

Agenda Cabinet

**Wednesday, 7 June 2023 at 3.30 pm
at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

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 7 - 34)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 as a correct record.



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| 4 | Additional Items of Business | |
| | To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency. | |
| 5 | Young People's Corporate Plan (Pages 35 - 52) | Children,
Young
People &
Education |
| | To approve the Sandwell's Young People's Corporate Plan 2023-2026. | |
| 6 | Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework Refresh (Pages 53 - 112) | Leader |
| | To approve the refreshed Corporate Plan and Corporate Performance Management Framework. | |
| 7 | Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing (Pages 113 - 190) | Housing &
Built
Communities |
| | To authorise the Director of Housing to implement the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and the Policy on Adaptions for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing. | |
| 8 | Improvement Plan Update (Pages 191 - 328) | Leader |
| | To recommend to Council that the Improvement Plan Progress & Phase 3 Refresh report, along with the March progress report, the Improvement Plan Annual Report, and an 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. | |
| 9 | Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund - Wave 2.1 Funding (Pages 329 - 340) | Housing &
Built
Communities |
| | To approve proposals to accept grant funding of up to £5.5m to fund proposed energy-efficiency improvements to assist in addressing fuel poverty in council-owned dwellings in Sandwell. | |

Shokat Lal

Chief Executive

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor Carmichael (Chair)
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Millard, Padda, Piper, Rollins and
Khatun

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Minutes of Cabinet

**Wednesday 15 March 2023 at 3.30pm
at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House**

Present: Councillor Carmichael (Chair);
Councillors Ahmed, Hackett, Hartwell, Millard, Padda, Piper
and Rollins.

In attendance: Councillors Taylor, EM Giles and J Giles.

Also present: Shokat Lal (Chief Executive), Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing), Michael Jarrett (Director of Children's Services), Tony McGovern (Director of Regeneration and Growth), Simone Hines (Director of Finance), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy), Matthew Huggins (Assistant Director: Green Spaces, Green Services, Events), Matt More (Communications & Corporate Affairs Manager), Victoria Lee (Head of Human Resources), Anthony Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer) and Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager).

31/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Fenton and Moore.

32/23 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hackett declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Minute No 35/23 (Friar Park Urban Village Masterplan) on the basis that he was a board member of the Millennium Centre located in Friar Park.

33/23 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

34/23 **Additional Items of Business**

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

35/23 **Friar Park Urban Village Masterplan**

Approval was sought to the Friar Park Urban Village masterplan, as amended, and to authorise the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth and the Director of Regeneration and Growth to progress the procurement strategy as proposed in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board asked several questions on behalf of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. Clarification was sought regarding possible contingency plans for the potential soaring costs that may be incurred over the course of the project.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth reported that the WMCA had secured funding which was intended to be used towards the remediation of the site, although the exact details relating to how this funding was utilised was still to be determined. In addition, further specific details relating to both authority's expectations of the scheme (such as Building Regulations 2025+), were yet to be determined. Early consideration of the impacts of specification requirements would be undertaken as discussions progress, allowing for consideration of the need for any additional grant funding and/or any implications for the Council's land receipt. The resultant scheme specification would form the basis of bids to be submitted by developers, and the contractual outputs required to be delivered.

Once a developer was appointed to progress the scheme, the responsibility for the management of costs and funding required to undertake it would fall to the developer.

Part of the rationale for utilisation of the Homes England Framework, which was recommended, was that the financial capability of a developer to undertake a scheme of this nature was tested prior to selection for the Framework. This would ensure that the selected developer had the appropriate knowledge, experience and financial capability to deliver the scheme as required.

In response to questions around the poor number of respondents to consultation and plans to place Council properties in the site, it was confirmed that a wide range of consultation had taken place including targeted letter drops and a press release. Response forms were also available both physically and digitally. Further engagement was planned as the scheme progressed and it was expected that once a developer had been appointed, community consultation on the proposed scheme would be carried out as part of any subsequent planning application. Regarding Council Housing on the site, the scheme would require a 25% requirement for affordable homes which could be provided in many forms. No decision had yet been made as to whether such provision on the site would be undertaken directly. The use of a local lettings policy for this site would also be explored.

Reason for Decision

Sandwell significantly underperformed against the annual housing delivery target of 1467 new dwellings set out in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The 630 units on the Friar Park site would make a significant contribution to those targets although delivery would be over a number of years. A minimum of 25% of the new homes would be affordable in accordance with planning policy.

Alternative Options Considered

Not progressing with the masterplan would not give the surety and design framework to have brought the site forward in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Option 1: Do nothing - this option would signify a continuation of the status quo and fail to deliver against Sandwell's housing delivery targets. The site would continue to be underutilised, remain highly contaminated and would not deliver any wider regenerative benefit to Friar Park.

Option 2: Do not proceed with the masterplan and instead, the Council could look to dispose of the site to a developer without a level of surety. Alternatively, the Council could have chosen to sell their site in isolation. However, this would fail to deliver a comprehensive regeneration proposal.

Resolved:--

- (1) that the results of the public consultation undertaken on the Friar Park Redevelopment Project during November to December 2022 as set out in the Consultation Report be received;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, approval be given to the Friar Park Urban Village masterplan as amended;
- (3) that approval be given to the proposed procurement strategy for developer selection, including the use of the Homes England Framework, and that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth and the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to progress the procurement strategy as proposed in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority;
- (4) that approval be given to the use of the Masterplan in assessing developer bids as part of the agreed procurement process;
- (5) that in light of community concerns arising from the consultation exercise, the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to develop a potential scheme which accommodates the extension of the Millennium Centre, and that the outcome of that work, including the detailed proposals and funding strategy scheme implementation are reported to Cabinet at a future date;
- (6) that the comments made by the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board at their meeting held on 28 February be received;

- (7) that, the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to ensure that:
- (a) the use of a Local Lettings Policy on the site be explored;
 - (b) regular air quality monitoring is undertaken as the development progresses and once it is complete;
 - (c) different options to utilise appropriate vegetation to help address air pollution is considered for the site.

(Councillor Hackett left the meeting during consideration of this matter)

36/23 **Award of Unified Communications Telephony Contract**

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth and the Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer, to award a contract for corporate unified communications – replacement contact centre telephony, via the Crown commercial Services Network Services 2 (RM3808) framework for a 5-year period (3+2), following a successful competitive exercise.

In response to a question by the Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources clarified that approval was being sought to award a contract following a procurement exercised.

A further question was asked on behalf of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. Although supportive of the report, questions were asked on why considerations of merging all three Council contact centres had not been included, which had been discussed as part of the Customer Journey Scrutiny Review. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources stated that the procurement of a new system would take a considerable amount of time to implement following award of contract. The current system was outdated and was causing a number of issues and that is why the Council were trying to move quickly. Any decision to merge/not merge contact centres would not be impacted by this procurement.

Reasons for recommendations

The Council telephony system Avaya CS1000 and Avaya CS 1000 (AACC6) which were in use within the Council's Contact Centres had been in place since 2007. This system was out of date and unsupported as a result.

A large proportion of the Council's customer contact was still via telephony (2020-2021 - 617.7k calls received, 2021-2022 - 641.0k calls received and 2022 - March 2023 - 511k calls were received), despite continued digital solutions being offered and therefore, the Council required a system that was fit for purpose, responsive and future proof.

Alternative options considered

An options appraisal was completed as part of the Business Case for this project and the option presented was found to be the most appropriate.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Regeneration & Growth and the Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, be authorised to award a contract for Corporate Unified Communications – replacement Contact Centre telephony, via the Crown Commercial Services Network Services 2 (RM3808) framework for a 5-year period (3 + 2), following a successful further competitive exercise;
- (2) that the Director of Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed;
- (3) that in relation to Resolution (2) above, approval be given to fund the costs in 2023/24 from a combination of HRA resources and the Customer Journey Priority Service Investment budget, and future costs be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process strategy as proposed in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Haden Hill Leisure Centre – Levelling Up Fund Programme

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Finance to provide the minimum 10% match funding contribution to the Haden Hill Leisure Centre Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Programme from the identified LUF contribution for the project of £2million, including via prudential borrowing if necessary.

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board requested information on what was planned for the old equipment that was used.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism confirmed that as part of the decommissioning of the facilities at Langley and Smethwick, the building inventories would be assessed and decisions would be made regarding the future of all the equipment, furniture and fittings. Where possible, equipment in good condition would be relocated to other centres. End-of-life equipment would be recycled or disposed of in the most efficient manner possible.

Reasons for Decision

Cabinet previously agreed partnership funding contribution of up to £8,000,000 for four Sandwell Levelling Up Fund submissions. On the basis that only one bid was successful, the match funding required was £2m for the Haden Hill project. Partnership funding was required to deliver the Haden Hill Leisure Centre programme as project costs exceeded £20,000,000 awarded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Alternative Options Considered

The original project scope be reduced to address the current funding gap if further partnership funding cannot be secured.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Finance be authorised to provide the minimum 10% match funding contribution to the Haden Hill Leisure Centre Levelling Up Fund programme from the identified LUF contribution for this project of £2,000,000, including via prudential borrowing if necessary;

- (2) that the Director of Finance be authorised to identify and provide an initial £300,000 capital budget in advance of receipt of grant monies and draw down of any partnership funding to enable necessary key project developments to be undertaken in the interim;
- (3) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to procure and appoint architects via an industry framework utilising identified capital budget prior to receipt of grant;
- (4) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to take all the necessary steps to appoint the project team utilising identified capital budget prior to receipt of grant;
- (5) that the Head of Human Resources be authorised to provide exemptions for recruitment processes as necessary to ensure avoidance of project delays;
- (6) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to finalise and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;
- (7) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to agree to the terms of the Levelling Up Funds Local Authority Assurance Framework provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;
- (8) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to formally accept the grant awarded (£20,000,000) by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and all associated grant terms.

38/23

The Future Use of Langley Swimming Centre

Approval was sought to authorise the allocation of the site at Vicarage Road, Oldbury for the development of new affordable rent council housing, subject to planning permission being obtained.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth moved the following amendments to the recommendation:

That the Director Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Housing and Director of Finance be authorised to amend funding sources available from the balance of 1-4-1 replacement receipts or Homes England to ensure the most appropriate use of funding for the scheme to ensure expenditure of Homes England funding within the contracted timescales and ensure the use of the time limited receipts generated from the sale of properties within the specified time periods.

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, on behalf of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, sought clarification on what consultation had taken place with ward members from the affected wards.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth highlighted that at a meeting of Cabinet on 31 January 2018, a decision was taken to close Langley Swimming Centre once leisure provision was transferred to the Sandwell Aquatic Centre. Therefore, local ward members were aware that this site would become vacant and requiring a review to its future use. The proposal to look at a scheme for council housing for this site, and the proposals for the Smethwick Swimming Centre which would also become vacant, were outlined to Langley and Abbey Ward Members at the end of February 2023 by the Director for Regeneration and Growth. At that time, members were asked to raise any concerns or issues they may have although no major concerns were received for this site.

Reasons for decision

Following the Cabinet decision made on 31 January 2018 (Minute No. 18/18 refers) Langley Swimming Centre was due to close in summer 2023 when the leisure provision would be located at the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre, Smethwick. Following the opening of the new Aquatics Centre the Council had the opportunity to develop the site at Vicarage Road, Oldbury with circa 27 homes (subject to planning consent), as part of the new strategic approach to provide more and better housing in the borough.

Alternative options considered

Option 1 – Disposal of the site on the open market

The Council could have disposed of the site on the open market. This would have resulted in the loss of a Council asset that could have been used for the Council build programme. The Council would have had minimal control over the future use of the building. This option increased the risk of ASB should the building become vacant.

Option 2 – Clear the site and disposal on the open market

Clearing the site and disposal of the site on the open market would have reduced ASB issues but as identified in Option 1, would result in the loss of a Council asset that could be used for the Council build programme.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to allocate the site at Vicarage Road, Oldbury for the development of new affordable rent council housing, subject to planning permission being obtained;
- (2) that approval be given to allocate funding from the Council's Housing Revenue Account to demolish the existing buildings/structures at Vicarage Road, Oldbury as a pre-requisite for site investigation to facilitate compliance with the Homes England funding timescales;
- (3) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, 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 any relevant Homes England Strategic Partnerships, to assist with the delivery of the project;
- (4) 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;

- (5) that subject to Resolution (3) and (4) 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;
- (6) 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 West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and any other relevant funding sources 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 and any other relevant funding sources grant on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance;
- (7) that following practical completion of each property at the site of Vicarage Road, Oldbury, the Director of Housing be authorised to manage and let the properties built in accordance with the Council’s housing allocation policy;
- (8) that the Director of Finance be authorised to make any necessary adjustment required to appropriate the site at Vicarage Road, Oldbury, for housing purposes;

- (9) that the Director Regeneration and Growth in consultation with the Director of Housing and Director of Finance be authorised to amend funding sources available from the balance of 1-4-1 replacement receipts or Homes England to ensure the most appropriate use of funding for the scheme to ensure expenditure of Homes England funding within the contracted timescales and ensure the use of the time limited receipts generated from the sale of properties within the specified time periods.

39/23

The Future Use of Smethwick Swimming Centre

Approval was sought to advertise the site at Thimblemill Road, Smethwick on the open market to ascertain if there was any commercial or other interest to purchase the site.

Reasons for Decision

Following the Cabinet decision made on 31 January 2018 (see Minute No. 18/18) Smethwick Swimming Centre was due to close in summer 2023 when the leisure provision would be located at the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre, Smethwick. A working group of officers from Planning, including the Conservation Officer, Strategic Assets and Sports Strategy was created to look at options for the future use of the building. The working group assumption was that no other Council service would have use for the building once it closed and the Council could not afford to retain the building. The listed status of the building constrained uses to those that would interfere least with its significance as a designated heritage asset and consequently appropriate uses were limited. Proper maintenance of such buildings was both necessary and potentially costly.

Alternative Options Considered

In order to enforce the legislation and fulfil its statutory duty, the Council required a policy that outlined what fines would be for breaches of the legislation. The Council could have decided to construct its own framework for calculating the amount of a civil penalty however, this risked not being aligned with other authorities which could impact the Council's ability to justify in the event of any appeal against a penalty levied.

As a result of the requirement for all authorities in England to have regard to the policy of the Lead Enforcement Authority, the adoption of this policy would ensure that the approach was consistent with that of other authorities.

The Council had the opportunity to support the People's Orchestra, a community based non-profit organisation to convert the building into a music venue. This change of use would provide a 'community development and training hub' and concert hall, ensuring the building was retained as a community venue. Such a use would be expected to be compatible with the conservation of the building's significance. However, it would likely involve the Council underwriting building related revenue risk in the short to medium term.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to test the market and advertise the site at Thimblemill Road, Smethwick on the open market to ascertain if there is any commercial or other interest to purchase the site, subject to any planning consents that may be required for change of use;
- (2) that the Director for Regeneration and Growth be authorised to work with a community consortia, The People's Orchestra, in parallel with Resolution (1), to allow the group three months to develop proposals to determine their projects viability and allow them to undertake a business planning exercise to confirm whether they are able to take on the premises under a Community Asset Transfer;
- (3) that in connection with Resolution (2) above, a further report be submitted to the Cabinet in June 2023 which will outline the disposal options identified through market testing and full details of the community-led option.

40/23

Use of Compulsory Purchase Order Powers to enable strategic acquisitions in West Bromwich Town Centre

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers to acquire any land and property interest necessary to enable delivery of zones 1 & 2 identified in the West Bromwich Masterplan.

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board sought clarity on why Compulsory Purchase Order(CPO) powers could not be made on pockets of land that had stood dormant for years. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth reported that a CPO should only be made where there was a compelling case in the public interest. This was usually to facilitate major regeneration projects in line with the Local Plan. Instead, planning enforcement powers should be used to tackle pockets of untidy land and proactive dialogue with landowners should take place to understand issues around developments.

An additional question was asked on behalf of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. Clarification was sought on what the Council was proposing to acquire and any associated risks. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth confirmed that land and property interests were identified in the report. A more detailed risk register had been prepared as part of the full business case submission which would continuously be updated.

Reasons for recommendations

Use of a Compulsory Purchase Order would assist SMBC in the delivery of the aspirations outlined in the West Bromwich Masterplan, which sought comprehensive regeneration of the town centre.

Alternative options considered

Option 1: Continue to negotiate by agreement only - without proactive use of CPO powers it was likely that the status quo would persist. This would fail to deliver against the Council's regeneration agenda in West Bromwich and would fail to deliver against the Towns Fund outputs resulting in grant funding clawback. Reputation of the Council would be at risk as a result of failing to secure and spend government grant.

Option 2: Identify another site that could achieve the Town Fund project and submit another change request - this area of West Bromwich was specifically being targeted due to acutely high levels of vacancy. A comprehensive options appraisal had been conducted by officers and there were currently no other sites in the area that deliver similar strategic benefits and satisfy the grant funding criteria.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers to acquire any land and property interests necessary to enable delivery of zones 1 & 2 identified in the West Bromwich Masterplan;
- (2) that the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration & Growth, be authorised to take all preparatory actions to enable the making of a Regeneration Compulsory Purchase Order, subject to a further resolution to formally make the Compulsory Purchase Order and confirm the agreed (red-lined) order lands;
- (3) that the Director of Regeneration & Growth be authorised to procure any professional services required to advise the council on the preferred Compulsory Purchase Order strategy and execution, including a revised Property Cost Estimate (PCE) on any necessary interests

41/23

Demolition Framework 2023-2027.

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the S151 Officer, Director of Law & Governance-Monitoring Officer and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Growth, to commence procurement of contractors for a demolition framework agreement to undertake demolition works on council managed properties in accordance with the public procurement rules, the Council's procurement and contract procedure rules and financial regulations.

Reasons for recommendations

The Council operated a successful demolition framework agreement, this ended in March 2023. The new framework needed to be in place before the previous one ended to provide the Council with a continuity of demolition options and resources.

Alternative options considered

The alternative option to the demolition framework was that demolition projects would instead be undertaken individually and were procured on a project by project basis. This would result in the following:

- additional procurement costs;
- extended programme to appoint a contractor;
- inability to react quickly to urgent works;
- potential loss of income from external clients;
- loss of opportunity to develop close working relationship with specialist demolition contractor(s) and other local public sector bodies.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the S151 Officer, Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Growth, to commence procurement of contractors for a demolition framework agreement to undertake demolition works on council managed properties in accordance with the public procurement rules, the Council's procurement and contract procedure rules and financial regulations;
- (2) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to award contracts to the successful demolition framework contractors in accordance with Resolution (1) above.
- (3) that subject to Resolutions (1) and (2) above, the Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into and execute under seal as may be required, any documentation in relation to the award of framework contract and/or other agreements with the procured contractor(s) as deemed necessary;
- (4) that any necessary exemption 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.

Parking Enforcement Contract Exemption

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Borough Economy to extend the contract to APCOA for a period until 30 June 2023 at a value of £994,510 to deliver Parking Enforcement Services representing an increase of £34,561 (3.6%) on the value for 2021/22 of £959,949.

Reasons for recommendations

Efforts to properly procure a new parking enforcement contract, with available internal resources and external commissions, over the last year had been unsuccessful. The scope of the contract requirements had changed and were dependent on the balance between in-house and contract provision, the best practice use of new technology, the adoption of new enforcement powers, confirmation of the approval of revised parking charges and the post pandemic stabilisation of parking demand. These factors were unforeseen at the outset.

The recommendations set out the approvals necessary to provide sufficient time to commission external subject matter expertise and capacity to develop the options and carry out potential procurement activity if required.

Alternative options considered

No suitable frameworks had been available and there had not been a positive response to the ITT for Consultancy Services that were sent out December 2021 to January 2022.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to extend the contract to APCOA for a period until 30 June 2023 at a value of £994,510 to deliver Parking Enforcement Services representing an increase of £34,561 (3.6%) on the value for 2021/22 of £959,949;
- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to extend the contract to APCOA for a period from 1 July 2023 until 29th February 2024 at a value of £704,613 to deliver Parking Enforcement Services, equivalent to an increase of £6.3% on the value for the equivalent period in 2022/23;

- (3) that the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be authorised to extend, in the event of process delays, the contract to APCOA for a period from 1st March 2024 until 30th June 2024 at a value of £349,644 to deliver Parking Enforcement Services;
- (4) that approval be given to the procurement of a new four-year parking enforcement contract with provision for two, one-year extensions to include transferring the following staff from APCOA to the Council for the future in-house delivery of these services, at an annual value of approximately £200,000 and would reduce the scope of the new contract accordingly;

Service	Staff Transfer Numbers
First Line Notice Processing Officers	2
Notice Processing Supervisor	1
Bus Lane Enforcement officer (3 days per wk)	1
TRO Officer, Surveyor	1
Representation and Appeals Officer	1
Operations Supervisor	1

- (5) that any necessary exemptions be made under the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules, the exception that we will use is a VEAT Notice to mitigate any risk to enable the course of action referred to in Resolutions (1), (2) and (3) above to proceed;
- (6) that any necessary exemptions be made to Council Policy or approved processes to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (4);
- (7) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to take any necessary actions to bring the proposals referred to in Resolutions (1) – (6) into effect.

Organisational Culture, Values and Behaviours

Approval was sought to adopt a new set of values and behaviours for Sandwell Council following the work that had taken place as part of the culture workstream within the Single Improvement Plan.

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, on behalf of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, requested further information on when, if ever, recorded meetings would be taking place between staff and their managers on a regular basis. Questions were also raised on how the Cabinet Member would ensure that the new organisation Culture, Values and Behaviours would be incorporated into the staff/manager meetings as well as the annual appraisal process.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that with the introduction of Oracle Fusion in April 2024, systems would be available to record meetings between employees and managers. This functionality would be explored as part of the development project work. However, consideration would need to be given as to whether it would be appropriate to record these types of meetings. The Culture, Values and Behaviours would be embedded into people management approaches including performance and development review processes.

Reasons for recommendations

The Council's organisational values and behaviours were central to customer experience and would both drive and be embedded through work on customer journey and around equality, diversity and inclusion.

Alternative options considered

There was no alternative option as this recommendation had been agreed as part of the Single Improvement Plan

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to adopt the following set of values and behaviours for Sandwell Council following the work that has taken place as part of the culture workstream within the Single Improvement Plan:-
 - We are one team - united and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.

- We are customer focused– caring about providing the best possible public service.
- We are inclusive – treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength.
- We are ambitious – striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough.
- We are accountable – delivering what we say we will.

44/23

Cape Primary School and Uplands Manor Primary School – Making significant changes (prescribed alternations)

Approval was sought to proposals to reduce the pupil admission number (PAN) of both Cape Primary School and Uplands Manor Primary School, Smethwick.

The Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, on behalf of the Chair of Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board, asked if there were any plans to use the places/premises within the borough that were seeking to reduce their PANS to help with the growing number of places needed for children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

The Cabinet Member for Children and Education confirmed that plans had been made through the Special Schools Place Planning Strategy to do so. As part of the initial discussion with each school that approached the Council seek a reduction in PAN, re-purposing of space for SEND was included as part of that dialogue.

Although not as a direct result of a falling roll, the Council had a recent example at Grace Mary Primary School, where focus provision had been extended through the re-use of surplus space. Uplands Manor Primary School had already expanded its focus provision to re-use surplus areas.

The Council would continue to support schools with additional resources who had the knowledge, expertise and skills to train staff, to enable an extension to, or form a new Focus Provision Unit/ Resource Base at their school.

ASD was the only one area of SEND that required additional specialist school place capacity. Officers were also looking to meet demand for extra support for children with a multitude of specialist needs.

Reasons for recommendations

The reduction in the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) would lessen the impact on the schools' budgets where the existing PAN was not being filled as the projected demand was considerably less than the PAN.

Alternative options considered

Do nothing and keep the PAN at their existing numbers – the Reception classes were not forecast to fill to their maximum, meaning the schools would not receive the maximum funding to enable the required classes per year group. There would be an expectation from the Local Authority that the schools could still take up to the maximum number of pupils throughout the whole intake year. This may have resulted in a high number of in-year allocations that could potentially require changes to class organisation during the school year which was detrimental to the pupils and the school.

Resolved that in connection with the proposed prescribed alterations to reduce the pupil admission number (PAN) of Cape Primary School, Cape Hill, Durban Road, Smethwick, B66 4SH and Uplands Manor Primary School, Addenbrooke Road, Smethwick, B67 6HT by a form of entry with effect from 1 September 2023 approval be given to:

- (1) publish the appropriate statutory proposals for each school;
- (2) delegate the decision for the prescribed alternations to the Director of Children's Services and Education, following completion of the statutory consultation period, and to request the School Adjudicator to make a final decision on the proposals to reduce the PAN's by a form of entry as the Authority has already determined its admission arrangements for those maintained schools for 2023/24 academic year.

45/23

Appointment of a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust

Approval was sought to agree the appointment of Jane Bleach as non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust for a three year period from 1 March 2023.

Reasons for recommendations

The appointment of the previous non-executive director ended in February 2023. To ensure that the requirement for independent non-executive directors as set out in Article 13.1.4 of the Articles of Association for Sandwell Children's Trust (the Trust) was met, a recruitment exercise was undertaken.

Alternative options considered

The alternative option would be to reject the recommendation. However, in line with the Governance Side Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) (which superseded the Memorandum of Understanding) and the Trust's Articles of Association, there would be a vacancy on the board that would still need to be filled. A new recruitment process would need to be undertaken which would leave a gap in the governance arrangements of the Trust for a period of time.

Resolved:-

- (1) that Cabinet, on behalf of the Council as the sole owner of Sandwell Children's Trust:
 - a) notes the completed sequence of events that are contractually required to appoint a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust;
 - b) notes and takes into account in its decision-making, the response from the Secretary of State for Education; and
 - c) agrees the appointment Jane Bleach as a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust for the period of 3 years from 1 March 2023.

46/23

Tree Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023 – 2028

Approval was sought to the adoption of the Tree Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023-2028.

Reasons for recommendations

The Tree Strategy refreshed the Council's approach to the protection, enhancement, and management of tree stock in Sandwell and aligned with practice in other authorities and national guidance.

Alternative options considered

There were no alternative options.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to adopt the Tree Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023 – 2028 as set out in Appendix A, including:
 - a) the Council's policy and approach to protecting, enhancing, and managing our tree stock in Sandwell;
 - b) the Council's policy and approach towards trees on private land;
 - c) the Council's policy and approach towards tree planting;
- (2) that the Assistant Director of Borough Economy be authorised to:
 - a) prepare a detailed action plan for the implementation of the Tree Strategy;
 - b) work with Climate Change colleagues and internal / external stakeholders to develop and implement a tree planting programme for the 2023 / 2024 planting season;
 - c) complete a baseline inspection of all trees on Council land within the red risk areas in the next 18 months, to comply with the inspection framework set out within the strategy;
 - d) work with finance colleagues to identify funds for the baseline inspection and subsequent red risk remedial works arising from this;

- e) prepare projections for the medium-term financial plan in relation to trees, following the baseline inspections, to meet the commitments set out within this strategy;
- f) submit a further report to Cabinet to consider on recommendations addressing Ash Dieback.

47/23

Improvement Plan Progress & Phase 2 Refresh

An update was received in relation to progress against the Improvement Plan up to 2 February 2023.

In response to questions from Scrutiny Chairs, it was highlighted that in contrast to previous unsuccessful attempts at recruiting to the children's to adults services project manager post, the most recent listing had gained interest. Work had progressed with additional resource from within the business. An outline business case had been refined with the Children's Trust and key external partners, and a governance structure had been agreed.

In relation to questions raised around the review into the SERCO contract, members were notified that officers would welcome the opportunity to present the report findings to the next available meeting of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board.

Reasons for recommendations

A quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporated all recommendations from the original Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Alternative options considered

The Value for Money Governance Review was undertaken as part of the external auditor's role to provide assurance on the council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. As the report included statutory recommendations, the council had a legal obligation to respond appropriately.

The Directions issued by the Secretary of State were 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 enabled 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 remained fit for purpose and provided Leadership Team with the oversight they require.

Resolved:-

- (1) that progress against the Improvement Plan up to 2 February 2023 be received;
- (2) that the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report be received;
- (3) that the responses to the recommendations and improvement points made in the Grant Thornton reissued Value for Money Governance Review Report, Grant Thornton Follow Up Review Report and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review be received;
- (4) that the Improvement Plan Risk Register as now submitted be received;
- (5) that details of changes to the Improvement Plan as a result of the follow-up external reviews and change to the Improvement Plan monitoring method be received;
- (6) that any recommendations or comments made by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan will be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Performance Management Framework – Q3 Monitoring

Approval of the Q3 monitoring reports was sought. An update was also provided in relation to the development of the Corporate Management Framework.

Reasons for recommendations

Council approved a corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.

The corporate PMF had been further refined and built into business processes. The report on Q3 sought to build on the intelligence gathered for Q1 and Q2 and offered the opportunity to assess in year progress.

Alternative options considered

The Directions issued by the Secretary of State, including the requirement to have a performance management framework in place, were a statutory requirement and the council had a legal obligation to respond appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures.

The council had various options on what type of performance management framework to establish. The Council's approach had been developed through understanding the needs of the organisation and drawing on best practice from other local authorities.

Resolved that that the progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework be received and approval be given to the Q3 monitoring reports.

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.

Refurbishment of Alfred Gunn House

Approval was sought to increase the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment Programme Budget for completion of the major project at Alfred Gunn House.

Reasons for recommendations

As the projected total cost of the project has risen, compared to the original contract value, Cabinet approval was required in order to authorise the additional £9.997m to £11.254m spend from the HRA Capital Investment Programme.

Alternative options considered

The option to terminate the current contract and re-tender for the outstanding work had been considered by officers but had been ruled out on the basis that additional costs had already been incurred and there had been no significant breach of contract by the contractor that would entitle the council to terminate.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to increase the Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment Programme budget by an amount in the range £9.997m to £11.254m for completion of the major project at Alfred Gunn House, which includes the refurbishment of the block, new build flats within the block and new build homes in the vicinity of the block;
- (2) that the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be authorised to remodel the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment Programme in order to accommodate the increased costs set out at Resolution (1);
- (3) that the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, be authorised to identify and implement the appropriate process for approving contract variations, in accordance with legal, financial and procurement procedures and advice;

- (4) that negotiations with the contractor, Seddon, be finalised in order to confirm the full and final costs of the Alfred Gunn House project, which shall not exceed £11.254m, and the completion date for the project;
- (5) that a review of contract performance and management on the Alfred Gunn House project be undertaken in order to learn the lessons and put more robust project and contract management in place for ongoing and future major complex projects of this type, and the review be reported to the Cabinet Member for Housing

Meeting ended at 4.45pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Report to Cabinet

7 June 2023

Subject:	Sandwell's Young People's Corporate Plan 2023-2026
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education Cllr Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Idnan Shafiq, Lead Officer Idnan_Shafiq@sandwell.gov.uk Sarah Sprung, Senior Lead Officer Sarah_Sprung@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations







- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the Sandwell's Young People's Corporate Plan 2023-2026 as set out in the Appendix.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council's refreshed Corporate Plan was adopted in 2021, it contains a high level of detail and is set out in a way that shows how each of the directorates work together to deliver key outcomes.
- 2.2 We recognised that in its adopted format it may not be 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.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People
	People Live Well and Age Well
	Strong Resilient Communities
	Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods
	A Strong and Inclusive Economy
	A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

3.1 The Young People’s Corporate Plan sets out nine key themes for the young people of Sandwell. It details future service provision to achieve these key themes, and how young people will be able to hold the Council to account via performance measures and milestones. The Young People’s Corporate Plan touches on all the objectives of the Corporate Plan as it engages young people’s opinions on several issues ranging from mental health to housing.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Aim

Building upon the school engagement element of the Corporate Plan, the aim was to create a young people’s version of the Corporate Plan that highlights the priorities of young people in Sandwell, giving them a voice to help shape Sandwell in the future. The plan has been created and is owned by the young people of Sandwell.



4.2 Approach

The Young People's Corporate Plan has been co-designed and co-produced by young people in Sandwell. The SHAPE Forum and the Care Leavers Forum have worked with Council Officers to determine the approach, to plan engagement activity, analyse results and to determine the outcomes.

4.3 It was important that young people owned this plan, so they could contribute openly and have creative control as to what is included in the plan. The SHAPE Forum agreed to take ownership of the Young Person's Corporate Plan.

4.4 The plan has been split into three sections: -

- Issues that concern young people in Sandwell,
- what can we as a Council do to improve this?
- performance measures/ milestones.

4.5 Performance measures were developed so going forward they will be able to be used to hold the Council to account and chart progress.

4.6 Engagement Developing the Corporate Plan in 2021

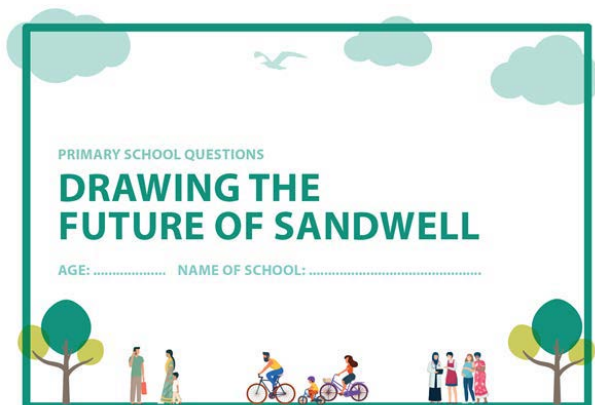
When developing the refreshed corporate plan in 2021 we held virtual workshops with primary and secondary schools. We engaged with seven schools (Four secondary and three primary, Q3 Tipton, Q3 Langley, Shireland Collegiate Academy, St Michael's Secondary School, Grove Vale Primary School, Christchurch Church of England School and St Phillip's Primary School)

4.7 Workbooks were posted out to all schools ahead of each session to support discussion, with different versions for primary and for secondary schools. The virtual workshops were supported by Directors and Cabinet Members. Whilst these conversations informed the Corporate Plan they also highlighted the need for the issues that matter to young people to be apparent and for young people to have a way of holding the council to account.

Developing the Young Person's Corporate Plan



4.8 Several workshops with SHAPE and Care Leavers have been conducted to identify their priorities.



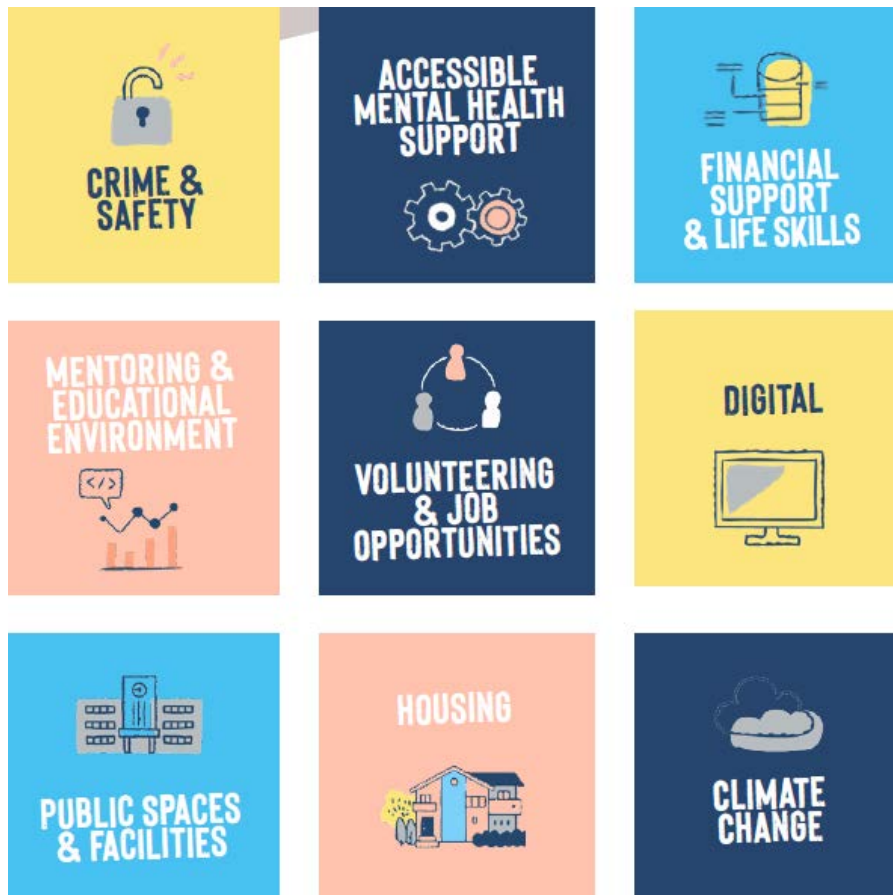
4.9 Following this, three in person workshops in Primary Schools in 2022 took place (Grove Vale, Christchurch and St Phillip's).

4.10 A workshop was also conducted by a SHAPE Forum young person in Q3 Langley and the results from the SHAPE survey (795 children and young people aged 9 – 18) also fed into the development of the plan.

4.11 Findings

Following consultation and engagement activity nine key themes have been identified: -





4.12 The themes were further developed to highlight the specific issues in each of the nine themes that concern young people.

4.13 The second section under each theme looks at how the Council could help to address these issues.

4.14 Finally, a set of performance measures / milestones were developed following conversations with several teams across the Council, the Children's Trust and the SHAPE Forum, to help young people hold the Council to account and chart progress.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 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.



6 Implications

Resources:	The Young People’s Corporate Plan will be delivered within existing resources.
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.
Risk:	Risk implications have been considered by services during the development of the Young People’s Corporate Plan.
Equality:	Equality implications have been considered by services during the development of the Young People’s Corporate Plan.
Health and Wellbeing:	This information is contained within the Young People’s Corporate Plan, where Accessible Mental Health Support is one of the nine key themes.
Social Value:	The Young People’s Corporate Plan sets out nine key themes for young people. Council services will use these to shape delivery to derive maximum social value.
Climate Change:	This information is contained within the Young People’s Corporate Plan, where Climate Change is one of the nine key themes.
Corporate Parenting:	This plan was developed following extensive consultation with SHAPE Forum and Care Leavers. The Plan is owned by the SHAPE Forum.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sandwell’s Young People’s Corporate Plan 2023-2026

8. Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2021 Refresh.



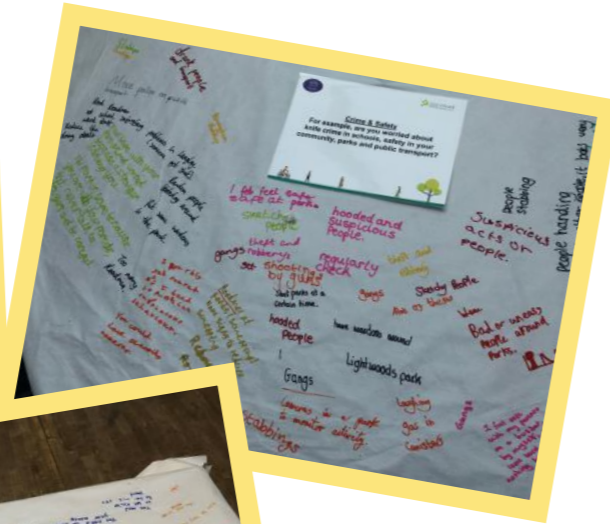
A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED SHAPE AND BRING THIS PLAN TO LIFE.



SHIRELAND COLLEGIATE ACADEMY



ST MICHAEL'S Church of England High School



SHAPE



SANDWELL'S YOUNG PEOPLES

CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2026



SHAPE



Building upon the school engagement element of the Corporate Plan, the aim was to create a young person's version of the Corporate Plan that highlights the priorities of young people in Sandwell, giving them a voice to help shape Sandwell in the future. The plan is created and owned by the young people of Sandwell.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Young Peoples Corporate Plan is owned by the SHAPE Forum
- Based on the Corporate Plan refresh 2021, where seven schools (Four secondary and three primary) were engaged with. (Q3 Tipton, Q3 Langley, Shireland Collegiate Academy, St Michaels Secondary School, Grove Vale Primary School, Christchurch Church of England School and St Phillips Primary School)
- Several workshops with SHAPE and Care Leavers were conducted
- Three workshops in Primary Schools in 2022 took place (Grove Vale, Christchurch and St Phillips)
- SHAPE conducted a workshop in Q3 Langley and the results from SHAPE survey (795 children and young people aged 9 – 18) also formed part of the findings
- Performance indicators/ milestones were developed following conversations with several teams across the Council and Children's Trust



Following extensive engagement nine key themes were identified

CRIME & SAFETY

ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

FINANCIAL SUPPORT & LIFE SKILLS

MENTORING & EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

VOLUNTEERING & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

DIGITAL

PUBLIC SPACES & FACILITIES

HOUSING

CLIMATE CHANGE

CRIME & SAFETY

Page 43

Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

Knife crime has become a nationwide issue

Young people are aware of gang culture and can feel intimidated when accessing places/ services

Violence against women and girls is an issue that young people feel strongly about

Social use of laughing gas is a nationwide issue, abuse of laughing gas impacts the health and safety of young people

Thefts/ robberies have increased

Some care experienced young people are not aware of their rights and entitlements when in custody or when they come out of prison



What can we do to improve this?

We will:

Provide knife crime education and amnesties in Sandwell

Raise more awareness and education regarding violence against women and girls ([Domestic Abuse Strategy](#))

Have more CCTV cameras and LED lighting in the Borough

Implement the [Sandwell Community Safety Strategy](#). This will ensure robust and effective victims pathways are in place to support victims of crime

Work with community partners and agencies such as WMP to jointly tackle crime

Have wardens patrolling public facilities and spaces

Work with partners to conduct more proactive stop and searches in public spaces

Develop a local offer for care leavers in custody

Have detached youth workers in key public spaces/ facilities to support young people and ensure they feel safe

Performance measures/ milestones

SHAPE Survey

How safe/unsafe do you feel from being hurt by others in the following places? (Primary & Secondary)

Sandwell Resident and Wellbeing Survey

Thinking about this local area, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are? (People using or dealing drugs & Groups hanging around the streets)

National crime data

Number of incidents and feeling safe

Number of modern day slavery victims identified

Number of domestic abuse incidents reported to police

Development of the local offer for custody



ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Page 44



Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- There is a stigma around mental health and accessing support
- Where to access support is not promoted widely, currently young people do not know where to access support services
- There is a need for more diverse accessibility for mental health services, and that the support is provided in several formats
- More education/ training is required for parents to allow them to spot the signs that their child is struggling with their mental health
- Support organisations such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have long waiting lists
- More funding is required for schools and other mental health organisations so that they can have designated resources to support mental health
- Affordability and accessibility to medical, eye and dental for care leavers due to living independently

What can we do to improve this? We will:

- Continue to improve support available for all children by promoting whole-school approaches to wellbeing, building resilience, and ensuring early identification of need and early access to mental health support
- Ensure the multi-agency governance for the Thrive Plan in Sandwell is clear and effective. Thrive Board to be the place where strategic decisions are made for emotional wellbeing/ mental health for children and young people in Sandwell
- Invest and support community mental health programmes (including pre-and post-natal support groups; a parenting programme; an anti-bullying campaign)
- Work with partners such as SCVO to help shift more resources towards local community projects ([Stronger Sandwell](#))
- Promote and map a list of all organisations that provide mental health support in the Borough
- Promote the use of the School Nursing Service
- Secure funding for free prescriptions, eye and dental for young people

Performance measures/ milestones

- Number of grants provided concerning Vision 2030, Better Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles
- Free prescriptions for care leavers eye, dental and medical
- Develop a wellbeing hub to support mental health and wellbeing for children in care and care leavers
- Schools to be supported to apply for funding, attend training and have a senior mental health lead within their school



FINANCIAL SUPPORT & LIFE SKILLS

Page 15

Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- Not taught about budgeting and finance management in schools
- There needs to be more support for low income families
- Cost of higher education (student fees), and the application process is not explained
- Parents not teaching life skills to their children, so there is a gap in knowledge for some young people
- Online scams and fraud have become more prevalent
- More education around the dangers of gambling is required
- More first aid training for young people is needed



What can we do to improve this? We will:

- Provide independent information to young people, making them aware of all their options to enable them to take up employment, an apprenticeship or further learning and training opportunities to fulfil their potential (Sandwell Connexions and Employment & Skills)
- Provide both financial and physical support to tackle the Cost of Living crisis
- Provide Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) to cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday period for 2023 to support school aged children and young people to access healthy food and enriching activities free of charge
- Deliver free play & youth services for Children & Young People across Sandwell (Go Play Sandwell) (Justyouth)
- Deliver anti bullying roadshows in Sandwell schools in Anti Bullying Week
- Work with partners such as Healthy Sandwell to provide and promote information regarding the dangers of gambling, spotting online scams and substance abuse in various formats and locations
- Deliver first aid training in schools, youth clubs and community centres

Performance measures/ milestones

- The total monetary value of benefits awarded assisted by the Welfare Rights Service
- Number of people assisted by the Welfare Rights Service to claim additional benefits
- Number of Council Tax reduction scheme cases processed
- The total amount of Council Tax Reduction
- scheme assistance provided
- Number of Housing Benefit cases processed
- Number of young people attending, HAF, Go Play and Play Making a Difference and Youth Service



PUBLIC SPACES & FACILITIES

Page 16

Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

Some young people's perception of parks is that they can be overcrowded at times with young adults who appear threatening and engaging with drug use

We want a graffiti and litter free clean Borough

Young people want libraries to be open for longer hours so that they can make the most of them

Safety and cleanliness are two reasons why young people are deterred from using public transport

Free sports activities in school holidays need to be promoted more effectively to young people and parents

The different locations of community centres in the Borough need to be mapped and promoted more effectively to young people



What can we do to improve this? We will:

Work with partners at the West Midlands Combined Authority to make public transport safer ([Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#))

Strive to maintain Green Flag status, whilst also working to enhance our existing green and open spaces. We will create new places to play and commit to plant a tree for every child starting school in Sandwell up to 2030

More CCTV cameras and LED lighting in the Borough

Develop and deliver a libraries strategy that works for the community. We will start to roll out the Open+ model which represents a different way of working for public libraries

Wardens will patrol public facilities and spaces

Deliver free play & youth services for children & young people across Sandwell ([Go Play Sandwell](#)) ([Justyouth](#)) and continue to provide Holiday Activities and Food ([HAF](#)) programme

Continue to enforce fines for littering and graffiti. Also signpost our services which help remove graffiti in public spaces and report ASB

Promote all locations where our community centres are located

Performance measures/ milestones

Sandwell Resident and Wellbeing Survey

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you overall with the: (Council's library services, Council's parks and open spaces?)

Thinking about the local area, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are? (Rubbish or litter lying around, Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles)

Physical visits to library sites (rate per 1,000 population)

1,000 activities delivered in libraries by year end

Local authority playgrounds per 1,000 population

Number of events per 1,000 population

Number/ percentage of cases or incidents where action was taken to reduce/ manage ASB



MENTORING & EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Page 47



Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- School staff want to mentor young people and help, but they are limited by time and resources
- Mentoring is needed for all young people not just high achievers
- Schools need to help develop career options and map education routes
- Sandwell has no University or Campus, so young people must leave Sandwell for higher education
- Interview practice for young people is needed for college interviews and job interviews
- The curriculum needs to cater for the new and future job market
- Care Experienced young people do not have access to a sufficient range of non-social work adult role models to advocate on their behalf

What can we do to improve this?

We will:

- Work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people
- Work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives
- Work with partners to deliver life skills sessions in schools in several formats and promote these services on our shared digital platforms
- Promote the Councils mentoring service for apprentices in the private or public sectors (Employment and Skills team)
- Provide independent support to young people highlighting all their options to enable them to take up employment, an apprenticeship or further learning ([Connexions Sandwell](#))
- Recognise that transport can be a barrier to work and accessing further education, we will work with our partners (WMCA) to ensure that our young people can access employment and education opportunities across the region particularly by public transport
- Provide mentoring support for children in care and care leavers to reach their goals and aspirations in life

Performance measures/ milestones

- Number of young people being mentored by the Employment & Skills team
- Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 - Reduce the Points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally
- SCT Ofsted rating
- "% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating (Primary, Secondary and Special)
- % of children in care and care leavers accessing continuous support from mentors, advocacy, independent visitor and lifelong links
- Number of engagement events held in schools and the community



CLIMATE CHANGE

Page 48

Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- Not enough education is given about the dramatic effects off climate change
- More partnership working around climate change is required
- More homes need to be "Eco Homes", this includes existing homes and new builds
- Cost of electric vehicles to replace diesel cars
- There is a continued trend of cutting down trees and building on green spaces
- Need more electric car chargers/ charging points and solar panels in the Borough
- We need to reward people for being greener and reward the use of public transport
- There is a need to produce food locally



What can we do to improve this?

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
- Embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral Council by 2030
- Invest in our buildings and fleet, so both are low carbon and compatible with 2030. Working with our partners, we will make refuse collection and street cleansing greener with the rollout of electric street cleansing vehicles and participation in pilot projects to test other green vehicles
- Work to make our own housing stock greener by implementing minimum energy performance standards for existing and new build council homes and exemplar schemes for modern methods of construction
- Increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change
- Continue to implement Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and deliver a programme of infrastructure improvements across the Borough
- Ensure that all public transport options available locally are as green as possible, including lobbying for clean green buses for our Borough
- Continue to invest in green infrastructure and increase the amount of EV charging points in the Borough
- Plant a tree for every child starting school in Sandwell up to 2030

Performance measures/ milestones

- % of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- Number of public EV charging points
- Number of passenger journeys on public transport
- Existing buildings showing an improvement in energy ratings
- Annual reduction in corporate carbon emissions
- Plan and rollout of electrification of Council fleet vehicles



VOLUNTEERING & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Page 49

Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- More job opportunities are needed locally in Sandwell
- Need volunteering opportunities after school/ college hours
- Employer fares needed in schools or in towns to show the types of jobs and opportunities available
- Without experience harder to get a job because you have no experience
- We need to do more to attract big employers to Sandwell
- There is an assumption that young people have a home and parents that can support the young person financially, allowing them to do the unpaid work
- Need to support care leavers and other young people who may need specific employment over specific time periods due to commitments e.g. childcare



What can we do to improve this?

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
- Give young people access to job opportunities through the Connexions and Employment and Skills team in the Council
- Support people into employment through the delivery of the Skills Strategy with our strategic partners in the Employment and Skills Partnership
- Work with our partners to support the development and growth of business start-ups in Sandwell
- Offer quality work experience placements within the Council
- Continue to deliver the Apprenticeship Levy and increase the take up of apprenticeships, particularly within small businesses in Sandwell
- 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
- Provide a broader offer to young people with SEND to include different supported internship and apprenticeship models
- Deliver engagement events to showcase the Sandwell offer. We will promote this by using our social media channels

Performance measures/ milestones

- Number of young people supported into apprenticeships (Inside and outside the Council)
- Children in care who have left school that are engaged in training, employment, further education up to the age of 21
- % of young people who are NEET
- Number of work experience placements provided in the Council
- Number of young people supported into employment
- Number of employers the Employment & Skills team has engaged with



DIGITAL

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Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

- Affordability of broadband and mobile data
- Not everyone has access to a digital device
- Age restrictions on apps and webpages not followed by young people
- Cyber bullying is on the rise
- Cyber security training and awareness is needed more than ever
- Overuse of the internet can cause health problems due to altering leisure patterns
- Care experienced young people are digitally excluded from accessing services, entitlements and opportunities



What can we do to improve this?

We will:

- Ensure that Digital Inclusion matters when designing services and making key council decisions
- Work with West Midlands 5G to ensure Sandwell maximises opportunities for 5G infrastructure
- Provide digital devices and data sticks for pupils from low income families
- Map out all places/ warm spaces in the Borough that provide free access to the internet
- 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
- Promote the [Digital Den project](#) (West Bromwich). This project invests in digital infrastructure to create pathways into education, training and employment through accredited online training courses, careers guidance, and provides children with online educational resources
- Work with our partners in the voluntary sector to improve and develop digital skills in the community to minimise digital exclusion and maximise employment and training opportunities
- The anti-bullying training programme and online safety training is being rolled out to schools, professionals working with children and young people and parents
- The Digital Citizenship community offer training is being rolled out to professionals working with children and young people

Performance measures/ milestones

- Sandwell Resident and Wellbeing Survey
- Do you access the internet? If Yes, How?
- How would you rate your digital skills?
- % of care experienced young people accessing the internet and equipment.
- Development of the Councils digital offer for young people
- Investment in digital infrastructure



HOUSING

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Issues that concern young people in Sandwell

All new builds should be designed to meet Decent Homes Standard and be futureproofed to offer maximum energy efficiency. They should come with electric vehicle chargers and solar panels wherever feasible

Some private landlords are exploiting individuals, charging above market rate rents while not maintaining properties to required standards

Care leavers and young people in housing need should not only be supported into finding a house, but also supported to ensure the house has sufficient items/facilities for them to live in

There should be various types and sizes of housing available so that we can cater for all needs and keep individuals in Sandwell

Cost of buying a house is growing year on year

We need to tackle homelessness and start prevention work early so that we can stop people from becoming homeless

Housing advice and support targeted for young people should be provided, so they can get a true picture of all costs and the process you must undertake to buy or rent houses

Building and safety standards should be kept high priority to prevent poor living conditions and further tragedies such as Grenfell reoccurring

What can we do to improve this?

We will:

Deliver new affordable homes across the Borough, on our own land and other viable sites to help meet the growing demand. Work with developers through the Planning process to delivery affordable housing that meets design standards

Work with private landlords to secure more good quality properties for young people in housing need, at affordable rents

Take enforcement action where standards in private rented housing are not met and where education and awareness raising have not delivered improvement

Encourage young tenants to tell us about disrepair and poor standards in private rented housing so that we can take action while protecting the tenant

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. We will design and deliver training and support for care leavers managing their own tenancies

Incorporate more renewable energy measures into the design of new-build Council homes, including modern methods of construction and energy efficient heating

Work to prevent and end rough sleeping by implementing the Homelessness Strategy 2022-25 focussed on increasing prevention, early intervention and rapid rehousing

Raise the standard of homes in the private rented sector and bring more empty homes back into use

Take a proactive approach to accessing national funding for Sandwell that benefits our tenants and people who are homeless or in housing need

Invest in training and induction for new young tenants to ensure understanding of rights and responsibilities and to promote tenancy sustainment. Enable young tenants to have a voice in the council's tenant engagement structures

Support people in the private rented sector to ensure their landlords comply with safety standards

Ensure that council homes are safe places to live by fully complying with fire and building safety requirements and regularly reviewing compliance. This includes taking a proactive approach to tackling damp and mould

Performance measures/ milestones

Number of care leavers accommodated by housing under their own tenancy

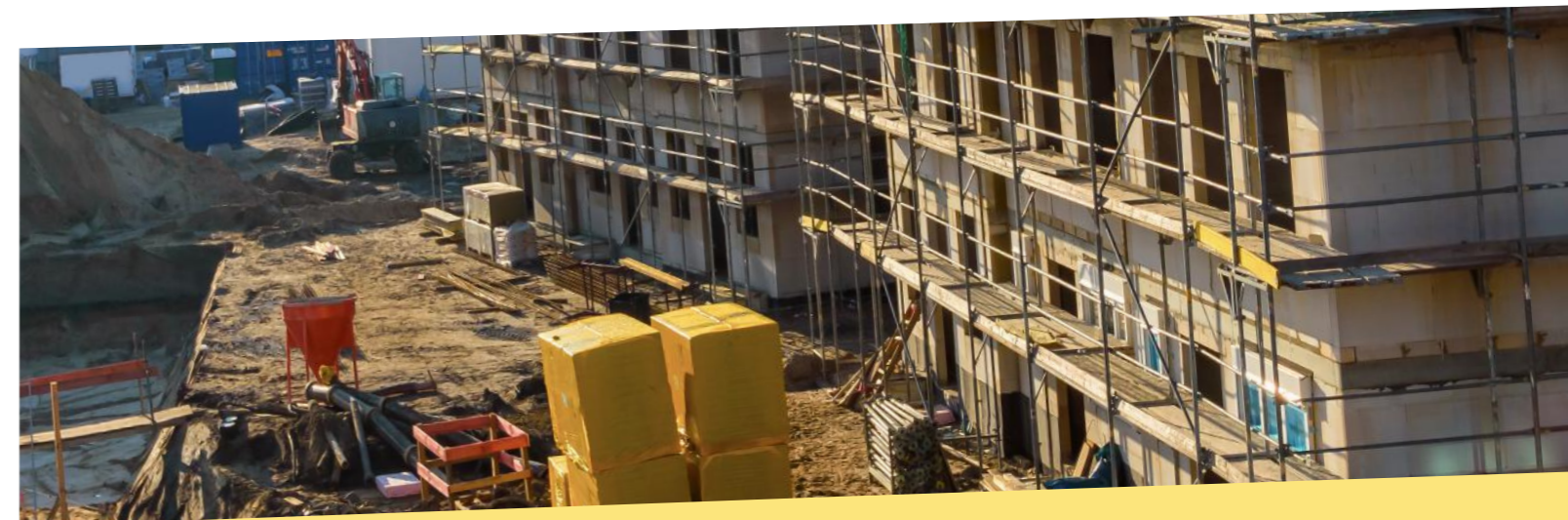
% of homes that meet energy efficient target

Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented

Number of private sector properties reported to be in state of disrepair with a positive resolution

Number of long term empty homes brought into use

Number of new homes built each year (New Council homes, affordable homes, total)



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Report to Cabinet

7 June 2023

Subject:	Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework Refresh
Cabinet Member:	Leader and Deputy Leader, Cllr Carmichael and Cllr Piper
Director:	Chief Executive, Shokat Lal
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead Officer Sarah_sprung@sandwell.gov.uk Jane Alexander – Senior Lead Officer Jane_alexander@sadwell.gov.uk Rebecca Jenkins – Senior Lead Officer Rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk Kayleigh Walker – Senior Lead Officer Kayleigh_walker@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the refreshed Corporate Plan and Corporate Performance Management Framework as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 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.









2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan was developed in 2021, at a time when the borough was still responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. As time has moved on, it is important to regularly review the Corporate Plan and related Performance Management Framework to ensure that they reflect the progress made and the current priorities.
- 2.2 At the same time, the council is on an improvement journey to respond to issues raised by external reviews in 2021. The key areas for focus have been set out in the separate Improvement Plan, but as we move towards sustainable improvement, it is important that our key actions to embed the changes that have been made to date become part of our normal business.
- 2.3 For these reasons, the key actions or 'we wills' that sit under the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan have been reviewed to ensure that they reflect and support the council's priorities and current position. Where appropriate the 'we wills' have been amended to ensure that core elements of the Improvement Plan are captured within the single Corporate Plan.
- 2.4 To monitor the delivery of the revised 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan, the existing Corporate Performance measures were also revised and refreshed where appropriate. This will allow the council to understand its journey in delivering the Corporate Plan and to take informed decisions.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People
	People Live Well and Age Well
	Strong Resilient Communities
	Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods
	A Strong and Inclusive Economy
	A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

3.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities for Sandwell Council that will enable us to contribute to the achievement of Vision 2030.

4 Context and Key Issues

Overview

4.1 The Corporate Plan contains a set of six strategic outcomes for the Council to deliver on, underpinned by a seventh strategic outcome, One Council One Team.



4.2 Supporting delivery of these seven strategic outcomes are 145 'we will' statements which indicate key actions the Council will work towards to help achieve delivery of the strategic outcomes.

Reviewing the Corporate Plan against the Improvement Plan and Refreshing the We Wills

4.3 This refresh of the Corporate Plan has focused on reviewing the 'we will' statements to ensure that core elements of the Improvement Plan are captured and against the following criteria:



Are the we will statements: -

- Still relevant – is an update required to reflect the current position?
- Appropriate to be at Corporate Plan level – does it sit better at Directorate Business Plan level?
- Succinct – does the text overlap with another We Will statement, could they be amalgamated?



4.4 Appendix 1 details the revised ‘we will’ statements for each strategic outcome. The impact of the review on the number of ‘we will’ statements is outlined in the table below: -

Strategic Outcome	2021 We Wills	2023 We Wills
Best Start	17	12
Live Well and Age Well	20	21
Strong Resilient Communities	21	20
Quality Homes	20	17
Strong Inclusive Economy	22	11
Connected & Accessible	18	8
One Council One Team	27	18
TOTAL	145	107

4.5 Since approving the first refresh of the Corporate Plan in 2021 many things have changed and moved forward. For instance: -

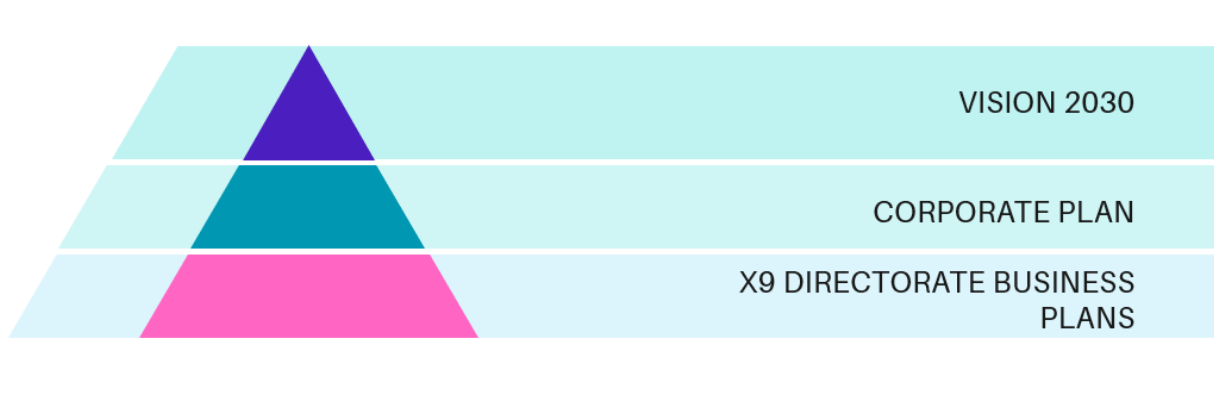
- We have now delivered the Sandwell Aquatic Centre and hosted the Commonwealth Games events, and emphasis has shifted to developing our legacy plan.
- The Black Country Plan we had jointly developed with Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall Councils is no longer moving forward and we have plans in place to develop our own Sandwell Plan.
- We have matured as an organisation and have key corporate priorities that all directorates are supporting, including our work on the cost of living crisis, improving customer experience, and our focus on improving school attendance.
- Government have announced that Sandwell will be one of the first Levelling up Partnerships to provide place-based regeneration.

4.6 These points demonstrate some of the ways in which the refresh has impacted on the key actions or ‘we wills’ that will deliver the strategic outcomes.



Aligning the Directorate Business Plans

4.7 Vision 2030 is the shared vision for the future of Sandwell, this is owned by the Council and its partners and stakeholders. The Corporate Plan is the Council's highest-level strategic document and represents the Council's contribution to delivering Vision 2030. All of our other key strategies and plans support the Corporate Plans delivery, this includes directorate level business plans.



4.8 Every year each council directorate updates its business plan to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan and to reflect any changes in legislation or service provision.

4.9 Each Directorate Business Plan contains a set of Corporate Plan commitments - actions that directly support the delivery of the 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan. Alongside the refresh of the Corporate Plan, each directorate business plan has also been realigned to support the revised set of 'we will' statements. This cross-council set of commitments, set out in Appendix 2, represents the council's delivery plan.



Revised Corporate Performance Indicators

- 4.10 To monitor the delivery of the revised 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan, the existing Corporate Performance measures were revised and refreshed where appropriate, in consultation with Directors and Leadership Team. The revised indicator set out along side the revised 'we wills' in Appendix 1.
- 4.11 There were 244 measures in the existing Corporate Performance Indicator Set and these have been revised down to 208 in the new Corporate Performance Indicator Set. These have been aligned against the refreshed 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan and include a range of measures that will provide senior officers and members with oversight of the impact on outcomes for our residents.
- 4.12 The review also included the indicators that have been reported in a separate report for Finance (monthly), Customer Experience (monthly) and Organisational Health (annual).
- 4.13 For 2023/24, the indicators in the Finance and Customer Experience report are included in the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report, and that monthly reports continue at Directorate level as required. Other indicators that are no longer being reported corporately will still be collected at Directorate level, where appropriate.
- 4.14 The indicators in the Organisational Health report will be reviewed in line with the workforce strategy and the impact the implementation of Oracle Fusion. (the latter will bring better intelligence for finance, HR and performance so will need to be regularly refreshed).
- 4.15 The intention is that by having a smaller, more aligned, and focused number of Corporate Performance indicators, the reports will highlight performance matters in the key areas of strategic importance and what action is being taken, or needs to be taken, in response.



- 4.16 The new Corporate Performance Indicator Set will be reported quarterly in a Corporate Performance Report alongside the quarterly Corporate Plan monitoring reports.
- 4.17 Performance data will be analysed, which alongside qualitative updates in the Corporate Plan monitoring, will provide an even better insight into the delivery of strategic outcomes and our progress against delivering the Corporate Plan as a whole.
- 4.18 The Corporate Performance Report will initially be provided as a pdf flat file. However, the intention is that as capacity grows in the Performance Team, Microsoft Power BI will be used to create a Corporate Performance Dashboard with additional datasets Leadership Team and Members will be able to access and interrogate. Leadership Team and Members will be provided with more information about this later in the year.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative to this refresh of the Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework would be to continue with the current versions 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, should no review or refresh 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 our residents the organisation's priorities and the improvement journey that the council is part way through.



6 Implications

Resources:	The refreshed Corporate Plan will be delivered within existing resources.
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.
Risk:	Risk implications have been considered by services during the development of the Corporate Plan.
Equality:	Work was carried out during 2020/21 to understand the impact of the pandemic on our communities, this was utilised as evidence to inform the refresh of the Corporate Plan. A corporate EA will be presented to Cabinet with the refreshed Corporate Plan.
Health and Wellbeing:	This information is contained within the body of the Corporate Plan, specifically the Live Well and Age Well strategic outcome.
Social Value:	The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities for the council, and services will use these to shape delivery to derive maximum social value.
Climate Change:	This information is contained within the body of the Corporate Plan, specifically the Live Well and Age Well Strategic Outcome and the Strong Resilient Communities Strategic Outcome.
Corporate Parenting:	This information is contained within the body of the Corporate Plan, specifically the Best Start in life for Children and Young People.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – 2023 Refreshed Corporate Plan we will statements and Performance Indicators

Appendix 2 – Directorate Business Plans – Corporate Plan Commitments

8. Background Papers

Improvement Plan
Corporate Plan 2021 Refresh



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Headlines

Strategic Outcome	2021 We Wills	2023 We Wills
Best Start	17	12
Live Well Age Well	20	21
Strong Resilient Communities	21	20
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One Council One Team	27	18
TOTAL	145	107

The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People

	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
First 1000 Days	B1	We will promote the importance of communication and language to parents, and we will provide earlier support to children who need it.	Percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
	B2	We will seek additional support for social mobility projects that address early language, with an intention to increase aspiration and ability.	
Ready for School	B3	We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes.	% of 1st, 2nd or 3rd preference for state school place Primary (Reception) % of 1st, 2nd or 3rd preference for state school place (Secondary) % of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Nursery % of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Primary % of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Secondary % of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Special and alternative provision
	B4	We will work with our partners, and the wider community, to support schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence	% Attendance: Primary % Attendance: Secondary % of pupils with persistent absence (10% or more sessions missed): Primary % of pupils with persistent absence (> 10% absence): Secondary % of pupils severely absent (50% or more sessions missed) Primary % of pupils severely absent (50% or more sessions missed) Secondary
	B5	We will work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.	Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 - Reduce the Points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally % gap between LA disadvantaged and not disadvantaged pupils nationally at KS2, achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths
	B6	We will work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives.	Rate of Children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 CYP population % children becoming subject of a CP Plan for the second or subsequent time (within two years) % Care leavers that are NEET % of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET)
	B7	We will be a council that understands the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, with a workforce that provides services with compassion and understanding.	a 5-7% point reduction on the reported numbers of CYP experiencing emotional health and well-being challenges
	B8	We will work with Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care.	Vacancy rate of social workers % of practice reviews and practice observations rated as good or outstanding Financial performance against budget SCT Ofsted rating
	B9	We will be a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our 'family', and promoting fostering and adoption.	
	B10	We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need.	
	B11	We will ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families	% EHCP 20 week completion rate, including exceptions % of EHC annual reviews completion rate
	B12	We will ensure that emotional health and wellbeing support is in place for children and young people.	Early Help - Number of Allocated Lead Professionals by Organisation Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months Early Help - Number of Step Downs to Multi-Agency Early Help that do not return to Social Care within 12 months Early Help - Number of Children/Young People receiving intervention
	Children & Young People that need more support		

People Live Well and Age Well

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
Rebuilding	L1	We will identify and tackle health inequalities (especially those which have been widened by the Covid pandemic), including inequalities emerging across vulnerable groups	Proportion of households in fuel poverty Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work Healthy pregnancy programme The use of the Sandwell Language Network to support learning English and Health literacy. The targeting of the health checks at those most in need The release of the Healthy Aging App - directed at providing information in multiple languages Universal Healthy Start Vitamins
	L2	We will invest in the community, voluntary and faith sector through grants, upskilling and co-development.	Number of grants provided concerning Vision 2030, Better Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles
	L3	We will continue to prepare for emerging Health Protection risks and support uptake of all vaccination programmes to protect our population.	We will continue to push for improved vaccine take up, childhood vaccines, flu season and COVID boosters
	L4	We will work with our partners, including the community and voluntary sector, to reduce social isolation and ensure people are connected within their local communities and beyond.	ASCOF 5A (formerly 11) the proportion of people who use services who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like (data source: ASCS) LGBTQ+ needs assessment and Challenge fund to support outcomes. Inclusive cycling programme
Healthy Lives	L5	We recognise our responsibility to continue to invest in our community to promote wellbeing and help people live healthy lives. We will increase the role of local people in initiating, designing and delivering health improvement initiatives.	Investment and support of community mental health programmes (including pre-and post-natal support groups; a parenting programme; an anti-bullying campaign) Grants to the SCVO around child wellbeing, Grants for child wellbeing for special school mental health and wellbeing. LGBTQ Challenge fund to support outcomes.
	L6	We will develop a strength-based approach to further develop a Stronger Sandwell, by working with our public-sector partners and voluntary and community organisations.	Towns based awareness of Public Health offer/ Stronger Sandwell.
	L7	We will support people to get accessible information and advice about their health, care and support and how they can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally.	Sandwell Stride programme (volunteer-led walking scheme) and digital app-based walking offer
	L8	We will continue to support access to food through food banks and opportunities for children in school holidays.	Greenspace utilisation (physical activity in parks and open spaces)
	L9	We will ensure that we have sufficient mental health provision and we will promote good mental health through a range of initiatives, ensuring equitable access to mental health support.	
	L10	We will contribute to better air quality and climate change through raising public awareness, increasing active travel and supporting organisations to reduce carbon emissions.	Number of sites that are non-compliant with the national NO2 air quality objective (open data)
	L11	We will ensure continued investment into health and wellbeing services including drugs and alcohol, adult obesity and smoking cessation.	C19d - Deaths from drug misuse Hospital admissions due to substance misuse (15-24 years) C18 - Smoking Prevalence in adults (18+) - current smokers (APS) C21 - Admission episodes for alcohol-related conditions (Narrow): New method.
	L12	We will support more people to achieve healthier life choices and be informed around their health through; delivering Making Every Contact Count, Health Checks, the Healthy aging app and access to health interventions through Healthy Sandwell and social prescribing support.	Update of health checks for 2023/2024 for those eligible.
	L13	We will encourage more people to be healthy through being physically active and eating good nutrition. Through #movemoresandwell, School meal review and weight management support.	Numbers of people physically active in Sandwell Childhood obesity Smoking cessation uptake Smoking at time of delivery

Choice and Independence	L14	We will actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We will tailor the care, support and treatment in response.	ASCOF 3A (formerly 1B) the proportion of people who use services who report having control over their daily life (data source: ASCS) 1D (formerly 3A) overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support (data source: ASCS) 1E (formerly 3B) overall satisfaction of carers with social services (for them and for the person they care for) (data source: SACE)
	L15	We will promote access to employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and those with mental ill health.	
	L16	We will review access to day care provisions to ensure that people have access to community resources to improve independence and choice.	
	L17	We work with people to understand what being safe means to them and work with our partners to develop the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We will make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.	ASCOF 4A (formerly 4A) the proportion of people who use services who feel safe (data source: ASCS) ASCOF 4B the proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed (data source: Safeguarding Adult Collection)
	L18	We will support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control, live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.	2D (formerly 2B) the proportion of older people (65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital (data source: CLD) 2E (formerly 1G) the proportion of people who receive long-term support who are enabled to live in their home or with family (split by age: aged 18 to 64; aged 65+) (data source: CLD)
	L19	We will understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We will share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement.	
	L20	We will ensure that all carers in Sandwell are offered support in a timely way and that they have access to the information, guidance and advice that they need.	3B (formerly 3C) the proportion of carers who reported that they have been involved in discussions about the person they care for (data source: SACE) 3C (formerly 3D1 and 3D2) the proportion of people and carers who use services who have found it easy to find information about services and/or support (data source: SACE and ASCS)
Joined up Health and Social Care	L21	We will develop a comprehensive Workforce Strategy - one that incorporates recruitment and retention, whilst also assessing joint health and social care roles.	6A the proportion of staff in the formal care workforce leaving their role in the past 12 months (data source: Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS)) 6B the percentage of adult social care providers rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission (data source: CQC Directory)

Strong Resilient Communities

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
Vibrant Community	C1	We will ensure our grant funding of community/voluntary sector activity supports the priorities we're outlining in this plan.	
	C2	We will deliver the Towns Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, secured through £67.5m of Town Deal Funding.	West Bromwich Town Centre Investment Plan delivered (target 2026) Smethwick Town Centre Investment Plan delivered (target 2026) Rowley Regis Town Centre Investment Plan delivered (target 2026)
	C3	Through working with the SHAPE Forum, we will make sure that our towns become welcoming places for young people and that they have jobs, activities and facilities to give them a part in the local community.	
	C4	We will put the needs of our residents at the heart of what we do, establishing processes to engage with them to ensure that our residents guide and influence our services.	
	C5	We will strive to maintain Green Flag status in 14 parks, whilst also working to enhance our existing green and open spaces, create new places to play and committing to plant 10,000 trees by 2030.	-The number of Friends Groups working in Partnership with The Council -Green Space Published Programme of Works Achieved -Britannia Park Town's Fund Project Completed -West Smethwick Park NLHF Project Completed -Black Patch Park Levelling Up Fund Project Completed
	C6	We will support our residents to cope with the current cost of living crisis and address the long term underlying causes of poverty.	
Culture	C7	We will develop and deliver a libraries strategy that works together with the community. We will start to roll out the Open+ model which represents a different way of working for public libraries.	The number of library visits in person -The number of Meaningful gifting of Booktrust packs -The number / % of library visits made by under 16s -1,000 activities delivered in libraries by year end -Meaningful gifting of Bookstart packs provided to 95% of eligible children -The number of community activities & events held in libraries -The number of PC sessions held in libraries -% of visitors satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their visit to a library
	C8	We will work the community and local stakeholders to develop a legacy plan that maximises the benefits of the Commonwealth Games Sandwell Aquatic Centre.	
	C9	We will showcase local, regional, national and international talent in an engaging and inspiring programme of events.	
	C10	We will explore and develop a Sandwell Valley phased investment programme over the next five years- towards the Valley becoming a key Visitor and Destination Gateway into Sandwell.	Forge Mill Farm Education Visits (students) -Events Attendance / Participation -Forge Mill Farm Centre of Excellence - Play and Learning Barn Completed -Sandwell Valley Urban Bike Track Completed -Enabled funding target through Friends Groups -Visitor Services and Events Mystery Shopper Scores
Green	C11	We will work with partners to deliver initiatives that will help us to achieve our climate change strategy and the target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2041.	
	C12	We will embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.	
	C13	We will review our corporate fleet, so that they are low carbon and compatible with our climate change strategy for 2030. Working with our partners, we will make refuse collection and street cleansing greener with the rollout of electric street cleansing vehicles and participation in pilot projects to test other green vehicles.	
Clean	C14	We will improve and transform our street cleansing programmes post Covid.	NI195 - Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting).
	C15	We will increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change.	
Safe	C16	Sandwell's Community Safety Strategy will be reviewed and priorities will include ongoing work around prevention of violence and exploitation, reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime and supporting victims. We will implement our Domestic Abuse strategy in line with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.	Total recorded crime in Sandwell Number of Domestic Abuse incidents in Sandwell reported to police The number of cases referred to MARAC
	C17	We will continue to work with partners and agencies to ensure that there is a joined up and effective approach to hate crime.	
	C18	We will strengthen our approach and raise awareness across partner agencies, businesses and communities, to address modern slavery and work collaboratively to target perpetrators and support victims.	
	C19	We will strengthen our multi-agency tasking processes for community safety and take steps to foster resilience, shared understanding, support networks and cross-community working	
	C20	We will deliver more responsive, robust and co-ordinated and integrated enforcement service across the council.	

Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
A Home for Everyone	H1	We will deliver much needed new homes across the borough, especially affordable homes, on our own land and other viable sites in order to help meet the demand for affordable housing in our communities	Number of new homes built each year Number of new council homes built p.a. Number of affordable homes delivered p.a through the HRA Number of affordable homes delivered p.a via private developers
	H2	We will help keyworkers to access affordable housing in order that Sandwell can attract and retain a strong local health and social care workforce for the benefit of our communities.	
	H3	We will help to keep people independent in their own homes for as long as possible through use of the Disabled Facilities Grants and adapting council homes for tenants with disabilities.	% of new builds meeting accessible and adaptable standards (Council house build programme) Home Improvement Agency - Number of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) approved Number of DFG's certified as complete
	H4	We will ensure there are housing options available to children and young people who have complex needs and those who have been in care so that they have a sustainable roof over their head.	The number of care leavers accommodated by housing under their own tenancy
	H5	We will focus more of our council house building and adaptations on the needs of people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs.	
	H6	We will incorporate renewable energy measures into the design of new-build Council homes.	
	H7	We will work to identify the needs of the most vulnerable people in Sandwell and work upstream to prevent homelessness where ever possible.	Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)
	H8	We will work to prevent and end rough sleeping.	% of rough sleepers who have retained their tenancy for 12 months AND/OR Number of rough sleepers by housing situation: a) rough sleeper, b) Emergency & Supported accommodation, c) sustainably housed. AND Number of rough sleepers found in Sandwell in the annual count.
	H9	We will explore all options for housing delivery, including new partnerships and new funding opportunities.	
	H10	We will raise the standard and safety of homes in the private rented sector and bring more empty homes back into use.	Number of long term empty homes brought into use No. of private sector properties reported to be in state of disrepair with a positive resolution.
Regeneration & Resources	H11	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.	
Looking after our existing estate	H12	We will modernise our tenancy and estate management offer, delivering a more proactive service, early identification and intervention to mitigate risks to tenancy sustainment and a new neighbourhood management working in partnership with communities to address their priorities.	The number of Home checks carried out AND/OR The % of tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years)
	H13	We will work to ensure our tenants live in safe and thriving neighbourhoods and that social housing is a tenure to be proud of.	Satisfaction that home is safe (from tenant perception survey and measures below).
	H14	We will ensure that council homes are safe places to live by fully complying with fire and building safety requirements and tackling damp and mould.	The average time taken to complete all responsive repairs including gas (days) New building safety measures (all or select individually) No. of private sector properties reported to be in state of disrepair with a positive resolution (as in H10)
	H15	We will improve the energy efficiency of council housing through retrofit programmes and stock improvements.	% of homes that meet energy efficient target
	H16	We will aim to be a Borough of Sanctuary, offering a safe place for asylum-seekers and refugees to live, while recognising our leadership role in promoting integration and community cohesion.	% of residents agreeing that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
	H17	We will increase our engagement with tenants, including tenants in high rise blocks.	Satisfaction with the overall service provided (Tenant satisfaction survey) Satisfaction that home is safe (Tenant satisfaction survey) Satisfaction that home is well maintained (Tenant satisfaction survey)

A Strong and Inclusive Economy

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
Spend and Invest our Money Locally	E1	We will work with our partners to spend local wherever possible and make long term investment decisions that benefit our borough	% of council spend spent locally (Finance PI) (Placeholder - info not yet available)
	E2	We will spend more money directly with suppliers in Sandwell. We will do this by developing better intelligence and improving our knowledge of local supply chains, as well as working with major contractors to encourage spending and sub-contracting with local suppliers.	TBC - check if we can measure this through procurement
	E3	We will develop the levelling up partnership with Government to provide place based regeneration in Sandwell.	
	E4	We will work proactively with our partners at the West Midlands Combined Authority and with central government to secure appropriate funding opportunities to deliver Sandwell regeneration projects.	
	E5	We will develop a new local plan for the borough to ensure development takes place in appropriate locations, including housing, employment opportunities, amenities and community facilities.	"Local Plan progressed and successfully adopted in accordance with the timeframe set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) - target 'timescale achieved'"
	E6	We will develop and deliver the projects within the approved Regeneration Pipeline.	Progression of projections in the Regeneration Pipeline, by stage
Working with Businesses	E7	We will deliver the Economic Plan for Sandwell to support businesses and grow the local economy.	From growth and spacial planning performance report (discuss best ones): The number of Businesses supported Business receiving Financial Assistance or Grants
	E8	We will ensure that local people have the skills and knowledge to fill any vacancies by reducing the number of residents with no/low qualifications and offering local training and skills development opportunities via the Adult Education Budget and other funding streams.	
	E9	We will work to ensure our young people have access to good jobs and we will work with all education institutions to guide young people to the pathways that enable them to meet their aspirations. We will do this through the provision of independent advice and guidance.	
	E10	We will support people into employment through the delivery of the Skills Strategy with our strategic partners in the Employment and Skills Partnership.	Employment/unemployment rate (nomis)
	E11	We will offer a range of opportunities within the Council including work experience, supported internships, apprenticeships and graduate opportunities.	The number of work experience placements The number of supported internships The number of apprenticeships The number of graduates (dashboard for future talent group)

A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	PMF Measures
A Connected & Accessible Sandwell	A1	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.	
	A2	We will ensure that the responsibilities of the Local Highways Authority are delivered and continue to maintain standards in relation to highway condition.	The % of our unclassified carriageways in Red Risk condition National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Reduction in the number of all road traffic injuries The number of road safety improvement schemes
	A3	We will work with our partners and voluntary sector to improve and develop digital skills in the community to minimise digital exclusion and maximise employment and training opportunities.	
	A4	We will ensure that Digital Inclusion is incorporated into the design of services and when making key decisions.	
Clean & Green	A5	We will enable people to get around in a healthy and sustainable way, supporting our health and wellbeing and our climate change strategies.	The number of passenger journeys on public transport
Partnerships	A6	We will work with the Environment Agency in our role as Lead Local Flood Authority to adopt a Flood Risk Management Plan for 2021 to 2027.	
Key Infrastructure Partnerships	A7	We will deliver our transport projects in line with our Regeneration Pipeline.	Progression of transport projections in the Regeneration Pipeline, by stage
	A8	We will ensure Sandwell is well placed to support the move towards electric vehicles by delivering key infrastructure requirements.	The number of on-street residential EV charging points installed

One Council One Team

Heading	Reference No.	We Will	Workstreams from Improvement Plan	PMF Measures
Organisational Culture	O1	We will embed the One Team Framework	OC.A2 Creating the right environment for the culture to thrive	HR are coming up with a set of measures to underpin the framework. EES Engagement Score
	O2	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 (combine previous O11, O12 and O13).	CO.B1 Employee Engagement Survey OC.B2 Management Development Programme OC.B3 Officer Learning and Development	as above
	O3	We will progress and drive our equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government and utilise Council resources to support our equalities agenda.	SD.B1 EDI Strategy and Actions	Completion of the Audit and Assessment against the Equality Framework for Local Government (completed by June/July). Following this audit further performance measures will be put in place.
	O4	We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	OC.C4 Assurance activity to sustain positive Member-Officer Relationship OC.D3 All Member Briefings OC.D4 Induction training re employment of Chief Officers OC.D5 Member Development Programme OC.H1 Scrutiny and Audit Continuous Improvement	Member-Officer Relationship Survey Delivery of training
Listening, Learning and Accountable	O5	We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents, internal workforce and external stakeholders	SD.A3 Comms and Corporate Affairs Strategy SD.E2 Public Consultation OC.E2 Deliver the comms strategy to assist with more effective internal comms	Potential for new metric re Citizenspace
	O6	We will embed a performance culture across the council to ensure transparency and accountability in delivering our priorities.		See breakdown of customer performance measures on the following page.
	O7	We will hold ourselves to account for the delivery of the improvement plan and will continuously improve	CO.B1 Ongoing monitoring and reporting of IP CO.B3 Continuous Improvement	
Improving the Customer Journey	O8	We will deliver the customer journey programme and improve customer experience across all of our channels		See breakdown of customer performance measures on the following page.
	O9	We will refresh the organisation's digital strategy		
Governance and Decision Making	O10	We will ensure that our refreshed governance arrangements are embedded	OC.G1 Governance Review Phase 2 OC.H1 Assurance activity to ensure effective contribution of scrutiny and audit	ST is developing metrics as part of corporate governance plan. Delivery of the MDP. Mod.Gov Phase 2 implementation. No. of late Reports and use of Exemptions (Urgent Decisions - non-compliance with 28 days notice). Member PDPs completed (BUT may sit better under O4 above). No. of Standards Complaints

Making the Most of our Resources	O11	We will set a sustainable and balanced budget each year and ensure the Medium Term Financial Strategy is underpinned by realistic savings plans	CO.C2 budget monitoring CO.D3 Reduction of financial transactional activity CO.D4 sign-off of final accounts	Variance from budget - General Fund Variance from budget - Housing Revenue Account Council Tax Collection collection Business Rates Collection rates Sundry Debt Collection Prior year Council Tax collection Prior year Business Rates Collection Prior year Sundry Debt Collection Rent collected as a % of rent due % of invoices paid on time PI being developed on social value
	O12	We will update the Medium Term Financial Strategy at least annually	SD.D1 Fundamental review of MTFP	
	O13	We will embed a strong financial management approach.	CO.D2 Embedding Finance Business Partner Role	
	O14	We will embed our approach to social value to get maximum benefits for Sandwell		
	O15	We will deliver the Oracle transformation programme by April 2024	CO.A1 Implement Oracle Fusion	
	O16	We will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement approach to ensure we are directing our resources to meet our priorities	PR.C1.0 perf mgmt system SD.E2 Public Consultation CO.C1 Performance Management Framework CO.G1 Strategic Planning Framework	
	O17	We will establish a Corporate Transformation Programme and governance structures.	CO.E1 Corporate Transformation Programme	
	O18	We will develop our commercial approach including our approach to contract management and monitoring and deliver our first commercial business streams.	PR.A1 SCT robust governance arrangements and positive relationship PC.A1 - Serco contract monitoring framework and review of the Waste Contract SD.A5 Commercial Strategy	
	O19	We will implement a new Corporate Asset Management system to ensure the Council has sufficient, comprehensive information to make best use of its assets and assist with timely and accurate completion of annual accounts.		

Customer Service Measures

Reference	We Will	Measures
O6	We will embed a performance culture across the council to ensure transparency and accountability in delivering our priorities.	Numbers of Contact by Channel
O8	We will deliver the customer journey programme and improve customer experience across all of our channels	% Contact by channel Satisfaction from process submissions (out of 5) Adults Contact Centre Abandonment Rate Adults Contact Centre Average Wait Measure Adults Contact Centre Average Call Time Revs and Bens Contact Centre Abandonment Rate Revs and Bens Contact Centre Average Wait Measure Corporate Contact Centre Abandonment Rate Corporate Contact Centre Average Wait Measure Corporate Contact Centre Average Call Time Ombudsman Numbers Upheld SARs volumes SARs compliance with timescales FOI volumes FOI compliance with timescales Numbers of complaints received % of complaints responded to in 10 working days (also service standard) Numbers of stage 1 and stage 2 Complaints upheld Number of MP Enquiries received Numbers of compliments received Satisfaction with Member Enquiries - the average satisfaction rating of a response Lessons learnt from Complaints

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Children & Education - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
CH1	B11	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. Sandwell has seen a 48% increase in C/YP with EHC Plans since 2019, staff capacity to support C/YP and deliver timely EHC Plan within statutory timelines is now a red risk.
CH2	B10	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.
CH3	B11	To work across agencies to deliver improvements specified in the SEND Operations Board Development Plan and meet aims of the SEND Strategy. Priority areas are: Quality Assurance of Statutory Responsibilities, workforce development, improving provision within local area and improving attainment and progress of C/YP with SEN
CH4	B9	Ensuring the Council maintains a safeguarding oversight of all Children and Young People
CH5	B4	Attendance is Everybody's Business: Supporting schools to Improving school attendance and reduce persistent absence
CH6	B3	Ensure that every child in Sandwell has access to a place in a good or outstanding school
CH7	B11	Maintain the continued and sustained improvement of SEND Transport
CH8	B5	To challenge and support schools to raise standards in all key stages to close the gaps with national. Increase the proportion of schools and academies rated good or better by Ofsted
CH9	B1, B2	To ensure that all children have a good start to their education by attending good quality early years provision

Children & Education - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
CH10	B9	Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) so that funding is appropriately targeted to meet the needs of all Sandwell Children in Care; particularly in closing the attainment gap to peers (LACE Virtual School).
CH11	B1	Deliver the Family Hubs Programme, creating a network of Family Hubs and spokes which provide services for children 0 - 18 (25 if SEND)
CH12	B6, B10	Lead on the implementation of the Early Help Strategy in partnership with Sandwell Children's Trust, SCVO and Krunch
CH13	B12	Deliver Phase 2 of Emotional Wellbeing Grant Programme for children and young people
CH14	B9	Deliver the Corporate Parenting Action Plan, continuing to review and strengthen the corporate parenting function and governance arrangements
CH15	B8	Continue to support Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care through robust contract monitoring and management

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
	Short Term	
ASC. 1	L18	Operating model for intermediate care services.
ASC2	L14	Prioritisation and delivery of Discharge 2 Assess Action Plan.
ASC. 3	L18	Joint Equipment Stores site development and relocation of Community Alarms.
ASC. 4	L18	Options appraisal on STAR service due to impact of Discharge 2 Assess.
ASC. 5	L18	To upgrade the Walker Grange accommodation and communal areas in order to provide a modern service at the Grange.
ASC. 6	L16	Review and option appraisal for in-house day service offer.
ASC. 7	L8	To continue to monitor demand on Enquiry Service in light of current economic situation. Especially in relation to cost of living crisis and fuel crisis.
ASC. 8	L7	To ensure all Adult Social Care web pages have been updated to provide easily accessible information, advice and guidance.
ASC. 9	L17	A review of Safeguarding Improvement Plans.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 10	L6	Embedding Strengths Based Practice Project.
ASC. 11	L18	<p>Establish a programme of complete actions required for the transformation of social work and therapy including the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Town Teams • Reviews • Liberty Protection Safeguards • Community DoLS • Workforce Strategy • Staff Survey • Charging Reform • Adult Social Care Process and Procedures • Direct Payments • Appointeeship • Adult Social Care Restructure • Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team • Continuing Health Care
ASC. 12	L17	<p>Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) will replace Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).</p> <p>LPS will provide a framework for people aged 16 and above to determine whether a deprivation of liberty is necessary and proportionate to enable care or treatment for the individual.</p>
ASC. 13	L14	The Local Authority will need to implement the Charging Reform. As part of the charging reform a Care Cap is being introduced on the amount a person with eligible care and support needs, will spend on their care in their lifetime.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 14	L18	Realignment of intermediate Social Work Team with Community Social Work Teams.
ASC. 15	L18	Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adult's services. Map out the current transitional model.
ASC. 16	L21	Develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for social work and therapy to improve recruitment and retention.
ASC. 17	L6	Produce an up-to-date market position statement.
ASC. 18	L18	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.
ASC. 19	L18	Fair Cost of Care Exercise. Implement outcomes of mandated cost of care. Undertake cost of care exercise for supported living market.
ASC. 20	L16	Implement new Day opportunities model across the market.
ASC. 21	L18	Commissioning Place Based Model - map current commissioning model and activity across place to identify any duplication or gaps. Establish a Place Based Commissioning Board.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 22	L18	Identify resources to scope, develop and rollout digital offer and integrated communications. Initial implementation focussed on in-house services
Medium Term		
ASC. 23	L18	Established intermediate care service in relation to social care operating models.
ASC. 24	L18	Monitor progress against key performance indicators through performance management dashboard.
ASC. 25	L18	Implement agreed STAR operating model integrated with ICares to deliver intermediate care at home.
ASC. 26	L18	Re-commission PIP Pathway, Domiciliary care provision to deliver outcomes focussed reablement support alongside intermediate care at home service.
ASC. 27	L19	Implement agreed Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan. Review current commissioned services to ensure fit for purpose and agree revised commissioning plan.
ASC. 28	L18	Develop a Co-production Strategy with place-based partners, citizens and carers.
ASC. 29	L18	Walker Grange Work undertaken to implement upgrade and develop dementia offer.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 30	L16	Implement outcome of the options appraisal for both community and building based day service offer.
ASC. 31	L7	To continue updating the Adult Social Care web pages as and when required throughout the year. Adding accessibility elements to the website to support residents access information on the website.
ASC. 32	L17	Adult Social Care response to Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan.
ASC. 33	L6	Embedding Strengths Based Practice Project.
ASC. 34	L18	<p>Implement the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Town Teams • Reviews • Liberty Protection Safeguards • Community DoLS • Workforce Strategy • Staff Survey • Charging Reform • Adult Social Care Process and Procedures • Direct Payments • Appointeeship • Adult Social Care Restructure • Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team • Continuing Health Care

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 35	L17	Implementation of the operational model in relation to Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).
ASC. 36	L14	The Local Authority will need to implement the Charging Reform. As part of the charging reform a Care Cap is being introduced on the amount a person with eligible care and support needs, will spend on their care in their lifetime.
ASC. 37	L18	Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adult's services. The intention is to create a seamless and robust pathway from a child-centred care system to adult strength based orientated services.
ASC. 38	L21	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is in place.
ASC. 39	L18	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.
ASC. 40	L18	Fair Cost of Care Exercise. Implement outcomes of supported living cost of care. Undertake cost of care exercise for day services and complex residential care.
ASC. 41	L18	To rollout the Implementation of the E-brokerage system to support the wider social care provision.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 42	L18	Commissioning Place Based Model - Agree a Market Development Strategy which defines current gaps in provision and how these will be addressed across place together with agreed commissioning priorities for development.
ASC. 43	L18	Identify resources to scope, develop and rollout digital offer and integrated communications. Testing market and digital rollout.
	Long Term	
ASC. 44	L18	Established intermediate care service in relation to an integrated offer across all partners.
ASC. 45	L18	Implement agreed STAR operating model integrated with ICares and Harvest View to deliver intermediate care at home.
ASC. 46	L20	Review and refresh Carers Strategy.
ASC. 47	L18	Walker Grange fully developed and modernised.
ASC. 48	L7	Re-review and update Adult Social Care web pages to continue providing easily accessible information, advice and guidance.
ASC. 49	L17	A new Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan to be in place in 2024 and action plan to be reviewed and revised from an Adult Social Care perspective in response to the new strategic plan.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 50	L17	<p>Adult safeguarding improvements in practice and performance.</p> <p>Monitor progress and review need for new actions.</p>
ASC. 51	L17	<p>Embedding learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Serious Case Reviews.</p> <p>Establish a clear procedure for learning in Sandwell for all levels of Adult Social Care to disseminate information and raise awareness.</p> <p>Frontline practitioners to be clear of the organisations approach to learning and developing a culture of learning.</p>
ASC. 52	L6	Embedding Strengths Based Practice Project.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 53	L18	Review progress and refresh the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Town Teams • Reviews • Liberty Protection Safeguards • Community DoLS • Workforce Strategy • Staff Survey • Charging Reform • Adult Social Care Process and Procedures • Direct Payments • Appointeeship • Adult Social Care Restructure • Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team • Continuing Health Care
ASC. 54	L17	Implementation and review of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).
ASC. 55	L14	Implementation of Charging Reform/Care Cap.
ASC. 56	L18	Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adults services. Robust pathway for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who may be eligible for adult social care services.
ASC. 57	L21	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is implemented.

Adult Social Care Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
ASC. 58	L18	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.
ASC. 59	L14	Go live with supported living framework.
ASC. 60	L18	Commissioning Place Based Model is in place.
ASC. 61	L18	As technology develops continued review of new opportunities available for deployment.

Public Health - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
PH.1	L11	Drug Misuse Services
PH.2	L11	Alcohol Misuse Services
PH.3	L5, L11	Healthy eating and weight management
PH.4	L2, L3	Going support with vaccination programmes (COVID and flu)
PH.5	L1, L3, L4, L5, L7, L9	Healthy Sandwell advice and referral service and Health Checks service
PH.6	B10, B12, L2, L9, C1, L4, L5, L6, L7	Investment and support of community mental health programmes
PH.7	L2, L3, L6, L7	Outbreak management
PH.8	B1	Public Health support to babies and parents
PH.9	B6, B7, B11, B12, B10	School Nursing
PH.10	L1, L7	Stop smoking support
PH.11	L6, L7	Public Health marketing campaigns

Public Health - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
PH.12	L5, L6	Inclusive cycling programme
PH.13	L5, L6	Sandwell Stride programme and digital app-based walking offer
PH.14	L5, L6	Greenspaces Utilisation
PH.15	L1, L2, 11, C16, C17, C18, C19	Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work
PH.16	B10, B12, L5, L6, L9	Expand the Charter Mark framework into the Voluntary and Community Sector
PH.17	B6, B10	Relationship and Sex Education
PH.18	L4,L5,L7,L16,L17,L18	Falls Prevention
PH.19	C1, C4	Community champions programme
PH.20	L1	Air Quality

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
	Short Term	
BE.1	A1	Deliver the 2022/23 £16m highways capital programme of improvement works (including street lighting, speed reduction measures, bridge refurbishment, major route signage, cycling and walking schemes) underway at 48 locations in the borough.
BE.2	A6	Support the delivery of the programme of works scheduled for 2022/23 of the £30m Birchey Island Major Junction Improvement.
BE.3	A2	Deliver the capital programme for 2022/23 of annual maintenance schemes to renew or repair highway infrastructure prioritised in red risk condition (HIAMP) £4.741 Million capital budget
BE.4	C11, C13, C14	Replace 4,000 high energy street lighting lanterns with low energy LED lighting and computer management, providing the same lighting levels
BE.5	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
BE.6	C14	Serco to provide and deliver street cleansing transformation plan to improve standards of street cleansing across the Borough.
BE.7	C15	Serco to provide and develop recycling and behavioural change plan for 2022/23
BE.8	C14	Delivery of the Serco fleet replacement programme 2022/23

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BE.9	C14	Review waste client team to develop & modernise the monitoring of street cleansing and waste collection standards.
BE.10	O18	Delivery of income generated from chargeable 2 nd garden waste bin through spend to save proposal.
BE.11	C14	Implement the contract provision for a benchmark review of the baseline of waste and street cleansing specification.
BE.12	C13	Review the Council Fleet and develop a replacement plan for Low Carbon Vehicles by 2030
BE.13	C8, C9	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)
BE.14	L4	Develop a sustainable plan for the delivery of leisure services. Including; a) Resolution of Business Plan matters with SLT, b) Resolution of contract / finance matters with Places Leisure
BE.15	L4	Develop a plan for the successful operation of the new San a) Legacy Mode O, c) Viable Management solution / operator outcomes, b) Robust Revenue Modeldwell Aquatic Centre, including;

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BE.16	C8	Finalise Commonwealth Games Physical Activity, Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan
BE.17	C16, C20	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.
BE.18	C8	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.
BE.19	C5	Develop and deliver a long-term trees strategy for Sandwell Council
BE.20	C10	Develop an initial refine/relaunch of the offer at Sandwell Valley for 2022/3
BE.21	C10	Reduce council subsidy to Lightwoods House and deliver clear 3-year business plan to net zero subsidy
BE.22	C9	Programme of cultural events and activities across all libraries and museums including at Sandwell Live Site for Commonwealth Games
BE.23	C8	Implementation of Tourist Information Points in Libraries and Museums to support the hosting of the Commonwealth Games
BE.24	C15	Develop options for the introduction of a recycling service for high rise residential buildings in the Borough

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
	Medium Term	
BE.25	C16, C20, H8, H13, C19	Work with partner agencies to develop and build the Anti-Social Behaviour response pilot, to develop our multi-agency response to Anti-Social Behaviour
BE.26	C16, B6	Commission bespoke community-based support for children experiencing Domestic Abuse
BE.27	C16	Development and Implementation of new Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24
BE.28	C16, H12, H13, L17	Implementation of Delivery Plan for New Burdens Funding for support in safe accommodation
	C16, L17, B6, B7	Development and implementation of new Prevention Of Violence Exploitation (PoVE) Plan and Strategy 2023-26
	C13, C14, C19, C20	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.

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
	C8	Implement CWG Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan
	C10	Start to develop a draft masterplan for Sandwell Valley
	C13	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.
	C7	Delivery of Libraries and Archives Strategy including rollout of Library+ (a new model of delivery)
	C2	Delivery of West Bromwich Quarter (Town Hall and Central Library) Project – subject to approval from DLUHC
	Long Term	
BE.36	C2, E3, E4	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

Borough Economy - Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BE.37	C20	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.
BE.38	C8	Continue implementation of CWG Health & Wellbeing Legacy Plan

Housing – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref NO	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
H.1	H4	Review of the Housing Offer for Young People, including Care Leavers
H.2	L18	Develop an alternative operating model for Shop Mobility
H.3	H3	Implement revised policy statements to maximise the use of Disabled Facilities Grant funding
H.4	H3	In Partnership with Adult Social Care, access the Housing Transformation Fund to support Independent Living
H.5	H14	Preparation and compliance with new regulatory requirements as set out by the Housing Regulator & Building Safety Regulator
H.6	H17, H13	Respond to findings from the tenant satisfaction survey to improve the customer journey for access to housing services
H.7	H14, H12	Refresh the Asset Management Strategy for HRA stock
H.8	H13	Continuation of major refurbishment programmes to High Rise blocks including the installation of sprinklers and CCTV
H.9	H10	Pro-active enforcement of Standards across Private Rented Accommodation

Housing – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref NO	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
H.10	H10	Implementation of Empty Homes Strategy
H.11	H15	Bid for funding and delivery of projects to retro fit properties to support climate change objectives
H.12	H16	Resettlement of new arrivals to Sandwell via the asylum dispersal and other resettlement programmes
H.13	H16	Become an awarded Council of Sanctuary, as part of being recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary
H.14	H7, H8	Delivery of Homeless & Rough Sleepers Implementation Plan
H.15	C13	Plan for replacement of diesel fleet with sustainable fuel vehicles
H.16	E10	Generate work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within Housing Services and through strategic partnerships

Regeneration & Growth – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
RG1	L10	Develop and implement council-wide programme of carbon literacy
RG2	L10	We will deliver the Active Travel projects funded by both Towns Fund Programme and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
RG3	C2	We will deliver the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners (NHS, Sandwell College, Canal & River Trust) across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich
RG4	C8	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.
RG5	C8	We will deliver the Legacy Build phase for the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and make facility available for public use from Summer 2023.
RG6	C11	Produce Corporate Climate Change Action Plan to ensure we can meet our 2030 and 2041 targets for carbon neutrality
RG7	C11	We will invest and improve the EV Charging Infrastructure in the Borough
RG8	H1	We will introduce town centre living in appropriate locations ensuring council developments maintain excellent standards in urban design.
RG9	H1	We will work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough.
RG10	E1	We will work with our partners to spend local wherever possible and make long term investment decisions that benefit our borough

Regeneration & Growth – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
RG11	E2	We will work more closely with strategic businesses to develop shared opportunities
RG12	E4	We will work proactively with our partners at the West Midlands Combined Authority and with central government to secure appropriate funding opportunities to deliver Sandwell regeneration projects.
RG13	E5	We will develop a new local plan for the borough to ensure development takes place in appropriate locations, including housing, employment opportunities, amenities and community facilities.
RG14	E6	We will develop and deliver the projects within the approved Regeneration Pipeline.
RG15	E7	We will deliver the Economic Plan for Sandwell to support businesses and grow the local economy.
RG16	A5	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.
RG17	A5	We will continue to implement Sandwell's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and deliver a programme of infrastructure improvements across the borough.
RG18	A7	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.

Regeneration & Growth – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
RG19	A8	We will ensure Sandwell is well placed to support the move towards electric vehicles by delivering key infrastructure requirements.
RG20	O19	We will implement a new Corporate Asset Management system to ensure the Council has sufficient, comprehensive information to make best use of its assets and assist with timely and accurate completion of annual accounts.
RG21	E3	We will develop the levelling up partnership with Government to provide place-based regeneration in Sandwell.

Finance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
F.1	CP06 OC 08	<p>Proposed that this moves to Directorate Business Actions as part of support to the customer journey programme.</p> <p>Customer Journey Programme: Review approach to customer journey to include: Monitor data monthly on customer contact points to understand current demand and adapt services to meet this demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out self-service kiosks in more customer facilities • Continue to promote My Sandwell to increase online transactions <p>Supporting customer journey by providing additional staffing at OSS</p>
F.2	CP 007	<p>Proposed that this moves to Directorate Business Actions as part of maximising Council Tax income (if it needs to be retained at Corporate Plan action level align to digital strategy ref O11 balanced budget)</p> <p>Undertake quarterly campaign to promote e-billing take-up for Council Tax and NNDR</p>
F.3	CP007	<p>Proposed that this moves to Directorate Business Actions as part of maximising Council Tax income (if it needs to be retained at Corporate Plan action level align to digital strategy ref O11 (balanced budget)</p> <p>Undertake quarterly campaigns to increase Direct Debit take-up for Council Tax and NNDR</p>
F.4	CP05	<p>Proposed that this moves to Directorate level as its a part of a workstream within the Customer Journey Programme</p> <p>Explore options for co-location of Revenues and Benefits and/or close working with key partners as part of customer journey strategy</p>

Finance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
F.5	CP 14 O15	Implement Oracle Fusion and achieve transformational benefits and cashable savings
F.6	E2 O14	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 • % of council spend spent locally - include InTend information leaflet with Business Rates bills
F.7	CP115 O12	Medium Term Financial Strategy - Review as part of 2024/25 budget process
F.8	O11	Budget Setting each year (including financial benchmarking) to ensure a balanced budget
F.9	O11	Budget Monitoring
F.10	O11	Annual Sign-off of accounts
F.11	O11	Develop and maintain a 12 month rolling cash flow
F.12	O11	Review investment strategy and counterparty options

Finance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
F.13	O18	Reduction of financial transactional activity through a series of end to end process reviews (bank reconciliations, recharges, debtors and creditors)
F.14	O13	Implement Workforce Development Plan for financial services section
F.15	O13	Develop core finance competencies to support Budget Holder Role Profiles
F.16	O13	Repeat Budget Holder Survey
F.17	O11	Delivery of the Transformation Savings Programme
F.18	E2 O14	Carry out regular engagement and training events for local suppliers
F.19	O14	Introduce and embed a Social Value Policy as part of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules
F.20	O10	Embed a comprehensive Corporate Governance Training programme for officers and members
F.21	O17	Placeholder for actions around Corporate Transformation Programme and Programme Management Office.

Finance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
F.22	O18	Procurement Pipeline
F.23	O18	Agree a procurement strategy, policy and set of standard contracts
F.24	O18	Develop and embed a contract assurance approach
F.25	O18	Implement the Commercial Strategy
F.26	O9	To refresh the VMWare hosting platform.
F.27	O9	To complete phase 2 of the Local Area Network refresh.
F.28	O9	Carry out a review of the ICT Strategy and produce new for 2022-2025
F.29	O8	To replace the Avaya 'back-office' telephony system with MS 365 Telephony technology
F.30	O9	Deploy new Windows10 build to all users including Always On VPN.
F.31	O9	Deploy Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to all users.
F.32	O17	Establish Corporate Transformation Programme and PMO with corporate methodologies to realise savings and service benefits
F.33	O9	Implement the Cyber Security Improvement Plan.

Law and Governance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
LG.1	O4	<p>Implement a Member Development Programme that accords with the needs and ambitions of Councillors</p> <p>Embed a personal development planning process for elected members</p> <p>Delivery of a programme of all Member briefings focused on priority topics</p> <p>Identifying Continuous Improvement activity through conducting Member-Officer survey and using insight to develop the relationship</p>
LG.2	B2	<p>In 2024 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.</p>
LG.3	B5	<p>We will support schools providing work experience places, continue to do exam preparation with our legal professional experience and provide careers advice to students from local schools. Stand at careers fayres for Sandwell schools</p>
LG.4	B8	<p>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</p>
LG.5	E11	<p>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.</p>

Law and Governance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
LG.6	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.
LG.7	C20	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
LG.8	O9	New business applications for our bereavement services teams to enable better access for our residents and other service users. Building on the benefits of increased digitalisation of our services
LG.9	O9	Upgraded business applications for our Legal and Assurance team and management of SARs and FOIs.
LG.10	B3	Our school admission appeals service will grow their offer for the delivery of an impartial and independent admission appeals function
LG.11	C1	Undertake a review of Town Working arrangements and governance
LG.12	C1	We will work with elected members to strengthen our Civic and Democratic Engagement
LG.13	O10	The holistic review of democratic governance will be completed
LG.14	O10	The Committee Management System (modern.gov) will be fully implemented and utilised effectively across the organisation and accessed by services users.

Law and Governance – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
LG.15	H13	The service will support the introduction of the new tenant scrutiny panel and development of links into corporate scrutiny functions
LG.16	O10	Identify continuous improvement activity to ensure that scrutiny and audit continue to add value
LG.17	O10	Design & Deliver a new EDI Strategy

Business Strategy & Change – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	New CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BSC.1	O1	Development, delivery and embedding the Corporate Plan and service planning framework – coordinating the corporate approach and embedding the Fairer Sandwell Principles
BSC.2	O1	Lead the refresh of Vision 2030 and development of a performance framework to track progress across the borough
BSC.3	O7	Programme management of the Improvement Plan to address the requirements in the three external reviews and government's Directions, and manage the updates to ensure effective delivery of the Improvement Plan.
BSC.4	O7	Develop and embed a Continuous Improvement Framework to enable continuous improvement across the council
BSC.5	O8	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.
BSC.6	O8	Invest in our customer Contact Centre telephony systems to ensure an efficient and effective system is in place.
BSC.7	O2	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.

Business Strategy & Change – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	New CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BSC.8	O2	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.
BSC.9	O2	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.
BSC.10	O2	(Proposed to re-align to new O2) 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.
BSC.11	O2	(Proposed to re-align to new O2) 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.
BSC.12	O16	Development and delivery of a Corporate Performance Management Framework to identify strategic priorities for the council and delivery of the key outcomes and embed a performance culture across the organisation.
BSC.13	O16	Develop and implement corporate planning and performance management framework to ensure delivery of Corporate Plan

Business Strategy & Change – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	New CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BSC.14	O16	Development of a corporate-wide Data Strategy for the council to improve all of the ways we acquire, store, manage, share and use data to help us make more informed business decisions
BSC.15	O9	Digital Inclusion Strategy
BSC.16	O9	<i>Develop Digital Strategy, maximising the opportunities for Sandwell from the WMCA digital roadmap.</i>
BSC.17	O5	Co-production Network – facilitate and grow network across the council as resource to develop co-production in Sandwell
BSC.18	O5	Internal communications channels used to deliver key comms messages to staff on an ongoing basis
BSC.19	O5	Develop a core narrative for the council that can be used as the ‘golden thread’ that articulates the purpose, vision and values of the council. From this a Communications Strategy will be developed.
BSC.20	O5	Manage the corporate approach to consultation and engagement with residents, ensuring that this activity feed into the council’s policy development and performance management framework

Business Strategy & Change – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	New CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BSC.21	O5	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.
BSC.22	O8	Customer Feedback Review – implement recommendations to improve customer experience
BSC.23	C1	Bring together governance arrangements and budgets to ensure VCS grants are aligned to corporate objectives
BSC.24	C1	Voluntary Sector Support - ensure grants given to the voluntary and community sector by the council conform to the Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Funding Guidance and Procedures and wider Financial Regulations, and deliver value for money in achieving the council's strategic priorities
BSC.25	O1	Launch and share events with people managers
BSC.26	O1	Alignment of One Team framework values and behaviours in people practices and L&D offer including induction refresh, recruitment and selection.
BSC.27	O1	Appraisal refresh for 2024
BSC.28	O2	Workforce Strategy Approval

Business Strategy & Change – Corporate Plan Commitments

BP Ref.	New CP 2023 Reference	Directorate Action
BSC.29	O2	Workforce Strategy Delivery
BSC.30	O2	Management Development Programme delivery
BSC.31	O2	Senior Leadership Development Programme
BSC.32	O2	Employee Recognition Scheme delivery

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Report to Cabinet

7 June 2023

Subject:	Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environments Councillor Rollins
Director:	Director for Housing Gillian Douglas
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Assistant Director for Housing Management and Solutions Nigel Collumbell Nigel_collumbell@sandwell.gov.uk Business Manager Community Partnerships & Support Services Manny Sehmbi Manny_sehmbi@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the Director for Housing be authorised to implement the new policies.





2 Reasons for Recommendations


2.1 The focus for reviewing and revising the policy is to achieve the following objectives:

- To continue to provide adaptations and housing improvements to disabled residents, offering the most cost effective and best value solutions, targeted at those with the greatest need.
- Revise policies to expand and maximise opportunities for improving the homes of vulnerable and disabled people. These changes are designed to promote independence and reduce/prevent demand on health and social care services and fundamentally improve quality of life.
- Introduce a more customer centred approach by offering residents more bespoke and easily accessible service irrespective of tenure
- Align the policy with objectives of the Better Care Fund (BCF) to assist with the prevention of admissions to hospital and social care, support hospital discharge and reduce social care interventions
- To reflect good practice as set out in the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper 2021 and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England (2022).

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting children and young people to live independently in their home • Supporting to improve quality of life • Both policies apply to adaptations for disabled children and young people as well as adults
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well: The policy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support more people of all ages to live in suitable housing so they can stay independent for longer and • Potentially prevent the need for care and support and help maximise independence. It can also prevent the need for additional support in the future by:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting disabled residents to remain living independently in their own homes • Reduce the number of home accidents • Reduce the number of avoidable hospital admissions and readmissions
	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of all tenure including Council tenants are supported to remain independent and safe in their own home.

4 Background

- 4.1 The current Housing Assistance Policy was formed in June 2012 and can be accessed here:
https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33125/smbc_policy_for_assistance_june_2012
- 4.2 The revised policy proposes a fresh approach that creates a home environment enabling disabled people to live a full life. It will reinforce a person-centred approach and a focus on prevention.
Appendix A is the proposed Council’s Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy
Appendix B is the proposed Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing.
- 4.3 Both the above documents are underpinned by the Guidance for the Provision Equipment. This document provides the guidance as to the provision of equipment and adaptations for disabled residents.
- 4.4 Since 2003, the Council has the discretion to develop and maintain its own housing financial assistance policy in compliance with the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Every Housing Authority in England must publish and maintain a policy to allow them to provide assistance.
- 4.5 Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) changed significantly in 2015/16 when it became part of the Better Care Fund (BCF), a single pooled budget to support health and social care services to work more closely in local areas. The aim of the fund is to provide more joined-up and customer focused services to reduce hospital and care admissions and enable people to return home more quickly. There



is now an opportunity to better align the Council's policy with the objectives of the BCF.

- 4.6 The home environment plays a major role in a person's health and wellbeing and Sandwell Council can contribute to the BCF's objectives by providing assistance to adapt, repair or modify the homes of its residents. The policy seeks to support a timely and streamlined service which aims to prevent, reduce or delay the need for interventions by health and social care services, and support vulnerable individuals to remain safe and well in their own homes.
- 4.7 Guidance from Foundations (the National Body for Home Improvement Agencies) encourages Local Authorities to adopt policies to reduce the bureaucracy around the DFG process. Foundations report 'The Disabled Facilities Grant: Before and After the Introduction of the Better Care Fund' (June 2016) stresses the need to have a fast and nimble service to match the aims of the BCF plan to have services assembled around the individual, regardless of provider and funding source.

5 Current Position

- 5.1 The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Team helps residents through the process of applying for grants and assistance, and manages works carried out if requested.
- 5.2 Examples of the types major adaptations carried out are:
- Lifts (straight and curved stairlifts, through floor lifts and step lifts)
 - Ceiling Track Hoists
 - BOSI (Bath Out Shower In)
 - Level Access Showers
 - Ramps
 - Extensions
- 5.3 The front door to the service is through Adult Social Care with the Occupational Therapy Team undertaking the initial assessments and then referring accordingly to the HIA Team.
- 5.4 In May 2021, the HIA moved directorates from Adult Social Care to Housing, and this presented an opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with the Asset Management & Maintenance (AMM) Service,



particularly when discussing council housing. But also, AMM hold vast amount of experience, skills and knowledge regarding large contract management relating to buildings and manage the repairs and maintenance of council.

- 5.5 The HIA and AMM Teams are working together and developing a pathway where AMM are leading contract management and co-ordination and management of building works including major adaptations. The HIA Team continuing to offer housing assistance to residents living in the private sector housing, and administrating applications for assistance under the council's policy. Also providing advice and information on the extent of assistance available.
- 5.6 Currently council tenants must apply for a grant and go through a DFG based process, and there is no clear framework as to how decisions are made whether to adapt a council property, which increases the need for a specific policy to enable consistency and guidance.

6 Financial Position

- 6.1 Adaptations are funded through two separate funding streams; owner occupiers, private tenants and housing associations through a DFG and local authority tenants through the housing revenue account (HRA).
- The government provide funding annually to local authorities, and currently this is £4.75m
 - The yearend reserve is £12.5 which has predominantly developed through the impact of covid, however a key focus of the policy is to enable further spend.
 - £3m of Housing Revenue Account funding is allocated for major adaptations to council housing.
- 6.2 A key focus of the policy revisions is to enable the reserves discussed above to be effectively spent. The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy outlines a range of offers of assistance, and **Appendix C** provides a proposed outline as to how the reserves could be allocated.



7 Proposed Revisions

7.1 It is proposed the Housing Assistance Policy will be replaced by two policies, one will focus on Council Housing, the Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing and the second will be a Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy. In addition, the separation supports the changes with AMM as discussed above.

7.2 Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing will be led by the Tenancy & Estate Management Team and will enable the team to consider requests relating to council housing directly and explore all options open to the tenant.

7.3 The key benefits of the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy are:

- Supporting affordable warmth
- Supporting assisted technology
- Assisting people getting home from hospital quicker
- Supporting areas where rapid delivery of essential minor adaptations is enabled
- Faster process for low cost adaptations

7.4 The Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing aims to bring greater parity between the way housing adaptations are managed through the housing revenue account (HRA) and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) regime applied to other social housing and the private sector. The key features of this policy include:

- A focus on supporting people to consider how their housing needs can be met in the long term.
- Financial assistance to support people with the costs of relocating where needed.
- Support to meet older people's overall well-being including safety in the home, access to welfare benefits, social inclusion and referrals to sensory services and other healthcare services.
- Ensure we maximise the impact of resources and make best use of stock.

7.5 To support the proposed changes and implementation of housing assistance the HIA Team has undertaken a redesign where resources have been realigned to support the changes with AMM. In addition,



discussions are continuing as to further reshaping of the HIA Team to further support the implementation and develop the offers

8 Consultation:

- 8.1 Engagement sessions and workshops have taken place with staff groups, which includes Adult Social Care and Housing Management, including officers who work across the adaptations pathway. The feedback received has helped shape the changes to the policy.
- 8.2 Foundations have been engaged as a critical friend throughout the process and assisted with shaping the policy and sharing good practice.
- 8.3 Initial targeted consultation has taken place with the voluntary sector and their service users, particularly those that provide a service to people with disabilities and or mobility issues. In addition, the bottom 4 of the below are also part of Adult Social Care's Community Offer programme. The organisations engaged were:
 - Agewell
 - Ideal for All
 - SCIPs (Sandwell Community Information & Participation Services)
 - Murray Hall
 - Kaleidoscope Plus
 - Communities in Sync
 - St Albans
- 8.4 Discussions took place with the above partners during December 2022, and then further discussions took place with residents/service users during January/February 2023 through face to face discussions and managed through this to engage over 150 residents. Initial feedback indicates that residents agree with what is being proposed and supportive of changes to policy. However, a clear action to be followed up is to do more promotion and raising awareness of the grants and this is an action that will be taken forward upon implementation of the policies.
- 8.5 In addition, SCVO (Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations) and SCIPS (Sandwell Community Information Partnership) have been approached as infrastructure organisations and have been part of the consultation process and have been supportive of the process.



- 8.6 Consultation has taken place with relevant service areas, to ensure joined up working but also to check any legal aspects of the policy.
- 8.7 The draft policies have been placed online on the SMBC website as well as on the consultation platform, Citizenspace. The links were promoted and invited further feedback from residents, voluntary sector partners, and other partners as well as promoting internally with colleagues. Also, the links were added to newsletters circulated by SCVO (Sandwell Council Voluntary Organisation) and SCIPS (Sandwell Community Information and Partnership Services).

The consultation formally commenced on 20 March 2023 and ended on 2 May 2023.

- 8.8 The draft policies have been shared and discussed at Safer Neighbourhood and Active Communities on the 23 March 2023 and at Leadership Team meeting on the 11 April 2023.
- 8.9 At the close of the consultation we had received feedback via Citizenspace and included 16 responses to the online survey and received an additional 5 emails from one tenant providing further feedback, a summary can be found in **Appendix D** outlining the nature of feedback received.
- 8.10 The Citizenspace data highlights that there is mostly consensus to support the propose changes:

93.75% supportive of increasing the threshold for minor adaptations and agreeing that it will not only benefit residents but also is a positive change.

93.75% also agree with the proposed change to top up to grants up to £60,000, to enable works to continue without further delays in waiting for approvals and is seen as a positive change.

87.50% agree that it is a positive change in amending the means test so the first £15,000 of any application contribution to be waived. However, a respondent did raise that potentially it could '*mean that support is being given to more affluent households*'.



81.25% were supportive of offering a grant to support relocation where an adaptation is not suitable. Offering up to £10,000 for owner occupiers and £2,000 for private tenants, although 18.75% didn't think it would make a difference. However, comments by 2 respondents were raised about whether relocating a resident could inadvertently place a resident in 'social isolation'. Residents would have a caseworker/point of contact who would support the resident through this process and support with the wider community networks.

100% agreed with the support with home from hospital.

87.50% agreed with the definition of Disability, although 2 respondents queried whether the definition included autism and neurological conditions. For clarification the definition does not just refer to a physical disability, but also considers aspects where a resident considers themselves to have a disability and we would work with and support with advocacy services throughout process.

100% agreed with the proposed support that the council will provide where a tenant needs to move in order to meet their needs and the proposed criteria that the council may use to refuse an adaptation.

8.11 The feedback in Appendix D was collated and discussed with colleagues across Housing Management and Adult Social Care on 4 May and as a result of the consultation the following changes have been adopted or have provided further reassurance regarding proposals:

Reassurance:

- As to role of caseworkers/point of contact for the customer through the customer journey
- Contract management and delivery to be delivered through Asset Management and Maintenance
- Overall direction

Changes adopted:

- Within the Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing, 14.1 refers to timescales tenants may expect for adaptations to be completed, being within 90 days from the date when the work is approved. However, further narrative has been



added as to where there are more complex cases and it could take longer than this period.

- Colleagues within the Children’s Trust also feedback as to suggesting further emphasis within the policies concerning children and young people with disabilities and eligibility. This request has also been further emphasised within the narrative and have added the strategic objective for Best Start in Life for Children and Young People to both policies.

9 Alternative Options

9.1 The policy could remain unchanged and Sandwell Council would continue to deliver adaptations in the same way. The introduction of the Better Care Fund in April 2014 and the Care Act in April 2015 is leading to the creation of new integrated services centred on the home. This could potentially make grant delivery more effective, efficient and customer-focussed. There is a need to balance the preventative role of the DFG in keeping people living safely and 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.

10 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Financial, staffing, land/building implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds to support these services and works are delivered from the HRA, DFG and other available resources allocated to the Council. • The HRA is an allocation of funds to the Council to fund the management, maintenance and major improvements of council housing. The HRA funds the provision of Major Adaptation / Improved Works and Bath Out Shower In (BOSI)/ Level Access Shower (LAS) works to Council owned properties. • The yearend HRA spend has been £5.46m • The DFG is an allocation to the Council to fund the provision of adaptations to disabled
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	<p>resident's homes that are privately-owned and non-council rented housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date DFG spend has been in the region of £3.5M. • The Council plans to spend £450,000 from the DFG to fund handyperson/minor adaptations contract and £3M to deliver major adaptations.
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is required by the Housing Grants and Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to approve a valid application for Disabled Facilities Grant and to pay the grant. The Council operates an agency service to facilitate the grant aided works and the administration of the grant. • The Council is under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Children Act 1989 (in respect of children) and the Care Act 2014 (in respect of adults who may be in need of care and support) to provide support where it has assessed that such support is needed, this includes practical assistance in the home and adaptations to the home • The private Sector Housing Assistance Policy sits alongside the Housing Strategy Statement. Under the Council's Constitution, whilst the latter requires approval by full Council the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy requires approval by Cabinet. The Director of Housing is delegated to undertake/exercise and discharge the strategy as part of the Scheme of Delegation of executive functions to officers.
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>Risk implications, including any mitigating measures planned/taken, health and safety, insurance implications</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are risks that the policy objectives could become unaffordable, however this has been mitigated by outlining the discretionary grants are subject to available resources. In addition, the policy will be subject to further review.
Equality:	<p>Implications for equality (all aspects and characteristics) including how meeting Equality Duty, equality impact assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When deciding 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. • An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. It concluded that the policies would not adversely affect equality based on any of the protected characteristics. Any unforeseen adverse impacts will be identified through monitoring processes and statistical/other data analysis. • Increased efficiency in service delivery will provide a far more effective service to all vulnerable households and improve quality of life.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Implications of the proposals on health and wellbeing of our communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The investment of housing adaptations and improvements significantly improves the quality of life of disabled people by preventing avoidable accidents such as falls that may result in potential hospital admissions and the prevention of social care and support that may result in potential residential placement. The investment also has the added value of



	improving the quality of life for carers and other family members.
Social Value:	<p>Implications for social value and how the proposals are meeting this (for e.g. employment of local traders, young people)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the major adaptations contracts, social value will be achieved through the inclusion of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP). The plan includes contractual performance indicators such as work experience placements, apprenticeships in addition to school engagement and community activities.
Climate Change:	The policy will invest in new technologies to support the energy efficiency of homes for vulnerable residents, and to support wider regeneration projects where resources allow and doing so contribute towards the objectives of the policies.
Corporate Parenting:	The policy will support improving the lives of young people.

11. Appendices:

Appendix A. Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

Appendix B. Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing

Appendix C. Summary Proposed Funding Allocation

Appendix D. Summary of Consultation Part 1 and Part 2

12. Background Papers

The Disabled Facilities Grant: Before and After the Introduction of the Better Care Fund - Foundations, June 2016

Adult Social Care Reform White Paper December 2021 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England (2022) -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>



Housing Associations and Home Adaptations -

<https://www-foundations-uk-com/library/housing-associations-and-home-adaptations/>



Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022

The Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Draft – March 2023

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Introduction and Vision

1. Introduction

This policy sets out how Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) will offer financial help for improving and adapting homes in the Borough, together with the conditions and eligibility criteria associated with each type of assistance. The aim of the policy is to support residents to improve their health and wellbeing by addressing problems with unsuitable homes that do not meet their needs.

It aims to ensure that SMBC continues to provide housing support services to its most vulnerable residents. In a period of increasing pressures on resources it will offer the most cost effective and best value solutions, targeted at those with the greatest need and who meet the eligibility criteria defined by this policy.

The policy sets out how SMBC intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) to improve the quality of housing occupied by those most in need. The RRO gives SMBC the power to adopt a Housing Assistance Policy to improve living conditions in Sandwell and to provide financial and other assistance in a way that best suits local circumstances and within the financial resources available. This activity is integral to supporting and maintaining sustainable and healthy communities and supports ambitions in SMBC's Vision 2030 and our Corporate Plan strategic objectives.

Ensuring that homes are decent, accessible, safe and secure is not only important for the health and wellbeing of the occupants but is vital for the sustainability of communities. Many residents have the necessary resources to maintain, adapt and repair their own homes; however, some may need assistance to do this, especially those who have disabilities or are elderly.

Decisions regarding an individual's needs will be made in accordance with the council's Guidance for the Provision of Adaptations. All other assistance types are discretionary and subject to resources being available.

The policy is designed to be fair, consistent, and transparent and operate in accordance with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

This policy and its provisions apply to any residents living in owner-occupied homes, housing association and private rented tenants (referred to as tenants in this policy). Assistance for tenants of Sandwell Council is defined within a separate policy.

2. Statutory Context

- 2.1 Council powers to provide financial assistance for home repairs and adaptations are governed by:
- 2.2 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – the relevant parts of this Act provide the basis for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), which are financial grants to help with the cost of adapting a property to meet the needs of a disabled occupant.
- 2.3 It is mandatory for assistance to be provided to those that are eligible.
- 2.4 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) – provides local authorities with the discretion to provide assistance for the purpose of improving living conditions so homes are safe to live in. This includes the use of DFG funding and other available resources to support strategic priorities which integrate health, wellbeing, and housing, for the benefit of local people.
- 2.5 To use the powers provided in the RRO the Council must adopt a policy for the provision of the assistance. The Policy complies with that requirement.
- 2.6 The award of any financial assistance under the Policy through the powers provided by the RRO are subject to the availability of funding, with financial assistance provided at the discretion of the Council. Schemes may be withdrawn or amended at any time and without notice.
- 2.7 Housing Act 2004 - The Housing Act 2004 sets out that a Council shall take action where it finds serious hazards to remove or reduce the risk of harm as identified by the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System.
- 2.8 Armed Forces Act 2006, the Armed Forces Covenant Duty - Due regard will be made when supporting Armed Forces personnel or their families living in their own accommodation, and veterans.
- 2.9 It is the Council's expectation that homeowners will maintain their own property so that it remains safe, but accepts that some homeowners, particularly older people and the most vulnerable, may not have the necessary resources to do so. In certain circumstances the Council may offer advice and/or assist homeowners to do so.
- 2.10 Better Care Fund – The Better Care Fund Planning Requirements sets out the detailed requirements to local areas on developing and implementing Better Care Fund plans. It encourages the use of DFG funding in addition to the provision of the mandatory DFG, to support assistance that improves integration of housing, social care and health services, with the aims of achieving a preventative approach to care, reducing hospital admissions, improving hospital discharge and reducing inequalities. This should have the effect of improving the health and wellbeing of assisted householders and achieving savings overall.

- 2.11 These objectives have been translated into the local Sandwell Better Care Fund Narrative Plan, which recognises the role that housing plays in people's health and wellbeing, and the contribution that can be made by helping people to maintain and adapt their homes, in reducing hospital discharge times, preventing admission/re-admission (particularly from falls), and helping to reduce/delay expensive care packages. The principles of prevent, reduce, delay, wellbeing, assessing and meeting eligibility needs as per the Care Act 2014 are particularly relevant.
- 2.12 The policy recognises the need to support children and young people to live independently in their homes and to contribute towards the Better Start In Life strategic outcome.

3. Capital Resources

- 3.1 The DFG is a capital grant paid from the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to local authorities in England to adapt older and disabled people's homes to help them to live independently and safely. Adaptations can include ramps, stair lifts and suitable heating systems. The DFG, which has run for more than 30 years, became part of the Better Care Fund (BCF) in April 2015.
- 3.2 Therefore, the DFG is one of the funding streams within the Better Care Fund (BCF), which is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government which seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
- 3.3 The requirements regarding delivery of the Better Care Fund (BCF) are set out in the BCF Framework. As the DFG forms part of the funding within the BCF arrangement, it must be spent in accordance with the locally agreed BCF plan.
- 3.4 The following capital financial resources are available to apply and deliver through this policy:
- Capital grants from central government distributed through the Better Care Fund (BCF) or otherwise.
 - Where capital monies are provided through the BCF they will be allocated for spending in line with decisions regarding capital expenditure agreed with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - Local capital from the Council which may be provided for any specified purpose.
 - Monies from national schemes such as energy company obligations.
 - Money provided from partners or other public-sector organisations to address specified problems.
 - Money obtained from charitable or other sources on behalf of customers.
- 3.5 Local Housing Authorities are obliged first and foremost to deliver mandatory DFGs either via the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 route or an equally effective parallel pathway. Alternative discretionary assistance should not normally be promoted at the expense of delays to the statutory grant.

4. Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 The contents of the policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure the assistance provided remains relevant and keeps abreast of any national legislative changes or best practice. The Director of Housing in agreement with the relevant cabinet member has delegated authority to make minor amendments to this policy.
- 4.2 A full review of the policy should be undertaken periodically.

5. Corporate Strategic Outcomes

- 5.1 Our Corporate Plan details how we will create a fairer Sandwell through our strategic outcomes. This policy works toward achieving the following strategic outcomes:
- 5.2 **People live well and age well**
Supporting individuals and families to live well and age well independently in their own homes. Assistance detailed in this policy works towards preventing hospital admissions and making sure that people don't stay in hospital for longer than they need to. We aim to enable people to return home quickly and help to reduce demand on residential care placements.
- 5.3 **Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods**
We will aim to keep people independent in their own homes as long as possible which includes incorporating Lifetime Homes Adaptable Standards in to as many new homes as possible.
- 5.4 **The best start in life for children and young people**
Supporting children and young people live independently in their own homes and improving quality of life

6. Local Context

- 6.1 Sandwell is a deprived area and according to the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation was the 12th most deprived local authority out of 317. On most measures Sandwell is the most deprived borough in the Black Country. These measures include, income, employment, health deprivation and disability and living environment. Sandwell's deprivation is spread across the borough rather than being concentrated in certain hotspots.
- 6.2 There is significant research from the Black Country Housing Market Assessment 2021 that evidences the benefits of housing interventions, including major and minor adaptations to homes of older and disabled people to help them remain living safely and independently at home. This policy will support the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy through clear and measurable actions.
- 6.3 The 2021 census records show that Sandwell has 130,246 households. 54.2% of households (70,635) own their homes, 18.6% rent privately.

6.4 Local prevalent issues include:

- High rates of pre-1919 construction
- High rates of fuel poverty – 21% of Households are in fuel poverty
- High rates of disabilities
- High rates of disrepair

6.5 The 2021 census shows that 20% of residents are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 definition (compared to 17.8% nationally) and 9% of residents stated that disability seriously impacts their quality of life.

6.6 The 2022 Sandwell Housing Needs Assessment identifies that the population growth among adults with disabilities is projected to grow significantly over the next two decades. Sandwell will see increasing numbers of physically disabled adults, adults with learning difficulties, autistic people and people with long term mental ill health who require specialist accommodation to support them to live as independently as possible. This includes general, extra care and supported housing schemes.

6.7 Sandwell has high levels of deprivation, including a high proportion of residents living in fuel poverty and is likely to include residents who would qualify for assistance under the policy. Information on fuel poverty can be found at <https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/fuel-poverty-risk-index-reveals-areas-under-greatest-energy-bills-threat/>

7. Policy Priorities

7.1 In addition to mandatory DFGs, Sandwell Council has determined our local priorities to offer a range of discretionary grants to assist residents.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1 Sandwell Council is committed to fulfilling its roles as an employer, service provider, purchaser of goods and services and community leader without discrimination. We will apply this policy fairly and give equality of opportunity and experience regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, transgender status/gender reassignment, race and religion/belief. All members, employees and agents of the Council must seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and good relations between all groups. The Council's equality information can be found on the council's website at the following location https://intranet.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/258/equality_policy

8.2 We want to improve the lives and well-being of everyone in the Borough. This policy is particularly relevant for anyone who has a disability or long -term condition. Our aim is to ensure that people

have a home and surrounding area which is safe and suitable so that they can live independently for as long as is possible.

- 8.3 Sandwell Council and contractors will actively support applicants and treat them fairly throughout the customer journey. Examples of practical help include removing barriers for those with alternative communication needs as well as support with understanding technical issues and using equipment in a safe manner. The Council may record and monitor data to gain insight on the impact of this policy on customers and help improve operational processes.

9. Principles of Assistance

- 9.1 The Council recognises that the primary responsibility for repairing and maintaining a property rests with the owner. However, the Council has certain statutory responsibilities to fulfil and must also take steps to protect and assist vulnerable members of the community whilst providing advice to all residents to help them maintain their own homes and utilise government funding where appropriate.
- 9.2 The Council provides support to older and disabled individuals, and their carers, to help them to remain living independently, confidently, safely and with dignity in their own homes. Housing assistance can help to reduce the impact of a disabling environment and therefore maximise independence. It can also help to prevent or delay the need for care and support, both of which are central themes of the Care Act 2014.
- 9.3 In addition, housing assistance provides support to carers in their caring role and underpins a wide range of customer and carer outcomes including improved safety, greater independence, personal resilience, and well-being.

10. How Assistance is Delivered (Major Adaptations only)

10.1 Option 1 Managed Application Process

The Council will fully manage the application with the applicant. The Council will handle everything on behalf of the applicant through an agreement between the applicant and the service. This is the easiest and most effective option, particularly for more extensive adaptations, as the service will organise and manage both the funding application and the work.

The Council will:

- Where applicable, assess the applicant's financial circumstances by a statutory **means test** which will identify any contribution to be paid towards the cost of the works
- Arrange for a technical officer to visit to discuss how the adaptations can be provided in the home and what building works or alterations are required to provide them
- Draw up a schedule of works and plans (and planning permission or building regulations approval if required)

- Assist in the completion of the formal DFG application forms
- Supervise the contractor on site on behalf of the applicant
- Deal with any unforeseen works and interim payments
- Arrange final payment to the contractor and collect any certificates and guarantees from them and pass them on the applicant.

10.2 Option 2 – Customer Contractor Process

This option is where an applicant may wish to use the services of the Council to prepare their application for DFG, including the preparation of drawings but wishes to use their own choice of contractor to carry out the works.

A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue this option including the role of the Aids and Adaptations Team and the responsibilities regarding the works which will transfer to the applicant (this option is in development).

10.3 Option 3 – Customer Managed Process

This option is where an applicant may wish to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and building management themselves. An applicant can use their own architect or draftsman and contractors to plan, develop or build a preferred scheme.

A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue their own application which outlines the information required to make a DFG application and the requirements to receive DFG funding.

- 10.4 Processes to deliver other forms of assistance will be developed and published as supplementary information.

11. Fees and Ancillary Charges

- 11.1 The Council will consider reasonable fees for financial assistance. The following fees and ancillary charges will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making an application or seeking approval for the proposed works, or to ensure the satisfactory completion of works assisted under this policy;

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest.
- Relevant legal fees.
- Technical and structural surveys.
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings.
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works.
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area

- consent (and similar).
- Obtaining of estimates.
- Consideration of tenders.
- Supervision of the relevant works.
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works.
- Payment of contractors.
- In a case where the application is for adaptations support, the reasonable services, and charges of a (private) occupational therapist in relation to the relevant works.

11.2 Fees and Charges will be detailed in a separate document which will be available online at https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200223/housing/4935/home_improvement_agency.

12. Complaints and Appeals

12.1 Complaints about the handling of an enquiry, application or delivery of any service will be dealt with through the Council's complaints process. The Council's complaints policy can be found on the council's website at the following location

https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33189/customer_feedback_guidance

12.2 Appeals about the refusal of any type of assistance, disputes regarding eligible works, levels of assistance provided or demands to repay a grant will be dealt with by the Director of Housing or to whom the Director of Housing delegates the responsibility; and may be in consultation with the Director for Adult Social Care where relevant. The Director of Housing's decision will be final.

13. Summary of Assistance Available

Assistance	Funding Max	Financial Eligibility	Objective
Advice and Information	N/A	Non-means tested. Available to all Sandwell residents. Advice and information will generally be available to all homeowners.	Available for elderly and disabled residents about available assistance to help them live independently at home for longer.
Handyperson Service	Maximum value of £100 plus up to 3 hours labour	Non-means tested The Handyperson Service is available to homeowners aged 60 plus and/or those in receipt of a disability related benefit (Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independent Payment or Attendance Allowance) who live in Sandwell. It is also available to private and council tenants who meet the eligibility criteria but only for jobs which are not the responsibility of their landlord. All residents are eligible for a handyperson practical service to support discharge from hospital.	Covers a wide range of low-cost jobs that can have a positive impact on the quality of life of vulnerable people.
Hospital to Home Assistance	Maximum value of £6,000	Non-means tested. All Sandwell residents – subject to a referral from Adult Social Care or by a trusted assessor. Hospital to Home Assistance is available to Sandwell residents who are in hospital at the time of referral and waiting to be discharged or have recently been discharged to somewhere other than their own home. An assessment and referral from Adult Social Care referral is required.	To assist with hospital discharge enabling people to return home quickly and to help reduce demand to residential care placements.
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Statutory maximum value of £30,000	Means tested- the relevant person is means tested. Adaptation is the most satisfactory course of action subject to an Occupational Therapy assessment and a 'reasonable and practicable' assessment. The applicant or person they are applying for must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own the property • Intend to live in the property for a period of 5 years. Available to:	To meet the council's statutory obligation to provide adaptations and/or technology to enable residents to live independently at home.

Assistance	Funding Max	Financial Eligibility	Objective
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled homeowners • Disabled tenants or landlords with disabled tenants (private, housing association). • Disabled people living at home with their family, and • Parents or guardians of a disabled child who are homeowners or tenants. <p>Landlords with a disabled tenant can also apply for a grant.</p> <p>The council must be satisfied the work is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs • Reasonable and practicable – depending on the age and condition of the property. <p>Further information regarding qualifying works can be found in Sandwell Council's Guidance for the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations.</p> <p>Availability is subject to a financial test of resources unless the adaptations are for a disabled child.</p>	
Disabled Facilities Grant- Top Up	<p>Maximum value of £60,000</p> <p><i>*In exceptional circumstances, the council may, at its discretion and subject to available funding, decide to approve top-up assistance in excess of £60,000</i></p>	<p>The council must have confirmed your eligibility for a Disabled Facilities Grant before an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant – Top Up can be considered.</p> <p>In addition, applications must be from owner occupiers. The financial assessment for any DFG top-up will only consider the financial circumstances of the disabled person and /or their partner.</p> <p>Discretionary awards over the £60,000 limit will be considered on a case by case basis and signed off by the Director of Housing in agreement with the Director for Adult Social Care.</p>	<p>To provide top-up funding to meet the reasonable cost of non-standard equipment and adaptations to assist a disabled person to live independently in their own home.</p> <p>To provide additional assistance when the statutory maximum (including fees and charges) has been exceeded.</p>
Minor Adaptations	Maximum value of £1,500	<p>Non-means tested.</p> <p>All Sandwell residents with an assessed need. Where adaptation is the most satisfactory course of action subject to a 'reasonable and practicable' assessment.</p>	Low level adaptations to increase independence, improve quality of life and reduce falls risks and hospital admission.

Assistance	Funding Max	Financial Eligibility	Objective
Relocation Grant	<p>Maximum value of £10,000 for owner occupiers</p> <p>Maximum value of £2,000 for private tenants</p>	<p>Non-means tested– disabled person must be eligible for assistance under a DFG.</p> <p>Available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner occupiers and private rented tenants (not housing association tenants) where it is considered neither reasonable or practicable to proceed with the adaptations due to the character, layout, or condition of their home. • The applicant must meet the qualifying criteria for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. • Any other person with an interest in the property either as owner or lessee that the Director of Housing considers it appropriate to offer assistance to. <p>The applicant must be satisfied that the property being purchased can be reasonably adapted to meet the needs of the disabled person.</p>	<p>To help with the cost of moving home if a property or is not suitable for adaptation.</p>
Hazard Removal Grant	<p>Maximum value of £30,000</p>	<p>Non-means tested.</p> <p>Grants will be awarded per hazard on a discretionary case by case basis.</p> <p>Available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner occupiers in receipt of state pension and council tax reduction due to low income (not single occupier discount) or income-based employment and support allowance. 	<p>To remove urgent Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.</p>
External Improvement Schemes	<p>Up to 90% of the eligible expense of the scheme</p> <p><i>*rising to 100% in exceptional circumstances</i></p> <p>The maximum total eligible expense limit per property for each scheme will be determined prior to the scheme commencing.</p>	<p>Means tested.</p> <p>Offered to all owners of buildings or land (including wholly or part commercial properties if appropriate) within targeted streets and blocks in Sandwell which will be defined by specific project goals and ambitions.</p>	<p>To carry out repairs and improvements to the external fabric of a dwelling to make it weather-tight and to significantly improve the visual amenity of an area – for properties in targeted streets or blocks of dwellings.</p>

Assistance	Funding Max	Financial Eligibility	Objective
Empty Property Loan	Maximum value of £20,000 for owner occupiers	Means tested. Owners of long-term empty properties where there are works required to bring the property back into occupied use again.	To help with the cost of renovating a long-term empty home. For more information please refer to the Empty Homes Strategy.
Sustainable Warmth Grants	£10,000* *A limited number of households may be entitled to a higher level of assistance if the property is not heated by gas and the house is very thermally inefficient.	Householder may be eligible if all the following apply: 1) The household's annual income (before tax) is under £31,000. 2) The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of the property is E, F or G. 3) You own and occupy your home or rent your property from a private landlord.	Householder in Sandwell who live in energy inefficient properties may be able to benefit from a grant to cover the cost of a range of energy efficiency improvements to their home

14. Details of Advice and Information

14.1 SMBC will provide advice and information to all Sandwell residents to tell them about assistance available to help them live independently at home for longer. Contact details for all services will be provided within promotional material and via the website.

14.2 Scope of Assistance

The council will seek to provide advice and information on subjects including:

- Grants and assistance for major adaptations.
- Relocation Assistance (where adaptations are not suitable).
- Grant and assistance to tackle defective housing.
- Signposting to other housing-related services.
- Loans for Empty Properties.

14.3 Processes to deliver the assistance

Advice and Information is available via the council's webpage, email, or telephone.

14.4 Preliminary fees or charges

None.

14.5 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

None.

15. Details of Handyman Service

The Handyman Service covers a wide range of low-cost jobs that can have a positive impact on the quality of life of vulnerable people.

15.1 Scope of Assistance

Handyman service includes but is not limited to:

- Refix loose floor coverings.
- Repairs to external door locks.
- Replace portable appliance fuses.
- Move small items of furniture.
- Install security light.

15.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the person.

15.3 Preliminary fees or charges

Jobs may or may not require a contribution for the cost of labour and/or materials.

15.4 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

None.

16. Details of Hospital to Home Assistance

16.1 Hospital to Home assistance is available to anyone living in Sandwell to assist with hospital discharge enabling them to return home quickly and to help reduce demand for residential care placements.

16.2 Scope of Assistance

Prescribed interventions to make properties clean and safe to ensure timely hospital discharge, such as:

- Deep cleaning.
- Property clearance.
- Urgent home repairs/falls prevention measures.
- Temporary heating.
- Urgent adaptations to prevent hospital readmission.

16.3 Processes to deliver the assistance

A referral will be made by Adults Social Care, or a trusted assessor, to the council's service providers on behalf of the disabled person.

16.4 Preliminary fees or charges

The following fees or charges may qualify for grant assistance:

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest.
- Relevant legal fees.
- Technical and structural surveys.

- Design and preparation of plans and drawings.
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works.
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar).
- Obtaining of estimates.
- Consideration of tenders.
- Supervision of the relevant works.
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works.
- Payment of contractors.

16.5 **Conditions attached to the provision of assistance**

None.

17. Details of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

17.1 The health and well-being of disabled residents is often compromised due to their homes not meeting their specific needs and this can impact on their ability to live with dignity within their homes.

17.2 The council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently at home.

17.3 **Scope of Assistance**

The Council will award mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) according to the governing legislation, principally the 1996 Act and subordinate Regulations and Orders as amended - and guidance issued by central Government. This details, amongst other matters, the types of work that are to be funded, the maximum grant payable (currently £30,000), and the test of financial resources where applicable.

17.4 **Occupation Requirements**

Where an owner occupier has given a signed undertaking to occupy a property as their principal residence after completion of the works for a period of five years, and if they cease to do so during that time, they will repay on demand to the Council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where a landlord (or owner) has given a signed undertaking that the property will be available for letting for a period specified after completion of the assisted works, five years, and ceases to make the relevant property available for letting during the specified period. Then the landlord will repay on demand to the Council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where the Council has the right to demand repayment, but extenuating circumstances exist, the Council may determine to waive the right to repayment or to demand a sum less than the full amount of Assistance paid out.

As a part of the application process, the Council will require certificates relating to property ownership and future occupation and will request permission from the owner. The Council would reasonably want to ensure the tenant has the right to carry out the works and that the landlord would not object or attempt to reinstate the property and evict the client.

17.5 Qualifying Works

Those works eligible for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant is set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act, as amended. These are:

- 1) Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, qualifying houseboat, or qualifying park home, (now including the garden) or
- 2) making the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them;
- 3) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
- 4) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
- 5) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- 6) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- 7) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- 8) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- 9) improving any heating system in the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet their needs;
- 10) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- 11) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home in order to enable them to care for a person who is normally resident and is in need of such care;
- 12) facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant; or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant.

17.6 Processes to deliver the assistance

An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the disabled person.

A mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant application will only be made if the works are both 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonably practicable'. Where an applicant prefers a different scheme of works to that approved by the Council, the Council may offer to 'offset' the value of the original scheme towards those greater works with appropriate safeguards. This is at the discretion of the Council.

Works which have been started prior to the approval of an application will not be eligible for financial assistance.

Unexpected works which arise during the carrying out of eligible works will be considered for assistance if the works could not have been reasonably foreseen and if they are vital to the completion of a safe and effective adaptation.

Unforeseen works carried out without prior approval of the Council will not be eligible for assistance. Where unforeseen works are necessary these will be added to the grant up to the specified maximum for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. Costs above the mandatory grant maximum may be supported as discretionary assistance in accordance with this policy. Care must be taken when agreeing to schemes of works on third-party property such as tenanted accommodation, that the property owner is fully engaged with the decision process. This is also particularly important where an architect or similar is acting on the customer's behalf, and where issues such as planning permission, building control and other regulation are involved.

17.7 Preliminary fees or charges

The mandatory DFG regime sets out the specific fees and charges for grant assistance. The following fees will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making an application or seeking approval for the proposed works, or to ensure the satisfactory completion of works assisted under this policy;

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest.
- Relevant legal fees.
- Technical and structural surveys.
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings.
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works.
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar).

- Obtaining of estimates.
- Consideration of tenders.
- Supervision of the relevant works.
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works.
- Payment of contractors.

17.8 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

Repayment of Grant

Conditions imposed under The Disabled Facilities Grant (Condition relating to approval or payment of grant) General Consent 2008.

A land charge will be registered when the local authority approves an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant from an owner, and the grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000. The charge will be for the amount of the grant that exceeds £5,000 but cannot be for more than £10,000 in total (so, for example, if the grant were for £8,000 the charge would be for £3,000; if the grant were for £15,000 the charge would be for £10,000; if the grant were for £25,000 the charge would still be for £10,000).

The charge will only be recovered if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the “certified date”, that is, the date certified by us as the date on which the works were completed to our satisfaction.

If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, Sandwell Council will consider whether or not it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge taking into account:

- The financial hardship it would cause;
- Whether the sale is due to an employment related relocation;
- Whether the sale is connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the grant recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
- Whether the sale will enable the recipient of the grant to provide care to disabled person.

The Director of Housing’s decision in conjunction with the Director of Adult Social Care will be final in all decisions regarding the repayment of the grant.

Conditions imposed under The Housing Renewal Grants (Additional Conditions) (England) General Consent 1996

Recovery of specialist equipment

Where specialist equipment such as a lift or hoist is provided through a grant, it will be on condition that it may be recovered where it is no longer required. This condition may be registered as a local land charge.

Where it is clear that the equipment will not be reused because of age or condition, the council may decide to waive the right to recovery.

The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a qualified agent (e.g. the Home Improvement Agency) or a member of the RICS, RIBA or equivalent.

The council will not place local land charges for the repayment of grants in the following circumstances:

- Where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement
- Where the grant is solely to provide equipment including stairlifts, vertical lifts, step lifts, ceiling track hoists or a combination of the above equipment.

Notice of Relevant Disposal

It is a condition of grant that should the dwelling be disposed of within the grant condition period the recipient of the grant should notify SMBC if a relevant disposal occurs. A disposal is relevant if it is a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease. This grant condition may be registered as a local land charge.

The council will not place local land charges in the following circumstances:

- Where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.
- Where the grant is solely to provide equipment including stairlifts, vertical lifts, step lifts, ceiling track hoists or a combination of the above equipment.

Insurance Claims

- The pursuance of any insurance claims by the applicant to cover the cost of adaptations and reimbursement to the council where appropriate

17.9 Test of Resources and Sandwell Discount

All applications for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant will be subject to a means test in accordance with the regulations made under the 1996 Act, (including any local amendments within this policy). The maximum mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant award at the time of policy publication is £30,000 minus any contribution required by a 'means test' (test of financial resources. If the maximum grant limit is changed by statute, then the maximum available Disabled Facilities Grant award by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council will reflect this. When the financial means test determines that a client has a financial contribution to make and that contribution is £15,000 or less, the requirement to make that contribution may be waived. This ensures that vulnerable clients are not deterred from having essential adaptations due to the requirement to make a financial contribution.

The Director of Housing can alter or withdraw this means test discount at any time.

Where successive applications are awarded, the applicants' assessed contribution to the first grant award will be considered if within the period of the contribution originally calculated (10 years if owner, 5 years if tenant).

NOTE: where an applicant is in receipt of a recognised, qualifying, means tested benefit they will not be further means tested and they will have no calculated contribution to make. Where works are for the benefit of a child or young person up until their 19th birthday or younger at the date of application – they too will be exempt from a means test.

Dependent on the level of demand the council may have to prioritise how it progresses enquiries for Disabled Facilities Grant. Details of how cases are prioritised are detailed in a separate document – SMBC Guidance for the Provision of Equipment & Adaptations.

17.10 Future occupation of the dwelling

It is a condition of the grant that throughout the grant condition period (that is 5 years from the date of certification) the dwelling is occupied in accordance with the intention stated in the certificate of owner occupation or availability for letting or intended tenancy.

17.11 Applicant dies

Where the applicant or disabled person for whom the adaptation is required dies prior to grant application then no funding will be available via the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant for any costs incurred.

Where the applicant or disabled person dies after the grant has been awarded, then reasonable fees will be paid from the grant where those have been incurred and can be evidenced. If works have been started then they will be completed to a reasonable point which makes the property safe and meets minimum standards, excluding the provision of any specialist equipment. Each case would be decided individually based on circumstances and the stage of works completed, but it would be expected that all electrical and plumbing installation works would be completed and able to be used, although decoration and finishes etc. may not be completed.

17.12 Customer Own Schemes (COS)

Customers who meet the Disabled Facilities Grant eligibility and are therefore entitled to a grant may wish to 'top-up' the Disabled Facilities Grant funding. The Disabled Facilities Grant recommendation by the Occupational Therapist will be for the most cost-effective solution which meets all identified needs and will look to adapt an existing property. Where a customer wishes to pursue a different scheme, they will be responsible for the difference in costs between the Disabled Facilities Grant 'Mandatory Scheme' and the final cost of the works, including unforeseen costs.

18 Details of Disabled Facilities – Top Up Grant

To carry out works deemed necessary and appropriate as well as reasonable and practicable when the maximum statutory grant limit (including fees and charges) has been exceeded.

18.1 Scope of Assistance

To carry out works recommended by an Occupational Therapist as part of a Disabled Facilities Grant in excess of the maximum amount payable.

Top-up funding is available to homeowners (owner occupiers) only and is subject to the availability of council funding.

18.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the disabled person.

18.3 Amount of Assistance- Exceptional Circumstances

A grant of up to £60,000 is available to cover the cost of works identified by an Occupational Therapist. In exceptional circumstances, the council may, at its discretion and subject to available funding, decide to approve top-up assistance in excess of £60,000.

Discretionary awards over £60,000 will be considered on a case by case basis and signed off by the Director of Housing.

18.4 Preliminary fees or charges

The following fees or charges may qualify for a top-up grant:

- As per the Disabled Facilities Grant. Please refer to paragraph 18.7 above.

18.5 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

Repayment of Grant

A land charge will be registered when the local authority approves an application for a disabled facilities grant from an owner, and the grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000. The charge will be for the amount of the grant that exceeds £5,000 but cannot be for more than £10,000 in total (for example, if the grant were for £8,000 the charge would be for £3,000; if the grant were for £15,000 the charge would be for £10,000; if the grant were for £25,000 the charge would still be for £10,000).

The charge will only be recovered if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the “certified date”, that is, the date certified by us as the date on which the works were completed to our satisfaction.

If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, Sandwell Council will consider whether or not it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge taking into account:

- The financial hardship it would cause;
- Whether the sale is due to an employment related relocation;
- Whether the sale is connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the grant recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
- Whether the sale will enable the recipient of the grant to provide care to disabled person.

The Director of Housing’s decision in conjunction with the Director of Adult Social Care will be final in all decisions regarding the repayment of the grant.

Recovery of specialist equipment

Where specialist equipment such as a lift or hoist is provided through a grant, it will be on condition that it may be recovered where it is no longer required. This condition may be registered as a local land charge.

Where it is clear that the equipment will not be reused because of age or condition, the council may decide to waive the right to recovery.

18.6 Future occupation of the dwelling

It is a condition of the grant that throughout the grant condition period (that is 5 years from the date of certification) the dwelling is occupied in accordance with the intention stated in the certificate of owner occupation.

18.7 Applicant dies

Where the applicant or disabled person for whom the adaptation is required dies prior to grant application then no funding will be available via the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant for any costs incurred.

Where the applicant or disabled person dies after the grant has been awarded, then reasonable fees will be paid from the grant where those have been incurred and can be evidenced. If works have been started then they will be completed to a reasonable point which makes the property safe and meets minimum standards, excluding the provision of any specialist equipment. Each case would be decided individually based on circumstances and the stage of works completed, but it would be expected that all electrical and plumbing installation works would be completed and able to be used, although decoration and finishes etc. may not be completed.

The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent (Sandwell's Home Improvement Agency or a member of RICS, RIBA or equivalent).

19 Details of Minor Adaptations

Low level adaptations to increase independence, improve quality of life and reduce risk of falls and hospital admission.

19.1 Scope of Assistance

Types of work include:

- Grab rails
- Handrails
- Ramps
- Door widening (replace with stair rail)
- Over bath showers (replace with half step)
- Assistive technology.

19.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the disabled person.

19.3 Preliminary fees or charges

None.

19.4 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

None.

20 Details of Relocation Grant

A relocation grant can be made available to help with the cost of moving home if a property is not suitable for adaptation.

20.1 Scope of Assistance

Property is unsuitable for adaptation, or it is more cost effective to move rather than adapt.

The type of costs covered include:

Homeowners:

- buy & sell solicitors fees (homeowners only)
- packaging and removal costs
- cost of valuation survey
- mortgage redemption fees
- Estate Agent's fees
- Stamp Duty fees.

Private Tenants:

- packaging and removal costs.

Grant application must be made prior to moving.

20.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person, in agreement with the resident, will make a referral to the council on behalf of the disabled person / applicant. Assistance can only be paid retrospectively following the purchase of a property or in the case of a tenant after removal costs have been incurred.

20.3 Preliminary fees or charges

Any preliminary fees or charges will be defined for all individual schemes developed.

20.4 Conditions Attached to the Provision of Assistance

These conditions apply to homeowners only and not to private tenants.

- the property must be occupied by the applicant as their main residence, for a period of five years
- the purchased property must have no category 1 hazards
- no further grant assistance will be given for 15 years from the completion date unless there is a change in needs making relocation necessary (except Disabled Facilities Grant and Disabled Facilities – Top Up Grant)
- the assistance is repayable in full if the property is disposed of within 10 years
- the assistance amount is secured as a local land charge against the property.
- Applications must be supported by an OT/suitable appropriate assessor who can confirm that the new property will meet the needs of the disabled person or be suitable for adaptation at a reasonable cost. In some cases, depending on the distance of the potential property an independent OT may be commissioned to do this assessment.

21 Details of Hazard Removal Grant

A Hazard Removal Grant can be provided to remove Category 1 hazards identified in the property by the council.

21.1 Scope of Assistance

To carry out works to remove category 1 hazards identified in a property under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System in accordance with the council's response to the Housing Act 2004. Grants will be awarded per hazard on a discretionary case by case basis.

21.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

An authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the applicant. The council will determine if there is serious disrepair to the property under the Housing Act 2004. Individual schemes will be defined to tackle specific issues.

21.3 Preliminary fees or charges

The following fees or charges may qualify for grant assistance:

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors

21.4 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent (Sandwell's Home Improvement Agency or a member of RICS, RIBA or equivalent).

Work must be carried out within 12 months of the date of approval unless otherwise agreed by the Council.

The grant will be paid subject to the works being completed to the satisfaction of the Council and the receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand, or receipt.

The grant will be repayable if applicant does not permanently occupy the property within 6 weeks of the work being certified complete.

The grant will be repayable on disposal of the property or a breach of the relevant future occupation certificate for the relevant grant condition period – ten years after the grant certification date.

A land charge will be registered when the local authority approves an application for a Hazard Removal Grant from an owner, and the grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000. The charge will be for the amount of the grant that exceeds £5,000 but cannot be for more than £10,000 in total (so, for example, if the grant were for £8,000 the charge would be for £3,000; if the grant were for £15,000 the charge would be for £10,000; if the grant were for £25,000 the charge would still be for £10,000).

The charge will only be recovered if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the “certified date”, that is, the date certified by us as the date on which the works were completed to our satisfaction.

If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, Sandwell Council will consider whether or not it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge taking into account:

- The financial hardship it would cause;
- Whether the sale is due to an employment related relocation;
- Whether the sale is connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the grant recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
- Whether the sale will enable the recipient of the grant to provide care to disabled person.

The Director of Housing’s decision will be final in all decisions regarding the repayment of the grant.

Conditions imposed under The Housing Renewal Grants (Additional Conditions) (England) General Consent 1996

Notice of Relevant Disposal

It is a condition of grant that should the dwelling be disposed of within the grant condition period the recipient of the grant should notify SMBC if a relevant disposal occurs. A disposal is relevant if it is a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease. This grant condition may be registered as a local land charge.

22 Details of External Improvement Schemes

External Improvement Schemes may be made available to owners of properties in targeted streets or blocks of dwellings to carry out repairs and improvements to the external fabric of a dwelling to make it weather-tight and significantly improve the visual amenity of an area.

Further works may also be carried out both within and outside the immediate curtilage of the dwelling to improve the visual amenity of the area.

A Grant will only be provided where, in the authority's opinion, to do so represents the most satisfactory course of action.

The owner's contribution to the cost of the works will be fixed.

22.1 Scope of Assistance

External Improvement Assistance may be used for any of the purposes described below:

- To carry out any works to the external fabric of properties within a targeted block of dwellings to ensure the dwellings are weather-tight and the visual amenity of the area is improved
- To carry out works to the curtilage of dwellings including boundary walls, yards, pavements etc to improve the visual appearance of an area
- To carry out works immediately outside the curtilage of the dwellings to improve the visual amenity of an area
- To pay for preliminary fees or charges including the production of drawings, Structural Engineers fees, Building Regulation Fees, Planning Fees or Supervising Agents fees properly incurred in carrying out the above
- To pay for storage, removal and rehousing costs properly incurred in carrying out the above
- For any other purpose agreed by the Director of Housing (or equivalent).

22.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

The Council will decide which streets or blocks of dwellings it wishes to consider for External Improvement Schemes.

When the Council is in a position to offer grants, it will contact all owners in the block and invite them to make applications.

A sufficient proportion of owners must agree to participate in the scheme to make the scheme financially viable and to achieve value for money before it will be considered further.

The Council will inspect all the buildings, decide on eligible works and prepare costed schedules of work.

The Council will advise all owners of their likely contribution including a fixed figure for contingencies and obtain their consent to proceed.

The Council, in consultation with the owners will agree a single agent and contractor to carry out the works on behalf of the owners.

The agent will be responsible for submitting applications on behalf of the owner.

Applications for grant must be made on a standard form to be provided by the Council and include all information including certification of proposed future occupation required by the Council.

The Council will determine what works it is prepared to pay grant towards.

The Council will determine the amount of grant it feels it is reasonable to pay by reference to its own schedule of rates and an assessment of the costs submitted in relation to fees and disbursements.

No grant will be payable for works which have been started or completed before a grant application is determined.

Grant monies will be paid directly to contractors or agents in all but exceptional cases.

Grant will only be paid once works are completed to the satisfaction of the Council and satisfactory invoices are submitted.

Any variations in the cost of the scheme due to unforeseen works over and above the contingency will be paid for by an increase in the grant and not result in an increase in the owner's contribution.

Any contingencies remaining may be repaid to the owner or put towards the cost of additional works in accordance with the wishes of the owner.

22.3 Amount of Assistance Available - Exceptional Circumstances

The Council will pay a proportion of the costs determined on a scheme by scheme basis rising to 100% in exceptional circumstances.

The Director of Housing will agree the terms and conditions for each scheme including the criteria for 100% contributions.

The maximum total eligible expense limit per property for each scheme will be determined prior to the scheme commencing.

A fixed figure for fees and disbursements reasonably incurred in submitting a grant application and supervising works may be included in the grant and will be agreed prior to the scheme commencing.

The Director of Housing (or equivalent) may impose a maximum grant payable or vary the exceptions at any time.

22.4 Preliminary Fees or Charges

The following fees or charges may qualify for grant assistance:

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors

22.5 Conditions Attached to the Provision of Assistance

All grant applicants must use the services of one agent agreed by the Council.

All applicants must provide access at all reasonable times to allow for the completion of the works.

All works must be carried within 12 months of the date of approval or such further period as the Council agree.

Grant will be paid subject to the works being completed to the satisfaction of the Council and the receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand, or receipt.

Applicants must agree not to dispose of the property during the relevant grant condition period and occupy the property in accordance with the relevant Certificate of Future Occupation.

The Certificate of Future Occupation will require:

- Persons applying as owner occupiers to occupy the premise as their only or main residence for the grant condition period
- Persons applying as Landlords to make the property available for letting not to a member of their family during the grant condition period.

The grant will be repayable upon disposal of the property or a breach of the relevant future occupation certificate for the relevant grant condition period after the certified date.

Where a grant is provided to a private landlord, the person providing the Certificate of Availability for Letting must agree to take all reasonable steps to become an accredited landlord and carry out all additional works, at their own expense, to enable the property to be accredited under the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme both within 6 months (or other period agreed by the Council) of the Certified Date of the grant.

The relevant grant condition period will be 3 years after the certified date.

If a breach of grant conditions occurs the owner for the time being of the premise will be required to repay on demand the relevant amount plus compound interest decreasing by a third for each complete year that the conditions have been complied with.

The Council may, at its discretion, decide not to reclaim the amount of assistance or to reclaim a lesser amount.

Grant Conditions will be registered as a Legal Charge. This Legal Charge will be registered at HM Land Registry and secured against the property, the Legal Charge will rank in priority after any existing mortgages and after any secured loan provided from one of the Council's partner organisations.

The provisions of Section 45 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 will be adopted in determining whether a disposal is a relevant or exempt disposal.

The provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Grant Repayment) General Consent 2000 will be adopted in determining the circumstances in which the Council may determine not to demand repayment.

The Director of Housing (or equivalent) may, at any time, specify additional conditions for the provision of assistance.

23 Details of Empty Property Loan

Empty property loans are to help with the cost of renovating a long-term empty home.

Empty property loans are for certain circumstances where financial difficulties are preventing property owners from being able to make their empty property safe to live in again.

Loans are limited and subject to council discretion on a case-by-case basis against the merits of each individual situation. Loans will be subject to a legally binding agreement to bring the property back into use.

Loans will be specifically aimed at properties that are in a reasonable condition but need works to bring them back into a lettable or sellable condition to ensure that they are occupied in the near future.

23.1 Scope of Assistance

Where the empty property contains category 1 or 2 hazards as per the Housing Health and Safety Rating System under the Housing Act 2004.

23.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

- Application made for loan
- Property inspected to assess viability
- Financial checks carried out
- Owner provides contractor quotes
- Offer in principle made
- Paperwork signed
- Money transferred to owner
- Works carried out
- Property placed on market or occupied as per terms agreed
- Money repaid as per terms agreed.

23.3 Preliminary Fees and Charges

There will be a registered charge on the empty property that will be lifted when the money is repaid. The Council may seek to enforce the sale of a property to recover the charge where the terms are not met, and the money is not repaid.

23.4 Conditions Attached to the Provision of Assistance

- The loan will be interest free

- Owner must be a person, not a company
- Owner must be a permanent UK citizen
- Person receiving loan must be the owner of the property
- Joint owners must all agree loan agreement and agree where money is paid
- Borrowers will be means tested to ensure they are suitable for a loan
- The loan will be paid directly to the bank account of the applicant only
- Robust proof of identity and permanent UK citizen status will be required
- Loan conditions will be registered as a legal charge. This legal charge will be registered at HM Land Registry and secured against the property, the legal charge will rank in priority after any existing mortgages and after any secured loan provided from one of the Council's partner organisations
- Works must be carried out by a professional qualified contractor with full liability insurance
- Works and timescales will be agreed before a loan is issued
- Works must progress timely and reasonably as agreed or else the loan will be immediately repayable in full
- The loan will be repayable within a month of works being completed
- The loan is repaid immediately and in full at the point of a sale of the property
- The loan will be repaid in instalments if the property is let to a tenant or occupied by the owner or other persons without a sale occurring
- Should the loan not be repaid, the property may be at risk from recovery action of the debt.

24 Sustainable Warmth

24.1 Scope of Assistance

Where the property has an EPC rating of E, F or G and the household has a combined income of less than £31k.

Measures available to Sandwell residents could include:

- External wall insulation (EWI)
- Cavity insulation
- Loft insulation
- Door improvements
- Smart heating controls
- Solar panels
- Central Heating

24.2 Processes to deliver the assistance

The council will work with a suitably qualified and accredited registered provider in line with current industry standards to deliver energy efficiency works.

1. Enquiry made

2. Property survey undertaken to assess viability and proposed package of measures
3. Financial checks carried out
4. Offer in principle made
5. Paperwork signed
6. Works carried out.

Please note not all households who receive an energy survey will necessarily receive a grant

24.3 Preliminary Fees and Charges

The following fees or charges may qualify for grant assistance:

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors

24.4 Conditions attached to the provision of assistance

- Owner must be a person, not a company
- Owner must be a permanent UK citizen
- Must be their principal abode
- If the property is sold within 5 years of the work being carried out the cost of works could be repayable.

Appendix 1: Summary of Grant Repayment Conditions

Grant Type	Conditions
<p>Disabled Facilities Grant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full amount of the grant over £5,000 up to a maximum of £10,000 may need to be repaid on sale or transfer of the adapted property within ten years of the grant being certified as complete • The grant will be registered as a local land charge against the property for any grants over the value of £5,000 • Any specialist equipment provided may be reclaimed • The pursuance of any insurance claims by the applicant to cover the cost of adaptations and reimbursement to the council where appropriate • The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent (Sandwell's Home Improvement Agency or a member of RICS, RIBA or equivalent) • The council may, at its discretion, decide not to reclaim the amount of grant or to reclaim a lesser amount. • Repayment conditions only apply to grants awarded to owner occupiers.
<p>Disabled Facilities – Top Up Grant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full amount of the grant to be paid upon relevant disposal of the property for a period of 10 years following the certified date- same as above • The grant will be registered as a local land charge against the property • The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent (Sandwell's Home Improvement Agency or a member of RICS, RIBA or equivalent) • The council may, at its discretion, decide not to reclaim the amount of grant or to reclaim a lesser amount. • Repayment conditions only apply to grants awarded to owner occupiers.
<p>Relocation Grant</p>	<p>These conditions apply to homeowners only and not to private tenants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the property must be occupied by the applicant as their main residence, for a period of five years • the purchased property must have no category 1 hazards • no further grant assistance will be given for 15 years from the completion date unless there is a change in needs making relocation necessary (except DFG) • the assistance is repayable in full if the property is disposed of within 10 years

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the assistance amount is secured as a local land charge against the property. • Maximum of one grant in a five-year period
Hazard Removal Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full amount of the grant over £5,000 up to a maximum of £10,000 may need to be repaid on sale or transfer of the property within ten years of the grant being certified • The grant will be registered as a local land charge against the property for any grants over the value of £5,000 • The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent (Sandwell's Home Improvement Agency or a member of RICS, RIBA or equivalent) • The council may, at its discretion, decide not to reclaim the amount of grant or to reclaim a lesser amount. • Repayment conditions only apply to grants awarded to owner occupiers.
External Improvement Schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grant applicants must use the services of one agent agreed by the Council • All applicants must provide access at all reasonable times to allow for the completion of the works • All works must be carried out within 12 months of the date of approval or such further period as the Council agree • Grant will be paid subject to the works being completed to the satisfaction of the Council and the receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt • Applicants must agree not to dispose of the property during the relevant grant condition period and occupy the property in accordance with the relevant Certificate of Future Occupation. <p>The Certificate of Future Occupation will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons applying as owner occupiers to occupy the premise as their only or main residence for the grant condition period • Persons applying as Landlords to make the property available for letting not to a member of their family during the grant condition period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant will be repayable upon disposal of the property or a breach of the relevant future occupation certificate for the relevant grant condition period after the certified date • Where a grant is provided to a private landlord, the person providing the Certificate of Availability for Letting must agree to take all reasonable steps to become an accredited landlord and carry out all additional works, at their own expense, to enable the property to be accredited under the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme both within 6 months (or other period agreed by the Council) of the Certified Date of the grant • The relevant grant condition period will be 3 years after the certified date

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a breach of grant conditions occurs the owner for the time being of the premise will be required to repay on demand the relevant amount plus compound interest decreasing by a third for each complete year that the conditions have been complied with • The Council may, at its discretion, decide not to reclaim the amount of assistance or to reclaim a lesser amount • Grant Conditions will be registered as a Legal Charge. This Legal Charge will be registered at HM Land Registry and secured against the property, the Legal Charge will rank in priority after any existing mortgages and after any secured loan provided from one of the Council's partner organisations • The provisions of Section 45 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 will be adopted in determining whether a disposal is a relevant or exempt disposal • The provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Grant Repayment) General Consent 2000 will be adopted in determining the circumstances in which the Council may determine not to demand repayment. <p>The Director of Housing (or equivalent) may, at any time, specify additional conditions for the provision of assistance.</p>
Empty Property Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loan will be interest free • Owner must be a person, not a company • Owner must be a permanent UK citizen • Person receiving loan must owner of property • Joint owners must all agree loan agreement and agree where money is paid • Borrowers will be means tested to ensure they are suitable for a loan • The loan will be paid directly to the bank account of the applicant only • Robust proof of identity and permanent UK citizen status will be required • Loan conditions will be registered as a legal charge. This legal charge will be registered at HM Land Registry and secured against the property, the legal charge will rank in priority after any existing mortgages and after any secured loan provided from one of the Council's partner organisations • Works must be carried out by a professional qualified contractor with full liability insurance • Works and timescales will be agreed before a loan is issued • Works must progress timely and reasonably as agreed else the loan will be immediately repayable in full • The loan will be repayable within a month of works being completed • The loan is repaid immediately and in full at the point of a sale of the property • The loan will be repaid in instalments if the property is let to a tenant or occupied by the owner or other persons without a sale occurring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the loan not be repaid, the property may be at risk from recovery action of the debt.
<p>Sustainable Warmth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council may require grant applicants to use the services of a suitably qualified agent / surveyor • The council may require that all measures are installed by an accredited installer • Work must be carried within 12 months of the date of approval unless otherwise agreed by the Council • The grant will be paid subject to the works being completed to the satisfaction of the Council and the receipt of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt • The grant will be repayable if applicant does not permanently occupy the property within 6 weeks of the work being certified complete • The grant will be repayable on disposal of the property or a breach of the relevant future occupation certificate for the relevant grant condition period, five years after the grant certification date • If grant conditions are breached, the owner must repay, on demand, the relevant amount plus compound interest. • Maximum of one grant in any five-year period <p>Grant conditions will be registered as a local land charge against the property.</p>

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SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
POLICY ON ADAPTATIONS FOR DISABLED TENANTS IN COUNCIL
HOUSING
(Effective from to be confirmed)

1. Executive Summary

A comprehensive review of the Disabled Adaptations Service has been completed and this policy will replace the previous version dated 2012. The Borough Council aims to bring greater parity between the way housing adaptations are managed through the housing revenue account (HRA) and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) regime applied to other social housing and the private sector. The key features of this policy include:

- A focus on supporting people and families to consider how their housing needs can be met in the long term
- Financial assistance to support people and families with the costs of relocating where needed
- Support to meet people and families overall well-being including safety in the home, access to welfare benefits, social inclusion and referrals to sensory services and other healthcare services
- Ensure we maximise the impact of resources and make best use of our housing stock.

2. Background

- 2.1 The aim of the Adaptations Service is to enable tenants and members of their household with disabilities to be provided with housing which best meets their assessed needs. The council will consider alternatives to adaptations, such as the provision of equipment or if appropriate assistance with relocation, when deciding on the most suitable option(s) to meet a person's needs. Decisions regarding an individual's needs will be made in accordance with the views of the tenant and the council's Guidance for the Provision of Equipment & Adaptations. All other assistance types are discretionary and subject to funding being available.
- 2.2 The policy will also guide Occupational Therapists (OT) and other professionals to understand what the council may or may not, be able to assist with in terms of adaptations to their home.
- 2.3 A separate Protocol for Supporting Families and Children with Disabilities to Access Suitable Housing highlights the support that is available to children & families from

this policy and the Adaptations Policy, and should be considered alongside this document,

3. Legal context

- 3.1 In determining this policy, regard has been given to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy 2021 alongside the relevant statutory provisions and requirements mentioned in the Housing Act 1996, Localism Act 2011, Care Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- 3.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on a public authority, where it must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

4. Necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable works

- 4.1 Adult Social Care and Housing Management will work in partnership to take the appropriate measures to satisfy themselves that the works are reasonable and practicable having regard to the age and condition of the property:
- Assessments are completed by Occupational Therapists (OT's) in line with their good practice guide. An Occupational Therapist or other authorised person will make a referral to the council's service providers on behalf of the person detailing the nature of the works required. Each case will be individually assessed on its own merits and the Council decides what is reasonable in the light of its need to make housing available to a wide range of people in need, over the long term.
 - Reasonableness also relates to cost, and where the construction type of a property makes it excessively costly to adapt, the Council may refuse the adaptation in favour of offering alternative housing that meets the applicant's needs or which can be readily adapted at a lower cost.

5. Application process

- 5.1 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is committed to working in collaboration with Adult Social Care and the Children's Trust to enable people to remain independent in suitable housing for as long as possible.

6. Applying for an adaptation

- 6.1 An applicant may request an Occupational Therapy assessment by contacting Adult Social Care Enquiry Service. The Contact Centre will take their details, including their requirements, and bring to request to the attention of the Therapy Service, who will categorise the needs. A request will normally be classified as urgent if the person does not have access to a kitchen or toilet or they are terminally ill.
- 6.2 The Occupational Therapist will arrange a visit to assess the person's needs as required. Following this visit, if the adaptation request is potentially reasonable and practicable, a recommendation will be passed to the Housing Team who will be required to carry out a Homecheck on the property. The property condition will be checked, and a more detailed discussion will take place to assess their individual needs and manage the person's expectations through their chosen pathway.
- 6.3 An Occupational Therapist or other approved person may recommend and order minor adaptations. These will be sent to the council's Asset Maintenance and Management team. Once an order is received the council will contact the tenant.

Adaptations will be categorised into two groups

- i. **Minor adaptations** as referred to in **section 8** of this policy and
- ii. **Major adaptations** as referred to in **section 10** of this policy.

7. Eligibility

- 7.1 An individual will be considered for adaptations to their home if they are:
- a Sandwell Council tenant and/or
 - a partner or a member of the tenant's immediate family who has been a permanent resident of the household (proof of residency will be requested) and they have an impairment which has a significant and serious long-term effect on their ability to:
 - a) Carry out normal day to day activities in or around their home
 - b) Access essential facilities within the home
- 7.2 Under the terms of this Policy, a person is regarded as being disabled if they have a physical, sensory or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their home. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, the effects of which last for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

8. Minor Adaptations (under £1,500)

- 8.1 The Council will provide low level adaptations to increase independence, improve quality of life and reduce the risk of falls and hospital admission up to the value of £1,500.
- 8.2 These will include but are not limited to:
- Grab rails
 - Assistive Technology
 - Handrails
 - Ramps
 - Door widening (replace with stair rail)
 - Over bath showers (replace with half step)
- 8.3 In the event that a customer has accessed an Occupational Therapist (OT) directly (4.1 above) and an assessment has been completed, the council will determine whether additional consideration of a tenant's long-term housing options is required.
- 8.4 It is the Council's intention to ensure that the needs of the client are balanced with the suitability of adapting the property depending on the tenant's circumstances and the alterations required to the property.

9. Long Term Housing Needs

- 9.1 Where an adaptation is likely to exceed £1,500 a Homecheck may be carried out to discuss the tenant's broader needs including the best long-term housing solution which may include a move to alternative accommodation.
- 9.2 For some, moving home can be a stressful process. Every effort will be made to support the person to find housing in a location that is most suitable for their needs.
- 9.3 If it is decided that a tenant's needs may be better met by relocating, then financial help may be offered only if the estimated cost of the initial adaptation request would have exceeded £2,500. This financial assistance will be equivalent to (but not in addition to) that made to tenants in accordance with the Council's under-occupation incentive scheme. However, if a tenant is moving home and not downsizing, the amount paid in lieu of completing the adaptation will be at the council's discretion. In this scenario, it is expected that a discretionary payment will only be made in lieu of extensive major adaptations such as extensions or work over the value of £20,000.
- 9.4 Where a tenant decides to move, help to complete the application will be offered. An assessment of their needs will take place and where appropriate priority will be applied. The tenant/s will be able to bid through choice-based lettings for a suitable

property.

- 9.5 Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct offer, if the Council has a shortage of suitable properties.
- 9.6 Those waiting for a move will be provided with temporary adaptations where possible, for example a removable ramp or other equipment as recommended by an Occupational Therapist or other approved person in order to manage their needs in the short term.
- 9.7 Non urgent cases will be banded in accordance with the Housing Allocations Policy.

10. Major Adaptations

- 10.1 The council will liaise with the tenant and their family to ensure that the applicant's needs have been fully considered in accordance with section 6.0 above and will only complete major adaptations where the works are identified as necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practical as recommended by an Occupational Therapist.
- 10.2 The following will be taken into account:
- The total value of the proposed adaptation (including design costs) which should not exceed the max value of an equivalent Disabled Facilities Grant (as stated in Sandwell Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2023).
 - The availability of housing that would be more suitable to adapt.
 - Any exceptional circumstances which require the person to remain in their current property.
 - Whether the property is suitable for building alterations as determined by the council.
 - The size of the household and their housing need.
 - Any unacceptable health and safety risks associated with the desired adaptations.
 - The occupant's status, the type of tenancy held and any pending possession action.
 - The person's wider physical and mental health needs and the length of time

that they will remain in the property.

- 10.3 Some cases are complex and require a multi-disciplinary approach with other professionals. However, all cases will be determined on their own merit and where an applicant's needs can only be met in their existing accommodation; this work will be arranged to be completed at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.4 The budget for adaptations will be set as a part of our Housing Revenue Account Business Planning Cycle which is reviewed periodically and/or where demand exceeds the allocated budget.

11. Circumstances where we will not undertake an adaptation

11.1 This section of the policy only relates to adaptations exceeding £1,500. We will deal with each adaptation request on a case by case basis, however where one or more of the following criteria applies the council may exercise their right to refuse their request and offer additional advice or assistance:

- Where a person is under-occupying **more than** one bedroom or where they are overcrowding (except in exceptional circumstances) or are waiting for a transfer to another property.
- Where the adaptation is unreasonable, for instance installing a level access shower to a house or a flat above ground floor which cannot be accessed by the tenant using an *existing* lift or; where the tenant's needs can be met with alterations to the original proposal i.e. using a ground floor second reception room as a bedroom.
- Where there is other suitable alternative adapted, part adapted accommodation or where temporary aids and adaptations can be provided it is considered likely that a suitable property will become available within 3 years of the request being made.
- Where an adaptation would adversely affect the council's ability to make the best use of the stock and re-let the property in the future without incurring significant additional costs.
- Where the cost of the adaptation is prohibitive and exceeds the equivalent maximum value applied to a DFG.
- Where the applicant's condition is such that further adaptations will be required over time, temporary mitigation to meet current needs and/ or review their priority to move will be considered until alternative suitable accommodation becomes available.

- Where an adaptation would place others at risk i.e. a communal stair lift with no alternative access for other first floor residents.
- Other than in exceptional circumstances, where a person has left another property with suitable adaptations already present, within 5 years of those adaptations being completed.
- Where the building is unsuitable for adaptation due to its construction.

12. Tenants alterations

- 12.1 If a tenant wishes to install their own alterations to make their home more suitable for their needs, they should apply under the Tenants Alteration Procedure. The Council will not unreasonably withhold consent, but will refuse permission for adaptations that make the house less suitable for occupation in future.

13. Where adaptations are no longer required

- 13.1 Although the council will have made every effort to ensure adapted accommodation is let to those in need, there are occasions when, due to low demand, a property may be let to someone who does not have an assessed need for the adaptations previously installed. If an adaptation cannot be used by the incoming tenant and can easily be removed, it will be removed by the council free of charge. The council will recycle equipment as far as possible.
- 13.2 In the event that a tenant without a disability accepts a property with an adaptation, they do so on the understanding that the adaptation may not be removed. Items which can be recycled, like stairlifts, will be removed prior to occupation.
- 13.3 Adaptations such as level access showers or fixed ramps will only be replaced at the end of the items economic life as determined by the council. At this point, staff will consider the needs of the household at that time. Prospective tenants will be advised of this in advance of accepting the tenancy.
- 13.4 Where the person for whom an adaptation has been completed no longer resides in the property and the tenancy continues i.e.: for succession, any equipment that cannot be removed easily will remain in the property and the weekly servicing and maintenance charge in respect of that piece of equipment will continue, we will assist the occupant to move to suitable accommodation. If the remaining tenant is on housing benefit, they will be supported to apply for a discretionary housing benefit payment to cover this cost.
- 13.5 Major adaptations made to a property could deem the property to be considered as a “specialist dwelling”. The property would then be recorded by the council on their housing register as a “specialist dwelling” and as such this could potentially affect

any right to buy applications against this dwelling in the future.

14. Timescales

- 14.1 It is envisaged that the Majority of the smaller adaptations jobs will be completed with 90 days from the date the Form A is received from the OT's, these works are the Level Access Showers and Bath Out Shower In work. Properties where more complex building extensions or where suppliers lead in times for E.G. Lift design and installation will be outside the 90 Day timescales.
- 14.2 Approved adaptations for those pending hospital discharge, those with limited access to essential facilities or the potential for harm to a carer will be prioritised.
- 14.3 The council will work closely with health and social care professionals to ensure that the requirements of tenants with deteriorating or life limiting conditions are addressed in a timely manner, with dignity and in consideration of their current and future needs.

15. Future rehousing

- 15.1 Properties will be allocated in accordance with the criteria set out in the council's Lettings Policy and adverts will clearly detail the adaptations within each property. Tenants moving from adapted housing may not be allocated any further priority if their current housing remains suitable for their existing needs.
- 15.2 In order for the council to make best use of its resources, it is expected that the occupant for whom the adaptation has been completed will remain in the property for at least five years after the adaptation has been completed if their circumstances, in accordance with the lettings policy are otherwise the same.

16. Mutual exchange

- 16.1 If a tenant applies for a mutual exchange, the council will engage an Occupational Therapist to assess the suitability of the proposed exchange where either a property is adapted or one or more of the parties to the exchange has needs for adaptations. The council may refuse a mutual exchange if the property is adapted for a person with a disability and nobody in the new household requesting to move requires the adaptation.

17. New housing developments

- 17.1 As part of its new housing development program, the Council aims to increase availability of high quality, newly built accessible housing for people to move to.
- 17.2 The Council may adopt a Local Lettings Policy or make direct offers for any new

build developments which gives priority for existing tenants who require a specific adaptation however; this will be considered on a site-specific basis and will take account of housing needs at the time.

18. Appeals, suggestions, complaints and compliments

- 18.1 The Council is committed to providing good quality housing for its tenants. The council welcomes feedback that enables it to improve services and will respond to complaints in line with its policy.
- 18.2 In the event that a tenant disputes the decision made they have a right to appeal. The appeal will be referred to independent senior officer/s. Where available this will also include an Occupational Therapist.

19. Equal Opportunities

- 19.1 Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has an equal opportunities policy and works positively to continually improve and make services accessible to all.
- 19.2 An equality impact assessment has been completed and is available separately.
- 19.3 This document can be made available in other languages and in large print or audio transcript if required.

20. Implementation and review

- 20.1 This policy came into effect on (to be confirmed). The policy will be available on Sandwell Council's website and specifically shared with relevant professionals involved with the service. The policy will be periodically reviewed, and any significant changes will be referred back to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

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Appendix C

Proposed Funding Allocation:

Assistance	Funding	Objective	Budget 22/23	Budget 23/24	Budget 24/25
Advice and Information	N/A	Available for elderly and disabled residents about available assistance to help them live independently at home for longer.	No budget	£0.01m	£0.02m
Handyperson Service * Please note this is administered and delivered through ASC	Max value of £100 plus 3 hrs labour	Covers a wide range of low-cost jobs that can have a positive impact on the quality of life of vulnerable people.	£0.1m* *Recharged to Public Health	£0.1m	£0.1m
Hospital to Home Assistance	Max value of £6,000	To assist with hospital discharge enabling people to return home quickly and to help reduce demand to residential care placements.	No budget / New form of Assistance	£0.1m	£0.15m
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants	Statutory max value of £30,000	To meet the council's statutory obligation to provide adaptations and/or technology to enable residents to live independently at home.	£4m	£4m	£5m
Disabled Facilities Grant Top Up	Max value of £60,000	To provide top-up funding to meet the reasonable cost of non-standard equipment and adaptations to assist a disabled person to live independently in their own home. To provide additional assistance when the statutory maximum (including fees and charges) has been exceeded.	New form of Assistance	From Mandatory DFG Budget	From Mandatory DFG Budget
Minor Adaptations * Please note this is administered and delivered	Max value of £1,500	Low level adaptations to increase independence, improve quality of	£0.36m	£0.36m	£0.4m

Assistance	Funding	Objective	Budget 22/23	Budget 23/24	Budget 24/25
through Adult Social Care Services		life and reduce falls risks and hospital admission.			
Relocation Grant	Max value of £10,000 for owner occupiers Max value of £2,000 for private tenants	To help with the cost of moving home if a property or is not suitable for adaptation.	New form of Assistance	From Mandatory DFG Budget	From Mandatory DFG Budget
Hazard Removal Grant	Max value of £10,000	To remove urgent Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004.	No budget / New form of Assistance	£0.5m	£0.5m
External Improvement Schemes	Up to 90% of the eligible expense of the scheme (rising to 100% in exceptional circumstances) The maximum total eligible expense limit per property for each scheme will be determined prior to the scheme commencing	To carry out repairs and improvements to the external fabric of a dwelling to make it weather-tight and significantly improve the visual amenity of an area – for properties in targeted streets or blocks of dwellings.	Nil	Nil	Nil
Empty Property Loan –	Max value of £20,000 for owner occupiers	To help with the cost of renovating a long-term empty home.	Capital Funding / New form of Assistance	£0.5m	£0.5m
Warm Homes	To be determined on a scheme by scheme basis	To help improve energy efficiency, reduce the carbon footprint and reduce fuel poverty.	No budget / New form of Assistance	£1m	£2.0m
			£4.36m	£6.57m	£9.17m

Appendix D. Summary of Consultation Part 1

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

and

Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing

Targeted Consultation Feedback:

Targeted consultation took place during January and February 2023

Response Received	Action Taken
<p>Agewell: Tipton Forum Approx. 12 people in attendance The group discussed their individual experiences with accessing services with the council and generally agreed with proposals. There were no specific comments about the policy and proposed changes.</p>	<p>None Provided reassurance that proposals were along right lines</p>
<p>Agewell: Deep Group Approx. 25 people in attendance, most were dementia sufferers with family or carers with them. General agreement with proposal, only questions raised related to process for delivery of DFG and how to apply.</p>	<p>Provided reassurance that proposals were along right lines. There is a need once the policy is adopted, that marketing and support to access the service is widely promoted. Will feedback to the group once policy has been approved.</p>
<p>SCIPS (Sandwell Community and Information Participation Services): Approx. 20 people in attendance</p>	<p>As above to promote and market the service widely and feedback to the group once approved.</p>

Response Received	Action Taken
<p>Group asked some questions about leaseholders and repayment conditions. Suggestion from the group that service is more prominently advertised and support to access the process.</p>	
<p>Agewell: Think Differently About Dementia Group Discussed with family members of people with dementia, approx. 5 people Generally positive feedback, in particular liked the £15k non-means tested grant. Comments about the lack of advertising and knowledge of the service.</p>	<p>Provided reassurance that proposals were along right lines.</p> <p>There is a need once the policy is adopted, that marketing and support to access the service is widely promoted.</p> <p>Will feedback to the group once policy has been approved.</p>
<p>Ideal For All: Peer Group Support Group (Fibromyalgia and Arthritis group) 6 people in attendance. Group felt that is was a good idea to refresh the policy, and positive feedback as to proposed updates.</p> <p>Questions asked about SMBC houses and where adapted, and if the resident was to leave the property is it kept for other people with who need such adapted properties. Also raised query about properties where adaptations have removed when they have become void. Also felt there should be some for of prevention to Right to Buys on adapted properties.</p>	<p>Comments have been feedback to Housing Management</p>

Response Received	Action Taken
<p>Raised need for a point of contact throughout the process, to assist with queries and updates.</p>	<p>Caseworker posts have been created within Home Improvement Agency to become point of contact for customers. Equally pathway being developed for council housing and point of contact to be within Tenancy Management.</p>
<p>SCIPS Board Approx.23 people in attendance. Positive discussion, pleased with the proposals. Some questions raised about value for money regarding contractors. Group were pleased with the discussion and opportunity to influence.</p>	<p>Contract management and delivery has changed and will be delivered through Asset Management and Maintenance.</p>
<p>Agewell: Rowley Forum Large group, over 60 people in attendance Group happy with the £15k non-means tested grant. Need to promote the service more and how to apply for grants. Group felt that council adapted properties should be kept for people who require such adaptations. Questions asked about how much funding is available and where this comes from.</p>	<p>Provided reassurance that proposals were along right lines. There is a need once the policy is adopted, that marketing and support to access the service is widely promoted. Will feedback to the group once policy has been approved.</p>

Overall over 151 people engaged, and mostly positive feedback received. The main point for improvement related to marketing and promotion of the service are widely and support how to apply.

Formal Consultation Feedback:

Formal Consultation between 20th March to 2nd May

Responses were invited via Email.

Response Received	Action Taken
<p>All below are enquiries have been raised by one resident and all relate to the policy for Council Tenants states:</p> <p>10.2 - The total value of the proposed adaptation (including design costs) which should not exceed the max value of an equivalent Disabled Facilities Grant (as stated in Sandwell Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2023)</p> <p>Question raised:</p> <p>Why are you having to refer to Sandwell Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2023 for the total value of the proposed adaptation which should not exceed the max value of an equivalent Disabled Facilities Grant for Council tenants with disabilities?</p> <p>14.1 - As a guide, tenants may expect their adaptations to be completed within 90 days from the date when the work is approved.</p>	<p>The Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing demonstrates the relationship between the two policies.</p> <p>The period starts once approved, however agreed that further narrative to be added to explain where some cases may take longer than the 90 days.</p>

Response Received	Action Taken
<p>Question raised: Query as to when the 90 days starts</p> <p>15.2 - In order for the council to make best use of its resources, it is expected that the occupant for whom the adaptation has been completed will remain in the property for at least 5 years after the adaptation has been completed if their circumstances, in accordance with the lettings policy are otherwise the same.</p> <p>Question raised: Question raised about should the tenant need to move within the 5-year period</p>	<p>No action needed, this is based upon intention at the time of the application, if something should then change, then this will be assessed based upon on each individual case.</p>

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Appendix D. Summary of Citizenspace Consultation Part 2

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy Consultation and Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing 2023

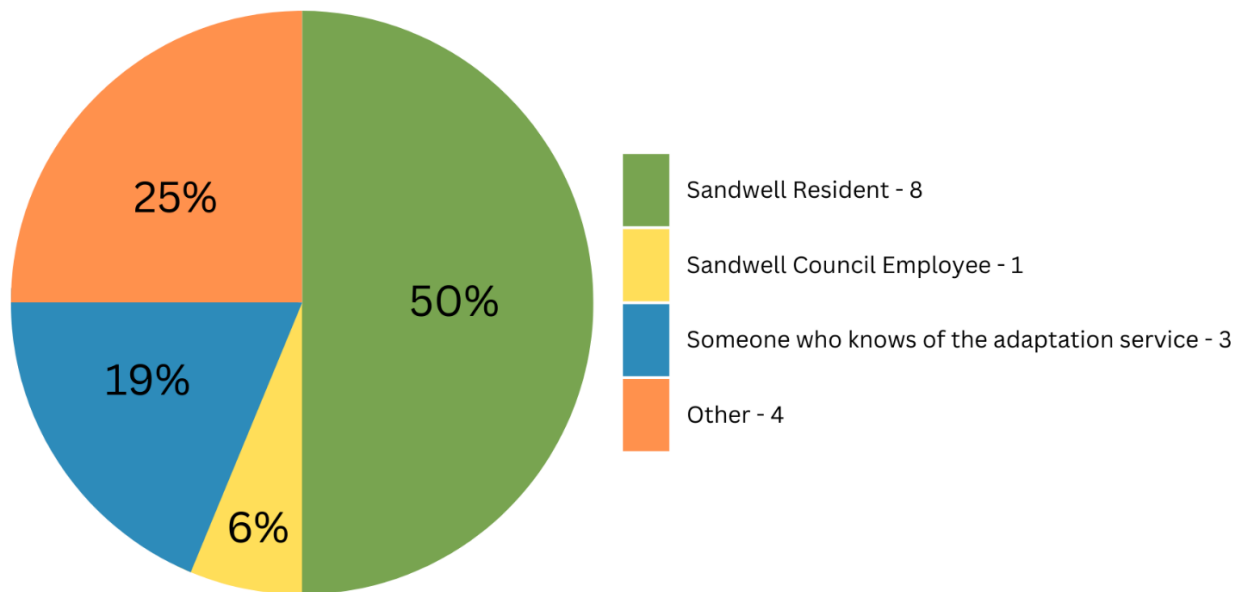
<https://consultationhub.sandwell.gov.uk/housing/disabled-facilities-grant-2023>

Report created on: **Friday 05 May 2023** at 13:11

The activity ran from: **20/04/2023** to **02/05/2023**

Responses to this survey: **16**

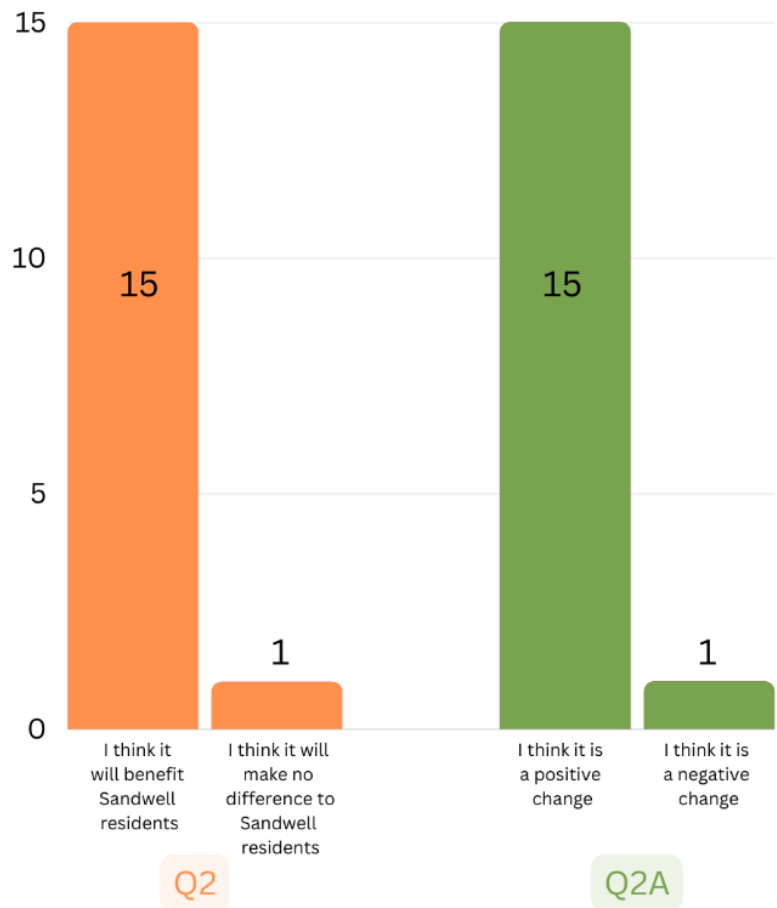
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2: Proposed service change no.1

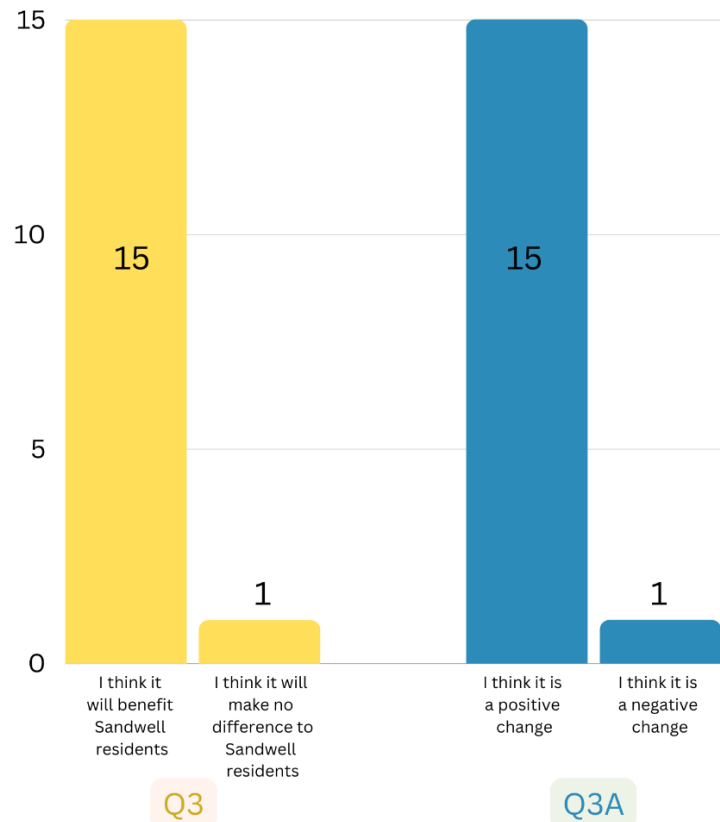
Some simple adaptations we could offer as a minor adaptation currently exceed the £1,000 limit. This means you may wait longer for something that could be installed quicker. We can overcome this by increasing the limit for minor adaptations that just exceed the current threshold, such as over bath showers.

To improve your customer experience and so we can install simple adaptations more quickly, we are proposing to increase the threshold for minor adaptation work to £1,500



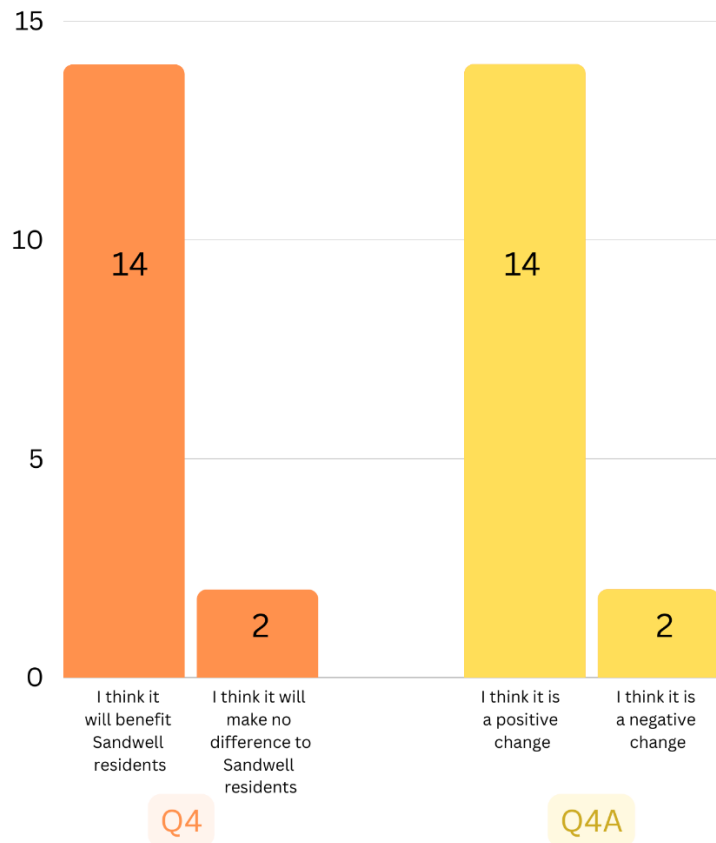
3: There are times when building works for adaptations cost more than the current grant limit of £30,000 and we need to request a “top up” so work can continue. As we must get approval first this can cause delays in completing your adaptation.

We are proposing that a ‘top up’ of up to £60,000 is made available without the need to go through another approval process so work can continue as quickly as possible.



4: All applications for Disabled Facilities Grants are currently means tested. This is where we assess your financial circumstances to see whether you need to contribute to your building work.

We are considering amending the means test so the first £15,000 of any application contribution is waived. However, we need to understand the impact this would have on Sandwell residents and our budgets. We would like to test this out and if the impact is positive, we may decide to make this change permanent.



Q4 OTHER RESPONSE

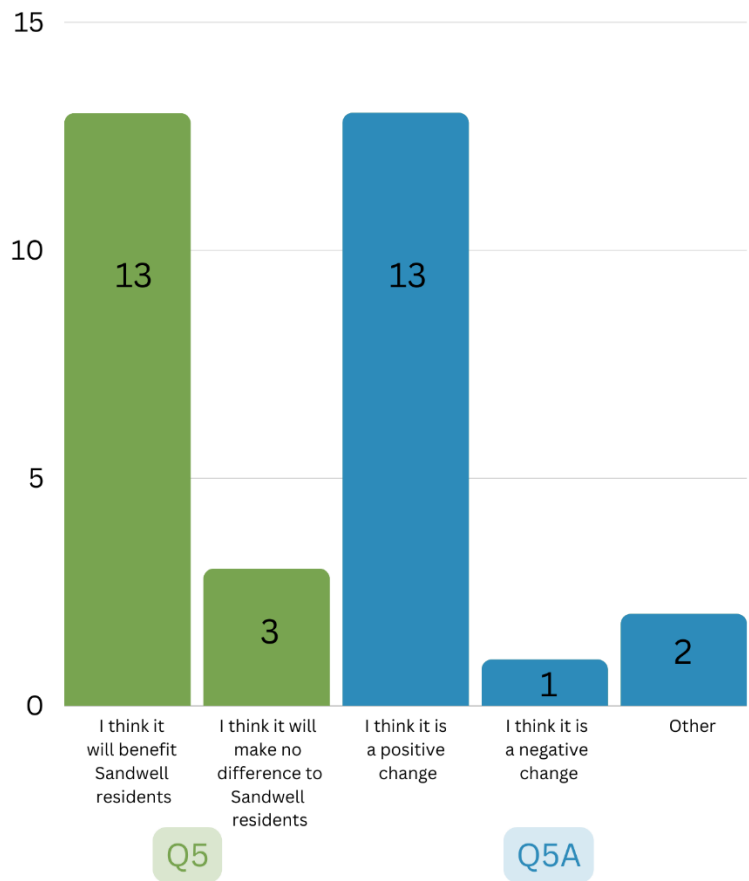
There was 1 response to this part of the question.

- The first question only gives two options, neither of which are that it might disbenefit Sandwell residents. It would be good to waive the first £15k, but might this mean that support is being given to more affluent households?

The proposal enables some services to be delivered much quicker. Sandwell is an area of deprivation and many residents accessing the service will be in a position of low income, however do acknowledge there may be some residents that have a higher income.

5: Not all properties are suitable for adaptations, or the cost of adapting them may be excessive. If this is the case, you may wish to move somewhere that better suits your needs. We previously offered New Homes Grants which helped with moving costs and any gap between the cost of your old and new home.

We recognise that moving house can be expensive so are proposing to offer a 'relocation grant' to help cover the cost of moving home. This would be up to £10,000 for owner occupiers and £2,000 for private tenants.



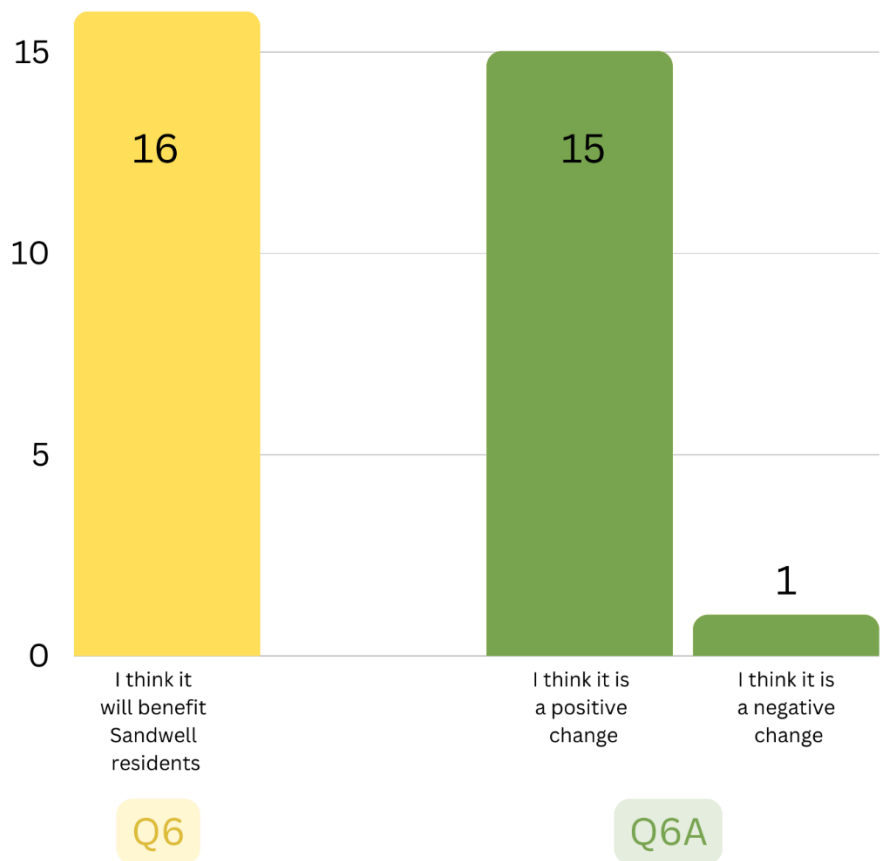
Q5 OTHER RESPONSE

There were 3 responses to this part of the question.

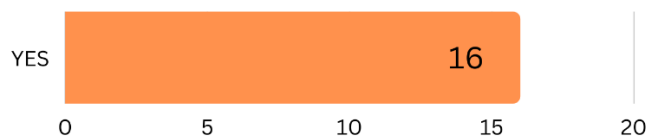
- There is potential risk of vulnerable people moving away from the community they know and their support networks. It's important to guard against this.
- It does not state the amount of the new homes grant compared with the relocation grant
- It's not clear if residents will be worse off as a result of this change. Leaving your local neighbourhood and community support networks can undermine well-being. How will the council ensure that this change doesn't result in unintended consequences such as social isolation?

Residents would be supported with this process through the identified caseworker/point of contact and will support the relocation in agreement with the resident and will consider wider necessary support in relation to community networks.

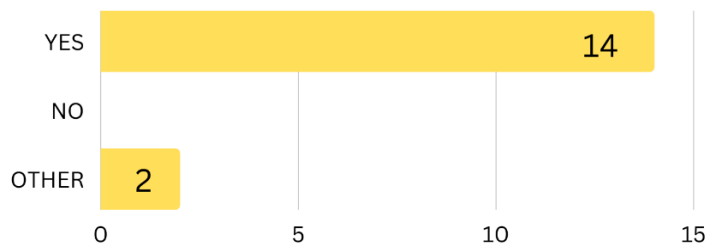
6: Most people who are in hospital want to get back home as quickly as possible. Sometimes discharge from hospital is delayed because homes are not safe to move back to, for example urgent home repairs might be needed to prevent trips/falls or a property may need to be cleared. We are proposing to offer a small grant (up to £6,000) to help residents get home from hospital sooner.



7: The Policy On Adaptations For Disabled Tenants In Council Housing policy states that a request for an adaptation will normally be classified as urgent if the person does not have access to a kitchen or toilet or they are terminally ill. Do you agree with this definition?



8: Under the terms of this Policy, a person is regarded as being disabled if they have a physical, sensory or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their home. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, the effects of which last for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life. Do you agree with this definition?



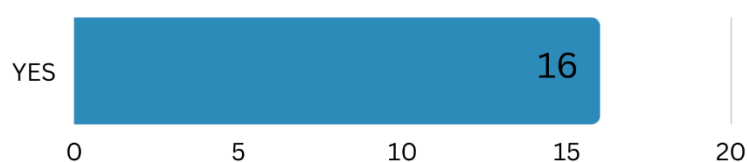
Q8 OTHER RESPONSE

There were 2 responses to this part of the question.

- Does this definition recognise people living with autism and other forms of Neuro diversity that and who may require long term support
- What about individuals with autism or other neurological conditions? Are they covered by this definition?

The definition does not just refer to a physical disability, but also considers aspects where a resident considers themselves to have a disability and we would work with them and provide support with relevant advocacy services throughout the process. In addition, the definition for disability is taken from legislation.

9: Section 9 of the policy sets out the support that the council will provide where a tenant needs to move in order to meet their needs. Do you think this support is sufficient?



10: Section 11 of the policy sets out some criteria that the council may use to refuse an adaptation. Do you agree with these criteria?



Report to Cabinet

07 June 2023

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress & Phase 3 Refresh
Cabinet Member:	Leader of the Council Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Director:	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Senior Lead Officer – Service Improvement Rebecca Jenkins Rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk Lead Officer – Service Improvement Dawn Webster Dawn_webster@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 11 May 2023 be received
- 1.2. That Cabinet receive the response to the CIPFA FM Model Re-Assessment Report
- 1.3. That Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register
- 1.4. That Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan



- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. That Cabinet recommend to Council that this report along with the March progress report, the Improvement Plan Annual Report, and an 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.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 This report provides a quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporates all recommendations from the original Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 2.2 As part of the council's assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, the LGA, Grant Thornton and CIPFA conducted follow-up reviews in Autumn 2022 to evaluate the council's progress on implementing the specific recommendations from those individual reviews. The responses to the findings from the follow-up visits from Grant Thornton and the LGA were reported to Cabinet in March 2023. The response to the CIPFA FM Model Re-Assessment Report is included within this report.
- 2.3 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes to the Improvement Plan are tracked through programme management mechanisms. As a result of the findings from the CIPFA FM follow up review, new and/or updated activity has been required within the Improvement Plan. This has been managed through the established change control process to form a refresh of the Improvement Plan.
- 2.4 Risk management is embedded within the council's programme management of the Improvement Plan. A risk register is in place which underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). Cabinet is asked to receive the Improvement Plan Risk






Register to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively and to provide contextual information for future decision making.




- 2.5 As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes. Both Committees are due to consider progress at their meetings in June and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet’s consideration.
- 2.6 Under the Statutory Directions, the council is 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 is 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 will make a recommendation to Council.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

- 3.1 Sandwell Council’s Improvement Plan focuses on the governance arrangements of the council and areas of improvement across the organisation. The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure that the council is able to deliver on the aims and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. The deliverables set out in this Improvement Plan will achieve long-term sustainable improvements in how the council operates and is able to make effective decisions focused on improving outcomes for residents and experiences of service users. Therefore, this impacts on the council’s ability to deliver all the objectives in the Corporate Plan.

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities



	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

4. Context and Key Issues

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.
- 4.1.2. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual.
- 4.1.3. This report is the fourth update to Cabinet on progress of the Improvement Plan.

4.2. Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress

- 4.2.1. Over this quarter, significant progress has continued to be made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes reaching a significant milestone in the Lion Farm Expert Determination process and this action moving to business as usual.



4.2.2. A comprehensive monitoring tool has been developed which includes a progress status rating for all actions. The monitoring tool provides quick reference around which actions are on track for delivery, as well as highlighting areas that may require remedial action or additional levels of assurance. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1.

4.2.3. Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within the Improvement Plan Annual Report included at Appendix 2. The Annual Report includes milestones achieved since June 2022, the next areas of focus, and commentary on our progress against measures of success. This provides information around the impact our improvements. A summary of the quarterly achievements along with any progress issues is provided below.

4.2.4. Organisational Culture Theme

4.2.4.1. Achievements this quarter:

- Revision of Corporate Induction
- Effective decision-making training (report writing) complete
- Member- Officer survey launched
- Project plan in place for embedding constitutional changes

4.2.4.2 Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship**
 - A Member-Officer relationship survey was launched in April.
 - The reason for the exception report is that the survey received a lower response rate from Officers and Members than was expected.
 - An initial analysis of the survey findings was considered by Leadership Team in May. Next steps are to identify actions and to discuss findings with Members. Consideration will be given to timescales for repeat survey and reasons for response rate as part of lessons learnt.



- **Approval of next iteration of the Member Development Programme (MDP) that includes actions as a result of Member Personal Development Plan analysis**
 - The MDP is regularly updated and approved by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. A delegation has been put in place for the Chair of the Committee to agree next update, which will include the updated Member Induction plan.
 - The reason for the exception report is that there has been slippage in the timescale. This occurred due to revisions needed to the Member Induction arrangements as a result of the number of new Councillors following the election.
 - The induction has now been finalised and a new Member toolkit is being produced to support new Members.

4.2.5 Corporate Oversight Theme

4.2.6.1 Achievements this quarter

- Workforce development engagement sessions have been completed to inform the financial services workforce plan
- Draft report and recommendations received for the Corporate Debt Recovery business process review.
- Transactional Finance Reviews completed, and recommendations being implemented.

4.2.6.2 Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Corporate Transformation**
 - Transformation activity is taking place across the council including the Oracle Programme, a review of business support arrangements and financial services business process reviews. Resources from across the council have been brought together to consolidate resources.
 - Local Partnerships are supporting a review of Corporate Transformation and PMO arrangements in the council. This is underway and is due to report in June.
 - The reason for exception report is that timescales for the establishment of the of the Corporate Transformation PMO, associated governance, and the implementation of a



programme and project management system have exceeded the original dates within the Improvement Plan. The dates did not reflect the review that is being undertaken by Local Partnerships.

- The dates have been reprofiled through change control for the Corporate Transformation PMO to be established in September 2023 (subject to the recommendations of the Local Partnerships Review), the Programme and Project Management System to be implemented in July 2023, and the Corporate Transformation Board to be operational in June 2023.

- **Develop a Continuous Improvement framework and Lessons Learnt Framework**

- Continuous improvement and lessons learnt activity is underway throughout the council. Examples include continuous improvement around the scrutiny function and lessons learnt around SEND transport and a case study around supporting residents around damp and mould.
- A Continuous Improvement Framework and Lessons Learnt Framework are intended to provide a set of standards, tools techniques and guidance around how continuous improvement and lessons learnt are to be conducted across the council. The intention was for these to be prepared and reported to Leadership Team in June 2023.
- The reason for the exception report is that the June date will not be met due to resource availability, as work on the Levelling Up Partnership has taken priority. The Continuous Improvement and Lessons Learnt Frameworks have been reprofiled for October 2023 through change control.

- **Directorate level restructuring and review of Spans and Layers**

- Recruitment for Assistant Chief Executive is underway.
- The reason for the exception report is that the Directorate-level structure is under discussion, and the spans and layers review is being considered in line with the workforce strategy implementation.
- Actions are currently placed on hold.



- **Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section**
 - Engagement sessions have been completed and the report has been received. The recommendations include a competency framework, which will be aligned to the One Team Framework.
 - The reason for the exception report is that the planned due date of March 2023 has not been met and the workforce development plan is now due to be finalised by July 2023.

4.2.7 Strategic Direction Theme

4.2.7.1 Achievements this quarter

- Commercial Strategy approved by Cabinet Member
- Early Help 'one year on' event held to capture impact and partnership focus on next steps.
- Direct awarded offer to data analysis consultant for the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- 5 Surveys published on Citizenspace (consultation platform)

4.2.7.2 Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Regeneration Pipeline: Internal infrastructure established for delivery (strategic delivery partner)**
 - The intention is to procure a strategic delivery partner to support the delivery of the regeneration pipeline. Engagement with one of the framework providers is being carried out and a report is being prepared for July Cabinet.
 - The reason for the exception report is that this is later than the original date of March 2023. This has been reprofiled to July through change control.
- **Customer Journey Strategy**
 - Work is progressing on the Customer Journey Programme with governance arrangements now established and workstreams in place.



- The reason for the exception report is that a small response rate was achieved for a Member-survey around the customer journey.
 - Meetings with Members are being arranged focusing on ward and casework management.
- **HRA Business Plan: Stock condition surveys**
 - The HRA Business Plan was agreed by Cabinet in February.
 - A range of factors need to be taken into account in reviewing and amending the plan in future years including the results of stock condition surveys. Procurement of stock condition surveys has commenced.
 - The reason for the exception report is that only one tender was received through the procurement and an award was not made.
 - The next steps are for the specification to be reviewed and re-tendering to take place.

4.2.8 Decision Making Theme

4.2.8.1 Achievements this quarter

- All major milestones in this theme have been achieved

4.2.8.2 Decision Making Progress Issues

- No issues in this theme

4.2.9 Procurement and Commercial Theme

4.2.9.1 Achievements this quarter

- Lion Farm key milestone in Expert Determination process reached and moved to business as usual for managing at directorate level and reporting to Leadership Team and members at an appropriate point in the future.

4.2.9.2 Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Performance Management System: Options Appraisal**
 - A performance management system is being explored to support business intelligence across the council and facilitate reporting within the performance management framework.



- The reason for the exception report is that the original timescales to bring forward an options appraisal have been delayed due to resources.
- Resources and a project plan are now in place. The options appraisal includes consideration of utilisation of current systems/tools, including Verto, Oracle Fusion and Power BI or the procurement of a new Performance Management System.
- The options appraisal is due to be completed by August 2023, with recommendation to Leadership Team to follow.

4.2.10 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

4.2.10.1 Achievements this quarter

- SCT performance reports considered by Children and Education Scrutiny Board

4.2.10.2 Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy**
 - A VCS Strategy is being prepared for approval in Autumn.
 - The reason for the exception report is that the strategy is being developed over a longer period to enable a more fundamental look at the relationship with the VCS to take place. An annual report is being prepared focusing on investment and impact. A Cabinet session is then planned for June / July, with the strategy due for approval in Autumn 2023.

4.3 Statutory Recommendations

4.3.1 The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review 2021 included three statutory recommendations that the council has a legal obligation to respond to. These recommendations are incorporated into the single Improvement Plan and are embedded across each of the six themes.

4.3.2 In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.



4.3.3 To provide an overview of progress against these three specific recommendations, Appendix 3 extracts the key actions that respond to each of the recommendations and they are summarised below.

4.3.4 **Statutory Recommendation 1** - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.

Progress update:

- Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
- Sandwell Leisure Trust – progressing the approach agreed by Cabinet in June 2022 to transfer services to a Local Authority Trading Company.
- Sandwell Children’s Trust – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract commenced April 2023
- Waste Contract – Contract Monitoring framework progressing well and embedded in PMF reporting. Review of the Contract is complete.
- ERP (Oracle Fusion) – support provider in place and implementation commenced. Project Management and Governance arrangements are in place.
- Lion Farm – key milestone reached in expert determination process and has now moved to business as usual.
- Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. First monitoring provided to Cabinet in November.

4.3.5 **Statutory Recommendation 2** - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.

Progress Update

- The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with approval granted to the revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, thresholds for decisions, Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol, Scheme of delegations and refresh



- Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being planned for roll out during 2023-2024.
- Commercial Strategy approved in April 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.

4.3.6 **Statutory Recommendation 3** - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.

Progress Update

- Member Development – New Member induction arrangements are in place. Member Development Programme is being regularly reviewed by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee.
- Officer Development – A consolidated programme of fundamental training for managers on Corporate Governance matters has commenced. A broader Management Development Programme will be rolled out in 2023 following the approval of the Workforce Strategy.
- Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held to inform the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours) which was approved in March 2023. Launch of values and behaviours taking place.
- Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.

4.4 Reporting Framework, Governance and Assurance

4.4.1 To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, Council approved the reporting mechanism for the Improvement Plan in June 2022. This set out that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as



usual. The diagram included at Appendix 4 sets out the governance framework.

- 4.4.2 This report forms the fourth quarterly update to Cabinet on the Improvement Plan. Leadership Team have reviewed progress against the plan every month.
- 4.4.3 The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in December 2022. The next report is due June 2023
- 4.4.4 Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 4.4.5 The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council last year.
- 4.4.6 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register and they received the external follow up reviews in January 2023. The Committee are due to consider this quarterly progress update in June 2023.
- 4.4.7 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. This has included a 'deep dive' focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce. The Board will receive this quarterly update in June 2023.



4.4.8 Following consideration of the progress report to Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, those members will identify areas for further exploration and reporting. Any recommendations or comments from these committees for Cabinet's consideration will be presented to Cabinet

4.5 External Reviews

4.5.1 External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations made through external reviews. Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA conducted follow up reviews in late 2022. Cabinet received the Grant Thornton and LGA reports in December 2022 and actions to respond were embedded in the Improvement Plan and Business Plans as reported to Cabinet in March 2023.

4.5.2 The CIPFA FM Model Reassessment Report was reported to Cabinet in March 2023 and is included at appendix 5. The CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Report set out that Sandwell has improved from a progressive two star rating to a three star rating.

4.5.3 Key points raised were that:

- Positive progress was evident and represents a step change in under a year, which is to be commended
- Finance is seen as a key function and priority and there is a positive commitment to the finance improvement programme
- The Director of Finance is well-respected
- The MTFS is now much stronger
- The budgetary process has improved
- The emphasis on business partnering has been broadly welcomed
- There is a coherent agenda and programme of financial reform
- There is clearer evidence of strategic and operational awareness

4.5.4 In their report, CIPFA raised a series of additional improvement points which have been considered. Responses to the recommendations are set out in Appendix 6 and changes required to the Improvement Plan as a result have been managed through the established change control process. The changes are set out in section 4.8 of this report.



4.6 Resources

- 4.6.1 In the development of the Improvement Plan, a review of the resources available to deliver the plan was carried out. Resources to deliver the Improvement Plan have been allocated from within existing commitments in the majority of cases. Council approved funding of approximately £1.768m for one-off funding to progress improvement plan actions. A summary of the year end position on all Council reserves is provided within the year end budget monitoring report
- 4.6.2 The fund has enabled recruitment to key positions including corporate transformation capacity, work on organisational culture and resources to support the implementation of finance improvements and the Governance review. Where longer-term staffing capacity has been required, this has been built into base budgets to ensure sustainability.
- 4.6.3 To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is also being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from September 2023.

4.7 Risk Management

- 4.7.1 The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- 4.7.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 7. The main risks are associated with:
- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the performance management framework, asset management system implementation and culture change programme. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June.
 - **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
 - **Performance Management Framework** – to ensure that we can effectively monitor progress and evidence improvement.



Each theme includes an outline of how success will be evidenced. Processes for monitoring progress are in place

- **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
- **Constitutional Changes-** If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate Governance Review is underway and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes

4.7.3 Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have reduced:

- IP2 Programme Management Arrangements- Amber to Green

4.7.4 Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have been closed:

- IP7- Organisational culture- moved to Strategic Risk Register.
- IP8- Impact of Covid 19 on the Project Resources- target score achieved.

4.8 Changes to the Improvement Plan – Phase 3 Refresh

4.8.1 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes.

4.8.2 The Improvement Plan report to Council in June 2022 set out that changes (which may include the addition of new workstreams or objectives, or the amendment of timescales for delivery of actions) will be tracked through programme management mechanisms and that Cabinet will retain oversight of changes through regular formal reporting.

4.8.3 As we move through our improvement journey it is important that our key actions to deliver the required improvement become part of our normal business. For this reason, the key actions or ‘we wills’ that sit under the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan have been reviewed and, where appropriate, amended to ensure that core elements of the Improvement Plan are captured. Cabinet will consider the revised Corporate Plan in June 2023.



- 4.8.4 The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool has been updated to include a cross-reference to the relevant actions within the Corporate Plan or business plans, as appropriate. This alignment paves the way for our improvement activity to be monitored within our performance management framework whilst retaining the assurance mechanisms to manage progress and performance.
- 4.8.5 This refresh to the Improvement Plan also includes the responses to the CIPFA FM follow up review. As such, this refresh of the Improvement Plan is referred to as the Phase 3 Improvement Plan.
- 4.8.6 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 8. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour. Changes as a result of the CIPFA FM follow up review are also referenced within Appendix 6.
- 4.8.7 The changes made are summarised below.
- 10 sub-actions have been added, this includes 4 actions that are a result of the response to CIPFA follow-up review.
 - 18 changes have been made to action delivery timescales, and milestones (10 of which are of more than 3 months)
 - 3 changes have been made to descriptions of actions
 - 4 actions have been closed as the activity is complete

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Value for Money Governance Review was undertaken as part of the external auditor's role to provide assurance on the council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. As the report includes statutory recommendations the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately.



- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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 is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require.
- 5.4 Alternative formats for reporting to the Secretary of State could be adopted, however the proposal to submit a covering letter along with the quarterly reports made to Cabinet makes use of existing reports. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities confirmed that this would be an acceptable format to them.

6 Implications

Resources:	The monitoring of the Improvement Plan is being carried out within existing resources. Council's approval of the single Improvement Plan included allocation of resources to ensure delivery of the Improvement Plan. These resources are monitored regularly by the Programme Management Office and Leadership Team.
Legal and Governance:	<p>On 22 March 2022, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act) in order to ensure that the council can comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act. Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p> <p>The delivery of actions within the Plan agreed by Council in June 2022, as well as any subsequently identified actions, will support the council to achieve</p>



	<p>sustainable improvement. This will support the end of government intervention.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.</p>
Risk:	<p>If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register is in place and will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan which will underpin the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). This will be reported monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and will be regularly reported to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
Equality:	<p>The successful delivery of this Improvement Plan will require the development and review of many of the council's policies and procedures. These changes will build in consideration of the impact on equalities throughout the development and will include an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way. Therefore, improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the</p>



	council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.
Social Value	Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the council will be able to maximise its social value return.
Climate Change	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.
Corporate Parenting:	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities include being a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care and supporting young people once they leave care. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to be a good Corporate Parent.

7. Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool April 2023
2. Improvement Plan Annual Report 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting April 2023
4. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram
5. CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report
6. Response to CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Review
7. Improvement Plan Risk Register April 2023
8. Changes to the Improvement Plan April 2023
9. Improvement Plan Progress Report to Cabinet, March 2023
10. Draft Letter to Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities



8. Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Reports to the Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing and Communities:
 - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022](#)
 - [Sandwell Council Commissioners: second report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022 \(published March 2023\)](#)
 - [Ministerial response to second letter \(March 2023\)](#)
- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
 - To Council: [13 December 2022](#)
 - To Cabinet:
 - [March 2023](#)
 - [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
 - [September 2022](#)
 - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - [March 2023](#)
 - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)
 - [June 2022](#)
 - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
 - [March 2023](#)
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)
- External Review Reports
 - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up Report 2022](#)
 - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review December 2021 – reissued October 2022](#)
 - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report 2022](#)
 - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022](#)



- [CIPFA Financial Management Report January 2022](#)





IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Progress against Plan Status Rating	Definition	Leadership Team Action as a result
On Track	Progress against the action is good and there is i) a low level of issues; and/or ii) progress is in line with the delivery date with no/ minor slippage (e.g. less than 1 months); and/or that	Leadership Team note progress and seek assurance that on track
Medium progress	Progress on the action is being made but there is i) a medium level of issues and/or ii) slippage (actual / projected) of 1-2 months	Leadership Team watching brief and review impact on dependencies
Significant issues / slippage	There is a significant level of issues and/or slippage (e.g. more than 2 months)	Leadership Team review and remedy
Not due to start	Work on the action is not due to start	N/a
Complete	Action is complete	N/a
Closed	Action is complete and there is evidence that the measures of success have been fulfilled	Evidence to be provided
N/A	Update not required at this time	N/a
On hold	Action placed on hold due to different approach being considered	

Theme 1 -Organisational Culture

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (April 2023)	Update (initial and Date)(April 2023)
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.0	Establish the desired organisational culture for Sandwell Council		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	May 2022	Dec 2022	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.2	Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Aug 2022	Mar-23	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.3	Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Autumn 2022	Mar-23	N/A	Complete	Cabinet endorsed the new desired values and behaviours on 15 March 2023. Discussed at Wider leadership team 9.3.23 and sharing on All Staff Briefing 22.3.23. DS 20.3.23	Complete	complete
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.0	Create the right environment for that organisational culture to thrive	(New) O1 We will embed the One Team Framework	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader					Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Dec-22	May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Priorities and action plan developments are underway	On Track- little or no slippage	Priorities and action plan developments are underway
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.3	Roll out of One Team framework - Launch and share events with people managers (June & July 2023) - Alignment of One Team framework values and behaviours in people practices and L&D offer		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	23-Mar	23-Jul	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	As above A1.3	On Track- little or no slippage	As above A1.3
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.4	New action: Employee performance review and objective setting, linked to Corporate Plan and Directorate Plans (Appraisal) a) confirm approach for 2023 b) determine fully refreshed approach for 2024 onwards		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	23-Mar	24-Mar	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.0	Develop a clear programme of management development	(New) O2 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	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.1	Management and Development Programme Scope, Content and Budget Agreed		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Head of HR HR Team Manager L&D/OD	Oct-22	April 23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Manager essentials ready to launch and pilot to be held in April 23 with open cohort May 23 and further dates	On Track- little or no slippage	Pilot session took place 20 April for Manager skills workshop. Sessions booked for May and June and promotion
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.4	Management Development Programme Delivery		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance		23-Apr	tbc	N/A	Not due to start	Apr-23	Not due to start	Apr-23
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.5	New action: Senior Leadership Development Programme Scope, Content and Budget Agreed		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR HR Team Manager L&D/OD		TBC	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B3.0	Officer Learning and Development	(New) O4-We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B3.1	Revision of Corporate Induction		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Head of HR	Autumn 2022	Feb-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	As reported February	Complete	Monthly face to face induction sessions in place for new starters without laptops. Data on completion of induction will be collected as part of Oracle implementation. Briefing note prepared for SL
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.0	Assurance Activity to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship	(New) O4-We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.1	Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	23-May	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Member-Officer Relationship Survey in final stages of preparation. Member survey launched 27/03/23. Officer survey due to be launched in early April. On track for analysis to be presented to IPRM in May.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Member Officer Survey launched in April with closing date at end of April. Amber rating reflects issues in response rate. Further comments with staff and Group Leaders and Chief Whips has taken place to encourage responses. Analysis will proceed for 11 May IPRM. Consideration to be given to timescales for repeat survey and reflection on reasons for response rate.
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.0	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development	(New) O4-We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council					Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.2	Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings to ensure they are meeting needs		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Ongoing	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	All Member briefings have continued to take place and briefings with LT taking place as part of the preparations. Reflections on this municipal year and proposals for next municipal year are being pulled together for discussion with LT in line with the results from the Officer-Member survey response.	On Track- little or no slippage	All Member briefings have continued to take place and briefings with LT taking place as part of the preparations. Reflections on this municipal year and proposals for next municipal year are being pulled together for discussion with LT in line with the results from the Officer-Member survey response.

Static data													April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Owners			Dates		Focus		Progress against plan		Evidence of status rating	
				Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)/March 2023	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Member Learning and Development	OC.D4.0	Induction training for Leader and Cabinet Members on appropriate processes relating to the employment of Chief Officers, and in particular Statutory Officers	(New) O4-We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jun-22	Jul-22	Focus 2	Complete	MDP signed off by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee and this includes the induction programme.	Complete	Complete
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.0	Member development programme	(New) O4-We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	Director - Law & Governance						Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.1	Approval of next iteration of MDP that includes actions as a result of Member PDP analysis		Director - Law & Governance		Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee		Mar-23	23-Mar	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	MDP update considered by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee in March. Delegation agreed for Chair to approve final version. Ongoing work with the Chair to respond to any emerging needs between now and the start of the Municipal Year, specifically Induction Programme following confirmation of at least 17 new Cllrs to be elected in May. Member PDP take-up is included within the Corporate Governance work.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	As per update last month, MDP approved by ESMDC and delegation in place for Chair to agree final version. Following confirmation that min. 18 new Councillors, the induction programme within MDP is undergoing further updates to reflect that significant change. The induction programme to MDP due to be signed-off by early May.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.0	Deliver the communications strategy to assist with more effective internal communications	(New) O5- We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents, internal workforce and external stakeholders (See O20 - O22)	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Feb-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internal Communications	OC.E2.1	Internal comms channels used to deliver comms messages on an ongoing basis including: - All staff briefing - Team Talk Leadership Updates - Member bulletin - Director live events - Boslin People e-bulletin (New)		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Ongoing	Monthly updates through IP	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	All staff briefing to launch new values and behaviours and update on improvement plan progress held on 22 March. Other internal comms activity has continued.	On Track- little or no slippage	Series of work planned with culture group and comms to embed the values across the org. Looking at how we can showcase the behaviours being demonstrated through employee stories/ we are Sandwell. From April 24 the values will form part of the appraisal guidance.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.2	Chief Executive's Comms Plan launch		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Spring 2023 TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Weekly CE blog established. Video shared with staff introducing the new CE.	On Track- little or no slippage	Comms introducing the CE to the organisation have been delivered. A forward plan is being developed with the CE that sets out how ongoing comms will be delivered.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.3	Develop proposal for all staff conference		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	TBC Aligned to CEX 100 day plan	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Programme of visits to service areas by CE and Directors underway. Plans being developed to hold in person briefings as part of rollout of new values and behaviours.	On Track- little or no slippage	Working towards a July in person briefing.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.4	Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead- Service Improvement	Mar-23	Oct-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Initial scoping of options for an employee recognition scheme has taken place. Next step is a survey to staff. The survey launch has been delayed due to the launch of the One Team Framework as the employee recognition scheme is linked to embedding the new values. Timescales for introduction of recognition scheme will be identified. RJ 30/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Update as per last month. Ongoing work is in place around recognition through comms approach e.g. recognition of good practice and shout outs, and through ongoing approach taken by Directors and Leaders. Employee experience strand within the workforce strategy includes employee recognition and reward. Considerations around formal recognition scheme will be a deliverable within the workforce strategy. RJ 25/04/23
Internal Communications	OC.E2.5	Continuous feedback on effectiveness of internal comms		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Ongoing	Quarterly Reporting Jan, Apr, July, Oct	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Pulse survey will be carried out ahead of the next EES.	On Track- little or no slippage	the next EES. Regularly run surveys in director live events, team talk. Looking at what colleagues are engaging with across internal comms channels.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.6	Regular comms activity around the scale of financial activities and how the organisation is addressing them.		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council	Director - Finance	Strategic Lead - Communications	Jan-23	ongoing	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	All staff newsletter from Finance Director shared.	On Track- little or no slippage	Director of Finance had leadership bulletin in Feb, and regular updating colleagues on live events, re: budget across team talk
Internal Communications	OC.E2.7	Review social media policy and create guidance/ protocol for working with MPs		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications AD - HR	Jan-23	23-Aug	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Comms and HR have met to discuss. Amendments to the social media policy have been drafted and are now being shared for comment.	On Track- little or no slippage	The social media policy has been agreed with TUs, and will now be shared with the CE before dissemination across the organisation.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.8	Regular comms activity around the golden thread		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Jan-23	ongoing	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	We are working with the LGA to develop a new corporate narrative which will enable us to use consistent language to describe council priorities and actions.	On Track- little or no slippage	a new corporate narrative which will enable us to use consistent language to describe council priorities and actions. The LGA are coming in June.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.0	Governance review Phase 2	(New) O10- We will ensure that our refreshed governance arrangements are embedded	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	TBC	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	

Static data			Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.1	Agree project plans relating to each of the changes within the constitution		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	Feb-23	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage	Draft Project Plan was due to be finalised by the end of March but it will now be end April. Activities have already commenced and have not been delayed by the formation of the overriding action plan. This includes report writing training, revising the induction programme for Members, specific training requested by the Leader, addressing streaming issues, and revising scrutiny procedure rules (which will go to Annual Council for approval). Seeking additional resources to help with BAU delivery so that there is capacity to deliver the Governance Review actions (including the finalisation of the action plan).	Complete	Overall project plan being finalised for end May.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.2	Effective decision-making training		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Dates are in place for the initial report writing training in March and April. Further training around procurement, financials etc. and scenario-based learning are being planned (within action OC.G1.1 above).	Complete	Effective report writing training delivered in April. As a result of feedback from the training, more training will be rolled out focusing on the process around effective decision-making.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.3	Delivery of Corporate Governance Development Programme		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director-Finance		Jan-23	May-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	See OC.G1.1 and OC.G1.2 above.	On Track- little or no slippage	See OC.G1.1 and OC.G1.2 above. Focus for this quarter has been the delivery of effective decision making training and budget holder training. Action title to be updated to reflect next phase.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.4	Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training		Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			TBC	tbc	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Part of Corporate Governance Development Programme. It is included within the induction programme for 2023-2024.	On Track- little or no slippage	Part of Corporate Governance Development Programme. It is included within the induction programme for 2023-2024. Action to be monitored within IP until it has been delivered. Dates to be included.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.5	Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training		Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jul-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Training was delivered in 2022. Part of Corporate Governance Development Programme for annual refresh. It is included within the induction programme for 2023-2024. Action to be monitored within IP until it has been delivered.	On Track- little or no slippage	Training was delivered in 2022. Part of Corporate Governance Development Programme for annual refresh. It is included within the induction programme for 2023-2024. Action to be monitored within IP until it has been delivered.
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	OC.H1.0	Assurance Activity to ensure effective contribution of Scrutiny and Audit is sustained	New O10- We will ensure that our refreshed governance arrangements are embedded	Director - Law & Governance						Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	OC.H1.1	Confirm mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the effectiveness of Scrutiny and Audit		Director - Law & Governance		Chairs of ARAC and Scrutiny				N/A	Complete	Range of mechanisms in place including regular review of work programmes, survey, meetings between Chairs and Officers. Regular engagement between Lead Scrutiny Chair and Lead Executive Cabinet Member. Scrutiny guidance published. Scrutiny annual reporting in place. Practice is embedded.	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	OC.H1.2	Quarterly survey of Member and Officers participating in Scrutiny and Audit meetings		Director - Law & Governance			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement Democratic and Member Services Manager		Jan April July October	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Last analysis shared with LT in January. Any immediate concerns/actions are being picked up by Democratic Services for action in between quarterly reporting. On agenda for April IPRM reporting. On agenda for April IPRM reporting.	On Track- little or no slippage	Last analysis shared with LT in January. Any immediate concerns/actions are being picked up by Democratic Services for action in between quarterly reporting. On agenda for April IPRM to conclude quarterly reporting cycle. Discussions underway on arrangements for next Municipal Year.

Theme 2- Corporate Oversight

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
ERP	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion	(New) O15 We will deliver the Oracle transformation programme	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader	Director-Business Strategy & Change Director- Law		Apr-22	Apr-24	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ERP	CO.A1.8	Completion of discovery phase		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Jan-23	Feb-23	N/A	Complete	Phase complete	Complete	Complete
	CO.A1.9	Completion of the modelling phase		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Feb-23	Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Project milestones on track. Some resources issues but being managed by the PMO	On Track- little or no slippage	Project milestones on track. HR and payroll is on the critical path and risk of slippage but this is being managed by PMO.
ERP	CO.A1.10	Go live		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO Lead	Apr-24	Apr-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	No slippage being reported against key project milestones	On Track- little or no slippage	Within Project Milestones to date. Resources in place. Main risk of slippage relates to HR and Payroll.
ERP	CO.A1.11	Programme benefits will be defined during the duration of the programme and agreed with the programme board -a process will be agreed for monitoring and reporting the benefits -benefit realisation will take place post go live.		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Feb-23	quarterly	N/A	Assurance Action	Update due May	Assurance Action	Update due May
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.0	Single Improvement Plan Phase 1		Leadership Team	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Jun-22	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.4	Ongoing Monitoring of Improvement Plan (Monthly Monitoring by Leadership Team, Quarterly Monitoring by Cabinet, ARAC regular review of IP and IP Risk Register, Scrutiny regular review of IP)		Leadership Team	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Ongoing	Monthly assurance	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	February report presented to IPRM 02/03 and to Leader's meeting 08/03. Quarterly report made to Cabinet on 15/03, ARAC on 16/03 and due at scrutiny on 29/03. RJ 16/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	March report presented to IPRM 06/04 and Leader's Meeting 12/04. Next Quarterly reports due to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit in June together with SoS letter. An annual report is being prepared. 24/04/23 RJ
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.5	6 monthly report to Secretary of State		Leadership Team	Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Dec-22	June each year throughout intervention	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December report submitted. Next report due June 2022. SoS response to Commissioners' December letter received 16/03/23. RJ 16/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Preparations underway for June report. 24/04 RJ
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.6	Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan monitored and reviewed by Leadership Team	(New) O2 We will develop and embed excellent people management practices, by effectively leading, supporting and improving our workforce	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jan July each year	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Leadership considered the progress update in January 2023. Agreement reached to conduct next Employee Engagement Survey in Autumn 2023. Next update on survey action plan due July. RJ 16/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Leadership considered the progress update in January 2023. Agreement reached to conduct next Employee Engagement Survey in Autumn 2023. Next update on survey action plan due July. RJ 17/04/23
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B2.0	Single Improvement Plan Phase 2	(New) O7 We will hold ourselves to account for the delivery of the improvement plan and will continuously improve	Leadership team	Leader of the Council			Dec-22	Mar-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B2.1	Approval of Improvement Plan Phase 2		Leadership team	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Dec-22	Mar-23	N/A	Complete	Changes to Improvement Plan as a result of External Follow up Reviews were included in the Quarterly Report to Cabinet in March to form the phase 2 plan. 16/03/23	Complete	Complete
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B2.2	Approval of Improvement Plan Phase 3		Leadership team	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Mar-23	Jun-23	N/A	New Action Added	Phase 2 plan agreed March 2023 to reflect external review findings from Grant Thornton and LGA. Phase 3 plan to be agreed in June to align with the update to the Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans.	On Track- little or no slippage	Phase 3 plan due to Cabinet in June 2023 to reflect response to CIPFA review and that IP activity embedded within Corporate Plan and Business Plans, as appropriate.
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.0	Continuous Improvement		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Spring 2023	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement framework		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Preparations underway for Leadership Team discussion in April and on track for approval in June. RJ 16/03/23	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Continuous Improvement activity is underway as part of improvement plan actions. Framework development has been delayed due to re-prioritisation of resources on LUP development. Timescales to be re-profiled.

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.2	Develop a lessons learnt framework		Chief executive	Leader of the Council			23-Jan	23-Jun	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Initial scoping of work is taking place. Lessons learnt for SEND has been reported to LT. Further lessons learnt around a multi-agency approach to a damp and mould issue is being captured. These examples of lessons learnt will inform the Presentation prepared to aid dissemination of lessons learnt and the actions in place to respond. Lessons Learnt scheduled for face to face WLT in June. Action due to be closed from IP once assurance in place that actions are	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	As update above. Lessons learnt capture is taking place and is informing our plans e.g. seeking lessons learnt around closure of accounts and Oracle implementation in other I&A. Framework development is incorporated.
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.3	Ensure SEND 2 lessons learnt applied		Leadership Team	Leader of the Council			23-Jan	June* to time with embedding actions in business plans	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Lessons learnt and the actions in place to face WLT in June. Action due to be closed from IP once assurance in place that actions are	On Track- little or no slippage	Scheduled for WLT in June. Action due to be closed from IP once assurance in place that actions are embedded in business plans (June).
Performance Management	CO.C1.0	Performance Management Framework (PMF)	(new)U16 - we will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Sep-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Performance Management	CO.C1.3	Quarterly Performance Reports made to Cabinet		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A	Assurance Action	Q3 report made to Cabinet in March. RJ 16/03/23	Assurance Action	Preparations underway for Q4 report to Cabinet in July. RJ 24/04/23
Performance Management	CO.C1.4	Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			January 2023	Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Work underway to refresh Corporate Plan including measures within the performance management framework. Due to be reported to Cabinet in June.	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	There are significant capacity issues in HR services due primarily to the (growing) demands of Oracle Fusion. A new HR dashboard will be developed over the next few quarters ready for reporting in Q1 2024/25. The existing set of organisational health metrics have been prepared for year end reporting within the PMF.
Performance Management	CO.C1.5	Review Corporate KPIs for customer experience to reflect customer experience programme		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			January 2023	Apr-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Work underway to refresh measures within performance management framework linked to the Corporate Plan refresh. This includes a set of customer service standards. These have been drafted and the next stage is to confirm the final metrics. This is due for Leadership Team consideration in April.	On Track- little or no slippage	Work underway to refresh measures within performance management framework linked to the Corporate Plan refresh. This includes a set of customer service standards. These have been drafted and the next stage is to confirm the final metrics. Leadership Team discussed this in April and a revised/final set is going to Leadership Team in May.
Performance Management	CO.C1.6	Review PMF and put in place plans to address data gaps		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Mar 23	Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Work underway to refresh PMF alongside Corporate Plan refresh.	On Track- little or no slippage	Work is continuing to refresh the PMF alongside Corporate Plan refresh. This is going to Leadership Team in May and Cabinet in June.
Performance Management	CO.C1.7	Q4 SCT Contract Report to include overview of ITS (invest to save) activity.		Director - Children & Education	Deputy Leader			June-23	Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Preparations being made for inclusion of this information in Q4 report.	On Track- little or no slippage	The Q4 Contract Report is being prepared for Leadership Team in June and will include specific update details relating to Invest to Save.
Performance Management	CO.C1.8	Corporate performance team in place		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Dec-22	Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Team manager has commenced and additional capacity is in place focusing on data and intelligence. JDs for additional posts are being prepared.	On Track- little or no slippage	Team manager has commenced and additional capacity is in place focusing on data and intelligence. Shortlisting for G Grade post underway and interviews due to take place in May. JD for remaining post being confirmed. RJ 25/04/23
Performance Management	CO.C1.9	New action: Consider integrating revenue, Capital and Performance reporting		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			July 23	Mar-24	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
Performance Management	CO.C2.0	Budget Monitoring	New O11- We will set a sustainable and balanced budget each year	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Mar-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Performance Management	CO.C2.4	Assurance action: Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports made to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action- March, June, Sep, Dec	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A	Assurance Action	Monthly reports are continuing and these are being reviewed for further improvement by the Interim Financial Strategy Manager	Assurance Action	(due June 23) Monthly reports are continuing and these are being reviewed for further improvement by the Interim Financial Strategy Manager
Performance Management	CO.C2.5	Assurance action: Where budget pressures identified, assurance provided that action has/is being taken (monthly summary comment from S151 Officer / raise issues)		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action	Monthly monitoring	N/A	Assurance Action	Budget pressures and mitigations are discussed at LT each month	Assurance Action	As previous update
Performance Management	CO.C2.6	Embed financial benchmarking in budget planning		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Apr-23	Jan-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	As February update	On Track- little or no slippage	As previous update
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.0	Restructuring		Leadership Team	Deputy Leader			Dec-20	Dec-22	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.1	Directorate Level restructuring		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader				Head of HR	N/A	Action on Hold	Directorate-level structure is under discussion. Planning stages for recruitment of Assistant Chief Executive.	Action on Hold	Directorate-level structure is under discussion. Planning stages for recruitment of Assistant Chief Executive.

Static data			Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.2	Review of spans and layers across Council's managerial structures in line with LGA Guidance (likely to be incorporated within Target Operating Model Programme in due course)		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		AD - Transf Head of HR	TBC	TBC	N/A	Action on Hold	as above	Action on Hold	This review is to be addressed through the workforce strategy implementation. Currently on hold.	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.0	Embedding Finance Business Partner role	New O13- We will embed the finance business role	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Aug-22	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.3	Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Finance Improvement Manager	Finance Improvement Manager		Mar-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Due to limited progress internally, C Co has now been commissioned to deliver this and the work is underway. This includes baselining the current position, workshops with staff, a gap analysis and an action plan.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Engagement sessions completed and report due by end of April which will allow plan to be developed by July in line with Change Control.	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.5	Assurance Action: Performance against KPIs for financial services section		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Finance Improvement Manager	Finance Improvement Manager	Ongoing- start date required	Quarterly	N/A	Assurance Action	KPI's agreed and will be embedded from April 2023 for the new financial year to allow for training and recruitment.	Assurance Action	quarterly update	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.0	Reduction of financial transactional activity	New O17- We will establish a corporate transformation programme and Governance Structures	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Mar-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.3	Review of corporate debt recovery processes completed		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Mar-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Review of current debts and debt processes is complete and final recommendations and Business Case for centralising debtors function is due mid-April.	Complete	Review is largely complete and draft report and recommendations received. Implementation of recommendations will be longer process.	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.6	New action: Implement recommended processes for a single view of debt		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				TBC	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			May-22	Mar-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Reviews on track to complete by the end of March 2023 with the exception of Business Support which has a completion date of May 2023.	On Track- little or no slippage	Transactional Finance Reviews completed and recommendations being implemented. Ongoing process so further areas for review are being identified. Also recommendations from some reviews are longer term e.g. business support	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.5	Implementation of Recommendations from CIPFa in relation to internal charges		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Oct-22	Apr-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	New methodology and process now being implemented	On Track- little or no slippage	New process now being implemented	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.7	New action: Develop Business case for Transactional Finance Unit		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				TBC	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.0	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.	New O11- We will set a sustainable and balanced budget	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	May-22	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.4	Assurance Action: GT sign-off of 2020/21 Accounts (assurance that previous issues raised have been resolved)		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Monthly monitoring	Monthly monitoring	N/A	Assurance Action	Accounts approved by ARAC on 16th March but Director of Finance has delegated authority to make final amendments before GT can issue the audit opinion and complete the audit. Staff sickness has slowed progress.	Assurance Action	Updated 20/21 accounts to be completed and handed over to Grant Thornton w/c 8 th May	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.5	Assurance Action: Preparation of Draft Accounts for 2021/2022 (assurance that approach to completion and sign-off of final accounts is becoming embedded)		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Monthly monitoring	Monthly monitoring	N/A	Assurance Action	Agreed early June for completion of 2021/22 accounts as GT have limited capacity before then due to NHS audits. Also gives further time for internal quality assurance of accounts to ensure accuracy is improved	Assurance Action	Slippage due to further asset valuation issues identified in 20/21. Decision to be made on timescale for 21/22 w/c 2nd May.	
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.0	Corporate Transformation programme	New O17- We will develop a corporate transformation programme and governance structure	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21		Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Static data												April Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Focus Main Action Risk	Progress against plan Status (March 2023)	Evidence of status rating Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan Status (April 2023)	Evidence of status rating Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.3	Corporate Transformation PMO established - Local Partnerships Review Concludes - Establishment of PMO		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		AD-Transformation		Late 2022	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Review underway with Local Partnerships to inform establishment of Corporate PMO but this won't be completed until June.	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Review underway with Local Partnerships to inform establishment of Corporate PMO but this won't be completed until June. Establishment of PMO will depend on outcomes of review. September indicative date
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation		Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		AD-Transformation		Mar-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	Verto build ongoing and meeting with internal stakeholders to agree extended deadline to incorporate revised transformation approach.	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	Revised project plan in place linked to Local Partnerships PMO review.
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.5	Corporate Transformation Board operational -ToR Finalised -Membership confirmed -Board dates in place		Director-Finance				23-Jan	Mar-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	CTB is being reviewed in line with PMO Review being undertaken by Local Partnerships. TOR and Membership will be reset once review is complete. In the interim, updates on Customer Journey and progress with other workstreams will be reported to Leadership Team.	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	As March update
Customer Journey	CO.F5.0	Customer Journey Programme	New O8 We will deliver the customer journey programme	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	22-Sep	TBC	Focus 1	N/A		N/A	
Customer Journey	CO.F5.1	Structure and Governance for Customer Experience Programme approved		Director – Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	22-Sep	Oct-22	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Customer Journey	CO.F5.2	Workstream Plans agreed (timeline, cost and resource) for 5 workstreams (fix the backlog, fix the OSS, customer experience strategy, contact centre/community hubs approach, technology)		Director – Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	22-Dec	Feb-23	N/A	Complete	Project briefs in place for the 4 workstreams as backlogs has been removed and will be incorporated in to PMF.	Complete	Complete
Customer Journey	CO.F5.3	Programme Board in place and regular meetings scheduled (first programme board to involve ToR, scope of workstreams, nominations for resources for each workstream, and high level milestones)		Director – Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	Nov-22	Feb 23	N/A	Complete	CI Programme Board in place. Meetings scheduled and Programme Manager in situ.	Complete	Complete
Customer Journey	CO.F5.4	Ward and Casework Management - Member Engagement held		Director – Regeneration & Growth			Strategic Lead - Customer	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Discussions have taken place with Member services. Meetings to be arranged with members but this will not happen before pre-election period.	On Track- little or no slippage	Update remains same as March 2023. Sessions will be booked in for towards the end of May and will include any newly Elected Members.
Customer Journey	CO.F5.5	Ward and Casework Management - Action plan in place		Director – Regeneration & Growth			Strategic Lead - Customer	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Meeting held with Member services, action plan devised, that will be developed further following sessions - this is with Director for approval prior to putting in to place. Pre-election period will delay this.	On Track- little or no slippage	Update remains same as March 2023. Action Plan has been refined and is ready to be implemented following pre-election period and Director sign off.
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.0	Strategic Planning framework	(New)O16 - We will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement approach to ensure we are directing our resources to meet our priorities	Chief Executive						Focus 2	N/A	new action	N/A	new action
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.1	Refresh of partnership wide vision 2030		Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		early 2024	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Engagement with partners, and development of a State of the Borough report has commenced. Aiming for refresh of Vision in early 2024. RJ 16/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Work continues on the State of the Borough report, this will inform the Vision refresh.
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.2	Finalise directorate business plans 2023-2026		Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		Jun-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Approval of Directorate Level Business Plans due in June alongside a refresh to the Corporate Plan. Initial drafts in place and being refined. RJ 23/03/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Work on the refresh of the Corporate Plan is nearly complete, work to understand implications for Directorate Business Plans has been completed. Once LT have finalised the 'we wills' within the CP relevant actions in directorate BP's will be rerouted accordingly.
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.3	Refresh appraisal process		Chief Executive			AD - HR Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	LT agreed update to process for 2023 ahead of implementation of Oracle Fusion and Talent module in April 2024	On Track- little or no slippage	LT agreed update to process for 2023 ahead of implementation of Oracle Fusion and Talent module in April 2024
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.4	Pilot an approach to service planning		Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Conversations have taken place with two Directorates to shape the approach to service planning. Initial priority is refreshing Corporate Plan and aligning Directorate Business Plans to Senior management structure. Timescales to be confirmed.	On Track- little or no slippage	Resource remains focused on refreshing the Corporate Plan and ensuring Directorate Business Plans are aligned. Service.

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction													April Update Due	
Static data			Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.0	Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery	E10- We will develop an overarching Regeneration Strategy supported by an approved Pipeline of Regeneration Projects to support economic recovery from Covid19.	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Autumn 2021	Apr-27	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.2b	Assurance Action- Pipeline projects updated to IPRM on a 6-monthly basis		Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			22-Dec	6 monthly update	N/A	Assurance Action	Due June 23	Assurance Action	Due June 23
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3	Regeneration Pipeline: Agreement to procure a strategic delivery partner		Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Mar-22	Mar-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Engagement with one of the framework providers is being carried out currently. This will feed into the report (to procure a strategic delivery partner) planned to go to Cabinet in June/July.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Update as March 23- Engagement with one of the framework providers is being carried out currently. This will feed into the report (to procure a strategic delivery partner) planned to go to Cabinet in June/July.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery	(New) O5 - We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents, internal workforce and external stakeholders	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		comms	Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Discussions have been held with the LGA to bring in support from comms associates to help deliver a series of workshops in April to develop a corporate narrative. The LGA will also be carrying out a comms health check to advise on the next steps in ensuring the comms team is set up to meet the ambitions of the organisation.	On Track- little or no slippage	Discussions to be held with the LGA in June
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.0	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy	E2 - We will spend more money directly with suppliers in Sandwell. We will do this by developing better intelligence and improving our knowledge of local supply chains, as well as working with major contractors to encourage spending and sub-contracting with local suppliers.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 2021	Jul-22	Focus 2	N/A	May update due	N/A	May update due
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.3	Training delivered		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 22	Dec-22	N/A	Complete		Complete	
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.4	New actions: Action Plan to address gap analysis in strategy to be completed		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Head of Procurement	Apr-23	Jul-23	N/A	New Action Added	new action added	On Track- little or no slippage	Action Plan currently being drafted
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.0	Develop and implement the Commercial Strategy	(New) O18 - We will develop our commercial approach including our approach to contract management and monitoring and deliver our first commercial business streams.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Autumn 2021	Jul-22	Focus 2				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.1	Commercial Strategy Approved		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Mar-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Strategy to be approved by Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources - 28th March 2023	Complete	Strategy approved by Cabinet Member
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.2	Business Cases Presented for commercial workstreams		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			TBC	Feb-23	N/A	Complete	Whilst Strategic Business Cases have been presented there are no pre-mobilisation actions required before full Business Cases can be presented. Various deadlines have been agreed for each business stream and Corporate Transformation Team are providing support. LT also agreed to recruitment of a Commercial Project Manager and this is underway.	Complete	Complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.3	Complete Full Business Cases for identified Business Steams in line with Commercial Project Plan approved by Leadership Team		Director- Finance					Oct-23		New Action Added	new action added		

Static data			We will statement (code & statement in full)	Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action		Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.4	Recruit Commercial Project Officer		Director- Finance					Jun-23		New Action Added	new action added		
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.0	HRA 30 year Business Plan	H17- We will ensure that council homes are safe places to live by fully complying with fire and building safety requirements and regularly reviewing compliance. We will support people in the private rented sector to ensure their landlords comply with safety standards too. H15- We will modernise our tenancy and estate management offer, delivering a more proactive service, early identification and intervention to mitigate risks to tenancy sustainment and a new neighbourhood management working in partnership with communities to address their priorities.	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Assistant Directors - Housing Management and Asset Management		Autumn 2021	Apr-23	Focus 2				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.2	HRA Business Plan developed		Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	ADs		May-22	Mar-23	N/A	Complete	Plan approved by Cabinet 15th February 2023	Complete	Plan approved by Cabinet 15th February 2023
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.3	HRA Business Plan approved (in line with budget approval 2023-24)		Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing				Apr-23	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.4	Procurement of stock condition surveys		Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing				Jun-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Tender deadline is 17/3/23.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Only one tender was received and so were not able to award the contract. The specification needs to be reviewed with a view to re-tendering in May 2023.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A7.0	Refresh the Early Help Strategy	B11 -We will work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives. B15- We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need.	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Mar-22	Focus 2				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A7.2	Early Help Strategy to be reviewed annually at the early help partnership board		Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	Annually	N/A	Assurance Action	Due April 23	Assurance Action	An 'one year on ' event was held in March 2023 to capture updates since the launch of the early help strategy. The early help strategy remains unchanged for now.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.0	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy	B14- We will be a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our 'family', and promoting fostering and adoption.	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan-22	Sep-22	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.3	Corporate Parenting Strategy - yearly assurances provided to the Corporate Parenting Board		Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Annually	N/A	Assurance Action	Due September 23	Assurance Action	Due September 23

Static data			We will statement (code & statement in full)	Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action		Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.0	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	(New) O3 - We will progress and drive our equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government and utilise Council resources to support our equalities agenda	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 1				
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.12	Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting		Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Jul-23	N/A	Complete	Report made to LT. All networks are now up and running with Chairs and Co-Chairs in place. Network chairs have held initial meeting with CEx and ST.	Complete	Complete
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.13	Refresh Equalities Commission Board Renew Terms of reference		Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Apr-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Conversations with Leader have commenced. Report to Executive being prepared for the start of the Municipal Year for approval to the terms of reference.	On Track- little or no slippage	Conversations with Leader have commenced. Report to Executive being prepared for the start of the Municipal Year for approval to the terms of reference.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.14	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy developed - appointment of consultant for data analysis - appointment of consultant for strategy development		Director- Law & Governance			Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23 ?? ??	Jun- 24 ?? ??	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Currently evaluating submissions for data analysis consultant. Anticipated award by end of March. Consultant for strategy development will commence following the data analysis. Currently on track for development of Strategy by June 2024.	On Track- little or no slippage	Direct award offered for data analysis consultant. Due to commence at start of June. This is later than planned but will not impact on the overall timescale of the strategy approval of June 2024. Strategy will form part of an EDI action plan. This is being discussed with the Leader and CEx at end April.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.15	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved and publication		Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Jun-24	Sep-24	N/A	Not due to start		Not due to start	due June 24
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.0	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy	O12 - We will update the Medium Term Financial Strategy at least annually	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Autumn 2022	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.2	Approval of MTFP and Capital Strategy		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Nov-22	N/A				
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.3	New Assurance Action (strategy implemented through budget plans): Budget Report to Cabinet (2023-2026) reflects funding gaps identified in MTFP		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Feb-23	and annually thereafter	N/A	Assurance Action	Cabinet report agreed 15/02/23.	Assurance Action	Due Feb. 2024
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.4	New Assurance Action (embedding the approach): MTFP and Capital Strategy refreshed and approved in October each year		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			October 2023	and annually thereafter	N/A	Assurance Action	Due October 2023	Assurance Action	Due October 2023
Performance Management	SD.D1.5	Approval of updated MTF5		Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			23-Jan	Feb-23	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.0	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework	(New) O5 - We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents, internal workforce and external stakeholders (New)O16 - We will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement approach	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	May-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.3	Survey results embedded within PMF and used to inform insight into how the Council is performing		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	May-23	N/A	Complete	Action complete. Refer to SD.E2.6. Results from the 2022 resident survey will continue to be used and utilised for benchmarking/comparison purposes.	Complete	Complete

Static data			We will statement (code & statement in full)	Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action		Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.6	Procurement of Consultant to deliver regular residents' survey, budget consultation and Citizens' Space		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement			N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Contract awarded for delivery of the resident survey and the budget consultation. Initiation meeting due to take place early April.	On Track- little or no slippage	Timetable of activity agreed for the budget consultation and the resident survey. Work commenced on development of the question set for the budget consultation.
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.7	Consultation and Engagement Framework produced		Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement			N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Citizen space procurement complete and site deployed. Training undertaken by cohort of staff from across the Council, roll out plan commenced, first survey going live on 27/3/23.	On Track- little or no slippage	Five surveys published on the Sandwell Citizen space Site. Roll out of comms plan and training commenced.
Customer Journey	SD.F1.0	Customer Journey Strategy	O8 - We will deliver the customer journey programme and improve customer experience across all of our channels	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strat	Strategic Lead - Customer	Oct-22	Aug-23	Focus 2	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Survey has gone out to all Elected Members. The engagement plan has been completed - engagement to commence May following pre-election period and a variety of sessions have been planned, to be delivered in a variety of methods from May to August. Further research in to other LA CES has taken place. Draft Strategy to be completed by September with final version ready for October 2023.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Very small amount of returns received from survey that went out to Members and therefore reminders have been sent. Work is on-going to prepare for engagement sessions.

Theme 4 - Decision Making

Static data											April Update Due			
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Owners				Dates		Focus Main Action Risk	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
				Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date		Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C3.0	Manage position on historic issues through work with ARAC chair		Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21	Ongoing	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Response provided to Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and scheduled for ARAC at first meeting of next Municipal Year (est June 2023).	On Track- little or no slippage	Response provided to Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and scheduled for ARAC at first meeting of next Municipal Year (est June 2023).

Theme 5- Procurement & Commercial

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Waste Contract	PC.A1.0	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring	(New) O18 - We will develop our commercial approach including our approach to contract management and monitoring and deliver our first commercial business streams.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Aug-22	Focus 2	Complete	assurance actions in place	Complete	assurance actions in place
Waste Contract	PC.A1.3	Assurance Action- Report provided to Officer Leadership on a quarterly basis. Regular reporting through PMF		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Feb-23	quarterly (from Feb) Feb May Aug	N/A	Assurance Action	5/1/2023 next report to Leadership	Assurance Action	Report to Leadership delivered 21/03/23
Waste Contract	PC.A1.4	Assurance Action- Annual report on leisure and waste contracts going through to cabinet member		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Nov-22	annually	N/A	Assurance Action	Next annual reports due by Nov 23	Assurance Action	Next annual reports due by Nov 23
Waste Contract	PC.A1.5	Assurance Action- The large contracts in BE for waste/street cleansing, and both leisure providers will be added to the Intend contract management module.		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				monthly	N/A	Assurance Action	Currently working with InTend in order to add the waste contract by April 2023. Once the waste contract has been uploaded we will add the leisure contract.	Assurance Action	Further work configuration work undertaken by Intend to allow upload of key performance management (quantitative) aspects of contract. Work anticipated to be completed May 2023.
Waste Contract	PC.A2.0	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco	(New) O18 - We will develop our commercial approach including our approach to contract management and monitoring and deliver our first commercial business streams.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Jan-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waste Contract	PC.A2.3	Recommendations reviewed		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Oct-22	N/A	Complete	Final report received from Friths. LT briefing date completed in March 2023	Complete	Final report received from Friths. LT briefing date completed in March 2023
Waste Contract	PC.A2.4	Recommendations adopted, as appropriate		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Jan-23	N/A	Complete		Complete	
Waste Contract	PC.A2.5	Delivery of recommendations – as appropriate		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Apr-23	Mar-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Further report to Leadership April 2023	On Track- little or no slippage	Leadership reporting in place

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Waste Contract	PC.A4.0	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	(New) C14- We will improve the energy efficiency of council housing through retrofit programmes and stock improvements.. C15- We will increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mar-23	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Waste Contract	PC.A4.2	Recovery plan implemented		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Oct	Mar-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Delivery continues with Serco	On Track- little or no slippage	Service Delivery Plan includes street cleansing plan 2023/24
Waste Contract	PC.A4.3	Assurance Action- Senior management meeting - annual plans requested- service delivery plan from SERCO is contractually compliant and includes elements of street cleansing.		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly (from Nov) Nov Feb May Aug	N/A	Assurance Action	Complete for 2022/23	Assurance Action	Complete for 2022/23 New plan for 2023/24 due to Contract Senior Management meeting and next Waste Board
Waste Contract	PC.A5.0	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract	(New) C14- We will improve the energy efficiency of council housing through retrofit programmes and stock improvements.. New C12 We will review our corporate fleet, so	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mid 2023	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waste Contract	PC.A5.2	Fleet replacement complete		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Mid 2023	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Serco is replacing the order for the next 14 RCVs. The review of the PAYMACH indicated there was no benefit in SMBC capital	On Track- little or no slippage	Next RCV order placed by Serco (add date)
Waste Contract	PC.A5.3	Assurance Action- Monthly fleet steering group taking place where the documentation considered by the group is contractually compliant.		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly (from Nov) Nov Feb May Aug	N/A	Assurance Action	Fleet group meetings are taking place as scheduled the next one is on 30th March 2023.	Assurance Action	Next update due May

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
SEND Transport	PC.B3.0	Procurement of 2024 SEND Transport Contract	B16- We will ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families	Director - Children and Education				Nov-22	Sep-24	Focus 2	N/A	n/a	N/A	n/a
SEND Transport	PC.B3.1	Leadership review of lessons learnt from SEND 2		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Sep-22	Nov-22	N/A	Complete	Lessons learnt review has been completed and was presented to IPRM 2nd Feb 2023	Complete	Complete
SEND Transport	PC.B3.2	Mobilise project team and establish project governance		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Feb 2023	April 2023	N/A	Not due to start		Not due to start	not due to start
SEND Transport	PC.B3.3	Commence Procurement		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Spring 2023	Sep 2024	N/A	Not due to start	not due to start	Not due to start	not due to start
SEND Transport	PC.B3.4	Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place		Director- Finan	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education		Jan-23	Ongoing	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	First meeting with GBS to take place w/c 27th March 2023	On Track- little or no slippage	GBS appointed to deliver robust contact management procedures and to support upskilling of team to ensure sustainability
New System Procurement	PC.C1.0	Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system	(New)O16 - We will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement approach to ensure we are directing our resources to meet our priorities	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Jun-21		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New System Procurement	PC.C1.1	Options Appraisal		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader				Mar-23	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Corporate Performance Manager now in place. Options appraisal commenced linked to Local Partnerships PMO conversation around use of Verto. New timescale to be confirmed by next monitoring period	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Corporate Performance Manager now in place. Options appraisal focusing on utilisation of current systems/tools, including Verto, Oracle Fusion and Power BI or the procurement of a new Performance Management System. Options appraisal including internal consultation and engagement to be completed by August 2023, with recommendation to Leadership Team to follow.
New System Procurement	PC.C1.2	Business Case and Implementation Plan Considered		Chief Executive	Deputy Leader				TBC based on selected option	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start
Lion farm	PC.D1.0	Lion Farm: Action plan to agree way forward and resolve matter	Business plan - Develop an agreed way forward for Lion Farm, including development of an action plan	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Dec-21	Dec-23	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Lion farm	PC.D1.4	Implement approved way forward		Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Feb-22	In progress ED due March 2023	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	The anticipated date for resolution was 24th March 2023. Both parties complied with all the deadlines required. The other party provided witness statements to the Expert, with their representations, and in order to provide SMBC the opportunity to respond to these statements, the timeline has been extended to the 5th of April.	Complete	Same update as March- Final determination now due 5th May.
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.0	Governance arrangements to manage, develop and support the current and future delivery of leisure services across the borough, including the new Aquatic Centre	L4 - We will work with our partners, including the community and voluntary sector, to reduce social isolation and ensure people are connected within their local communities and beyond. L6- We will create lots more community-based opportunities with local people, working across our partnerships, including the Voluntary and Community Sector, and we will commission a range of services that make the most of Sandwell's assets (including leisure centres, libraries, parks, community centres, youth centres, museums, canals and Sandwell Valley).	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism			Autumn 2021	May-23	focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.5	Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure facilities		Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism				May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Alongside LATC company setup parallel discussions are now being conducted with SLT regarding a potential extension with them until 2027. This reflects the improved relationship between SMBC and LATC and also the need to mitigate the utility cost pressures (SLTs fixed utility tariffs cannot be novated to LATC).	On Track- little or no slippage	Agreed (subject to Board and Cabinet Member approval) an extension to the termination notice to allow for finalisation of Deed of Variation. Will extend the current Management and Funding Agreement to the point of the handover of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre 13 July.
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.6	Aquatic Centre Handover		Director - Borough Economy					Jul-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Target practical completion date 13 July 2023. Hand over to leisure/ living well leisure / SLT will be no later than 14 July 23.	On Track- little or no slippage	Dates remain on track for hand over no later than 14 July 2023

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	April Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Asset Management	PC.F1.0	Asset Management	New O19- We will implement a new Corporate Asset Management system to ensure the Council has sufficient, comprehensive information to make best use of its assets and assist with timely and accurate completion of annual accounts.	Director – Regeneration & Growth				23-Jan		Focus 2				
Asset Management	PC.F1.1	Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge: Integration of Data in to the system		Director – Regeneration & Growth			Assistant Director – Property, Strategic Assets and Land Transforming Local services-programme manager		May-23	N/A	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Integration Training and meetings are being carried out . Customer portal session is taking place on 29 March 2023. The integration of data in to the system is still on track for May 23. Phase 2 should be completed by August 23.	On Track- little or no slippage	The integration of data in to the system is still on track for May 23.
Asset Management	PC.F1.3	New action: Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge: Configuration and organisation of data		Director – Regeneration & Growth			Assistant Director – Property, Strategic Assets and Land Transforming Local services-programme manager	23-May	Aug-23	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
Asset Management	PC.F1.2	Corporate Asset Management Strategy delivery plan in place		Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			23-Jan	ongoing	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	A report to Leadership team end of April, Agreed action plan needs to be done by May 23. Will be presented to an informal meeting of cabinet	On Track- little or no slippage	Asset management savings plan to be presented on 25/04.

Theme 6-Partnerships & Relationships

Static data													April Update Due	
Static data			Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.0	Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract	B13 - We will work with Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.2	KPI Suite reviewed		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet member for Children and Education			Mar-22	Dec-22	N/A	Complete	KPI suite reviewed.	Complete	KPI suite reviewed.
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.3	Revised KPI suite agreed		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Summer 2022	Dec-22	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	as February update- Final KPI will be agreed before the commencement of the contract on 1 April 2023	Complete	The KPIs along with accompanying tolerances will be implemented in Q2
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.4	Review of Contract concludes		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet member for Children and Education				Dec-22	N/A	Complete	Completed and submitted to the DfE.	Complete	Completed and submitted to the DfE.
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.5	Contract Review with DfE		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet member for Children and Education	Director - Finance			Spring 23	N/A	Complete	Submitted to DfE	Complete	Submitted to DfE
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.6	Contract commences		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	Apr-23	N/A	Not due to start	due April 23	Complete	In place, commenced 1/4/23
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.7	New KPIs reported through PMF		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Aug-23	Sep-23	N/A	Not due to start	due Sept 23	Not due to start	due Sept 23
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.8	New action: KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jul-23	Oct-23	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.0	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level	B13 - We will work with Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.3	Assurance action: Feedback provided on a 6 monthly basis on the continuation of regular cross - SMBC/SCT leadership team meetings.		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan	6 monthly Jan July	N/A	Assurance Action	July update	Assurance Action	July update
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.0	Establish corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues, such as corporate parenting and delivery of Early Help service	B15-We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data													April Update Due	
Static data			Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	We will statement (code & statement in full)	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (March 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(March 2023)	Status (April 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(April 2023)
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.3	Assurance action- Twice yearly performance reports tabled at Children and Education Scrutiny Board		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	6 monthly	N/A	Assurance Action	Due Apr 23	Assurance Action	Report was tabled at the March 23 Children and Education Scrutiny Board
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.0	Continue to develop the relationship with and actively participate in regional and sub-regional bodies (e.g. WM Combined Authority, Black Country LEP) to maximise opportunities for Sandwell	A1 -We will work with the WMCA to ensure that our residents can access employment opportunities across the region, particularly by public transport. H18 Housing - CP Action	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive		Jan-22		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.6	Assurance Action: Update provided on a 6 monthly basis by Director of Regen and Growth to confirm representation at key meetings continues and brings benefit to the council. Key meetings for Members to attend at sub regional and regional level are: ABCA Leaders; WMCA Board; WMCA Economic Growth Board; WMCA Housing and Land Board.		Director-Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Mar-23	6 monthly update	N/A	Assurance Action	participation in key regional and sub regional partnerships such as the WMCA Board, the CA Economic Growth Board, CA Housing and Regen Board and the ABCA Leaders. One example of the benefit of this participation is that Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has secured support from the Mayor and all Met Leaders to the agreed allocation of £2m from the Commonwealth Games 2022 budget underspend of £70m and this is being	Assurance Action	due Sept
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.0	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere'	(New) L17 We support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control, live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health				Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.1	Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services (preparing for adulthood project)		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health			May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	OBC refined in partnership with SCT and will include key external partners. •Governance structure agreed for both Sandwell Council and the Trust •Project board reps' agreed and workstream leads identified •Failure to recruit (twice) to the project managers post has prompted the Job description to be redefined and is due to be advertised imminently. Interest in the post has already been expressed. •Additional resource from within the business has been identified to progress activities included in the outline business case. •Final sign off for the business case is planned for the	On Track- little or no slippage	No change, on schedule
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.2 b	To broaden scope of partnership structures to explore the integration of adult services where appropriate		Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health			Feb-23	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Specific agenda item at the five boards governance group	On Track- little or no slippage	As previous month too
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.5	Assurance action: link to PC.C1.4 Receive a quarterly update from DPH and DAS to provide assurance that governance remains in place to test adequacy of partnerships through system-wide thematic deep dives and that any issues are being addressed by the partnership.		Director - Public Health		Director - Adult Social Care		Quarterly	Jan 23 Apr 23 July 23 Oct 23	N/A	Assurance Action	Apr-23		
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.0	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector.	C1 We will ensure our grant funding of community/voluntary sector activity supports the priorities we're outlining in this plan.	Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities			Mar-22	Jul-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.2	VCS Strategy formation commences		Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities		Director - Housing	2023	2023	N/A	Complete	New milestones captured as PR.D1.3 and PR.D1.4	Complete	New milestones captured as PR.D1.3 and PR.D1.4
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.3	Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy		Leadership Team			Director - Housing	Jan-23	Apr-23		Action on Hold	A more fundamental look a the relationship with the VCS is being taken. An annual report is being prepared that will focus on investment and impact. A Cabinet session is planned for June/July with the strategy due for approval in Autumn.	Action on Hold	A more fundamental look a the relationship with the VCS is being taken. An annual report is being prepared that will focus on investment and impact. A Cabinet session is planned for June/July with the strategy due for approval in Autumn.
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.4	Approval of VCS Strategy		Leadership Team			Director - Housing	23-Apr			Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start

Improvement Plan

May 2023





Kerrie Carmichael
Sandwell Council Leader

A year on from the approval of our Improvement Plan, we are proud to look back over our achievements.

We have embarked on whole-scale organisational change at the same time as delivering on our Corporate Plan commitments.

The long-standing service issues raised by external reviews in 2021 have now either been addressed or are well-progressed with robust delivery plans in place. This has enabled the council to shift its focus to longer-term planning. We welcomed follow-up external reviews from Grant Thornton, the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in Autumn 2022. Together with our Commissioners, they noted our significant progress.

Over the past year our achievements have been recognised. Sandwell's Emotional Wellbeing Programme has been shortlisted as one of eight finalists in the Innovation in Partnerships category at The Municipal Journal Awards. The project has supported more than 2,000 children and young people who are struggling with mental health issues. The prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) West Midlands Awards

for Planning Excellence 2022 honoured Sandwell Council's planners for shaping the regeneration of Smethwick. Our Housing Team were also shortlisted for an Inside Housing Development award for Best Older People's Housing Development - in 2022.

The launch of our One Team Framework, which sets out the organisational values and behaviours, was a significant milestone in our improvement journey. The five new organisational values and behaviours set out an ambition to be 'one team united and working together with a shared purpose of achieving great results' that is customer focused, inclusive, ambitious and accountable.

Over the past year, firm foundations have been laid and we have established mechanisms and approaches for new ways of working. More of our work is being driven by engagement, co-production, and using evidence effectively. We are also benefitting from strengthened relationships between Members and Officers and effective input from Audit and Scrutiny Committees as part of our One Council approach.

Examples of this include:

- Proposals around Brandhall Golf Course and consideration of the 4-Yearly Election Cycle, which involved resident engagement and consultation, and Scrutiny involvement to inform the decision-making process
- Using our resident's consultation to inform business planning and budget setting
- Development of the One Team Framework through staff engagement
- Developing our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy through focusing on insight and data

This report presents our progress against each of the six Improvement Plan themes. It contains the objectives for each theme, a timeline of the milestones achieved, evidence of success, and the next areas of focus.

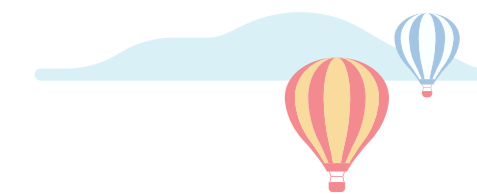
We have refreshed our Corporate Plan for 2023 to reflect priorities raised during our business planning process, the significant amount of change over the past 12 months, and the longer-term activity contained within the Improvement Plan. This paves the way for our improvement activity to be embedded within our Performance Management Framework and to move away from a stand-alone plan in forthcoming months.

Our ambition is not simply to see the end of Government intervention; we're striving for excellence.

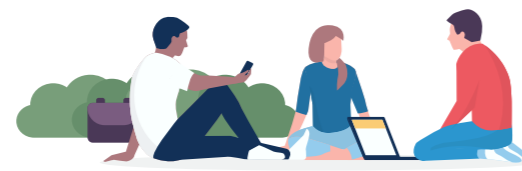
Within the Improvement Plan our key areas of focus over forthcoming months are driving our plans around Organisational Culture, Customer Journey, Transformation and Delivering the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

We enter the year ahead with pride in our achievements and a commitment to continue to work as One Team to drive the council's improvement.

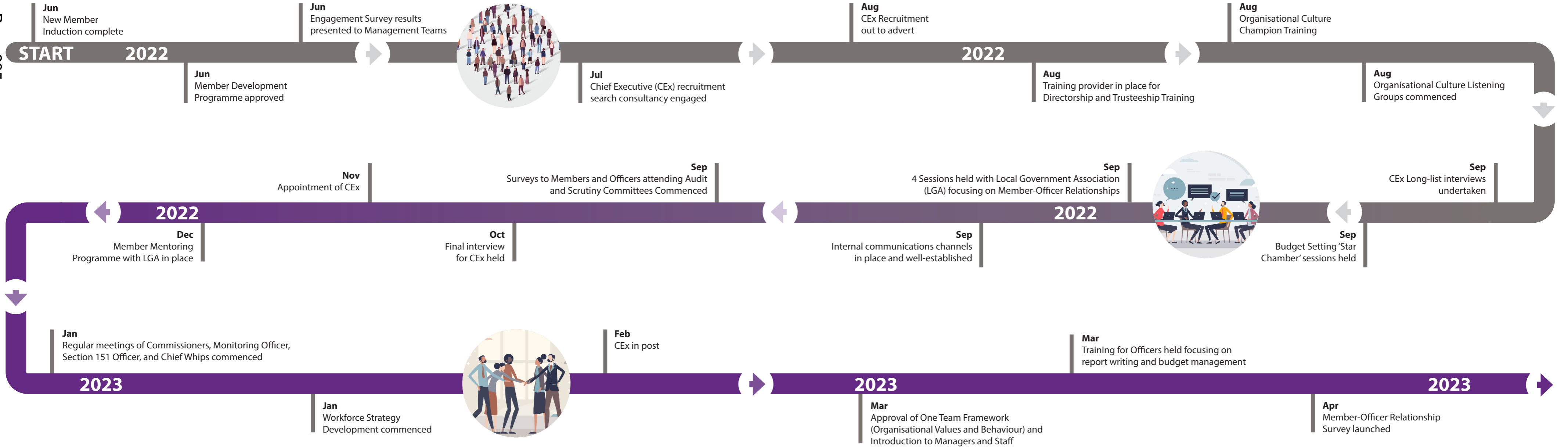
Our progress so far could not have happened without the commitment and dedication of Members and Officers alike and we want to pass on our thanks and appreciation to them.



Shokat Lal
Sandwell Council Chief Executive



Organisational Culture



Objectives

- For Senior Leadership (Officers and Members) to work together effectively
- That Officers receive appropriate support and direction from Senior Leaders
- For the council’s organisational culture to change, ensuring sustainable improvement through a focus on improving outcomes for residents, empowering staff to make decisions at the right levels, learning lessons and embedding customer focus throughout the organisation

Evidence of Success

We said that when we have made progress towards embedding an effective organisational culture, we would see evidence of:

- Employee engagement results improving
- Managers demonstrating expected behaviours (via employee engagement survey results)
- Members demonstrating effective behaviours
- Officers and Members having confidence in their decisions
- Healthy and regular dialogue between Senior Leaders (Officers and Members)
- Improved take-up of Member Development Programme opportunities
- Improvements in external review outcomes

The launch of our One Team Framework (organisational values and behaviours) marks the start of the next phase of our organisational culture change programme. The framework is the result of cross-council staff engagement which was facilitated by an internal network of Culture Champions. It sets out an ambition to be one team ‘united and working together with a shared purpose of achieving great results’ that is customer focused, inclusive, ambitious and accountable.

The repeat of our employee engagement survey in Autumn 2023 will further our insight into how our organisational culture is changing and how well the values and behaviours are becoming embedded. We have learnt from our 2022 Employee Engagement Survey results and we are committed to involving staff in the changes that affect them. An example includes staff views being used to inform policy development around hybrid working through a survey which received more than 1,350 responses from staff and managers.

474
staff involved in developing the One Team Framework



Our comprehensive Member Development Programme has been developed based on Members’ needs and learning from previous years. Member and Officer training around decision-making and governance has been well-received and is helping to embed the constitutional changes made during the year. Personal Development Plans have been developed for Members and learning needs are being addressed within the next update to the Member Development Programme.

We have made significant strides in the relationship between Members and Officers which was acknowledged by our external reviewers. Along with training and support, a range of meetings are in place to facilitate a healthy and regular dialogue which includes meetings with Group Leaders and Chief Whips and cross-party working groups. The strength of the relationship has enabled the council to move forward on difficult decisions such as the 4-Yearly Election Cycle, development of Brandhall Golf Course, the introduction of garden waste charging, and setting a balanced and sustainable budget for 2023/24 without reliance on reserves.

We know that culture change will take time. We are committed to continuous improvement

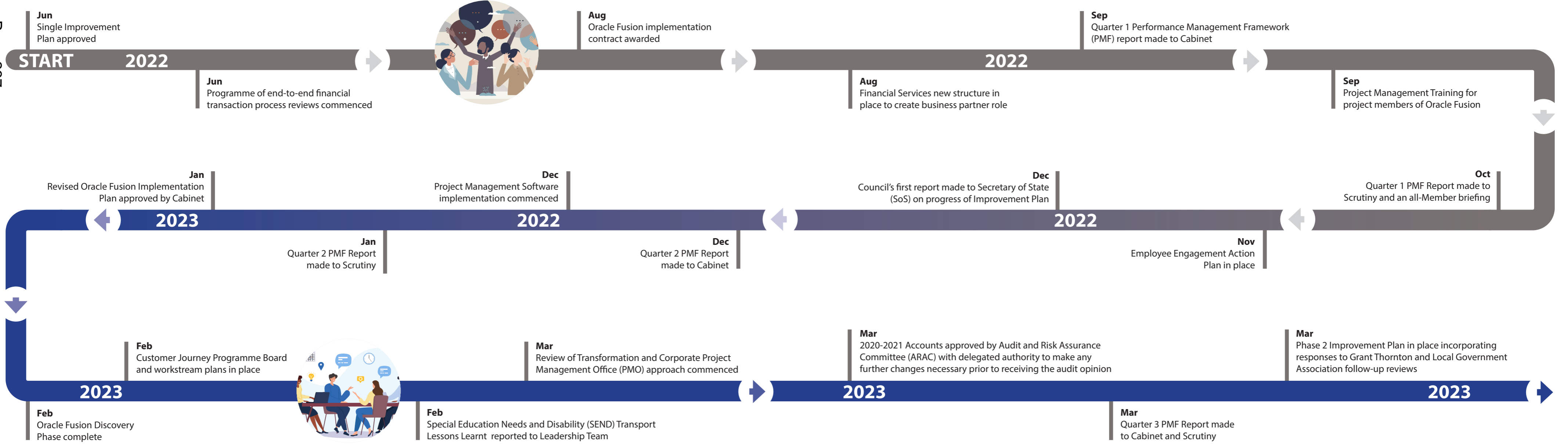
and have recently launched a Member-Officer Relationship Survey to build on insight gained to date through seeking views from Officers and Members participating in Audit and Scrutiny Committees and the Employee Engagement Survey.

‘Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well’
LGA

Next Steps

- Roll out of the One Team Framework to embed values and behaviours
- Continued focus on Member-Officer Relationships and New Member Induction
- Workforce Strategy approved and implemented
- Continued focus on learning and development for Members and Officers to embed corporate governance changes
- Using insight to drive continuous improvement - Employee Engagement Survey and Member Officer Relationship Survey

Corporate Oversight



Objectives

- Take effective corporate oversight of long-standing service issues and the council's overall improvement journey
- Embed learning from service issues identified in external reviews
- Provide a corporate approach to performance management and the delivery of programmes and projects
- Ensure the role of the Corporate Core is strengthened to enable front line services and staff to focus on outcomes for residents

Evidence of Success

When we are demonstrating effective corporate oversight, we said that we would see evidence of:

- Performance information being used by Leadership Team and Members to set strategic direction and respond to issues
- Improvement in performance measures relating to One Council
- Improvement in Employee Engagement Score
- Improvement in the views of external reviews

The long-standing service issues raised by Grant Thornton in their original Value for Money Governance Review have either been resolved or good progress has been made with a firm delivery plan in place. A major area of focus for the council is around improvements to the customer journey and we are developing a far-reaching programme of work linked to our One Team Framework.

'The council has a greater corporate grip over improvement, performance and decision making'

Grant Thornton Autumn 2022

In June 2022 we made our first quarterly report on our newly agreed Performance Management Framework. Over the past year we have reported quarterly on our progress in delivering the Corporate Plan along with our key performance measures around organisation health, finance and customer. Governance structures have been established to ensure regular monitoring and performance conversations are taking place. The Local Government Association (LGA) commented that 'the [Performance Management] Framework, and the information and insights it provides, act as a prime example of the way in which an increased evidence-base for decision-making can be seen in the council.'

Performance information is being used to set strategic direction and respond to issues. Examples include:

- Prioritising work around the customer journey
- Conducting additional analysis around recruitment and retention issues to inform a corporate approach
- Taking in-year action to manage the projected budget position e.g. through vacancy management arrangements
- Work to improve our response rates on Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) bringing them closer to target

- Reducing the number of Corporate Plan actions with significant progress issues
- Using an evidence bundle, including performance information and the outcomes from resident's consultation to inform our refreshed Business Plans and Corporate Plan
- Pulling together activity into a comprehensive transformation programme that will improve accessibility, systems, service and embed a customer focused culture

FOI response rate from
62% at Q1
to
82% at Q3

Strong governance arrangements were put in place to deliver the Commonwealth Games with regular updates to Leadership Team. Close working partnerships between the council, Commonwealth Games Organising Committee (CGOC) and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) allowed for the robust management of issues that arose throughout the project, resulting

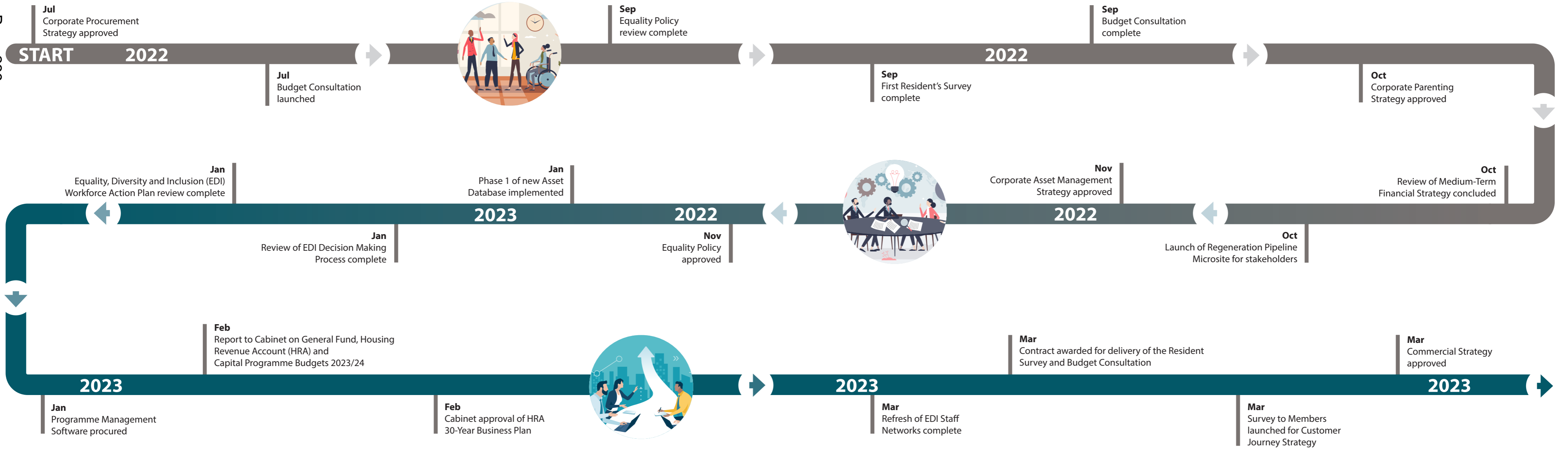
in the successful cross-council delivery of the Commonwealth Games events at the Sandwell Aquatic Centre. The Oracle Fusion Programme now has a more robust governance and resource model in place. A new Systems Integration Partner was procured in 2022 and a revised, realistic implementation plan and budget was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. A comprehensive Change Strategy is now in place.

We are taking time to reflect and learn. We completed a lessons learnt exercise around Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Transport Procurement. This is informing the council's overall approach to procurement such as through the creation of a procurement pipeline to help manage resources along with revised guidance and templates. It has also informed developing plans around the creation of a Programme Management Office and approach. This is currently under review with Local Partnerships. We are undertaking a lessons learnt exercise with Grant Thornton around the closure of our financial accounts and have sought out and have reflected on lessons learnt from a neighbouring local authority around their implementation of Oracle Fusion to assure ourselves around our approach and mitigations. A standard approach to lessons learnt is being developed.

Next Steps

- Continued focus on using performance information and insight to set strategic direction and respond to issues
- Implementation of service standards
- Creation of Corporate Project Management Office
- Transformation Programme in place
- Oracle Programme 'go live'
- Sign-off of final accounts for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023
- Delivery of Customer Journey Programme

Strategic Direction



Objectives

- Ensure that focus is maintained on longer-term direction through effective strategies being in place to support our Corporate Plan outcomes
- Ensure that sustainable financial planning is in place that is aligned to our priorities
- Conduct consultation and use the findings to inform budget setting and our understanding of how the council is performing

Evidence of Success

We said that when we are maintaining focus on our longer-term plans, we will see evidence of:

- Improvement to Corporate Plan Outcome Measures
- Sustainable Financial Planning in Place aligned to priorities
- Consultation and Engagement Shaping Strategic Direction and Financial Planning
- Examples of Sandwell's national profile showcasing the good work of the council

Through focused reporting, we have demonstrated significant progress on our Corporate Plan, and have reduced the number of areas with significant issues over the year (from 9 to 3, between quarter 2 and quarter 3). In July 2023 we will make our first report against Corporate Plan measures which will further grow our insight into performance to drive our strategic thinking and direction.

The original Grant Thornton Review of 2021 identified the disproportionate amount of time spent firefighting in recent years. In their follow-up review of 2022, Grant Thornton commented that 'by taking a grip of many long-standing operational challenges the leadership of the council is starting to create time and space to better consider the long-term'.

Our strategic capacity is growing. Leadership Team are dedicating more collective time to strategic thinking, for example through our recent work around the cost of living crisis and the customer journey.

We now have a set of new long-term strategies in place developed through engagement with partners. These include strategies around Early Help, Corporate Parenting, Green Spaces and Health and Wellbeing along with the £2.3bn pipeline of regeneration projects set to transform Sandwell's six towns in the coming years. We are monitoring the delivery of these strategies through the Performance Management Framework and we are making a positive impact. Of families who received multi-agency early help, 76.2% were not referred back to Early Help services or Children's Social Care within 12 months. New strategies around the Customer Journey, Workforce and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion are in development. All of which are drawing on extensive engagement.

We have set a balanced budget for 2023-24 that is aligned to our Corporate Plan priorities. Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been fundamentally reviewed and looks ahead to 2026. It identifies medium term savings options, closer integrates capital and revenue planning and we are committed to reviewing this annually.



CIPFA rating from 2* to 3* rating for Financial Management

In Summer 2022 we conducted a Resident's Wellbeing and Perception Survey and Budget Consultation. This has informed our 2023-2026 budget and business planning. For example, residents' preferred way to close the budget gap was to introduce more charging for non-essential services and to make savings through reducing buildings. This shaped our considerations of charging for garden waste collections, and informed our Corporate Asset Management Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in November. We are committed to continuing this approach and have a commission in place for resident's engagement and budget consultation for the next three years.

We enjoyed national and international coverage of Sandwell through the Commonwealth Games, and we are continuing to build Sandwell's profile for example with coverage in Local Government press for the Assistant Chief Executive recruitment, and successes in awards. These include:

1,062

participants of resident's survey – providing a representative sample

- Sandwell's Emotional Wellbeing Programme which has been shortlisted for the Innovation in Partnerships category at the Municipal Journal Awards
- Our Planners being awarded for the shaping of the regeneration of Smethwick by the prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence 2022
- Our Housing Team being shortlisted for an Inside Housing Development award for Best Older People's Housing Development - in 2022.

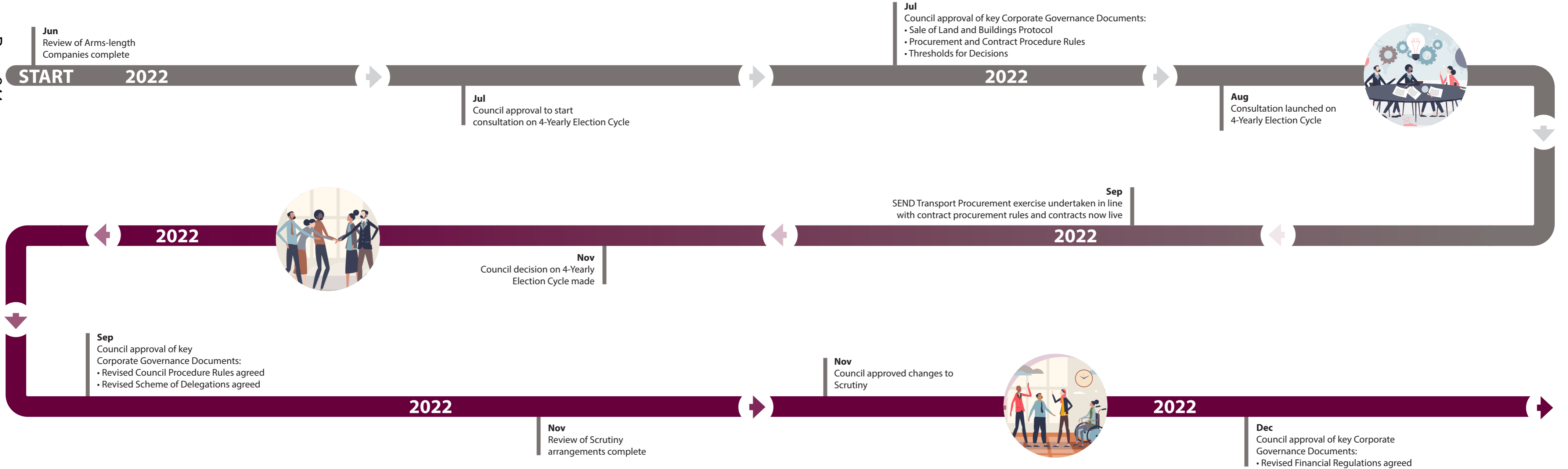
Sandwell has some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country and the challenges facing residents have been exacerbated by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Sandwell has been recognised as an area in need and we are excited to be working in partnership with the Government to bring forward proposals for a Levelling Up Partnership to further our regeneration aspirations.

Next Steps

- Development of our strategies around Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion and Customer Journey
- Prioritising Leadership Team collective time on strategic matters
- Continuing to use insight from consultation and engagement and the Performance Management Framework to inform strategic direction



Decision Making



Objectives

- Review and refresh key corporate governance documents laying the foundations for robust decision-making, audit and scrutiny and culture change
- Create a clear and strong role for Scrutiny and Audit and embed in practice
- Explore options around a 4-yearly electoral cycle

Evidence of Success

When we are demonstrating clear effective decision making, we said that we would see evidence of:

- Decision reports written which set out options and an assessment of their impact on outcomes for residents
- Evidence of effective scrutiny work through robust scrutiny review / input into priority areas
- Audit input driving assurance and improvement
- Commissioners' role embedded and understood across the council

Over the last twelve months we have undertaken a comprehensive corporate governance review, building in best practice and taking a co-production approach by engaging Members and Officers throughout. As a result, key corporate governance documents have been revised that clearly set out roles and responsibilities at all levels improving the transparency in decision making and ensuring decisions are made at the appropriate level. These include Thresholds for Decisions, Financial Regulations, Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol, and a revised Scheme of Delegation.

The current focus of the governance review is to embed the constitutional changes. This involves a series of learning and development activities for

Members and Officers, implementation of phase 2 of the Mod.gov system, and developing a new set of performance measures within the Corporate Performance Management Framework to track our progress.

In October 2022 the LGA revisited us to review our progress and reported positively on the effective work of Scrutiny. Examples of effective scrutiny work include a call-in around the Brandhall development, scrutiny of the SEND Transport Procurement, work underway on the customer journey, and a review into the impact of lockdown on children and families.

'Scrutiny is going from strength to strength'

LGA 2022

Grant Thornton also provided feedback on their return visit around the positive contribution of Audit and acknowledgement of the focus on matters of strategic importance rather than historic matters. A series of improvements to Audit and Scrutiny have been embedded throughout the course of the Municipal Year including agenda setting meeting and pre-meeting briefings with Chair and Committee Members. In order to

provide continued assurance around the work of Scrutiny and Audit, a survey is sent out at the end of each meeting to collate Officer and Member responses that are used to aid the continuous improvement work around these committees. The insight has led to conversations around etiquette in meetings to clarify expectations, improving the robust questioning from panel members and it has informed the Member Development Programme.

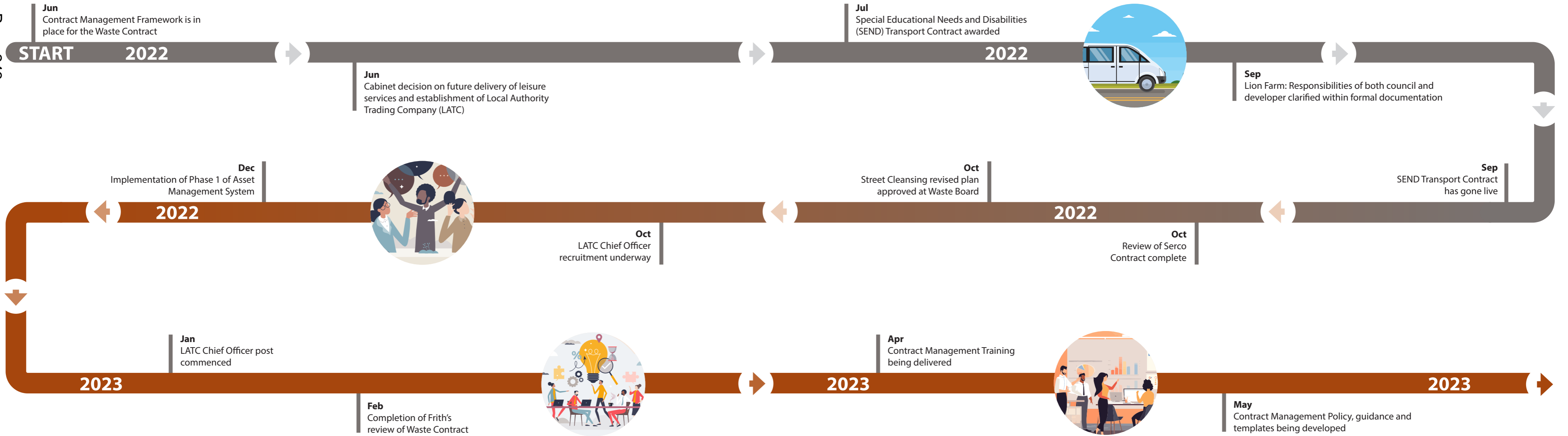
The Commissioners' role has been embedded within the council and the understanding of the role has been aided by regular staff communications. This included an 'All Staff Briefing' held January 2023 where updates were provided on the transition arrangements when the new incoming Chief Executive was due to join the council. The Commissioners' priorities were also shared at this meeting and live Q&A allowed for staff to ask questions.

Next Steps

- Continuing to embed constitutional changes
- Focus on continuous improvement in decision-making including the development of metrics within the Performance Management Framework



Procurement and Commercial



Objectives

- Conclude procurement and commercial matters in relation to key legacy issues
- Ensure that learning in relation to issues around commercial decisions, procurement and contract management are understood across the council
- Ensure corporate ownership and effective contract management of major contracts
- Ensure that major contracts have an effective focus on service quality and outcomes
- Conduct effective procurement for the new systems that are needed to support the delivery of the council's Improvement Plan

Evidence of Success

When we have robust systems and processes around procurement, commercial matters and contracts, we said we will see evidence of:

- Key contracts being effectively managed
- Improved outcomes from key contracts and commercial decisions as demonstrated by performance indicators for leisure, and waste
- Lessons learnt documented

In the original report from Grant Thornton, it was highlighted that contracts had been impacted by either poor specification during procurement, lack of clear contract management responsibility or poorly defined approaches to contract management. During their return visit in October 2022, they were able to see that there was clear evidence that the council was making better procurement and commercial decisions.

They pointed to Sandwell, Land and Property (SLaP) having been dissolved, Lion Farm and Providence Place being managed to a conclusion and notice having been served on Sandwell Leisure Trust. It was also noted that Sandwell Children's Trust had seen their rating improve on their most recent Ofsted inspection representing significant improvement.

Key major contracts are being managed across the council and they are embedded within the Corporate Performance Management Framework

to review their performance and service outcomes.

As a result of this focused monitoring, resident reported missed bins have been reducing month on month, and a clear plan is in place to improve street cleansing. Serco has now purchased a suite of new equipment including mini-sweepers, large mechanical sweepers and electric street vacuums, all of which should significantly improve the borough's cleanliness.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Transport Contract was awarded in September 2022 following a robust procurement process. Lessons learnt sessions were carried out with staff involved in the process and documented to aid continuous improvement. The findings are being shared and embedded within business plans.

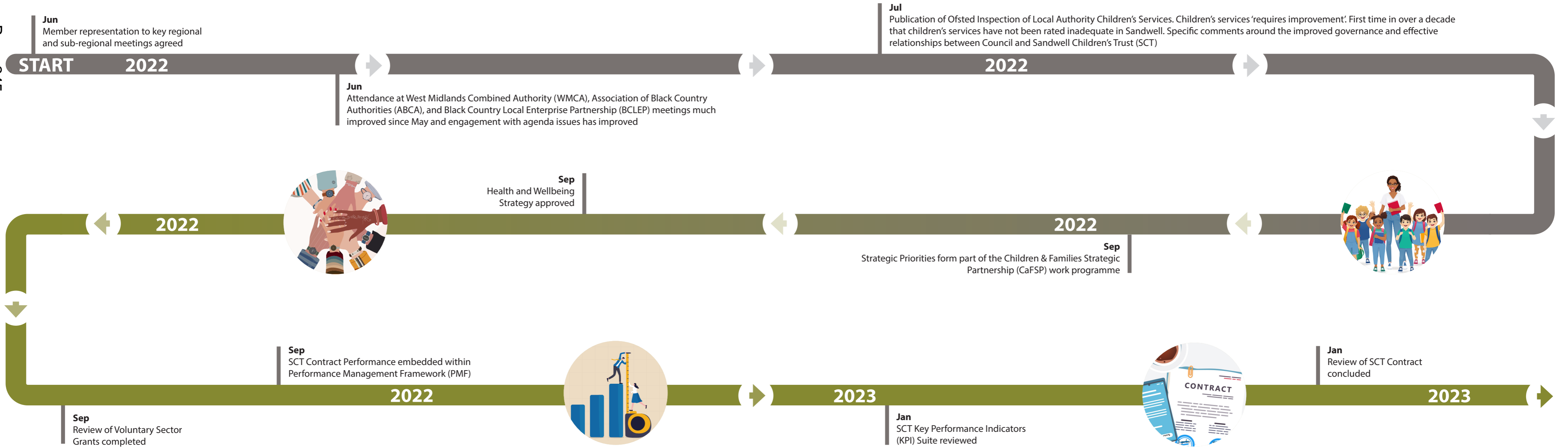
We have commissioned a piece of work to review the council's current contract management arrangements, provide training for relevant officers and develop a suite of contract management policies and templates. Specific contract management support is being provided externally for a small number of key contracts.

Next Steps

- Waste and Leisure Contracts being added to In-tend Contract Management Module to assist contract monitoring
- Review of council's current contract management arrangements
- Corporate Performance Management System in place
- Report to Cabinet on determination of position of developer for Lion Farm
- Establishment of Local Authority Trading Company for future delivery of leisure services
- Phase 2 of Asset Management System implementation



Partnerships and Relationships



Partnerships and Relationships

Objectives

- Improve Sandwell Council's standing with key partners and professional bodies at national, regional and local level
- Improve corporate approach to partner relationships
- Determine the future relationship between Sandwell Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and the approach to funding

Evidence of Success

When we have effective partnerships and relationships at all levels, we said that we will see evidence of:

- Improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell evidenced in Key Performance Indicators
- Improved external review outcomes
- Regular and active presence at regional and sub regional meetings resulting in more opportunities linked to Sandwell's priorities (e.g. Sandwell's financial asks realised)
- Improved performance in outcomes on the impact of health inequalities on individuals
- Clear understanding of the relationship between the council and the VCS that is embedded in practice – evidenced by feedback from VCS

Key Performance Indicators relating to the contract with Sandwell Children's Trust are reported and tracked through the Corporate Performance Management Framework to support senior leadership oversight. Over the year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of children in care and continued efforts across the Trust and council on workforce issues. New KPIs have been reviewed and will be introduced during Q1 following the commencement of the Sandwell Children's Trust

contract on 1 April 2023, and a dashboard of KPIs has been developed to support the Early Help Strategy delivery.

We regularly attend and participate in key regional and sub regional partnerships such as the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board, the WMCA Economic Growth Board, the WMCA Housing and Regeneration Board and the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) Leaders. This participation has meant that we have secured support from the Mayor and all Metropolitan Leaders to the agreed allocation of £2million from the Commonwealth Games 2022 budget underspend of £70million to fund increased utilities costs for the Sandwell Aquatic Centre. We have also fully participated in the negotiations and discussions on the proposals for a Devolution Deal with Government and formal decisions will be taken on this in the Autumn of 2023.

External Partners were spoken to by the Local Government Authority (LGA) when they returned in October 2022 and noted that Sandwell Council was much better again at sub-regional level, with the Leader of the Council being seen to engage in all the right places.

'Sandwell's voice is now being heard more widely'

LGA 2022

We are also working well with local partners, as demonstrated by our recent Cost of Living Emergency Summit. The summit brought together more than sixty public, private and voluntary sector partners to coordinate our efforts to support our community through this crisis. It resulted in a series of partnership-wide commitments and asks.

Our relationship with the VCS continues to deliver significant outcomes for Sandwell. A comprehensive review of grant funding across the sector demonstrated that our investment is to be aligned to our corporate objectives, and we continue to be committed to working in partnership in the long-term. Our partnerships are recognised as good practice, e.g., Community Cost of Living Champions and the Emotional Wellbeing Programme (shortlisted for MJ Award 2023 Innovation in Partnerships).

Next Steps

- Transitions Project (Children's to Adult Services) commences
- Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy to be formulated and approved
- Continuation of participation at regional and sub-regional level



Appendix 3 – Statutory Recommendation Status Summary April 2023

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<p>Page 247</p> <p>S1 - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council</p>	<p><u>Organisational Culture</u> Assurance Activity to ensure effective contributions of Scrutiny and Audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey to Scrutiny and Audit Members, and Officers attending Committees is being carried out on an ongoing basis to support continuous improvement. Findings were reported to IPRM in April 2023. The information continues to be shared with Democratic Services on a weekly basis so improvement can be implemented at first opportunity. Consideration being given to survey for 2023-24 Municipal Year linked to the Member-Officer relationship survey (conducted in April). <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u> ERP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project milestones on track. HR and payroll are on the critical path and risk of slippage, but this is being managed by PMO. On track for April 2024 Go Live. <p><u>Strategic Direction</u> Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regen Strategy and Pipeline: Update report across all the projects covering April- September was presented at November Cabinet. Next update due June 2023. The options for procuring a strategic delivery partner are being actively explored. Engagement is taking place with one of the framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oracle Fusion Implemented- On track. Regeneration pipeline: strategic delivery partner in place – due in July <p>Completed milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SCT Contract concludes- Complete Review of scrutiny arrangements- Complete Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)- Complete Termination notice for SLT contract approved by Cabinet- complete Revised contract governance arrangements in place for Serco contract- complete Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan Implementation - Complete Street Cleansing Recovery Plan approval – Resubmission to Waste Management Board in - Complete

	<p>providers. This will feed into the report to procure a strategic delivery partner planned for Cabinet in June/July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VERTO- Procurement complete and implementation phase has commenced. <p><u>Decision Making</u> No actions in this theme</p> <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u></p> <p><u>Waste Contract:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Delivery Plan includes street cleansing plan 2023/24 • Annual Plans complete for 2022/23 New plan for 2023/24 due to Contract Senior Management meeting and next Waste Board • Next RCV order placed by Serco • Fleet group meetings are taking place as scheduled the last one was held on 30th March 2023. • Continuation of quarterly monitoring through PMF. <p><u>SEND Transport:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GBS appointed to deliver robust contact management procedures and to support upskilling of team to ensure sustainability • Preparations being made for SEND3 procurement • Lessons learnt completed and being presented to Wider Leadership Team in June. <p><u>New System Procurement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management System- Corporate Performance Manager now in place. Options appraisal commenced linked to Local Partnerships PMO conversation around use of Verto. New timescale to be confirmed by next monitoring period <p><u>Asset Management</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SERCO contract performance reporting embedded in Performance Management Framework - Complete • Option appraisal for future leisure management options – Complete • Scrutiny work Planning event - Complete • Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion-complete • Approval of Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline- Complete • Early Help Strategy approved and launched- Complete • Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh Approved- Complete • SEND Transport procurement published- complete • SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings - Complete • SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF-Complete
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 of Tech Forge project underway. Integration of data into the system is expected in May 23. Phase 2 configuration and integration due to be completed August 23. <p>Lion Farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some slippage in timescales due to the Expert Determination process. Final determination now due 5th May. <p>Leisure Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extension to the termination notice with SLT was agreed (subject to Board and Cabinet Member approval) to allow for finalisation of Deed of Variation. This will extend the current Management and Funding Agreement to the point of the handover of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre 13 July. Continuation of quarterly reporting through PMF. <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u></p> <p>Sandwell Children’s Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract commenced 01/04/23 The new KPIs along with accompanying tolerances will be implemented in Q2 Continuation of quarterly reporting through PMF alongside SCT governance arrangements 	
<p>S2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management</p>	<p><u>Organisational Culture</u></p> <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management and Development Programme Broad scope agreed- Manager essentials Pilot session took place 20 April for Manager skills workshop. Sessions booked for May and June and promotion in April Team Talks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Resident Survey in place – in procurement Corporate Governance Training Delivery -Commenced <p>Completed milestones</p>

highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation

- Monthly face to face induction sessions in place for new starters without laptops.
- Data on completion of induction will be collected as part of Oracle implementation.

Embedding Constitutional Changes

- Series of learning and development activity has taken place during 2022. This month, effective report-writing training and contract management training has been delivered.
- Development and Training plan for 2023-2024 in final stages of preparation (including decision making, procurement, fin regs).

Member Learning and Development

- All Member briefings have continued to take place and pre-meeting briefings with LT taking place as part of the preparations. Reflections on this municipal year and proposals for next municipal year are being pulled together for discussion with LT in line with the results from the Officer-Member survey response.
- As per update last month, MDP approved by ESMDC and delegation in place for Chair to agree final version. Following confirmation that min. 18 new Councillors following the election, the induction programme within MDP is undergoing further updates to reflect that significant change. The induction programme is due to be signed-off by early May.

Corporate Oversight

Performance Management

- Commercial Strategy approved – approved
- HRA 30 Year Business Plan approved
- Revised Financial Regs - approved
- Implementation of Asset Management System -phase 1 complete
- Revised Scheme of Delegation – approved
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved- Approved
- Budget Holder Role Profile agreed - Complete
- Establish Performance Management Framework – Complete
- First Performance Management Report - - Complete
- Revised PCR, and Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol – Complete
- New Member Induction- Complete
- Member Development Programme - Complete and BAU
- Asset Management System Procured- complete

- Preparations underway for Q4 report to Cabinet in July.
- Work underway to refresh measures within performance management framework linked to the Corporate Plan refresh. This includes a set of customer service standards. These have been drafted and the next stage is to confirm the final metrics. Leadership Team discussed this in April and a revised/final set is going to Leadership Team in May.

Strategic Direction

Strategy Development and Refresh

- **Commercial Strategy:** strategy approved by Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources in March 2023

Procurement & Commercial

Corporate Asset Management:

- Phase 1 implemented.
- Phase 2 commenced. The integration of data into the system is on track for May 23.
- Phase 2 Configuration and organisation of data due for completion by August 23.

Partnerships & Relationships

No actions in this theme

<p>S3 - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies, and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.</p>	<p>Organisational Culture Establishing Organisational Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Strategy priorities and action plan developments underway. <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and Development Programme Broad scope agreed, and pilot took place in April. • Monthly face to face induction sessions in place for new starters without laptops. • Data on completion of induction will be collected as part of Oracle implementation. <p>Officer and Member Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Officer Survey launched in April as an additional mechanism for insight into the health of the Officer and Member Relationship to aid continuous improvement. Response rate has been low. Further comms has taken place with staff and Group Leaders and Chief Whips to encourage responses. Consideration to be given to timescales for repeat survey and reflections on reasons for response rate. <p>Member Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Member briefings have continued to take place and briefings with LT taking place as part of the preparations. Reflections on this municipal year and proposals for next municipal year are being pulled together for discussion with LT in line with the results from the Officer-Member survey response. • As per update last month, MDP approved by ESMDC and delegation in place for Chair to agree final version. Following confirmation that min. 18 new Councillors, the induction programme within MDP is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Strategy – On track for May 2023 <p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational Culture – Part 2 Engagement – determining the desired culture – complete • Approval of document / statement setting out desired organisational culture – ‘Our Values: Our Behaviours’- Complete • Organisational Culture - Part 1 Engagement – Starting the Conversation- Complete • New Member Induction - Complete • Meeting structures to support Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) – Complete • Member Development Programme approved- Complete
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undergoing further updates to reflect that significant change. The induction programme to MDP is due to be signed-off by early May.

Corporate Oversight

No Actions in Theme

Strategic Direction

No actions in Theme

Decision Making

No actions in Theme

Procurement & Commercial

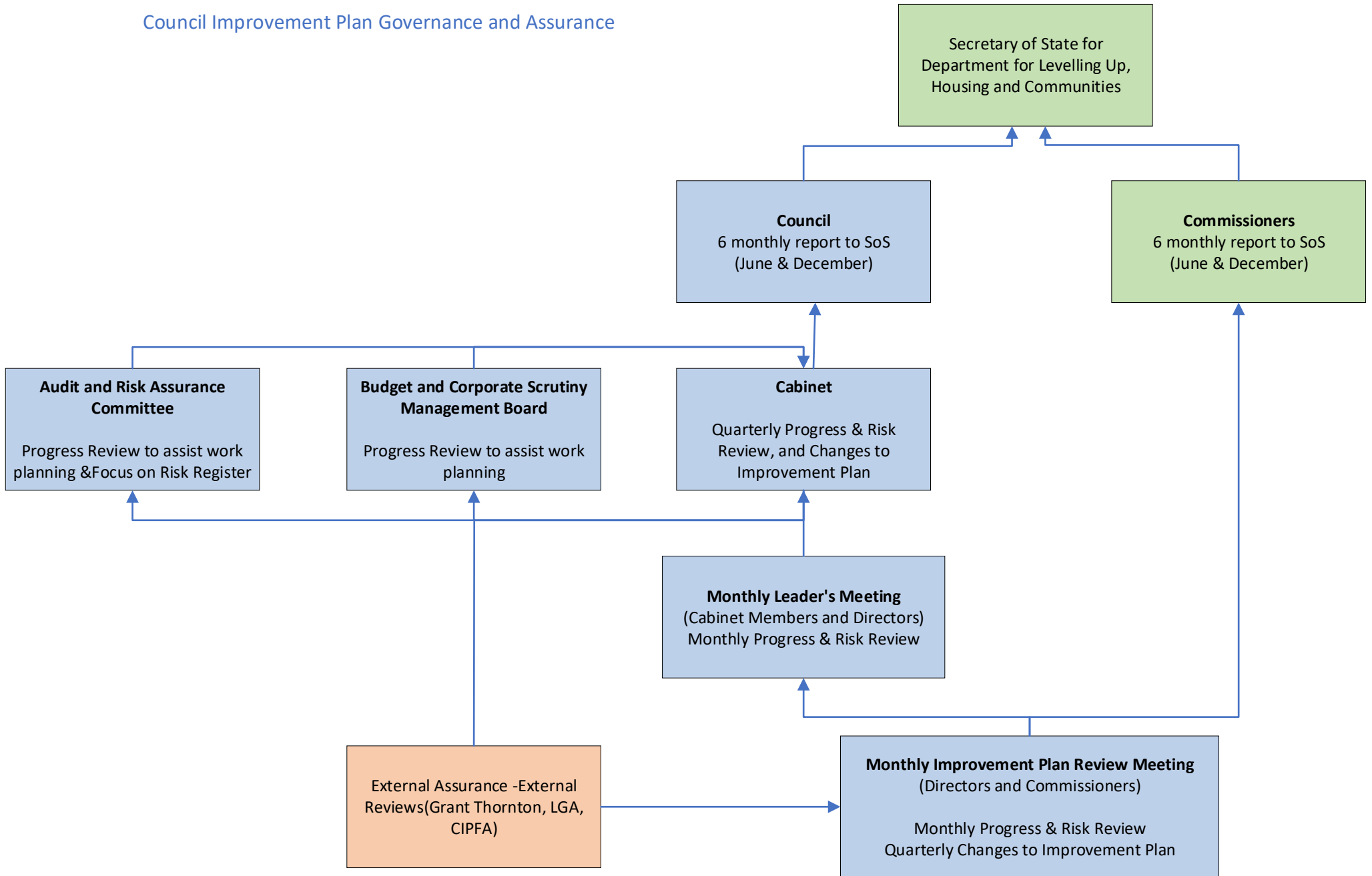
No actions in Theme

Partnerships & Relationships

No actions in Theme

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Council Improvement Plan Governance and Assurance



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Sandwell MBC

CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment

Final Report

A Report by:

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

December 2022

CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, is the professional body for people in public finance. CIPFA shows the way in public finance globally, standing up for sound public financial management and good governance around the world as the leading commentator on managing and accounting for public money.

Further information about CIPFA can be obtained at www.cipfa.org

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1 Summary

1.1 Purpose of the follow-up review

In late 2021, CIPFA were commissioned to review Sandwell Council's financial management performance, using the CIPFA Five Star FM Model. In that review, on which we reported in January 2022, Sandwell achieved a score 1.81 which equates to progressive 2* rating. CIPFA have now been asked to review progress throughout the year in improving the scoring. This report represents our findings.

1.2 Approach adopted

We have conducted a range of interviews, supplementing last year's. These interviews have included staff and senior members, who in some cases have joined the Council since the last review and importantly, a number that were new in to post at the time of the 2021 review. We have also added to our previous document review by examining new material, including crucial reports that were not available previously. Based on this evidence, we have rescored the Council against the model.

1.3 Findings

The previous January 2022 scoring is below.

Sandwell Council – January 2022 Position				
	Management dimensions			
Financial management styles	Leadership	People	Process	Stakeholders
Delivering Accountability	**	**	**	**
Supporting performance	**	*	*	**
Enabling transformation	**	*	*	*****
Overall	**			

As indicated above the individual questions and statements score was 1.81 the threshold for 2* is 1.99 hence the conclusion of a progressive 2* rating.

Following our re-assessment, the summary scoring matrix is below.

Sandwell – December 2022 Position				
	Management Dimensions			
Financial Management Styles	Leadership	People	Processes	Stakeholders
Delivering Accountability	****	****	***	***
Supporting Performance	***	***	**	***
Enabling Transformation	***	***	**	****
Overall	***			

The review and scoring indicate improved statement and question scores from the previous review and therefore a score of 2.36 which represents a progression to a 3* rating (there is a threshold of 2.25 for achieving the 3* rating). Our detailed findings are now more positively within the 2* range. Indeed, few further improvements should take Sandwell Council towards a strong 3* score.

1.4 Updated findings

In the remainder of this report, we have set out the original findings.

These are divided into the CIPFA model topic headings – leadership, people, process, stakeholders – which are then subdivided into three themes – delivering accountability, supporting performance and enabling transformation. We have then provided the revised scoring and commentary.

2 The follow-up review findings

2.1 Leadership

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
L1	Financial capability is regarded as integral to supporting the delivery of the organisation's objectives. The CFO is an active member of the board, is at the heart of corporate strategy/business decision making and leads a highly visible, influential and supportive finance team.	****	2.75	****	3.25
L2	The organisation has an effective framework of financial accountability that is clearly understood and applied throughout, from the board through executive and non-executive directors to front line service managers.	**	2.00	****	2.75
L3	Within an annual budget setting process the organisation's leadership sets income requirements including tax and allocates resources to different activities in order to achieve its objectives. The organisation monitors the organisation's financial and activity performance in delivering planned outcomes.	***	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				****	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
L4	The organisation has a developed financial strategy to underpin medium- and longer-term financial health. The organisation integrates its business and financial planning so that it aligns resources to meet current and future outcome focussed business objectives and priorities.	**	2.00	***	2.50
L5	The organisation develops and uses financial/leadership expertise in its strategic decision-making and its performance management based on an appraisal of the financial environment and cost drivers.	**	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
L6	The organisation's leadership integrates financial management into its strategies to meet future business needs. Its financial management approach supports the change agenda and a culture of customer focus, innovation, improvement and development.	**	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				***	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

Our fieldwork findings accord broadly with this year's LGA's peer review follow-up report. This indicates a positive direction and improvement for Sandwell. The Director of Finance is well respected. Messages about the Council's need to get a grip on its finances and achieve savings are increasingly robust and heard. The MTFs is now much stronger. The positive progress we have encountered is extremely welcome, evident, and represents a step change in under a year. It is to be commended.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- Finance is seen as a key function and priority from a leadership, financial management and financial governance perspective. The development of the finance improvement programme and its progression since the last review is evidence of the positive commitment and its actions are and will make a difference.
- The impact of finance leadership (from the CFO and team) is improving financial planning (including MTFP), improving financial awareness, better quality engagement with budget holders. This will contribute to developing a culture of ownership and accountability, it is still early days, but the signs are positive.
- The budget setting process has developed since the last review with increased rigour. Training has been delivered on budgeting techniques which will improve the quality of budgets in the future.
- The process for reviewing and developing forecasts has also changed in the last year, again this is still developing, but the changed approach will improve the engagement with budget holders, develop the role of finance as advisors and improve ownership. This is a culture change which takes time, which is recognised.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

There are still areas for improvement which have been identified through the review and these are also recognised by the Council, which provides a good foundation for continued development of financial management and governance. The budget process for example, while clearly much improved, will need further work and refinement. There are a few headline issues which require attention to ensure that the improvements in leadership continue. These include:

- **Leadership depth.** It has been argued that whenever the Director of Finance is absent, messages are less resonantly communicated.
- **Top/down reform.** It is perhaps inevitable given the intervention and the emphasis on governance, leadership and central 'grip' in the reviews to which Sandwell has been subject, that its reforms are somewhat top/down in character. It is apparent that the commitment to or understanding of the reform agenda diminishes the further one gets in the organisation from the leadership.
- **Prioritisation, communication and focus.** The Improvement Plan is a portmanteau of many initiatives. As such it could be considered unwieldy. The further towards the frontline we have ventured, the more likely staff have been to suggest that they do not know what initiatives their primary focus should be. We understand that work is in progress to prioritise the Improvement Plan, which will help.

- Sustainability.** The sound narrative in the MTFs should be complemented by strong and robust deliverable savings plans. Some interviewees were concerned that the drive for savings might mean that undeliverable plans would be accepted in the budget process, leading to future overspends and calls on balances. In our earlier review work, we noticed some separation of capital, including the use of assets and the understanding of liabilities, from revenue matters. This time, we have been informed of a more positive and proactive approach to capital and asset management. There are also some genuinely innovative uses of physical or digital assets to personalise services and achieve efficiency. Going forward, we would expect to see a clearer relationship between capital and revenue strategies in Sandwell service planning than has been evident previously.

Nevertheless, the signs on leadership are positive and promising and the matters listed above are comparatively straightforward ones to address.

2.2 People

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
P1	The organisation identifies its financial competency needs and puts arrangements in place to meet them.	*	1.50	***	2.50
P2	The organisation has access to sufficient financial skills to meet its business needs.	****	2.75	****	3.00
Overall				****	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
P3	The organisation manages its finance function to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.	*	1.00	**	2.00
P4	Finance staff provide business partner support by interpreting and explaining performance as well as advising and supporting on key business decisions.	*	1.50	***	2.50
P5	Managers understand they are responsible for delivering services cost effectively and are held accountable for doing so. Financial literacy is diffused throughout the organisation so that decision takers understand and manage the financial implications of their decisions.	*	1.00	***	2.25
Overall				***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022

P6	The organisation develops and sustains its financial management capacity to help shape and support its transformational programme.	*	1.50	***	2.25
Overall				***	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

The principal improvement in the people position is the finance restructuring and the emphasis on business partnering. With a few exceptions, which we will touch on below, the changes have been broadly welcomed and indicate a positive response to the issue raised in our previous review. They are plainly part of a coherent agenda and programme of financial reform and are linked to the positive leadership position. Again, this is real progress and to be commended.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- Developing the people aspect of finance across the organisation is a key objective of the improvement plan, this a positive step and a driver for change.
- The restructuring of the finance team with a concentration on alignment of function to service requirements (demonstrated through the business partnering drive) will help strengthen the role of finance and the overall finance environment.
- Recruitment has been underway during 2022 to strengthen the finance team and also reduce the reliance on interim staff. This will continue into 2023, though the market for skilled and qualified accountants is a challenge. The interim staff in place are seen as adding value, transferring learning and adding wider local government experience.
- Training has been delivered and more is planned for both finance and budget holders. This was a weakness in the previous review and now being addressed. In addition continued training and development is seen as an element of the overall improvement plan.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

Our review has highlighted some issues requiring further work so that this progress can be maintained and built upon. They include:

- **Implications of the pace of change.** The restructure, with associated re-alignment of responsibility, staff departures, and the slimming down of the finance function, have been received in varying ways across the Council. At least one senior officer on the business side has spoken of losing a skilled principal accountant who (in their opinion) exhibited the behaviours of a business partner, and their replacement by a new and interim appointment therefore losing some service-related knowledge. Though the same interviewee expressed a broadly positive assessment of the quality of finance staff and the information they provide, the experience has been unsettling in a mission critical area of the business. It will be worth assessing whether pockets of crucial service activity needs targeted support as the restructure progresses.

- **Sustainability.** While the business partnering shift has been welcomed, it has been widely observed that new business partners are frequently interims. How sustainable that will be, what challenges it will mean for consistency, continuity, corporate memory over time, are matters the reform programme should address.
- **Uneven financial management acumen across the wider business.** This has cultural implications, which we will touch on in the next section. As indicated above a programme starting with a budget holder survey has now developed into a programme of training for budget holders. More immediately, non-finance officers who lack good understanding of finance matters are ill-equipped to make the most of new business partnering arrangements. Even supported by strong systems, they will struggle to move towards self-service. Instead, they will continue in some cases to be excessively dependent on the finance function. There has been some initial training, setting out the responsibilities of budget-holders in the context of the business partnering approach. This should be supplemented by a comprehensive development and training programmes across the Council, and we are aware that this is part of the improvement plan.

Nevertheless, these caveats aside, we are happy to report strong intent and good progress on people matters.

2.3 Process

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR1	Budgets are accrual-based and robustly calculated	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR2	The organisation operates financial information systems that enable the consistent production of comprehensive, accrual based, accurate and up to date data that fully meets users' needs.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR3	The organisation operates and maintains accurate, timely and efficient transactional financial services (e.g., creditor payments, income collection, payroll, and pensions' administration).	*	1.50	***	2.25
PR4	The organisation's treasury management is risk based. It manages its investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, balancing risk and financial performance.	****	3.00	****	3.00
PR5	The organisation actively manages budgets, with effective budget monitoring arrangements that ensure 'no surprises' and trigger responsive action.	***	2.50	***	2.50
PR6	The organisation maintains processes to ensure that information about key assets and liabilities in its balance sheet is a sound and current platform for management action.	*	1.00	**	2.00
PR7	Management understands and addresses its risk management and internal control governance responsibilities.	***	2.25	***	2.25

PR8	Management is supported by effective assurance arrangements, including internal audit, and audit and risk committee(s).	****	2.75	****	2.75
PR9	The organisation's financial accounting and reporting are accrual based and comply with international standards and meet relevant professional and regulatory standards.	*	1.25	**	2.00
Overall				***	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR10	The organisation's medium-term financial planning process underpins fiscal discipline, is focussed upon the achievement of strategic priorities and delivers a dynamic and effective business plan.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR11	Forecasting processes and reporting are well developed and supported by accountable operational management. Forecasting is insightful and leads to optimal decision making.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR12	The organisation systematically pursues opportunities to reduce costs and improve value for money in its operations.	*	1.00	**	2.00
PR13	The organisation systematically pursues opportunities for improved value for money and cost savings through its procurement, commissioning and contract management.	*	1.00	**	2.00
Overall				**	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR14	The organisation continually re-engineers its financial processes to ensure delivery of agreed outcomes is optimised.	*	0.25	*	2.00
PR15	The organisation's financial management processes support organisational change.	*	0.50	*	2.00
Overall				**	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

In both the initial review and in this follow-up, the quality of financial information and the nature of financial processes were a major theme. Many officers in service areas were complimentary about the willingness and ability of the finance function to provide usable financial information. The recent exercise of providing comparatively unstructured raw data to the business and anticipating that forecasts could be derived from it does is work in progress and a positive step in both increasing ownership by budget holders and the engagement with business partners. It prompts better quality

discussions with budget holders and will, in time reduce the reliance on finance and increase adoption of the self-serve approach.

Again, however, there are positive developments to note. Our previous report reflected some extremely critical material on procurement and contract management. We note that there is now a vigorous and committed reform agenda here. Moreover, some of the scoring in this section has improved where we have been able to identify clearer evidence of strategic and operational awareness of issues and the intent to action them.

Overall, Sandwell's ability to deliver improved financial process will be a function of an improved culture. Staff at all levels should understand the relationship between the Council's priorities, the delivery of effective services, and prudent financial management.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- The Council and the finance team have responded to the weaknesses in transactional activities with the commencement of a review of transactional finance, debt recovery and business support. This redesign work has started to have an impact and responds to a risk area highlighted in the previous review.
- The budgetary process has improved during 2022. There is greater challenge, and this has strengthened the overall process. As a consequence, the approach to identifying and including savings within the agreed budget has also improved where challenge seeks not only to confirm suggestions but seeks alternative or additional areas to deliver value for money.
- The Council, as part of budget setting process for 2023/24 has also carried out a review of their Statutory and Discretionary spending which led to discussions with the Cabinet about priorities and corporate plan priority gaps. This shows a maturing relationship between both officers and members and the relationship between funding and demand.
- The Council has undertaken work to improve procurement and its contribution. This has included simplifying the approval process, along with authorisation and approval levels. Process have been reviewed and the procurement training introduced, all of which will have a positive impact on the service contribution, operation and effectiveness.
- A weak area under process was enabling transformation. As indicated above the use of external reviews and advisors to assess and develop processes is a positive step. As part of the improvement programme additional resource was brought in to develop and change the budgeting and forecasting process which will help transform the role and value of finance as well as the quality and reliability of budget.
- The operation of the finance system was an issue reported under the last review. There is still work to be done to improve the system, referred to below as an area for 2023. What is evident though is the change in thinking and re-setting the approach to developing the implementation and operation of the Oracle Fusion system. There has been a move away from the adapt culture to one of adopt which will reduce the impact of customisation (which can be problematic and costly) and hopefully once introduced will deliver the improvement necessary.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

New to this review was the delayed interim external audit for 2020-21. This was critical of Sandwell's governance arrangements. Had it been available to the previous CIPFA review, it is likely that the scoring on the relevant sections of the Five Star model would have been lower. However, we have also taken into consideration the seriousness with which the Authority is engaging with this matter, noted in the peer review follow-up and as such the score reflect the Councils approach. To improve processes further, we would suggest that Sandwell should focus on the following issues:

- **Oracle Fusion:** only part of the answer. The widespread expectation is that the much-delayed Oracle Fusion implementation will improve budgeting, financial information and facilitate financial self-help. It might. But ERP projects are littered with failures. To succeed, the Oracle Fusion initiative will require a comprehensive training and development programme. It should also be accompanied by redoubled efforts to streamline unwieldy processes. It is a misconception that new ERP systems remove defective processes. It is noted above that the Council's approach is now to adopt (using the system as it is designed) as opposed to adapting (which is customising) and will help improve the operation and value of the system. This will help eliminate the need for numerous over engineered processes, especially in transactions.
- **Cross-authority alignment on risk.** Weak or ineffective financial management can create an entirely understandable culture of being risk averse and control culture in central finance. This can however reinforce service dependency on finance, potentially stifling innovation and adoption of self service and ownership. It can also generate cumbersome processes, filled with restrictions and permissions, which create as many problems as they solve. As the reforms continue – for example in procurement – the relationship between the finance function's risk tolerance and the risk appetite needed to achieve reform across the business will need to be examined and balanced.
- **Culture.** We mentioned earlier that additional training would be needed to ensure that budget-holders were equipped to respond to Sandwell's financial management reforms. We believe this training should be extended to service-delivery level. It should be accompanied by robust engagement and two-way communication with all Sandwell staff on reform priorities and the relationship between financial prudence and service delivery. In CIPFA's experience, many of the best innovations in service and efficiency come from staff at the frontline. But equally, a relentless focus on efficiency is only achieved when all staff understand the relationship between financial management and service delivery. It is perhaps unsurprising that the overarching priority for the Council now is 'customer journey'. Some interviewees have spoken of a tendency at the Sandwell frontline to respond to service demands, even from councillors or the community, with the excuse that there is no money. It is important that the initiative mentioned above (about discussion on priorities with the Cabinet) on how things can be done differently to free resources, how joining up between similar service areas might extend the competence individual service units, or what might be achieved through pragmatic timetabling should continue to develop. The Council can benefit from the thinking from its excellent frontline staff. To secure it will require extensive engagement, development and training.

2.4 Stakeholders

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
S1	The organisation provides external stakeholders with evidence of the integrity of its financial conduct and performance and demonstrates fiscal discipline including compliance with statutory/legal/regulatory obligations.	**	2.00	***	2.25
Overall		**		***	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
S2	The organisation demonstrates that it achieves value for money in the use of its resources.	***	2.25	***	2.25
Overall		***		***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
S3	The organisation is responsive to its operating environment, seeking and responding to customer and stakeholder service and spending priorities that impact on its financial management.	****	3.00	****	3.00
Overall		****		****	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

We have ended up with an identical set of scores here. We received some new evidence in our fieldwork this time concerning historical issues in community engagement processes, which might have adversely affected the previous score in S3. However, these were comfortably outweighed by the positive intent we encountered, such as the Council's emphasis on customer journey, as well as new innovations, such as the budget consultation.


Key development areas of focus for 2023

There are a few areas for Sandwell to focus on to improve the service it achieves for stakeholders. They include:

- **Satisfying external reviewers.** The Council's ability to provide information in a timely and satisfactory manner to external auditors is clearly a work in progress and one that will develop as part of the improvement plan.
- **Real-time information.** CIPFA reviewers have often found it a useful thought experiment to ask officers how swiftly they could answer detailed thematic

questions similar to those that are routine for government departments accountable to parliament: for example, 'how much money do we spend per day on measures to help eradicate anti-social behaviour in ward X' etc. Imagining service spend in such thematic and micro terms is a very useful guide to considering the effectiveness of systems, processes and the budgetary culture. While we have no doubt that Sandwell officers could find such information – which would be hugely beneficial to service planning – it would take some effort and as such would be subject to priorities and susceptible to human error. As a consequence, developing both access and presentation of data and information will support challenge, scrutiny and therefore planning and decision.

- **Budget survey.** This is a sensible and positive initiative. To maximise its impact, Sandwell Council should provide a detailed, honest and thoughtful response. Survey findings should be cross-referenced with political priorities and budget assumptions. They should also be compared on the one hand to the perspectives of community groups and activists, who can often exert significant influence on services without always being fully representative, and on the other to actual patterns of complaints and casework, which sometimes give a contrasting picture of residents' day-to-day priorities to that found in a survey.
- **Customer journey.** The achievement of efficiency is linked to transparency about service process. A single complaint about a defective streetlamp, sent to officers, the CEO's office, ward councillors, portfolio holders, MPs, even to the Ombudsman, can create a nightmare of repetitive, nugatory work. If the complainant knows however from searching service information on the Council's website that the lamp is scheduled to be fixed in a week's time, they are likely to withhold their complaints until at least after that point. Sandwell is moving in the right direction on community engagement and transparency. But there are real benefits to be derived from going further.



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Financial Management Improvement Plan March 2023							
Recommendation description	Planned Activity	Proposed owner	Timescale	Date Completed	Comments	Location in Improvement Plan	CP/ PMF /Finance BP
Structure, Skills and Competencies							
Develop a clear consistent role for Finance and Budget Holders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply KPI's for Finance Team from April 2023 and review effectiveness 	Assistant Director – Finance	April 2023	KPI's developed in Sept 2022 – carry forward to apply from April		IP CO.D2.O Embedding Finance Business Partner role (already embedded in IP)	Corporate Plan O13
Review, assess, and revise where appropriate the competency framework principle considering the skills and capability necessary for the authority now and in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop core finance competencies to support Budget Holder Role Profiles Repeat Budget Holder Survey 	Director of Finance Senior HR Business Partner Head of Finance Business Partnering	July 2023 September 2023	New Repeat action		IP CO.D2.3 Embedding Finance Business Partner Role: Workforce Development Plan	Corporate Plan O13
Develop the finance skills and capabilities within services to ensure Budget Holders can meet the expectations of them as set out in the role profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive Finance and Governance training programme to be undertaken tailored to those with different levels of financial responsibility 	Director of Finance	Programme to be delivered by October 2023	Outstanding – carry forward with revised date		IP OC.G1.3 Delivery of 'Governance Training and Development Programme'	Corporate Plan O10

<p>Establish what skills gaps there are in the Finance Team and the broader finance environments across the authority. Following this produce and deliver a plan of awareness and training for both staff and elected members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete C Co Finance Skills Review • Complete skills gap analysis across the Finance Management service • Workforce Development Programme implemented to address gaps identified from the above 	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>June 2023</p>	<p>Outstanding – carry forward</p>		<p>IP CO.D2.3 Embedding Finance Business Partner Role: Workforce Development Plan</p>	<p>Corporate Plan O13</p>
<p>Systems</p>							
<p>Ensure that any new asset management system delivers the required information on control to manage assets from both a service perspective and a financial reporting strands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System implementation underway – to be completed by October 2023 • Journal testing is being undertaken to ensure that outcomes are accurate and as expected. • The system will be run along with spreadsheets for the first closedown process to provide further assurance. • Data matching and cleansing between Fixed Asset Register and asset system is ongoing. 	<p>Head of Technical Finance</p>	<p>October 2023</p>	<p>In progress</p>		<p>PC.F1.3 Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge</p>	<p>Corporate Plan O27</p>
<p>Implementation of Oracle Fusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Project Milestones to ensure implementation by April 2024 • Ensure thorough Learning and Development Programme embedded 	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>Go Live April 2024 Ongoing from April 2023 to Go</p>	<p>In progress</p>		<p>CO.A1.O Implement Oracle Fusion</p>	<p>Corporate Plan O15</p>

	through implementation so Finance Team and Budget Holders are prepared for business process changes		Live in April 2024				
Processes							
Continue the programme of end to end process reviews in key business areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete existing business process reviews Director of Finance to work with the Finance Team to identify further processes to review and reduce transactional activity which are likely to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly close-down 	Director of Finance Assistant Director – Finance	June 2023 October 2023	In progress		CO.D3.0 Reduction of financial transactional activity	Corporate Plan O18
Implement the recommendations from the Transactional Finance Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete review of internal recharges Complete review of Debt Recovery and implement processes for a single view of debt Develop Business Case for Transactional Finance Unit 	Director of Finance	April 2023 June 2023 May 2023	In progress		CO.D3.5 (review of internal recharges) CO.D3. (implement processes for a single view of debt) Proposed new action within IP at CO.D3.6 ‘development of business case for Transactional Finance unit’	Finance Directorate Business Plan
Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional resource in place to deliver 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts 	Assistant Director - Finance	Completed	Carry forward – update actions		CO.D4.0 Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts	Corporate Plan O11

- Develop and implement an Action Plan to address 2020/21 errors and weakness
- Identify training needs for the Finance Team and Service areas
- Lessons learned session in collaboration with External Auditor
- Budget Holder training being carried out to include year-end procedures such as accruals and receipting of orders
- Asset management steering groups in place to assist in communication between Asset Management Team, Finance and GT

April 2023

May 2023

TBC

January 2024

In place and ongoing

Review Budget Monitoring processes and reporting

- Review approach to budget profiling and forecasting and identify quick wins ahead of Fusion implementation
- Consider integrating Revenue, Capital and Performance reporting

Head of Finance

Director of Finance and Service Improvement Lead

May 2023

July 2023

Complete

Carry forward

CO.C2.0
Budget monitoring assurance action

Added to IP CO.C1.9
Consider integrating

Corporate Plan O11

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Capital Monitoring processes and reporting Review Capital Business Case template and process for approval 	Finance Business Partner – Capital and Planning Interim Financial Strategy Manager	July 2023 June 2023	New New		revenue, capital and performance reporting	
Review Treasury Management processes and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain a 12 month rolling cash flow Review Investment Strategy and counterparty options 	Interim Financial Strategy Manager Assistant Finance Business Partner – Treasury	April 2023 and ongoing	New			Finance Directorate B/Plan
Planning and Decision Making							
Develop the use of comparative data, benchmarking and demand management techniques in both budget setting and budget monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External benchmarking to be incorporated into Performance Management Framework Continue to use national and regional benchmarking data to inform budget setting process and identification of savings opportunities Undertake benchmarking exercise for support services with nearest neighbour group 	Director of Finance and Leadership Team Director of Finance Assistant Director – Finance Head of Finance Business Partnering Director of Finance	October 2023 Ongoing September 2023 August 2023 June 2023	Carried forward Carried forward – ongoing Carried forward New New		CO.C2.6 Embed financial benchmarking in budget planning	Corporate Plan O11

- Embed Cost Recovery Model for Fees and Charges as part of annual budget setting process
- Review Statutory and Discretionary spend as part of priority setting session with Cabinet

Review and improve engagement and communication within the Finance Team

- Regular workshops to be arranged during the budget setting process to communicate strategies and plans
- Business Partners to attend Budget Leadership Team to discuss issues relating to their areas

Assistant Director – Finance

Ongoing

New

Director of Finance

Ongoing

New

Finance Directorate Business Plan

Fundamental review of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy

- Implement new Medium-Term Financial Planning processes and templates
- Develop robust Project Governance around Transformation Savings Programme
- Undertake budget prioritisation exercise with Cabinet and align spend to Corporate Plan priorities

Interim Financial Strategy Manager

May 2023

New – partially complete
New

Director of Finance

April 2023

New

Director of Finance

June 2023

Interim Financial Strategy Manager

July 2023

New

Director of Finance

September 2023

Further review

SD.D1.0 Fundamental review of the MTFP and Capital Strategy

Corporate Plan O12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further strengthen links between Revenue and Capital Planning and extend time horizon for Capital Programme Review MTFS prior to 2024/25 budget setting process 						
Consider a review of external engagement with stakeholders and the process to feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Consultation to be carried out as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan review and budget process for 2024/25 Consultation with Community Groups 	Director of Finance Service Lead – Improvement	October 2023	Carried forward for 24/25 budget process		SD.E2 Incorporate public consultation results into PMF	Corporate Plan O5

Closed actions

Develop a clear consistent role for finance and budget holders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure of the Financial Services section to be completed to provide a greater focus on business partnering 	Director of Finance	Launch in March 2022, complete by end of June.	Completed	New Finance restructure approved by Cabinet 1 st June. Internal filling of vacancies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out Budget Holder and Finance Team surveys to get a baseline position and understand expectations of the Financial 	Finance Improvement Manager	June 2022	Completed	

	<p>Services section, and how well those expectations are being met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and approve role profiles for finance business partners and budget holders Develop KPI's and standards for the Financial Services section 	<p>Finance Improvement Manager / Leadership Team</p> <p>Head of Finance</p>	<p>May 2022</p> <p>August 2022</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed – to be applied from 2023/24</p>	<p>and allocation of staff to roles completed 14th July. New Structure implemented with effect from 1st August</p>
Review arrangements and practices that can ensure that it attracts high calibre staff and that these are retained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure of the Financial Services section to be completed to provide a greater focus on business partnering AAT/CIPFA Trainee programme to be incorporated as part of the restructure process 	Director of Finance	Launch in March 2022, complete by end of June	Completed	
Review and revise the structure and arrangements where appropriate for the delivery of business partnering across the authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure of the Financial Services section to be completed to provide a greater focus on business partnering 	Director of Finance	End of March 2022	Completed	
Consider a programme of end to end process reviews in key business areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Process Re-engineering resources approved as part of 2022/23 budget Review of internal recharges to be undertaken by June 2022 	<p>Director of Finance</p> <p>Head of Finance</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>June 2022</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	

Review Budget Monitoring processes and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review format and content of Leadership Team and Cabinet budget monitoring reports	Head of Finance	April 2022	Complete	
That financial governance and decision-making arrangements are reviewed and strengthened from both a political and officer perspective.	Constitution to be fundamentally reviewed, including the Scheme of Delegation and Financial Procedure Rules. Training Programme on governance and decision making to be carried out following this	Director of Law and Governance And Director or Finance	May 2022 July 2022	Complete	

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Improvement Plan Risk Register

April 2023



1. Best start in life for children and young people



2. People live well and age well



3. Strong resilient communities




4. Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods






5. A strong and inclusive economy






6. A connected and accessible Sandwell


Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
IP1	<p>Improvement Plan objectives and member / officer engagement in those objectives</p> <p>If programme objectives are not clearly defined to ensure they are within scope, deliverable, understood and agreed then the programme will proceed with no clear direction and may become unmanageable and/or scope creep may take place.</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	3 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement as part of the development of the Improvement Plan - sharing themes and workstreams with staff and members Communications Plan implemented for governance review, CPC and Statutory Notice Communications Approach set out in Draft Improvement Plan Objectives for each Theme within the Improvement Plan identified Set of key messages for stakeholders in place and issued to all Directors Council approval of Improvement Plan All Member briefing held (incl. newly elected Members) Regular informal reporting to Cabinet in place on IP progress Regular Staff communications on progress of Improvement Plan Reporting approach to ARAC and B&CSM agreed, with quarterly reporting in place. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Plan ongoing delivery including all staff briefings including key messages around Improvement Plan Staff and member engagement through Organisational Culture change programme Embed Improvement Plan Actions into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement


Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
IP2	<p>Programme management arrangements</p> <p>If appropriate programme management arrangements are not put in place then there is a risk that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will not be delivered to scope The required improvements will not be made within the necessary timescales The government may lose confidence in the council's ability to improve and intervention may be extended The borough's residents may lose confidence in the council ability to deliver effective services Inefficient use of limited resources Continued reputational damage 	8 (Amber)	4 (Green)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan approved by Council 07/06/22 PMO capacity being provided by existing experienced resources within Service Improvement Processes around risk management, progress monitoring and change control in place and established Risk register in place and reported to Leadership Team monthly and Cabinet and ARAC quarterly Establishment of PMO Teams Site for collation of programme documents and evidence Exception reporting format confirmed via highlight report standard template Regular work programming discussion to manage additional demands upon the PMO
IP3	<p>Allocation of sufficient resources to project management and project delivery/ maintaining Business as Usual while delivering the Improvement plan</p> <p>If sufficient resources (capacity and capability) and where</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single Improvement Plan and assurance framework PMO support being provided by existing experienced resources within Service Improvement Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan have been identified



Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
	<p>necessary additional resources are not allocated to the management and delivery of the improvement plan then this may result in officer fatigue, loss of motivation and the programme will fail to deliver all of its objectives.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council on 07/06/22 approved Use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions • Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan reviewed monthly by Leadership Team and Register maintained <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LT work on prioritisation to conclude to ensure that the improvement priorities are clear and resources are available to manage risk of officer fatigue and loss of motivation. • Local Partnerships Review of PMO and establishment of resourced Corporate PMO • National Graduate Development Scheme - placements to be focused on IP priorities • Embed Improvement Plan Actions into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement
IP4	<p>Project and risk governance assurance arrangements If a robust assurance framework is not put in place to in respect of project assurance, including detailing roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (eg Cabinet, Scrutiny, ARAC, partners, IB, etc) then the council may be unable to effectively monitor and evidence the improvement required.</p>	6 Green	6 Green	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of additional capacity to support delivery and implementation of key projects taken place in Asset Management, Finance, Service Improvement and Legal Services • Terms of Reference for Improvement Plan Review Meeting in place • Governance approach included within Council report 07/06/22 • Risk identification has taken place • Agreement for Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA to review progress regularly • Improvement Plan Risk Register in place • Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single


Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
						<p>Improvement Plan and assurance framework including role of Scrutiny and Audit Committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles of Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit agreed with Chairs • Quarterly reports to Cabinet, Audit and Scrutiny presented in September 2022, November/December and March 2023. • Scrutiny consideration of culture theme progress in Dec 22 • Consideration of external review reports by Scrutiny and Audit • Update to Improvement Plan to reflect findings from GT and LGA follow-up reviews <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Reports to Scrutiny, Audit and Cabinet (next reports in June 2023) • Scrutiny regular review on Culture Theme progress • Update to Improvement Plan to reflect findings from CIPA follow-up review • Agreement for ongoing external assurance activity
IP5	<p>Communication Strategy If a robust communications strategy is not put in place detailing how, when and what information is shared with the various internal and external stakeholders, then not everyone will be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities for delivering the improvement plan and effective service delivery. In addition, the DLUHC may lose confidence in the council's ability to improve resulting in extended/ additional intervention.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review visits from GT, LGA and CIPFA held Autumn 2022. Reports received and presented to Cabinet in January and March 2023. • Communications Approach set out in Improvement Plan approved by Council 07/06/22 • Key messages document for stakeholders in place • Regular PMO/Communications meetings to ensure key messages are embedded within internal and external communications • Communication with stakeholders to share details of transition between KBD and SL. <p>Further Actions</p>

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with stakeholders to share details of Improvement Plan Recruitment to vacancy within comms structure
IP6	<p>Investment and Financial Resources</p> <p>If sufficient/ additional financial resources are not made available, and the IP is expected to be delivered from existing budgets then the IP may not be delivered within the necessary timescales or to scope.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular comms with stakeholders taking place as per comms plan including incorporation in all staff briefings Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan identified Council on 07/06/22 approved use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan reviewed monthly by Leadership Team Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place and key milestones are being delivered <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resource allocation to deliver the Improvement Plan and determine if there are any gaps Identify additional resources or reprioritise activity following identification of resource gaps Graduate recruitment to focus on IP priority projects
IP7	<p>Risk Closed - Moved to Strategic risk Register (risk 70)</p> <p>Organisational Culture</p> <p>If the organisational culture does not change including improvement of member and officer relationships and political relationships, then this will impact the delivery of the IP objectives and the timescales</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific theme in place within Improvement Plan Corporate Governance Theme timescales revised to allow for additional engagement activity around Corporate Governance changes Regular meetings in place between senior members and officers to develop positive working relationships and information sharing LGA training on officer/member relationships delivered in September 2022.

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
	within which delivery is achieved and may result in extended government intervention.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External consultant engaged to support development of desired values and behaviours, providing independent facilitation Employee Engagement Survey results disseminated and discussed at DMTs and team meetings - action plans developed and monitored at LT. External Reviews providing assurance that organisational culture change has started to change Actions agreed for organisational culture theme following outcome of staff listening groups
IP8	<p>Risk Closed- Target score achieved and overall resource issues covered in risk IP3</p> <p>Impact of Covid 19 on the Project Resources</p> <p>If there is a continued impact of Covid 19 on resource availability, then this will impact the programme delivery plan.</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMO resourcing in place from within Service Improvement Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan are being identified Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place and key milestones are being delivered

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
IP10	<p>Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality</p> <p>If a robust PMF is not put in place and appropriate quality data captured then the council will be unable to effectively monitor and evidence improvement, delivery of the Improvement Plan and delivery of the Corporate Plan resulting in a failure to achieve the Council's objectives.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	8 (amber)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management Framework approved in April 2022 • Evidence of success outlined within each of the Improvement Plan themes focusing on outcomes for each theme • Improvement Plan Monitoring approach approved by Council and regular monitoring in place • Resources approved by Council to address staffing resources required to sustain PMF • 2022/23 Quarterly Corporate Performance Report presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny (Q1 Sept/Oct 22, Q2 Dec 22/Jan 23) • Residents Survey and Budget Consultation exercise conducted in Summer 2022 to feed into PMF and 2023/24 service and financial planning • Process in place for monthly and quarterly monitoring at corporate level • Corporate approach to consultation and engagement with residents, including regular residents survey agreed by Leadership Team. • Member Officer Survey conducted to provide a temperature check on the relationship <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence collation to be produced to support IP • Recruitment to additional corporate performance team posts • Development of customer experience metrics as part of Customer Journey Transformation Programme and refresh of corporate plan • Performance Management System options appraisal and procurement to provide capability for performance management • Repeat of Member Officer Relationship Survey to provide a temperature check on the relationship • Improvement Plan activity embedded in Corporate Plan and Business Plans

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed KPIs included in Corporate Plan refresh and streamlined reporting to Leadership Team (from Q1 report)
IP11	<p>Continued focus and resources allocated to historic issues</p> <p>If the council does not focus on the Improvement plan and corporate plan priorities and continues to focus and allocate resources on historic issues, then this will impact the timely delivery of both the Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan.</p>	4 (Green)	4 (Green)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance from LGA CPC Follow up Review around development of PMF Improvement Plan contains activity to be concluded, and lessons learnt embedding from historic issues Cabinet and Leadership Team approach to historic issues Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place Progress on GT recommendations specifically related to the proper functioning of Scrutiny and Audit Committees. Lessons learnt captured in relation to SEND transport <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learnt framework to be introduced as part of continuous improvement plan. Lessons learnt to be collated relating to historic issues and shared across organisation Leader to confirm executive's position in relation to a further review in relation to Wragge/Cox - due to ARAC in June 2023
IP12	<p>Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias):</p> <p>If the approach taken to risk scoring and/or progress monitoring against the delivery plans is unrealistic (e.g. being overly optimistic around progress and timescales or likelihood and severity of a risk) then there will be a failure to</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Thornton follow up review of progress against historical issues Corporate risk scoring definitions applied Definition in place for progress monitoring Red/Amber/Green progress monitoring for Improvement Plan Roles of Scrutiny and Audit confirmed

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
	appropriately manage the programme and a loss of confidence in its delivery.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to Scrutiny and Audit Committees presented in September 2022 • PMO reviewed use of RAG ratings for consistency and to ensure that progress monitoring is presenting a realistic view and reflecting risk associated with actions as well as progress against plans (September 2022). <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Reviews and Commissioners' views
IP13	<p>Constitutional Changes</p> <p>If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation and put into practice, then opportunities will be missed, progress will be limited, and there may be non-compliance with council processes.</p>	9 (Amber)	9 (Amber)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT, LGA, and CIPFA follow up reviews provide assurance • Alignment of workstream with organisational culture theme through Officer participation in Culture Working Group • Revised set of guidance and templates in place to support the changes made around key decisions • First round of training delivered to budget holders and procurement card holders in relation to spend thresholds and procurements processes. • New Scrutiny Handbook launched • New EIA guidance issued for decision-making • Sub-delegation schemes developed with Directors • Member Development Plan Refreshed • Decision-making arrangements (forward plan, report sign off etc.) reviewed. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Review Phase 2 project plan in place to embed the constitutional changes (Corporate Governance Development Programme) • Implement Phase 2 of Mod.Gov • Implement a programme of learning for Officers around effective-decision making

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Jan 23)	Current Risk Score (April 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of local KPIs to monitor performance in relation to decision-making e.g. timeliness of report submissions, publication of reports, use of exemptions, forward plan notice given on time. • MDP Delivery • Monitoring of local KPIs (once introduced)

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						Apr-23			Change Control
To be completed by action owner									
	Theme	Action reference	Action Title	Owner	Date Raised	Type of Change	If date change is required		Change/ Impact of change (incl. any dependencies)/ Reason for change
262	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement framework	Chief executive	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jun-23	Oct-23	Framework development has been delayed due to re-prioritisation of resources on LUP development.
264	Corporate Oversight	CO.D2.3	Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section	Director-Finance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jul-23	C.co now commissioned
266	Corporate Oversight	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews	Director-Finance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	May-23	Reviews on track to complete by the end of March 2023 with the exception of Business Support which has a completion date of May 2023.
268	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.3	Corporate Transformation PMO established	Director-Finance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	late 22	Sep-23	Review underway with Local Partnerships to inform establishment of Corporate PMO but this won't be completed until June. Review will conclude in June with implementation completed in Sept 23
269	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Director-Finance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jul-23	Revised project plan in place linked to Local Partnerships PMO review.
270	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.5	Corporate Transformation Board operational -ToR finalised -Membership confirmed -Board dates in place	Director-Finance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jun-23	CTB is being reviewed in line with PMO Review being undertaken by Local Partnerships
271	Strategic Decision	SD.A1.3	Regeneration Pipeline: Agreement to procure a Strategic Delivery Partner	Director-Regeneration & Growth	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jul-23	Report (to procure a strategic delivery partner) planned to go to Cabinet in June/July .
273	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.13	Refresh Equalities Commission Board Renew terms of reference	Director-Law & Governance	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Apr-23	Jun-23	Report to Executive being prepared for the start of the Municipal Year for approval to the terms of reference.
274	Strategic Decision	SD.F1.0	Customer Journey Strategy	Director-Regeneration & Growth	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Aug-23	Oct-23	Draft Strategy to be completed by September with final version ready for October 2023.
275	Procurement & Commercial	PC.C1.1	Options Appraisal (corporate performance)	Chief executive	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Aug-23	New timescale to be confirmed by next monitoring period- delays due to capacity issues. Corporate performance manager in place now.
276	Procurement & Commercial	PC.D1.4	Lion farm: Implement approved way forward	Director-Regeneration & Growth	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	May-23	Expert shifted timescale
279	Partnership & Relationships	PR.D1.3	Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy	Leadership team	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Apr-23	TBC	
280	Partnership & Relationships	PR.D1.4	Approval of VCS Strategy	Leadership team	28/04/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jul-23	Autumn 23	A more fundamental look at the relationship with the VCS is being taken. An annual report is being prepared that will focus on investment and impact. A Cabinet session is planned for June/July with the strategy due for approval in Autumn.

281	Partnership & Relationships	PR.A1.3	KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2	Director-Children & Education	28/04/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new action added
282	Procurement & Commercial	PC.A4.2	Recovery plan implemented	Director-Borough Economy	28/04/23	Change of Delivery Lead(s)	Mar-23	Ongoing delivery	Whilst we've an agreed improvement plan with Serco, it will inevitably become iterative requiring updating as work progresses, performance monitored and circumstances change
283	Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved	Chief executive	4/5/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	May-23	Jul-23	
285	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B3.2	Mobilise project team and establish project governance	Director-Children & Education	4/5/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Apr-23	Jun-23	change of start date for Commencement of Procurement for SEND 3
286	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B3.3	Commence Procurement	Director-Children & Education	4/5/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Spring 23 Sept 23	June 23 Apr 25	Procurement of SEND 3 2ill start in June 23 with a view to new contracts starting in April 25
287	Procurement & Commercial	PC.E1.5	Arrangement in place for future delivery of leis	Director-Borough Economy	4/5/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	May-23	Jul-23	Agreed (subject to Board and Cabinet Member approval) an extension to the termination notice to allow for finalisation of Deed of Variation. Will extend the current Management and Funding Agreement to the point of the handover of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre 13 July.
288	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.4	Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy	Chief executive	10/5/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jun-23	Mar-24	There are significant capacity issues in HR services due primarily to the demands of Oracle Fusion.
289	Procurement & Commercial	PC.D1.0	Lion farm: Implement approved way for	Director-Regeneration & Growth	11/5/2023	Closure of Main Action			The expert determination milestone has been reached- council is working on next steps- move to BAU

Report to Cabinet

15 March 2023

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress & Phase 2 Refresh
Cabinet Member:	Leader of the Council Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Director:	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Senior Lead Officer – Service Improvement Rebecca Jenkins Rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 2 February 2023 be received.
- 1.2. That the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report be received.
- 1.3. That the responses to the recommendations and improvement points made in the Grant Thornton reissued Value for Money Governance Review Report, Grant Thornton Follow Up Review Report and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review be received.
- 1.4. That the Improvement Plan Risk Register as now submitted be received.



- 1.5. That details of changes to the Improvement Plan as a result of the follow-up external reviews and change to the Improvement Plan monitoring method be received.
- 1.6. That any recommendations or comments made by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan will be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2. Reasons for Recommendations






- 2.1 This report provides a quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporates all recommendations from the original Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 2.2 As part of the council's assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, the LGA, Grant Thornton and CIPFA conducted follow-up reviews in Autumn 2022 to evaluate the council's progress on implementing the specific recommendations from those individual reviews. The findings from the follow-up visits from Grant Thornton and the LGA were reported to Cabinet in December 2022 and the responses to these findings are included within this report. The CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report has now been received.
- 2.3 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes to the Improvement Plan are tracked through programme management mechanisms. As a result of the findings from the Grant Thornton and LGA follow up reviews, new and/or updated activity has been required within the Improvement Plan. This has been managed through the established change control process to form a refresh of the Improvement Plan.
- 2.4 The actions to respond to the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report will be incorporated in the next update to the Improvement Plan.



- 2.5 Risk management is embedded within the council's programme management of the Improvement Plan. A risk register is in place which underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). Cabinet is asked to receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively and to provide contextual information for future decision making.
- 2.6 As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes. Both Committees are due to consider progress at their meetings in March and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet's consideration.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

3.1 Sandwell Council's Improvement Plan focuses on the governance arrangements of the council and areas of improvement across the organisation. The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure that the council is able to deliver on the aims and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. The deliverables set out in this Improvement Plan will achieve long-term sustainable improvements in how the council operates and is able to make effective decisions focused on improving outcomes for residents and experiences of service users. Therefore, this impacts on the council's ability to deliver all the objectives in the Corporate Plan.

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy





4. Context and Key Issues

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.
- 4.1.2. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual.
- 4.1.3. This report is the third quarterly update to Cabinet on progress of the Improvement Plan.

4.2. Improvement Plan Progress

- 4.2.1. Over this quarter, significant progress has continued to be made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes the completion of the Phase 1 Governance Review with changes to the Constitution agreed, preparations for the new Chief Executive taking up post on 6 February 2023, approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the completion of the reviews of the Serco and Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) contracts.



4.2.2. A comprehensive monitoring tool has been developed to include both a risk rating for each main action within the Improvement Plan and a progress status rating for all actions. The monitoring tool provides quick reference around which actions are on track for delivery, as well as highlighting areas that may require remedial action or additional levels of assurance. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1.

4.2.3. Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within Appendix 2. This includes a description of workstream progress including progress against milestones and achievements, and any progress issues. A summary by theme is provided below.

4.2.4. Organisational Culture Theme

4.2.4.1. Achievements this quarter:

- Regular meetings of Commissioners, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, and Chief Whips have commenced
- Mentoring Programme with LGA in place and ongoing
- Initial data gathering has taken place to identify the options for an employee recognition scheme
- Preparations for the new Chief Executive taking up post on 6 February 2023

4.2.4.2 Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Workforce Strategy**
 - Slippage from original delivery date of March 2023 to May 2023 due to slippage in the One Team Framework. The One Team Framework will be approved in March.
 - Scope and drafting have commenced. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May 2023
- **Effective Decision-Making Training** (also reported in the Decision Making theme)
 - Slippage from original date due to a revised approach to training delivery.
 - The revised programme will involve roll out through to the end of the current Municipal Year.



- The impact of the training delivered to date is evidenced by positive feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.

4.2.5 Corporate Oversight Theme

4.2.6.1 Achievements this quarter

- Q2 Performance Management report considered by Cabinet and Scrutiny. Preparations underway for Q3 Performance Management Report to Cabinet
- External training provided to corporate finance staff
- Realignment to create Corporate Transformation PMO has commenced

4.2.6.2 Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Customer Journey Programme Board in place and regular meetings scheduled**
 - Slippage against original timescales due to resources.
 - Board members are being confirmed, and future board dates will be scheduled commencing in Feb 2023. Project Manager will be confirmed prior to February board.
- **Performance Management Framework (PMF) - Review of KPIs**
 - Slippage against original timescales due to need for alignment with workforce strategy approval, alignment with customer journey programme and resources.
 - KPIs for organisational health need to be updated to reflect workforce strategy. The Workforce Strategy is in development and is due for approval in May.
 - KPIs for customer experience need to be updated to reflect the customer journey programme.
 - Review of the KPIs will commence from March 2023
- **Programme and Project Management System Implementation**
 - Slippage occurred due to resources
 - Implementation is now underway supported by Corporate Transformation Team. Implementation end date to be confirmed.



4.2.7 Strategic Direction Theme

4.2.7.1 Achievements this quarter

- Approval of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy, Equality Policy, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy
- Progress of the Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline reported
- Phase 1 of the new Asset Database implemented
- EDI Workforce action plan review complete
- Review of Council EDI decision making process complete
- Proposal approved for the next phase of resident consultation and engagement and budget consultation.

4.2.7.2 Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Commercial Strategy: Business Cases**
 - Slippage against original timescale of January 2023 due to work taking longer than expected
 - Strategic Business Cases have been prepared and are being reviewed by Leadership Team
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**
 - Issues being encountered due to resources focusing on responding to reporting of historic EDI issues. These issues are having an impact of the effectiveness of staff networks.
 - Revised plan for EDI strand is in place with re-profiled timescales, and preparation of a proposal around staff networks
- **Customer Journey Strategy**
 - Slippage against original timescale of August 2023 due to resources
 - Work is underway to develop the strategy with Cabinet holding priority focus sessions in December 2022 and February 2023.
 - Next steps are for engagement sessions to be held to capture Customer/Resident feedback to shape the strategy.

4.2.8 Decision Making Theme

4.2.8.1 Achievements this quarter

- All major milestones in this theme have been achieved



- Phase 1 of the Governance Review complete with agreement this quarter to the revised Council Procedure rules and revised Scheme of Delegations agreed

4.2.8.2 Decision Making Progress Issues

- **Effective Decision-Making Training** (as reported in the Organisational Culture Theme)
 - Slippage from original date due to a revised approach to training delivery.
 - The revised programme will involve training being delivered over a longer period and through to the end of the current Municipal Year.
 - The impact of the training delivered to date is evidenced by positive feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.

4.2.9 Procurement and Commercial Theme

4.2.9.1 Achievements this quarter

- Implementation of Phase 1 of Asset Management System
- Review of Serco Contract Complete
- Street Cleansing revised plan approved at Waste Board.
- Lion Farm statement of facts agreed
- Chief Officer for Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) has started, and a clear project plan is in place.
- SEND lessons learnt capture reported to Leadership Team

4.2.9.2 Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Lion Farm Options Agreement**
 - Issues encountered
 - Delivery timescales for the Expert Determination process are being decided by a third party.
 - The anticipated date for resolution is 24 March 2023

4.2.10 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

4.2.10.1 Achievements this quarter



- Delivery of the Early Help and Corporate Parenting Strategies has continued across partners.
- KPI suite for Sandwell Children's Trust reviewed.
- SCT Review of contract has concluded.
- Attendance and participation with key regional and sub-regional groups (including WMCA, ABCA, and BCLEP) has continued
- VCS Strategy development has commenced, and engagement sessions have been held. This work builds on positive relationships fostered between the council and VCS, including recent provision of Warm Spaces across the borough in community settings.

4.2.10.2 Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Partnership structures in relation to transition from children's to adults' services**
 - Slippage in timescales due to recruitment difficulties for this project
 - Two unsuccessful attempts at recruitment for a project manager. The approach will be reviewed.
 - Work is progressing, albeit at a slower rate, without this capacity being in place. Draft Project Initiation Document (PID) is in place, agreement has been reached to engage with key external stakeholders and the Trust's sign-off process has been incorporated into the project governance structure.
 - Next steps are for PID to be completed and approved and monthly project meetings established.

4.3 Statutory Recommendations

4.3.1 The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review 2021 included three statutory recommendations that the council has a legal obligation to respond to. These recommendations are incorporated into the single Improvement Plan and are embedded across each of the six themes.

4.3.2 In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.



- 4.3.3 To provide an overview of progress against these three specific recommendations, Appendix 3 extracts the key actions that respond to each of the recommendations and they are summarised below.
- 4.3.4 **Statutory Recommendation 1** - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.

Progress update:

- Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
- Sandwell Leisure Trust – progressing the approach agreed by Cabinet in June 2022 to transfer services to a Local Authority Trading Company.
- Sandwell Children’s Trust – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract will commence in April 2023
- Waste Contract – Contract Monitoring framework progressing well and embedded in PMF reporting. Review of the Contract is complete.
- ERP (Oracle Fusion) – support provider in place and implementation commenced. Project Management and Governance arrangements are in place.
- Lion Farm – expert determination process has commenced, anticipated date for resolution of 24 March 2023. Formal document detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of Council and the developer complete.
- Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. First monitoring provided to Cabinet in November.

- 4.3.5 **Statutory Recommendation 2** - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.



Progress Update

- The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with approval granted to the revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, thresholds for decisions, Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol, Scheme of delegations and refresh
- Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being planned for roll out during 2023-2024.
- Commercial Strategy in draft and due to be considered by Cabinet in March 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.

4.3.6 **Statutory Recommendation 3** - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.

Progress Update

- Member Development – New Member induction complete and Member Development Programme is being delivered and regularly reviewed by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. Next update to the Member Development Programme is due to be agreed in March which will incorporate analysis of Members' Personal Development Plans.
- Officer Development – A consolidated programme of fundamental training for managers on Corporate Governance matters has commenced. A broader Management Development Programme will be rolled out in 2023 following the approval of the Workforce Strategy.
- Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held and in final stages of developing the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours). Due for approval in March 2023.
- Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.



4.4 Reporting Framework, Governance and Assurance

- 4.4.1 To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, Council approved the reporting mechanism for the Improvement Plan in June 2022. This set out that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual. The diagram included at Appendix 4 sets out the governance framework.
- 4.4.2 This report forms the third quarterly update to Cabinet on the Improvement Plan. Leadership Team have reviewed progress against the plan every month.
- 4.4.3 The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in December 2022. The next report is due June 2023
- 4.4.4 Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 4.4.5 The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council last year.
- 4.4.6 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register and they received the external follow up reviews in January 2023. The Committee are due to consider this quarterly progress update on 16 March 2023.
- 4.4.7 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. This has included a 'deep dive' focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce. The Board will receive this quarterly update along with the external follow up reviews on 1 March 2023.



4.4.8 Following consideration of the progress report to Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, those members will identify areas for further exploration and reporting. Any recommendations or comments from these committees for Cabinet's consideration will be presented to Cabinet

4.5 External Reviews

4.5.1 External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations made through external reviews. Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA conducted follow up reviews in late 2022. Cabinet received the Grant Thornton and LGA reports in December 2022.

4.5.2 The CIPFA FM Model Reassessment Report is included at appendix 5 with context and findings summarised below.

4.5.3 CIPFA Review – Background and Scope

4.5.3.1 CIPFA were commissioned by the council to undertake a review of the financial management and governance arrangements using the Financial Management Model to contribute to the development of the council's financial management operation and arrangements. It assessed the council's financial management capability, its internal processes, and operations. It also examined how the council plans its future financial management.

4.5.3.2 The report from CIPFA received in January 2022 set out that the council was financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend, but that the authority has previously lacked ambition and innovation and has a very traditional approach to financial management.

4.5.3.3 The scoring process generated an overall star rating between one and five, five being the highest. Sandwell achieved an overall rating of two stars and was considered to be a progressive two-star authority with an encouraging direction of travel. CIPFA made 14 recommendations which were incorporated into the single Improvement Plan agreed by Council in June 2022.



4.5.3.4 CIPFA completed a Financial Management Model Re-assessment Review in December 2022.

4.5.4 CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Review – Key findings

4.5.4.1 The CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Report sets out that Sandwell has improved from a progressive two star rating to a three star rating.

4.5.4.2 Findings are arranged within the report according to CIPFA's model topic headings: Leadership, People, Processes and Stakeholders. All of these topic headings received increased individual scores.

4.5.4.3 Key points raised were that:

- Positive progress was evident and represents a step change in under a year, which is to be commended
- Finance is seen as a key function and priority and there is a positive commitment to the finance improvement programme
- The Director of Finance is well-respected
- The MTFs is now much stronger
- The budgetary process has improved
- The emphasis on business partnering has been broadly welcomed
- There is a coherent agenda and programme of financial reform
- There is clearer evidence of strategic and operational awareness

4.5.4.4 CIPFA raised a series of areas for the council to continue to focus on. Due to the date of receiving the CIPFA report, responses to these areas of recommendation will be incorporated within a further update of the Improvement Plan.



4.5.5 Responses to Follow up Reviews from Grant Thornton and the LGA

4.5.5.1 Grant Thornton and the LGA raised a series of recommendations and improvement points in their follow up reviews which have been considered. Responses to the recommendations are set out in Appendix 6.

4.5.5.2 Grant Thornton did not issue any new statutory recommendations in their follow-up review. They issued 4 new key recommendations. A summary of the response to these is outlined below:

- **Key Recommendation 1** - The Council must conclude the design of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan, which will focus on organisational culture, values and behaviours required to deliver change, and introduce a “golden thread” aligning corporate KPIs to individual’s performance objectives, so that planned improvements and changes become embedded across the organisation. The Council must also use the improvement building blocks now in place to bring a greater focus on service user responsiveness and outcomes.



Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan will include milestones around organisational culture and the actions to embed a golden thread including refreshing Vision 2030 and finalising Directorate level business plans. The response also sets out that a greater focus on outcomes for residents is being reflected in the One Team Framework and Workforce Strategy. These are reflected through the January changes to the Improvement Plan.

- **Key Recommendation 2** - The Council needs to ensure that the new corporate PMO remains appropriately resourced, integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council, and has access to appropriate data sources to be able to effectively monitor the delivery.

The establishment of the Corporate PMO is being progressed with support from Local Partnerships to ensure that we draw on best practice. The Corporate Transformation Office has been established and there is an agreed framework to integrate all transformation and change activity.

- **Key Recommendation 3** - The Council should progress and finalise outstanding actions relating to our previous recommendations, in particular introducing a commercial strategy and an asset management strategy and conclude the service based actions arising from our previous recommendations including finalising the outstanding Service Delivery Contract with Serco, and the creation of the new leisure services company. The Leadership Team needs to ensure there is appropriate corporate focus on medium term financial planning and financial statement production.

The council continues to have oversight of the progress against the service issues raised in the 2021 Grant Thornton review. The commercial strategy is in its final stages of preparation, the asset management strategy has been approved, good progress is being made in relation to the contract with SERCO and the establishment of the LATC. Leadership Team retains a robust corporate focus on medium term financial planning.



- **Key Recommendation 4** - Once all the planned revisions to the Constitution have been agreed, the Council will need to embed these changes and demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.

Work has already commenced to embed the revisions to the Constitution in working practice. Phase 2 of the Governance Review focuses on embedding changes and the next milestone is to agree the project plans.

4.5.6 The responses to all the recommendations from Grant Thornton and the LGA are incorporated into a refresh of the Improvement Plan which has been managed through the established change control process. The changes are set out in section 4.8 of this report.

4.6 Resources

4.6.1 In the development of the Improvement Plan, a review of the resources available to deliver the Plan was carried out. Resources to deliver the Improvement Plan have been allocated from within existing commitments in the majority of cases. Council approved funding of approximately £1.768m for one-off funding to progress improvement plan actions.

4.6.2 Recruitment to key positions has taken place including interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements. Other elements of recruitment are underway. Consultants have been commissioned to support the council's work on organisational culture and resources have been deployed to support the implementation of finance improvements and the Governance review. A summary of the Q3 position on all Council reserves is provided within the Q3 budget monitoring report considered by Cabinet in February.

4.7 Risk Management

4.7.1 The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.



4.7.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 7. The main risks are associated with:

- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the performance management framework, asset management system implementation and culture change programme. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June.
- **Organisational Culture** – If the organisational culture doesn't change, this will limit the improvements that can be made. A theme within the Improvement Plan focuses on organisational culture. A comprehensive engagement programme with staff has taken place and the resulting One Team Framework is due for approval in March. External reviews have provided assurance around the positive changes to the Member and Officer relationship.
- **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
- **Performance Management Framework** – to ensure that we can effectively monitor progress and evidence improvement. Each theme includes an outline of how success will be evidenced. Processes for monitoring progress are in place
- **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
- **Programme Management Arrangements**- to ensure appropriate programme management arrangements are in place existing experienced resource is being used. Governance arrangements in place for the Improvement Plan
- **Constitutional Changes (new risk)**- If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate Governance Review is underway and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes

4.7.3 Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have reduced:

- IP9 - Constitutional Changes (Amber to Green and now closed).



- IP10 - Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality (Red to Amber).
- IP11 - Continued focus and resources allocated to historic issues (Amber to Green).
- IP 12 - Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias) – (Amber to Green)

4.8 Changes to the Improvement Plan and Monitoring Method – Phase 2 Refresh

- 4.8.1 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes.
- 4.8.2 The Improvement Plan report to Council in June 2022 set out that changes (which may include the addition of new workstreams or objectives, or the amendment of timescales for delivery of actions) will be tracked through programme management mechanisms and that Cabinet will retain oversight of changes through regular formal reporting.
- 4.8.3 This refresh to the Improvement Plan includes the responses to the Grant Thornton and LGA follow up reviews. The refresh reflects that the majority of key milestones outlined in June 2022 have been delivered and an increasing focus is being taken on embedding and sustaining changes. As such, the refresh is referred to as the Phase 2 Improvement Plan.
- 4.8.4 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 8. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour. Changes as a result of the Grant Thornton and LGA follow up reviews are also referenced within Appendix 6.
- 4.8.5 The changes made are summarised below.
- 4 new workstreams have been added/amended
 - 5 main actions, 26 sub-actions, and 1 assurance action have been added
 - 32 changes made to action delivery timescales, and milestones (4 of which are of more than 3 months)
 - 16 changes to replace/move actions/milestones
 - 6 changes made to descriptions of actions



- 1 change to delivery lead throughout the plan (from Director – Business Strategy and Change to relevant Director/lead)
- 11 actions have been closed as the activity is complete

4.8.6 The monitoring method that has been in place for the Improvement Plan since June 2022 has involved actions being attributed with a risk rating and a ‘progress against plan’ status rating. These ratings have been combined to form an overall theme status rating to provide Leadership Team with oversight of progress and delivery issues.

4.8.7 As part of this Phase 2 refresh to the Improvement Plan, the monitoring method has been reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The review included consideration of some queries raised around the theme status ratings and the approach to attribute all actions a risk rating due to duplication with Directorate Risk Registers, Strategic Risk Register, and project risk registers.

4.8.8 Following the review, the changes made to the monitoring method are for action risk ratings to be replaced by a focus rating (to express areas of the plan that are a current delivery focus for leadership team), and for theme status ratings to no longer be used within the monitoring method.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Value for Money Governance Review was undertaken as part of the external auditor’s role to provide assurance on the council’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. As the report includes statutory recommendations the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately.



- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Reviewing progress against the Improvement Plan enables senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, and take corrective action, as necessary. Alternative methods of monitoring progress could be adopted. The current monitoring method is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require.

6 Implications

Resources:	The monitoring of the Improvement Plan is being carried out within existing resources. Council's approval of the single Improvement Plan included allocation of resources to ensure delivery of the Improvement Plan. These resources are monitored regularly by the Programme Management Office and Leadership Team.
Legal and Governance:	<p>On 22 March 2022, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act) in order to ensure that the council can comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act. Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p> <p>The delivery of actions within the Plan agreed by Council in June 2022, as well as any subsequently identified actions, will support the council to achieve sustainable improvement. This will support the end of government intervention.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.</p>



<p>Risk:</p>	<p>If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register is in place and will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan which will underpin the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). This will be reported monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and will be regularly reported to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The successful delivery of this Improvement Plan will require the development and review of many of the council's policies and procedures. These changes will build in consideration of the impact on equalities throughout the development and will include an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.</p>
<p>Social Value</p>	<p>Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the</p>



	council will be able to maximise its social value return.
Climate Change	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.

7. Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool January 2023
2. Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary January 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting January 2023
4. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram
5. CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report
6. Responses to Grant Thornton and LGA Follow Up Reviews
7. Improvement Plan Risk Register January 2023
8. Changes to the Improvement Plan January 2023

8. Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
 - To Council: [13 December 2022](#)
 - To Cabinet:
 - 7 [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
 - [September 2022](#)
 - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)
 - [June 2022](#)
 - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)



- External Review Reports
 - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up Report 2022](#)
 - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review December 2021 – reissued October 2022](#)
 - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report 2022](#)
 - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022](#)
 - [CIPFA Financial Management Report January 2022](#)





Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Council Leader – Cllr Kerrie Carmichael

DRAFT

My Ref:

KC/JLP

Please ask for:

Kerrie Carmichael

Telephone Number:

Date:

xx June 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

A year on from the approval of our Improvement Plan, we are proud to look back over our achievements. We have successfully embarked upon whole-scale organisational change at the same time as delivering on our Corporate Plan commitments. I am delighted that the Secretary of State for Education has commenced the process to end intervention in Children's Services.

We recognise that there is more work ahead on our improvement journey. The long-standing service issues raised by external reviews in 2021 have now either been addressed or are well-progressed with robust delivery plans in place. This has enabled the council to shift focus to longer-term planning.

Over the past six months we have continued to deliver at pace. Some of our achievements since December are summarised below, arranged by the themes of our Improvement Plan.

Organisational Culture

In terms of our organisational culture, we have been delighted to welcome our new Chief Executive, Shokat Lal, who took up post in February 2023. Recruitment is now underway for an Assistant Chief Executive who will oversee many of the service areas that make up the

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‘engine room’ of the local authority, helping to shape our culture and how we transform ourselves as an organisation.

The launch of our One Team Framework (organisational values and behaviours) this Spring marked a significant milestone and the start of the next phase of our organisational culture change programme. The framework is a result of staff engagement, facilitated by an internal network of Culture Champions. The five new organisational values and associated behaviours set out an ambition to be one team ‘united and working together with a shared purpose of achieving great results’ that is customer focused, inclusive, ambitious, and accountable.

The impact of our ‘One Team’ approach can be seen through work such as our preparations for voter ID in the May 2023 elections. Teams from across the council were brought together (including electoral services, communications, adult social care, libraries, pest control and revenues and benefits) with the VCS to develop our approach and then to help share messages. The VCS also supported digitally excluded residents to complete the online application. Through our ‘One Team’ approach we achieved one of the highest figures in the country for issuing voter authority certificates.

We have made significant strides in the relationship between Members and Officers which was acknowledged by our external reviewers. Along with training and support, a range of meetings are in place to facilitate a healthy and regular dialogue which includes meetings with Group Leaders and Chief Whips, and cross-party working groups. The strength of the relationship has enabled the council to move forward on implementing difficult decisions such as the development of Brandhall, re-setting the relationship with Sandwell Leisure Trust and implementing a chargeable garden waste scheme.

Over the next six months we are focusing on embedding the One Team Framework with learning and development for senior leaders and managers, a refreshed staff appraisal process, and the launch of an employee recognition scheme. The updated Member Development Programme and new Member induction programme will also be delivered to further cement the positive working culture between Members and Officers.

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Corporate Oversight and Strategic Direction

Since our letter to you in December 2022, we received the reports from Grant Thornton, LGA (Local Government Association) and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) from their follow-up reviews conducted in Autumn 2022. We were pleased that they recognised our clear progress. We have reflected on the further areas of recommendation to support our continuous improvement, and we have embedded actions to respond in our Improvement Plan and business plans.

Our performance management framework is maturing. Performance information and insight, including the results of consultation and engagement, is being used by Senior Leadership to set strategic direction and respond to issues. This approach has led to action being prioritised for example on the customer journey and targeted work to improve our response rates on Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information requests (FOIs).

As a result of this focus, SAR and FOI response rates have significantly improved and have been brought closer to target during the year. We have also reduced the number of Corporate Plan actions with significant progress issues. The performance management framework is also informing scrutiny work planning such as scrutiny's focus on customer journey work and the cost of living programme.

Since December we have put in place a framework for resident engagement along with a commission for delivery of regular resident surveys and budget consultation for the next three years. An evidence bundle, which included performance information and the outcomes from resident's consultation, has informed our refreshed business plans and Corporate Plan for 2023 onwards.

We are taking time to reflect and learn. We have recently completed a lessons learnt exercise on Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) transport procurement which is informing the council's overall approach to procurement. We sought out and have reflected on lessons learnt from a neighbouring LA around their implementation of Oracle Fusion and have assured ourselves that our approach is robust and

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that we have mitigations in place to avoid issues they encountered. We are also pursuing a joint lessons learnt exercise with Grant Thornton around the closure of our financial accounts.

Over the next six months, our refreshed Corporate Plan and Business Plans along with a newly developed set of service standards will continue to develop our insight and grow our performance culture. This will be supported by and intrinsically linked to how we embed the One Team framework. We have paved the way for our improvement activity to be monitored within our performance management framework through the refresh of our Corporate Plan. This will enable us to move away from a stand-alone improvement plan in forthcoming months, whilst retaining the assurance mechanisms to manage progress and performance.

In relation to financial strategy and management, our financial management improvements are demonstrated by the increase in our CIPFA rating from 2* to 3*. We continue to focus on developing financial acumen and skills through up-skilling budget holders and embedding a finance business partnering approach. Our approach to budget setting is embedded with conversations across Leadership Team and we have started the next budget setting cycle. We have an agreed budget in place that supports our Corporate Plan priorities and an agreed Medium-Term Financial Strategy. We have identified transformation programmes to bridge the budget gap in the medium term.

Transformation activity is taking place across the council including the Oracle Programme, a review of business support arrangements and financial services business process reviews. Resources from across the council have been brought together to consolidate resources. With the support of Local Partnerships, we are developing a Corporate Programme Management Office and approach to provide a strong corporate centre that enables transformation and project delivery across the organisation.

We recognise that we have a lot of work to do on our Customer Journey and see it as a corporate priority, establishing a robust framework, resources and performance improvement programme that should see

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visible improvements for customers, MPs and Councillors during 2023/24. The programme has a dedicated project manager and team and is being overseen by the Customer Journey Programme Board. Scrutiny are actively involved in shaping this work.

The Customer Journey Programme is ambitious and multi-faceted. Not only are we developing a Customer Experience Strategy, the programme also includes procuring a new telephony system, reviewing current technology and our customer processes so that they are responsive and efficient. We have also established a pilot Community Hub model for face-to-face contact for those who are digitally excluded or otherwise struggling to engage with the council and are reviewing our Contact Centres model, with regular reporting to senior leadership to monitor impact and inform future decisions on wider implementation. The programme will make the necessary improvements to our customer service to ensure our residents experience a seamless service when they need to contact us.

Now that the long-standing service issues raised by Grant Thornton in their 2021 Value for Money Governance Review have either been addressed or have a robust delivery plan in place, Leadership Team has been increasingly focusing on strategic matters using 'priority focus' sessions as a means for collective work across Cabinet and Senior Leaders. This approach is demonstrated by our work on the cost of living crisis. We convened a Cost of Living Emergency Summit in March 2023, bringing together more than sixty public, private and voluntary sector partners to coordinate our efforts to support our community through this crisis. The summit was full of energy and commitment from across all our partners to problem solve and collaborate and resulted in a series of partnership wide commitments and asks.

We enter the new municipal year with Cabinet that reflects the stability and continuity of the administration. We are focussed on working effectively together in the coming months to build on the improvements set out in the report.

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Decision Making

As we reported to you in December, our constitution has been fully refreshed. Since December, our attention has turned to further embedding the constitutional changes. Over the next six months, our learning and development activities will continue and will be strengthened by the role out of the One Team Framework.

We've continued to make key decisions focusing on long term planning such as approval of:

- the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan in February, which includes flexibility to amend the plan subject to results of stock condition surveys
- the Friar Park Masterplan in March. This has set the strategic direction for the development of the Friar Park Urban Village based on public consultation and impact assessments

We are developing a set of new measures as part of the performance management framework to provide us with further insight into the quality of the decision-making process and drive our continuous improvement.

We are proud of the improvements that have taken place within Audit and Scrutiny Committees. Members and Officers have worked together to ensure that these functions are working effectively and holding the council to account. The Committees are well-managed and have focused work programmes and meetings. We are continuously improving and learning and are using feedback gained from Members and Officers of their experiences of meetings.

The Scrutiny review on the Impact of Lockdown on Children & Families reported to Cabinet in February 2023, included wide-ranging and significant recommendations to improve the service/approach to improve outcomes for children and their families. Scrutiny took an outcomes-focused approach to considering SEND transport with effective challenge provided on the wider issues of the service rather than procurement.

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Partnerships and Relationships, Procurement and Commercial

We are continuing to prioritise our work with partners. At a regional and sub-regional level regular attendance and participation is in place, for example, with the WMCA (West Midlands Combined Authority) Board, the CA Economic Growth Board, CA Housing and Regeneration Board and the ABCA (Association of Black Country Authorities) Leaders. This participation has meant that the council has secured support from the Mayor and all Met Leaders to the agreed allocation of £2million from the Commonwealth Games 2022 budget underspend of £70million to fund increased utilities costs for the Sandwell Aquatic Centre.

I am pleased to be leading the Inclusive Communities Portfolio for the WMCA which will include developing an inclusive communities strategy for the CA, progress participation and coproduction through the Young CA and the Faith Strategy Participation Group, and will oversee delivery of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Funding.

The council has also fully participated in the negotiations and discussions on the proposals for a West Midlands Devolution Deal with Government and formal decisions will be taken on this in Autumn 2023. We are excited to be developing proposals for a Levelling Up Partnership with Government to secure further regeneration in Sandwell.

In a Sandwell context, relationships with partners continue to mature. Our recent cost of living summit is one example along with our joint work on Early Help which is bearing fruit. Of families who received multi-agency early help, 76.2% were not referred back to Early Help services or Children's Social Care within 12 months.

Key major contracts are being managed across the council and the corporate performance management framework includes regular reporting on major contracts, with a focus on service outcomes. We are developing a corporate contract management approach and are rolling out training to those responsible for contracts to ensure a consistent level of knowledge and practice.

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Accompanying this letter is our Improvement Plan Annual Report June 2023. This report is a summary of our progress on our improvement journey including key milestones achieved, evidence of impact, and next steps. Our quarterly progress reports to Cabinet made in March and June 2023 are also attached which provide a greater level of detail around progress issues, risks, resources and changes to the Improvement Plan.

Our key areas of focus over forthcoming months are driving our plans around organisational culture, customer journey, transformation and delivering the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

We enter the year ahead with pride in our achievements and a commitment to continue to work as One Team to drive the council's improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Signature ...

Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Council Leader

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Report to Cabinet

7 June 2023

Subject:	Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – Wave 2.1 Funding
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Communities, Councillor Rollins
Director:	Director of Housing Gillian Douglas
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officers:	Sarah Ager, Assistant Director – Asset Management and Improvement sarah_ager@sandwell.gov.uk Jonathan Rawlins, Business Manager - Asset Management and Improvement jonathan_rawlins@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 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.



- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 That subject to 1.1 and 1.2 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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.


2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to authorise the acceptance of grant funding of up to £5.5m to fund proposed energy-efficiency improvements to assist in addressing fuel poverty in council-owned dwellings in Sandwell and to seek approval to match-fund and supplement the works from the Housing Revenue account (HRA) in the order of £16m, to achieve an EPC C to the identified properties.
- 2.2 To seek approval for the Director of Housing to instruct the Council's External Improvement construction partners (currently being procured) to deliver energy improvement works in accordance with the tendered contractual arrangements.



- 2.3 To seek authorisation for the Director of Housing to instruct agencies procured via the Combined Authority to carry out duties to ensure compliance with funding criteria, on behalf of Sandwell MBC, in relation to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
- 2.4 This initiative clearly supports the current drive towards a greener, low-carbon economy and a need to address Climate Change priorities. It will also help to address high levels of fuel poverty in the Sandwell area.
- 2.5 Acceptance of the proposals contained within this report, will have the following effect:
- A reduction in fuel poverty levels
 - Improved living conditions for tenants in 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.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods, this investment is required to allow Sandwell MBC to improve the thermal efficiency, decency and appearance of the housing stock.</p> <p>Ambition 2 - <i>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> Improved energy-efficiency of homes should reduce energy bills and help to address fuel poverty, allowing vulnerable residents to enjoy more comfortable lives.</p> <p>Ambition 10 – <i>Sandwell now has a reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focussed on what really matters in people's lives and communities.</i> This initiative will demonstrate Sandwell as a forward-thinking authority that has successfully bid for government funding aimed at</p>
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reducing tenants' energy bills and carbon emissions and is committed to reducing our climate change impact.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background

4.1.1 During 2019 the Government committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social rented homes, on the pathway to Net Zero 2050. The SHDF aims to deliver warm, energy-efficient homes, reduce carbon emissions and fuel bills, tackle fuel poverty, and support green jobs.

4.1.2 Building on the previous successful wave of SHDF Wave 1, Sandwell MBC were a named partner in a SHDF Wave 2.1 bid submitted to government as part of the consortium headed up by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Other participating members of the Consortium are Community Housing Group, Midland Heart, Orbit Housing Group, Solihull Community Housing, St Basil's, Nehemiah Housing Association, Dudley MBC, Cannock Chase DC, Bromford Housing Group, Witton Lodge CIC, Make it Sustainable, The Elizabeth Dowells Almshouse Trust, St Johns Church and Balsall Heath Housing Cooperative.

4.1.3 Wave 2.1 aims to improve the energy performance of homes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C, wherever possible, to take households out of fuel poverty and deliver progress towards the UK's commitment to Net Zero by 2050. This is the second wave (out of a total of four waves, subject to future spending review agreement) of the SHDF programme.

4.1.4 Lessons learned from both the SHDF Demonstrator and SHDF Wave 1 have been incorporated in the design of SHDF Wave 2.1. The key aims and objectives for the SHDF Wave 2.1 are set out below:

- Fuel Poverty: Reduce the numbers in Fuel Poverty by improving the energy efficiency rating of social homes below EPC Band C and reducing energy bills. On this basis, tenant



energy bills should not increase for equivalent home warmth, and it is expected that bills will reduce.

- Carbon: Deliver cost effective carbon savings to contribute to carbon budgets, and progress towards the UK's target for Net Zero by 2050 by reducing CO2 emissions from Social Housing.
- Green Economy: Support economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of Covid-19, supporting thousands of jobs.
- Tenants: Improve the comfort, health, and well-being of Social Housing tenants by delivering warmer and more energy-efficient homes.
- Develop the Retrofit Sector: Create the conditions for growth in the retrofit supply chain capacity and capabilities, boosting productivity and innovation in the construction sector. Additionally, upskilling social landlords in retrofit to support future improvements to energy efficiency in the social housing sector.

4.1.5 WMCA appointed a consultant to coordinate the bid. Each authority was asked to identify properties that met the set criteria. The cost of investment is based upon the range of measures and type of property identified.

4.1.6 The grant provides funding of up to 50% of total eligible project costs to assist in the delivery of the project, with the Council contributing a minimum of 50% of total eligible project costs. The value of the grant is dependent on the rating on the property, with cost caps implemented on each home. One of the key principles of the fund is 'worst first', so those homes with the poorest EPC rating attract a higher cap than those homes that have a better rating. Cost caps are also applied to wall type, to allow more grant funding for harder to retrofit properties with solid walls, compared to the cheaper easier solution for cavity walls.



- 4.1.7 The property data that has been used for the bid gives an indication of the EPC for the identified properties, however upon acceptance of the bid a full retrofit assessment will be carried out which will validate the rating and in turn confirm the cost cap and the associated HRA contribution.
- 4.1.8 The cost of investment was established using prices for each measure available at the time of submission and this is subject to change. The indicative values provided in the bid were to invest in 625 properties, attracting a grant of £5.5m with the HRA contribution of £15.3m which is a 26% grant contribution to the overall delivery.
- 4.1.9 The total number of properties included within the consortium's bid is 2,076, of which Sandwell is the main contributor with a provisional number of 625 properties. The principal measure proposed by all members, including Sandwell MBC, is external wall insulation (EWI).
- 4.1.10 The HRA 30 Year Business Plan, approved by Cabinet on 15 February 2023, confirmed the Council's ambition to ensure our properties are energy efficient and to support the journey to net zero carbon. All council stock must be at Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level C or above by 2030. Under the council's Climate Change Strategy our housing stock should also achieve net zero carbon by 2041. Meeting these targets requires significant investment in the stock and this is reflected in the 30 Year Plan. However, to achieve net zero carbon we will require external funding as well as use of HRA.
- 4.1.11 Appendix 1 provides an overall project cost breakdown for the Combined Authority consortium bid, including the Sandwell element.
- 4.1.12 If the Council's ambitious climate change target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2041 is to be met, this type of intervention is necessary. This project will also help families who may be suffering from fuel poverty as they are currently living in some of the least energy-efficient houses in the Council's stock.



4.1.13 Measures will be incorporated into an ongoing external improvement programme and can help demonstrate a firm commitment towards achieving carbon reduction targets and climate change initiatives.

4.2 The Current Position

4.2.1 The bid was submitted on 18 November 2022, with a right reserved to withdraw from the project before entering into a more formal agreement once the decision to award funding had been made by Government.

4.2.2 Sandwell MBC's element of the bid includes delivering external wall insulation, improved flat roof insulation (including roof replacement) and cavity wall insulation to up to Council-owned dwellings that have been identified across various estates within the six towns of Sandwell.

4.2.3 On 20 March 2023, WMCA received notification from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero that our bid had been successful.

4.2.4 As the project value exceeds £100,000 and an application for external funding is being made, the bid is currently in the process of being financially appraised by Strategic Finance.

4.2.5 Officers are currently procuring contractors to deliver external improvement works, approved by Cabinet on 18 May 2022. Once appointed, these contractors will be the nominated installers to deliver the works detailed within this report. All eligible installers are required to be Trust Mark Registered or equivalent and all works must be compliant with PAS 2035:2019 Retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency; Specification and guidance. It will be a condition precedent to the award of these contracts that contractors comply with these requirements.

4.2.6 As the procurement process is yet to be concluded and an award made, the true cost to deliver these works is currently unknown. The bid was based on the historical costs, and the costs are increasing throughout the industry, it is likely that the overall cost to deliver the required measures to the identified properties will be significantly higher than the £20.7m total project cost.



The grant, however, of c.£5.5m will remain static, resulting in the requirement for any additional costs to be met from the HRA, or as an alternative a reduction in the number of properties could be considered. This will be monitored in conjunction with WMCA to maximise any additional grant that may be available within the consortium.

4.2.7 The external improvement works contract is due to mobilise in July 2023 for a four-year period with a value of £20m per annum. The current predicted HRA contribution of £16m will be spread over two financial years, with an approximate value of £8m per annum, leaving sufficient head room to carry this work alongside other external improvement works.

4.2.8 The delivery window for SHDF Wave 2.1 will run between March 2023 to 30 September 2025.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Council could do nothing, not accept the grant and not invest in the properties to improve the energy efficiency. This is 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.

5.2 Should the Council decline this offer and still wish 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 is ruled out because it is important that we draw down funding for retrofitting. It is highly likely that all registered providers of social housing, including local authorities, will need access to grant funding in order to meet the ambitious climate change targets in housing.

5.3 An alternative option could be to complete similar works to the same addresses without SHDF Wave 2.1 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 has been ruled out because it is important that we draw down



funding for retrofitting. If the Council wishes to access Government funding for retrofit works now and in the foreseeable future, compliance with PAS 2035 with associated increased costs is likely to be the norm.

6 Implications

Resources:	The HRA 30 Year Business Plan, which was approved by Cabinet on 15 February 2023 included, Capital investment for Refurbishment and ECO projects to improve the energy efficiency of properties in Sandwell. At this stage the proposed match funding contribution figure of £15.3m will be allocated from this budget and it is anticipated that all match funding will be expended during 2023/2024, 2024/25.
Legal and Governance:	<p>The project would be awarded and delivered via the current External Improvement Programme contract which are currently being procured, approved at the Cabinet meeting of 18th May 2022 (minute 105/22 refers)</p> <p>The contract is being procured and will be awarded in accordance with the council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p> <p>The project will be overseen and monitored by the SHDF Steering Group led by Sarah Ager, Assistant Director Asset Management and Improvement.</p>
Risk:	<p>A risk register has been compiled and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the SHDF Steering Group. Arrangements are in place to effectively manage and mitigate the risks identified. Major risks are identified below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project deemed unviable following assessment by Strategic Investment Unit owing to additional



	<p>costs predominantly caused by compliance with PAS2035:2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to spend any funding awarded
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise has been carried out and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Accepting SHDF funding and completion of the proposed insulation works should result in the following benefits to the households concerned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better insulation will help residents to save energy and money on fuel bills or able the residents to heat their home effectively with the money available to them • Improved living conditions could help to ease the pressure on the NHS by reducing hospital admissions • Use of the grant to support the associated work, will reduce carbon emissions with associated benefits through reducing the impacts of climate change
Social Value	<p>Social Value will be achieved through the inclusion of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) contained within the formal contracts with the successful contractors. The plan will include contractual performance indicators such as work experience placements, apprenticeships in addition to school engagement and community activities.</p> <p>The proposals contained in this report are entirely commensurate with the Council's climate change priorities and will help to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced carbon and greenhouse gas emissions • A reduction in fuel poverty • Improved health and wellbeing



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive economic growth – reduced fuel bills should allow more money to be spent locally.
Climate Change:	All council stock must be at Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level C or above by 2030. Under the council’s Climate Change Strategy our housing stock should also achieve net zero carbon by 2041. Meeting these targets requires significant investment in the stock and this is reflected in the Plan. However, to achieve net zero carbon we will require external funding as well as use of HRA.
Corporate Parenting:	The proposals will support residents, including children and young people.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Project cost breakdown

8. Background Papers

Report to Cabinet 15 February 2023, Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan (minute 17/23)

Report to Cabinet 18 May 2022, Asset Management and Maintenance Investment Programme 2022-23 (minute 105/22)



Appendix 1

Project Cost Breakdown

	Project Cost Breakdown				
	Total Project Costs	Total SHDF Grant Funding requested - Capital	Total RP Contribution - Capital	Total Grant Funding requested - A & A ¹	Total RP Contribution - A & A
WMCA Consortium Wave 2.1 Bid Submission	£ 52,180,793.00	£ 14,280,714.00	£ 30,907,677.00	£ 3,496,201.00	£ 3,496,201.00
Sandwell MBC element of Bid	£ 20,727,454.00	£ 4,558,000.00	£ 14,132,905.00	£ 845,519.00	£ 1,191,030.00
<i>All costs are inc. non-recoverable VAT</i>					

¹ A & A = Admin and ancillary costs, which include: -

- Consortium Manager
- Bid Manager Handover
- WMCA technical lead/ PAS 2035 compliance
- Retrofit assessor coordinator x 2
- Consortium Admin Support
- Consortium coordination
- Procurement support
- Customer journey support and tenant advice
- WMCA Corporate Services Recharge @ 2%
- Project Management (RPs)
- PAS 2035 Retrofit Assessment, Evaluation
- Co-ordination & Design
- Decant & Storage Costs
- EPCs
- Trustmark or equivalent lodgement fees
- Planning & Consent/Building Control fees

