

Minutes of Cabinet

**Wednesday, 21 June 2023 at 3.30 pm
at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury,
B69 3DB**

Present: Councillor Piper (Vice-Chair in the Chair);
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Khatun, Padda and Rollins

In attendance: Councillors Fenton, Lewis, Moore and Owen.

Also present: Shokat Lal (Chief Executive), Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing), Tony McGovern (Director of Regeneration and Growth), Simone Hines (Director of Finance), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy), Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer), Anthony Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer) and Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager).

60/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Carmichael and Taylor.

61/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

62/23 Additional Items of Business

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



63/23 2022/23 Financial Outturn

Approval of the Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO) and reserve transfer of £32.388m was sought. £33m of reserves had been used, some of which were planned and some of which were used to address budgetary pressures. The main variance to budget was the way in which the Council managed debt; this provided a saving of approximately £3.7m. The cost of living crisis and pay award offer to Council staff had a significant impact on the budget. SEND transport costs were also noted as significantly contributing to costs.

Following questions from the Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Board, on behalf of the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Board, the following responses were provided:-

- underspend was held in reserves and distributed by Leadership Team upon request;
- there was a significant increase in the number of Education and Healthcare Plans and as a result, more children were using services outside of the borough due to inadequate local provisions within Sandwell;
- cheaper options such as public transport, parent mileage payments, multi occupancy mini-buses and taxis were considered on a process of elimination when transporting pupils;
- the Council received income from the Airport totalling £100k per annum.

Reason for Decision

Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. Budgetary control, which included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets, was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility. The recommended treatment of the year end variances supported the financial sustainability of the council.

Alternative Options Considered

Cabinet could have varied the proposed treatment of the year end variances from budget.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the financial outturn reports of each directorate service area ([Appendices 1A to 1J](#)), the Housing Revenue Account ([Appendix K](#)) and the ISB ([Appendix L](#)) be referred to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment;
- (2) that approval is given to the Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO) and reserve transfers of £32.388m set out in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 3](#).

64/23 Adoption of Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Approval of the Housing Strategy for Sandwell 2023-28 was sought.

The housing strategy detailed the Council's ambitions, priorities and objectives and how the Council planned to address the key housing challenges across Sandwell. The strategy covered the period leading up to 2028 and was formed using housing need data and feedback from residents to help build sustainable and cohesive communities across the borough. Actions including delivering new Council-build housing, regeneration schemes and initiatives to improve housing standards within the strategy.

Following questions from both the Vice Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, on behalf of the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Communities Scrutiny Board, the following points and clarifications were made:-

- across housing directorate team had been created in December 2022 comprising of surveyors, housing officers and trade operatives to ensure that the Council could respond quickly to reports of damp and mould in tenant's homes;
- the team was shaping a strategy to help ready the Council to respond to the likely increase of damp and mould reported inside tenant's properties in the winter months;
- work was underway that assessed the scale of the damp and mould problems in order to set out a longer-term strategy that would include more substantial measures;
- although vital information had been received, it was acknowledged that only a modest number of responses had been received following consultation. Future use of Citizenspace

for consultation via the Council's website would be used to help stimulate greater interest in future surveys;

- the assessing officer, as part of the assessment, would consider adaptations to meet the needs of the tenant, including wheelchair users.

Reasons for recommendations

The report set out the Council's housing vision and ambitions for the 5-year period to the end of 2028, showing how the Council intended to address the key housing challenges affecting the community. It set out the Council's priorities and objectives for meeting housing need and working with tenants and residents to build sustainable and cohesive communities across the borough.

In addition, the document would outline how Sandwell Council planned to meet the current and future forecasts of housing need in the Borough, including specific household groups such as those with care and support needs and people from diverse equalities groups.

Alternative options considered

The Local Government Act 2003 required all local housing authorities to publish a Housing Strategy setting out a vision for housing in its area, including objectives, targets and policies on how the authority intended to manage and deliver its strategic housing role.

Resolved that approval be given to the Housing Strategy for Sandwell 2023-28 as set out in [Appendix 1](#).

65/23 Application For and Adoption Of Moving Traffic Contraventions Enforcement Powers

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Borough Economy to make an application to the Department for Transport for powers to enable the enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions (MTCs) in accordance with Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 across the whole of Sandwell Council adopted road network. Acquiring these powers would allow Sandwell Council to be more proactive in improving road safety, air quality, congestion and network management. Enforcement would be undertaken by number plate recognition cameras and would be prioritised at locations where events were taking place regularly.

Enforcement would be cost-neutral, and consultation was planned to commence in July 2023.

Following questions from Scrutiny Chairs, it was highlighted that the new powers would be extremely beneficial for the Council regardless of the current policies and circumstances facing the West Midlands Police Force. Enforcement would take place through static cameras that could be deployed and moved between different locations and static speed cameras in the borough would continue to operate under the control of the Police.

Reasons for Decision

With the exception of Bus Lane enforcement, only West Midlands Police had the legal authority to fine drivers for contravening moving traffic offences. Poor compliance with Traffic Regulation Orders for certain moving offenses had a detrimental effect on road safety and network efficiency, Sandwell Council wished to apply to the Department for Transport for Moving Traffic Contravention enforcement powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Acquiring these powers would allow Sandwell to be more proactive in improving road safety, air quality, congestion, and network management. In addition, having these powers would provide an effective tool to respond to resident, school, and councillors' concerns in a more positive and proactive manner, as currently all issues related to non-compliance were referred to the local police who had limited resource available for moving traffic enforcement.

Alternative Options Considered

Business as usual (Do Nothing) was not recommended as enforcement of moving traffic contraventions would remain the sole responsibility of West Midlands Police. Due to limited police resource, ongoing effective enforcement of moving traffic contraventions was unlikely, and this had the potential to impact the safety and efficiency of the highway network at the worst identified locations.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to make an application to the Department for Transport for powers to enable the enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions (MTCs) (listed in [Appendix A](#)) in accordance with Part 6 of the

Traffic Management Act 2004 across the whole of Sandwell Council adopted road network;

- (2) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to set Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to be issued with Moving Traffic Enforcement (MTE) at the higher level of (£70) for moving traffic contraventions (reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days) in line with existing civil enforcement activities undertaken in the borough;
- (3) that the Scheme of Delegations to Officers (Executive side function) be amended to enable the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways, to make decisions on moving traffic offences as follows:
 - the development and management of operational policy regarding enforcement, site selection and operation;
 - approval of future enforcement sites and their operation;
 - to undertake the required consultation process with any unresolved objections to be heard by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways;
- (4) that subject to Resolutions (1) – (3) above, the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to amend the Scheme of Delegations to Officers (executive side function) in relation to Director of Borough Economy.

66/23 Asset transfer of Charlemont Community Centre, Beaconview Road, West Bromwich

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Housing to transfer of Charlemont Community Centre, Beaconview Road, West Bromwich asset to Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation (SACMHF) based on a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 per annum.

Reasons for decision

As part of this process, Asset Transfer of sites had been considered as an option that had the potential to deliver both stability and future investment in facilities. Since the Council's current Asset Transfer Policy had been in place, a successful asset transfer of Brasshouse Community Centre had taken place and two further asset transfers were agreed by Cabinet in 2022/23.

Following an extensive consultation and negotiation period with local voluntary organisations and all relevant stakeholders, the authority had identified SACMHF as a preferred partner for Charlemont Community Centre.

Alternative options considered

To retain Council operational management, the site would require significant investment which would potentially be a financial pressure on Asset Management. Revenue budgets would also have had to be identified for SMBC to operationally manage the site.

This would not have signalled to the wider voluntary and community sector that the Council value their contribution as partners and wanted to use asset transfer as a positive tool for enabling the development of enterprising and sustainable organisations with a long-term stake in the area.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to authorise the Director of Housing to transfer the Charlemont Community Centre, Beaconview Road, West Bromwich, B71 3PJ asset to Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation based on a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 per annum for a multi-purpose community facility and office space;
- (2) that, in relation to Resolution (1) above, approval be given to authorise the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, a formal lease for Charlemont Community Centre.

67/23 Asset transfer of Hurst Road Community Centre, Oldbury B67 6ND

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Housing to transfer the Hurst Road Community Centre, Oldbury asset to Sandwell Asian Family Service (SAFS) based on a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 per annum for a multi-purpose community facility and office space.

The Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board sought clarification on the abilities of either party to terminate the lease. In response, it was confirmed that the agreed statement between parties was being maintained and reviewed

regularly. If the nature of the organisation's model was to change so that it could no longer deliver services, then the lease would allow the Council to charge a commercial rent on the premises. If the organisation was unable to meet the commitment, the Council retained the right to break the lease. Additionally, it was highlighted that due diligence would be taken to ensure that any funding applications made by the organisation was sustainable and deliverable.

Reasons for decision

Since June 2022, the Housing Directorate had been actively exploring long-term options to secure the future of three of its community centres.

Following an extensive consultation and negotiation period with local voluntary organisations and all relevant stakeholders the Authority had identified SAFS as a preferred partner for Hurst Road Community Centre.

Alternative options considered

To retain Council operational management, the site would require significant investment which would potentially be a financial pressure on Asset Management. Revenue budgets would also have had to be identified for SMBC to operationally manage the site.

This would not have signalled to the wider voluntary and community sector that the Council value their contribution as partners and wanted to use asset transfer as a positive tool for enabling the development of enterprising and sustainable organisations with a long-term stake in the area.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to authorise the Director of Housing to transfer the Hurst Road Community Centre, Oldbury, B67 6ND asset to Sandwell Asian Family Service based on a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 per annum for a multi-purpose community facility and office space;
- (2) that, in relation to Resolution (1) above, approval be given to authorise the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, a formal lease for Hurst Road Community Centre.

68/23 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Commission

Approval was sought to the establishment of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission (EDI Commission). The Council, over recent months, had delivered many EDI initiatives ranging from promoting and celebrating PRIDE, Black History month, Disability History month, International Women's week as well as Supporting the Queen's Baton Relay. The Council recently refreshed the equality policy and a new EDI learning module had been launched. Staff networks had been revised and EDI bulletins had been released.

The Council recognised Sandwell's rich and diverse communities and were keen to celebrate; it was highlighted that these celebrations were key to achieving a strong healthy and prosperous borough. The equalities commission played a crucial role in and outside of the Council for EDI. The commission focussed on being a critical friend and would raise Sandwell's profile regionally and nationally. The board would be chaired by the Leader of the Council and would include members from various backgrounds with differing views and opinions. Establishing the EDI commission was important for the infrastructure of the Council. The Council's five staff networks: Disability Network, LGBTQ+ Network, Ethnic Minority Network, Women's Network and the Age Smart Network would all be represented on the Board.

Reasons for decision

The Equalities Commission (EC) Terms of Reference expired on 31 March 2023. Refreshing the EC was a key strategic deliverable in the Sandwell Improvement Plan.

Alternative options considered

The alternative option would be to do nothing and not to have the Equalities Commission. The council was not legally obliged to have an Equalities Commission.

Resolved:-

- (1) that approval be given to the establishment of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission (EDI Commission);

- (2) that approval be given to the Terms of Reference for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission (EDI Commission) as set out in [Appendix 1](#).

69/23 Feasibility of establishing a Council Owned Housing Company

This item was deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

70/23 Rolfe Street Masterplan – Approval

Approval of the revised Rolfe Street Masterplan was sought. The masterplan proposed over 600 new homes, with a mixture of apartments and family housing with links to the Canal Network and additional open space areas. The masterplan suggested reduced parking provision, however, further reasoned justification and evidence would be needed for future proposals. Consultation with the public had taken place through a variety of mediums which produced positive results with many in favour of the vision of the masterplan.

In response to questions from scrutiny members, assurance was provided that the Council's social value team would engage with the developers of the scheme to encourage the creation of job opportunities for local people. This team would also ensure that local businesses would be represented in the supply-chain.

Reasons for decision

Authority to undertake community consultation on the Draft Rolfe Street Masterplan was granted by Cabinet on 18 January 2023. The Masterplan had been prepared following engagement with officers, members, members of the public and stakeholders. The period of consultation was undertaken between 6 February 2023 and 20 March 2023. From the consultation process, 41 responses were received on the online questionnaire with additional letters received from other stakeholders. The Masterplan had subsequently been amended, wherever possible, to reflect local views.

Alternative options considered

Not progressing with a Masterplan for the area would result in taking away development opportunities in the area or provide a strong base to bid for further funding. The continued regeneration envisioned for this area would not be achieved and it would

prevent the potential development of up to 660 much needed homes, within one of the most deprived areas of Sandwell.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the results of the public consultation undertaken on the Draft Rolfe Street Masterplan during February to March 2023 as set out in the Consultation Report be considered;
- (2) that, in relation to Resolution (1) above, approval be given to the Rolfe Street Masterplan, as amended.

71/23 Parking Charges Policy with Hybrid Working Benefits

Approval was sought to revise and update the schedule of fees and charges for parking in Sandwell that relate to on-street and off-street locations.

The proposed changes had been advertised from 18 August 2022 until 30 September 2022 on social media and the Council's website. Representations received from public consultation were considered by the previous portfolio holder at a public meeting. Individuals making representations were invited to the meeting to speak about their response to the public consultation.

Assurance was sought by the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on what assessment had been made of the impact that the newly introduced charges would have on local businesses. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment highlighted that the new charges were consistent with rates across the Black Country. Although free parking was considered for shorter stays, this was not feasible due to the subsequent need to increase long stay charges to off-set the cost. This would have greatly impacted residents working within the borough's town centres.

Reasons for decision

Adjustments were proposed to mitigate the major concerns raised during public consultation from 18 August 2022 to 30 September 2022 and at a public meeting on 1 February 2023. The recommendations sought to realign parking charges to support the objectives of Climate Change Policy, Carbon Reduction, Air Quality, sustainable transport choices, balancing available parking

with demand and to meet the cost of providing and maintaining car parks, parking related services and sustainable transport projects.

Alternative options considered

To alternatively fund parking and traffic related services from the general fund would partly rely on subsidy from 30% of Sandwell households that did not have access to a car or van and had less ability to pay.

To leave parking charges unchanged was not recommended as it would have missed the opportunity to support the strategic response to the declared Climate Change Emergency. It also would have missed the opportunity to make the most of changes in travel behaviour as experienced during the pandemic, it would have failed to address supply and demand problems, would miss the opportunity to mitigate against the future increases in demand and associated impacts on safety, the environment, trade for small businesses and local economy and would fail to take the opportunity to encourage working from home and modal shift in transport choice.

A further option, in response to concerns about town centre trade was to make a 30-minute stay, free for pay and display parking, to encourage passing trade. This was not a recommended option as it would increase enforcement costs. This option would still have required a no cost pay and display ticket to be issued and displayed (to record time of arrival) to avoid a penalty charge, leading to misunderstanding and an escalation of appeals. The total impact was difficult to estimate but could reduce income by £50,000 to £100,000 per year.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the decisions of the Cabinet taken on 20 July 2022 in relation to the review of parking charges policy be updated to include the decisions below following representations at public consultation to accommodate the most significant concerns (see Minute No. 148/22);
- (2) that future reviews of the appropriate documents that make up the Sandwell Local Plan consider the appropriate level of parking provision in centres for the future, taking into account the level of redevelopment planned and

implemented since the last review, climate change policy and facilitating modal shift through parking management;

- (3) that the proposed scales of parking charges are not applied to Sandwell Valley car parks;
- (4) that for off-street car parking, the scale of charges is reset including a new low cost 30 minute charge, removing the previous proposals for 2026 and 2027 (subject to the review) as follows:-

Outside West Bromwich

Up to No. of Hours	2016 To 2023	2023	2024	2025
30 mins	40p	20p	30p	40p
1 hr	40p	50p	60p	70p
2 hrs	80p	£1.00	£1.10	£1.20
3 hrs	£1.20	£1.50	£1.60	£1.70
4 hrs	£1.60	£2.00	£2.10	£2.20
Day	£4.00	£4.00	£4.50	£5.00

Within West Bromwich

Up to No. of Hours	2016 to 2023	2023	2024	2025
30 mins	40p	40p	60p	80p
1 hr	40p	£1.00	£1.20	£1.40
2 hrs	80p	£2.00	£2.20	£2.40
3 hrs	£1.20	£3.00	£3.20	£3.40
4 hrs	£1.60	£4.00	£4.20	£4.40
Day	£4.00	£8.00	£8.50	£9.00

- (5) that parking shall be free of charge at the following times with increased concessions over Christmas:-

- On Sundays,
- Overnight between the hours of 18.00 and 08.00.
- For Blue badge holders and

- For all Saturdays in December (except Sandwell Valley)
 - Every Saturday for season ticket holders (except Sandwell Valley)
- (6) that short stay on-street parking charges will remain unchanged;
- (7) that all long stay season tickets are valid for use at Sandwell Valley car parks on the nominated days covered by the season ticket;
- (8) that West Bromwich long stay Season Tickets are valid for all Council long stay car parking on the nominated days;
- (9) that the annual charges for long stay season tickets that operate on nominated days of the week be set, on the basis of one season ticket per vehicle, removing the previous proposals for 2026 and 2027 (subject to the review) and based on the representations received that the proposed increases within West Bromwich are reduced and aligned more closely with charges across the Black Country Authorities as follows:

Outside West Bromwich

No, of Days per Week	2015	2016 to 2023	2023	2024	2025
1	£175	£140	£40	£45	£50
2	£175	£140	£100	£115	£125
3	£175	£140	£200	£225	£250
4	£175	£240	£300	£330	£350
5	£175	£240	£400	£450	£500

Within West Bromwich (also valid outside West Bromwich for the same nominated days)

No, of Days per Week	2015	2016 to 2023	2023	2024	2025
1	£390	£140	£60	£70	£80
2	£390	£140	£150	£170	£190

3	£390	£140	£300	£330	£360
4	£390	£240	£450	£490	£530
5	£390	£240	£600	£650	£700

- (10) that for all zero emission electric vehicles, a 50% reduction in season ticket prices will apply;
- (11) that the monthly scales of season ticket charges will be levied at 10% of the annual scales of season ticket charges for car parks either within West Bromwich or outside West Bromwich as appropriate;
- (12) that at the few locations where long stay on-street parking charges are necessary, charges will be set to correspond with the off-street scale of hourly parking charges;
- (13) that the Off-Street Parking Places order is updated with the following changes;
- remove Bull Street Multi Storey, West Bromwich and Morrisons car park and Market Place car park, Wednesbury;
 - include wording for paying by other means advertised where there is no functioning ticket machine, no refunds for season tickets and spaces marked for electric vehicle recharging to only be used when actively recharging a vehicle;
 - include West Bromwich Street and Causeway Green Road car parks in the main Off Street Order and revoke the two individual orders;
 - change the operating times for New Street Disabled car park, West Bromwich. At present it is Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm. New time 7 days a week at any time. This is to keep spaces available for blue badge holders in the evening;
 - include Roway Lane car park, Oldbury;
 - include wording so that bays marked for recharging electric vehicles, disabled badge holders and motorcycles operate at all times. This is to prevent others parking in these bays after 6pm;
- (14) that the income from parking charges is used to meet the cost of car park maintenance, electricity for lighting, business rates, parking management, operation and enforcement, implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders, traffic management and associated statutory road safety

functions, to include parking enforcement in front of schools and working with schools to promote road safety and inform parents concerning inconsiderate parking and that the improvement work to car parks scheduled in [Appendix A](#) is completed by the end of 2024 and in the event that income exceeds these costs, that any remaining funding would contribute to public passenger transport projects or the provision of electric charging points on car parks or active travel projects;

- (15) that the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the Head of Human Resources and Chief Executive, consider mitigations for any employees that are identified as being impacted to a significantly greater extent than others due to the requirements of their job;
- (16) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to undertake the necessary public and statutory consultation required to introduce and amend the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) for additional on-street parking restrictions where necessary;
- (17) that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, the Director of Borough Economy and the Director of Finance be authorised to review the benchmarking of parking charges against the prevailing rates across the Black Country in 2025 and either confirm that the increases scheduled for 2025 will continue at that level, or require public consultation on increased rates for 2026 and 2027 to inform a further report to Cabinet for decision;
- (18) that the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to implement the approved scales of parking charges and approved recommendations as soon as possible and to implement the approved further increases at the earliest practical opportunity in January of each subsequent calendar year;
- (19) that the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to undertake the necessary statutory procedures to bring the approved recommendations into effect.

72/23 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund - Wave 1 Delivery

Approval was sought to extend the external improvement works contract with Vinci Construction Ltd to 30 September 2023 to enable the delivery of the works awarded under the Grant for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1.

Reasons for decision

Approval was granted by Cabinet on 23 February 2022 to accept the grant funding and to authorise the Director of Housing to instruct the Council's delivery partner, Vinci Construction Ltd, to deliver energy improvement works under the existing contract.

While orders for delivery of this project were placed with Vinci Construction Ltd prior to the end of the original contract, delays in mobilisation had been experienced due to price and supply chain volatility which has prevented works being delivered within the existing contract term.

Following engagement with Legal Services and Corporate Procurement, the recommendation was to extend the term of the contract with Vinci Construction Ltd from 31 December 2022 for a further 9 months to 30 September 2023 in order to allow sufficient time to deliver the positive impacts that this programme would bring.

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

Alternative options considered

Option 1 – Commence new procurement exercise specifically for SHDF Wave 1 works. This would cause delays in the delivery of works and the delivery would extend beyond the DESNZ deadline.

Option 2 – Access an alternative OJEU complaint framework to deliver energy improvement works. This would cause delays in the delivery of works and the delivery would extend beyond the DESNZ deadline.

Option 3 - Return the grant funding back to the West Midlands Combined Authority and DESNZ. This would have been a reputational and financial risk, with grant funding being lost and the

full cost of future works would need to come from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Housing be authorised to extend the External Improvement Works contract with Vinci Construction Ltd to 30 September 2023 to enable the delivery of the works awarded under the Grant for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave;
- (2) that the Director of Housing be authorised to grant a contract variation to the External Improvement Works contract with Vinci Construction Ltd under Regulation 72 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in order to allow up to £5m of works to be delivered under the SHDF Wave 1 programme.

73/23 Wednesbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan; Approval to carry out public consultation

Approval was sought to authorise the Director of Regeneration and Growth to undertake public consultation on Wednesbury's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. Wednesbury Marketplace was designated as a conservation area in 1980 due to its special architectural and historical interest.

The Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board reflected concerns around the low consultation feedback recently experienced in Sandwell. Re-assurance was sought on what strategy would be used to ensure maximum participation within this consultation period.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA expressed that the following strategies would be implemented or considered:-

- external consultants may be involved in the appraisal process;
- a database of immediate societies would be used to draw down information;
- an e-flyer would be prepared to promote the review;
- town and ward members would be actively encouraged to promote the consultation;
- pop up sites would be constructed in the area to receive feedback from the public;

- promotional material would be prepared to support the event;
- a social media campaign would be conducted by the Council's communications team;
- Citizenspace, a resident engagement platform, could also be used to improve the Council's consultation going forward.

Reasons for decision

The conservation area appraisal and associated proposals augment heritage focussed regeneration works carried out as part of Wednesbury's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) scheme.

Although there was no statutory requirement to consult the public, it was good practice to do so; by consulting local communities and owners on new designations, and when appraising and reviewing conservation areas, helping to ensure decisions were robust. Local communities and owners would also be helpful in providing proactive assistance in identifying the general areas that merit conservation area status and defining the boundaries.

Alternative options considered

The option exists to not consult on the appraisal and management plan.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to undertake public consultation on Wednesbury's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as set out in [Appendix A](#);
- (2) that Cabinet receive a further report, if and when necessary, setting out the responses to the consultation and any changes that result from them.

Meeting ended at 4.15 pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk