

Agenda

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 6.00 pm
in the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Members to declare any interests and party whips in relation to matter to be discussed at the meeting.

3 Minutes

7 - 20

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 28 September and 5 October 2023 as a correct record.

4 Additional Items of Business

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

5 WMCA Update - Devolution Deal

21 - 54

To consider the update on the Devolution Deal of



the West Midlands Combined Authority.

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|----|---|-----------|
| 6 | Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress Report | 55 - 140 |
| | To consider and comment upon the Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress Report. | |
| 7 | Medium Term Financial Strategy - Autumn 2023 Update | 141 - 262 |
| | To consider and comment upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update. | |
| 8 | Minutes of West Midlands Combined Authority - Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 263 - 278 |
| | To receive the minutes of the West Midlands Combined Authority - Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 10 July, 4 September and 19 October 2023. | |
| 9 | Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Action Tracker | 279 - 298 |
| | To consider and note progress on the implementation of actions and recommendations. | |
| 10 | Cabinet Forward Plan and Work Programme | 299 - 314 |
| | To note and review the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Board's Work Programme 2023/ 24. | |

Shokat Lal
Chief Executive
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West Midlands

Distribution
Councillor Moore (Chair)
Councillors Fenton, Chambers, Fisher, E M Giles, Hinchliff, Lewis, Taylor, Tipper and Owen

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Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Thursday 28 September 2023 at 6.04pm
In the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors Fenton (Vice- Chair), Fisher, E Giles, Hinchliff,
Lewis, Owen and Tipper.

In attendance: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance), Michael Jarratt (Director of Children and Education), Brendan Arnold (Interim Section 151 Officer), Sue Moore (Assistant Director for Education Support Services), Kate Ashley (Strategic Lead for Strategic improvement), Suky Suthi- Nagra (Democratic and Member Services Manager) and John Swann (Democratic Services Officer).

58/23 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

59/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

60/23 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.



61/23

Additional Items of Business

The Chair placed on record his thanks to the outgoing Director of Finance Simone Hines and welcomed the Interim Section 151 Officer Brendan Arnold to his role at Sandwell.

62/23

Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring 2023/ 24

The Board received an overview of the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring 2023/24 report which had been considered by Cabinet on 13 September 2023 and had been referred to the Board for consideration.

The Interim Section 151 Officer outlined that the Council had a projected outturn position for the General Fund of an overspend of 2.188m following the use of reserves. The variance, whilst not predicted to increase, was anticipated due to the net budget of the Council being in excess of £300m and the challenges facing local authorities.

The overspend across directorates was largely attributed to the potential pay award and an increased rate of pension contributions, the largest singular projected overspend was against Special, Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transportation.

With regards to the projected overspend against SEND transport, the Director of Children and Education outlined the following:

- Procurement of the new SEND transport arrangements had been challenging, with a key operator terminating arrangements the day before services were due to commence.
- The number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) had increased by 51% since 2019 in the Borough.
- The provision of transport and support for those in receipt of EHCPs was a statutory responsibility of the Council.
- Parents of children with EHCPs had been made aware that they could access personal travel budgets as an alternative to Council operated SEND transport.
- The financial pressures upon the Directorate had been significant and cost saving methods included not recruiting to vacant posts.

- Predictions for service demand to ensure continuity in service offer had been effective and accurate and had resulted in complex SEND cases being retained within the Borough.

The Board acknowledged that savings across all directorates were required prior to the culmination of the financial year.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The use of consultants by the Council was costly in nature, however it was accepted that vacant positions were required to be filled.
- Further information was sought on the projected outturn of a 3.219m overspend within the directorate of public health.
- It was agreed by Members that the projected outturn for the directorate of borough economy of £0.627m would benefit from further scrutiny, particularly the consideration of parks, green spaces, museums, tendered contracts and concessions.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Interim Section 151 Officer outline to the Board why the Directorate of Public Health had an outturn variance of a £3.219m overspend in Quarter 1 Municipal Year of 2023/ 24;
- (2) that a working group be established to review all areas of income, expenditure and staffing levels, particularly focusing on parks, green spaces, museums, tendered contracts and concessions within the Directorate of Borough Economy, with the membership and scope of the working group to be determined by the Chair of the Board.

63/23

Improvement Plan – Quarterly Progress Report

The Strategic Lead for Strategic Improvement provided a progress update on the Improvement Plan up to 3 August 2023. This report was the fifth quarterly progress update to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

Overall progress had been positive in nature and significant achievements had included the first in person all- staff briefing at Sandwell Aquatic Centre, the approval of the refreshed Corporate Plan and the One Team Framework launch.

Areas of concern were broken down by each theme as set out within the improvement plan and were presented to the Board.

Organisational Culture

The workstream related to the officer and member relationship had encountered issues due to a lower than desired response rate for the spring officer survey. Semi-structured interviews and a condensed Member survey was planned for the Autumn period which would support the Local Government Association sessions.

Corporate Oversight

An Assistant Chief Executive had been appointed and was due to start in September, once in the role, the timeline for the directorate level restructuring would be confirmed. Oracle Fusion was due to go live in April 2024 and had undergone a successful modelling phase, having been approved by both human resources and payroll. The revenue, capital and performance reporting was due to commence from March 2024 to coincide with the roll out of the Oracle Fusion software.

Strategic Direction

Slippage had been encountered for the stock condition surveys of council housing, the contract award had taken place and recruitment was underway for an officer to manage the project and oversee rollout. The customer journey strategy due date had been re- arranged to March 2024 due to delays with face- to- face customer engagement sessions and the online surveys. The recruitment of a commercial project officer had been unsuccessful and had resulted in other options being explored, in addition, whilst business cases had undergone development to support the commercial strategy, slippage against action plans had been encountered.

Decision Making

No issues were reported.

Procurement and Commercial

Delivery of 16 refuse collection vehicles would be received in late 2023 due to a delay with build slots. The options appraisal for the corporate management system had been delayed until after the Oracle Fusion demonstration and testing phase.

Partnerships and Relationships

The project manager position for the transition to adulthood project remained vacant and was being supported by the corporate transformation office. Benchmarking exercises had commenced and a case file audit was due to be started for the project. The Voluntary and Community Sector strategy was being developed and a report on the topic was due before Cabinet in the autumn.

A stable medium- term financial position and the streamlining of processes to deliver high quality services and improve the customer experience were key components when considering the next steps of the improvement plan.

The transition between children's and adult's services, in particular, the service offer available and the impact upon service users, was discussed by members and it was agreed that a further report on the matter should be considered at a future meeting.

It was highlighted that the improvement process was a continuous journey and that Grant Thornton would be providing a follow up review and making recommendations to support the Council in embedding positive steps.

Resolved that a report on the transition between Children's and Adult's Services, and the impact upon services users, be added to the Board's work programme.

64/23

Section 106 Spotlight Session Outcome

The Board received the report from the Spotlight Session on Section 106 funding and the recommendation contained within: 'That the Assistant Director: Green Spaces, Green Services and Events present an annual update to each of the Town Boards to discuss available Section 106 funds'.

Section 106 funding could be sought from developers towards the costs of community and social infrastructure and were set out in Section 106 agreements between the developer and the Council as the planning authority.

The majority of existing Section 106 agreements related to green space improvements and modifications to the highway.

The Chair outlined that the format of the session had received positive feedback and had allowed a robust discussion of the section 106 spend.

Resolved that the Assistant Director: Green Spaces, Green Services and Events present an annual update to each of the Town Boards to discuss available Section 106 funds.

65/23

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Action Tracker

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made. Further updates would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

66/23

Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme

The Board received and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Board's work programme.

Members agreed that overview and scrutiny boards needed to have opportunities for effective and proactive pre- decision scrutiny to better add value to the decision- making process.

Meeting ended at 7.19pm.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Thursday 5 October 2023 at 6pm
In the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors Fenton (Vice- Chair), Anandou, Fisher, E Giles,
Hinchliff, Lewis and Owen.

In attendance: Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance), Tony McGovern (Director of Regeneration and Growth), Kate Ashley (Strategic Lead for Strategic improvement), Kayleigh Walker (Senior Lead Officer – Corporate Performance Management), Suky Suthi- Nagra (Democratic and Member Services Manager), Stephnie Hancock (Deputy Democratic Services Manager) and John Swann (Democratic Services Officer).

67/23 **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Taylor.

68/23 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Moore declared an other interest in the matter referred to at 76/23 (Lion Farm – Secondary options Agreement), in that he was a Cabinet Member when the matter was considered by Cabinet.



69/23

Additional Items of Business

There were no additional items of business.

70/23

Corporate Performance Management Framework – Q1 Monitoring

The Strategic Lead for Service Improvement provided an outline of the Corporate Performance Management Framework – Q1 Monitoring to the Board.

The Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) was a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan and had addressed recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton. Subsequent to approval at Council in April 2022, in June 2023, the Corporate PMF had been revised with a refreshed set of Corporate Performance Indicators.

Comprehensive monitoring tools were in place to ensure accountability and continuous improvement, with key performance indicators being RAG rated to identify issues as they had presented. The Corporate PMF themes were aligned to the objectives of the Corporate Plan:

The Best Start in life for Children and Young People

No significant issues or risks had been identified under this theme, slippage on projects such as the Early Help Strategy had been identified with a review of the existing school admission appeals service arrangements having been commenced in Summer 2023.

Sandwell Children's Trust was predicted to have an end- of- year overspend of £0.224m, however, it was noted that in real terms, this represented an overspend of £0.996m due to the expectation that the Trust achieve a budget surplus of £0.742m.

People Live and Age Well

Upgrades to Walker Grange residential units were identified as being behind schedule, as were projects relating to the relocation of Community Alarms. The prevalence of childhood obesity at 34% was a concern, however, due to the childhood measurement programme not taking place during the pandemic, this figure could not be compared with the previous year.

The overall satisfaction of service users accessing care and support was high and above target at 71.6%, and performance indicators relating to drug use, alcohol and smoking were above the national average.

Strong Resilient Communities

The replacement of the Council's diesel vehicle fleet with sustainable fuel vehicles was the only significant issue identified. It was noted that technological limitations for larger vehicles and the lack of infrastructure to support electric vehicles had contributed to the delay.

Reported incidents of domestic abuse in the Borough had increased significantly in the past year and would continue to be monitored by the Council. The Council had recently commissioned a new 5- year contract with Black Country Women's Aid to provide refuge for those fleeing domestic abuse and violence.

Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

The viability of projects financed by the Housing Transformation Fund was the only highlighted concern as the government had withdrawn the funding.

The amount of homelessness cases prevented under the Homelessness Reduction Act had slipped below the target of 65% to 58.7%. It was outlined that this was due to a historical backlog and prevention levels were expected to return to target levels before the end of 2023.

A Strong and Inclusive Economy

No significant issues or risks had been identified under this theme, however, it was highlighted that the employment rate in Sandwell had decreased to 63.9%, which was below regional and national averages.

Collaborative work with partners was continuing to take place to retain local spending with the Borough and support employment opportunities locally. Capital projects also continued to support local businesses and the supply chain.

A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

No significant issues or risks had been identified under this theme. Highways infrastructure capital programme of maintenance and the Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan projects were progressing well and were on track for completion.

It was highlighted that bus services within the Borough had been reduced to issues of footfall and viability which had impacted the public transport provision across Sandwell, the Council was liaising with Transport for West Midlands on the matter.

It was acknowledged that the Covid- 19 pandemic had resulted in some metrics not being directly comparable to previous years.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The development of the Customer Access Strategy had encountered delays and the revised date for the draft strategy to be completed was projected to be March 2024.
- The Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board undertook to ascertain why the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) target for care- leavers (aged 19- 21) was 50% when 41% of care- leavers were NEET in England.
- Further information was sought on the increased prevalence of domestic abuse within the Borough.
- Service demands had resulted in slippage in the 10- day target response time for complaints, whilst the existing backlog was a factor, responding to complaints related to multiple service areas within timespan was challenging.
- The Director for Regeneration and Growth noted that the Council had successfully recruited roles within the complaints team to address capacity issues and undertook to identify complaints as complex to better reflect the service.
- The target Ofsted rating for the Directorate of Children and Education Services was 'good', the last inspection of the service was in 2022 and it received the rating of 'requires improvement to be good'.
- Further information was sought relating to service pressures in the homelessness team and the prevention of homelessness cases, to incorporate data relating to Section 21 evictions and financial support.
- Active Travel funding available from government had been utilised to provide a cycling network across the Borough; usage of which was expected to increase following completion.
- That monitoring the usage of the cycling network could better inform decision making related to the Active Travel Policy.
- Sickness due to work- related stress had increased and officers undertook to provide the reasons behind this.

Resolved that the Director of Regeneration and Growth be recommended to monitor usage of the cycling network via a representative sample to inform the Active Travel Policy.

72/23

Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/ 23

The Chair of the Board outlined the draft Scrutiny Annual Report for the municipal year 2022/ 23.

It was acknowledged that positive steps had been made within the past year with the role of scrutiny being elevated within the Council's decision- making process.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer outlined that the strengthening of relationships between Scrutiny Chairs and Cabinet Members, as well as the effective tracking and monitoring of recommendations via the Scrutiny Board Action Trackers, were demonstratable improvements which had taken place.

In particular, the Chair highlighted the steps taken to address recommendations made by Grant Thornton.

Resolved that the Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/ 23 be approved for submission to Council.

73/23

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Action Tracker

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made. Further updates would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

74/23

Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme

The Board received and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Board's work programme.

75/23

Exclusion of the Public

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.

(Councillor Moore left the meeting).

(Vice- Chair in the Chair).

76/23

Lion Farm – Secondary options Agreement

The Director of Regeneration and Growth provided an outline of the Lion Farm Playing Fields site.

The site was 49.6 acres and wholly owned by Sandwell Council, it represented a significant development potential due to its location.

The Council had been subject to the terms of a legally binding agreement in respect of Lion Farm Playing Fields, with a developer since 2013 to explore the establishment of a retail outlet village.

At the meeting of Cabinet in January 2022 (Minute No. 13/22), it was agreed to trigger the Arbitration Clause of the existing agreement to refer the matter for Expert Determination.

The Expert determination was completed in May 2023, with the details of the Secondary Option Agreement having been determined in accordance with the 2013 agreement.

The Council had an obligation as part of the Secondary Option Agreement to work collaboratively with the developer.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The Council had sought expert legal advice on the issue and had a duty to work with the developer in relation to the site.
- The costs of the expert determination process were to be incurred equally between the Council and the developer.

(Councillor Anandou left the meeting during consideration of this item).

Meeting ended at 7.33pm.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

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Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

22 November 2023

Subject:	WMCA Update – Devolution Deal
Director:	Laura Shoaf – Chief Executive – WMCA Ed Cox – Executive Director Strategy, Economy and Net Zero
Contact Officer:	Member Relationship Manager – James Hughes james.hughes@wmca.org.uk





1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the paper presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority on the Devolution Deal.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the Devolution Deal and the impact on Sandwell.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.
	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

- a. The deal contains over 190 different commitments. Sandwell will benefit from the impact of the deal on the region as a whole, as well as from benefits that may be specific to Sandwell. WMCA is committed to working in partnership with its local authority partners, including Sandwell MBC, as we implement the deal, which was ratified at WMCA Board on 13 October 2023.
- b. **The deal gives Sandwell MBC 10-year certainty over its ability to retain business rates growth.** The current rolling 100% business rate retention pilot could cease at any point. The deal therefore increases Sandwell MBC's financial certainty.
- c. **The deal offers Sandwell MBC the opportunity to identify Growth Zones.** Sandwell is taking the opportunity to identify Growth Zones, where 100% of business rates will be retained for 25 years without reset. This will support Sandwell MBC to catalyse regeneration across the borough.
- d. **The deal provides £60 million for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.** This funding, as well as government's commitment to CRSTS, will support the delivery of the Metro extension, which will help regenerate Sandwell and connect its residents and businesses to jobs, services and opportunities. It also helps secure additional benefits from Sandwell MBC's local contribution to the programme.
- e. **The deal gives the region £100 million for town centre and estate regeneration and to support the delivery of complex housing sites, which is accessible to Sandwell MBC.** This is additional to the commitment to give the region more control over the Affordable Housing Programme, working with Homes England.



- f. **The deal gives the region new partnerships with Government in policy areas that are a priority for Sandwell** – skills and employment support services, housing, culture, digital infrastructure and economic development. They will bring policymaking closer to Sandwell and offer opportunities to tailor policy to Sandwell's circumstances.
- g. **The single settlement:**
- a. **Will enable Sandwell Council to contribute to the development of place-based strategies across the region.** The strategies will bring together transport, housing, skills, net zero and local growth funding, to increase inclusive economic growth in targeted places across the region.
 - b. **Will give Sandwell Council more influence over funding decisions.** Through their role on WMCA Board, the Leader of Sandwell Council will gain significantly more power over how funding devolved into the single settlement is prioritised across the region.
 - c. **Will give the region significantly more flexibility over funding decisions.** WMCA will be able to select and fund projects to address the challenges we face with respect to levelling up, working towards an outcomes framework that will be jointly agreed between WMCA and government.
 - d. **Will increase certainty over the funding we receive through the single settlement.** The settlement will offer a multi-year block grant, lasting for each Spending Review period, as opposed to the patchwork of 1- and 2-year grants we currently receive – strengthening our ability to do long-term economic planning across the region.
7. **The deal gives the region more flexibility over Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and future adult skills funding than any other area of England.** This means skills funding can better serve the needs of Sandwell residents and be more closely aligned with current and emerging needs within the local labour market.



8. **People in Sandwell will face fewer barriers to using public transport as a result of the commitment from government to integrate different modes of transport.** This will open up economic opportunities for people and businesses in Sandwell. The deal also provides the region with the opportunity to have greater oversight of funding support for bus operators with the devolution of the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

5 Implications

Resources:	The Devolution Deal with see significant investment within Sandwell.
Legal and Governance:	The proposals are subject to consideration by the West Midlands Combined Authority and their governance arrangements.
Risk:	The risk elements will be considered by the WMCA and mitigated where possible.
Equality:	There are no equality implications arising.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising.
Social Value:	The proposals will help transport links and enable more people to travel to work.
Climate Change:	There are no implications arising.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no implications arising.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal – Thematic Summaries

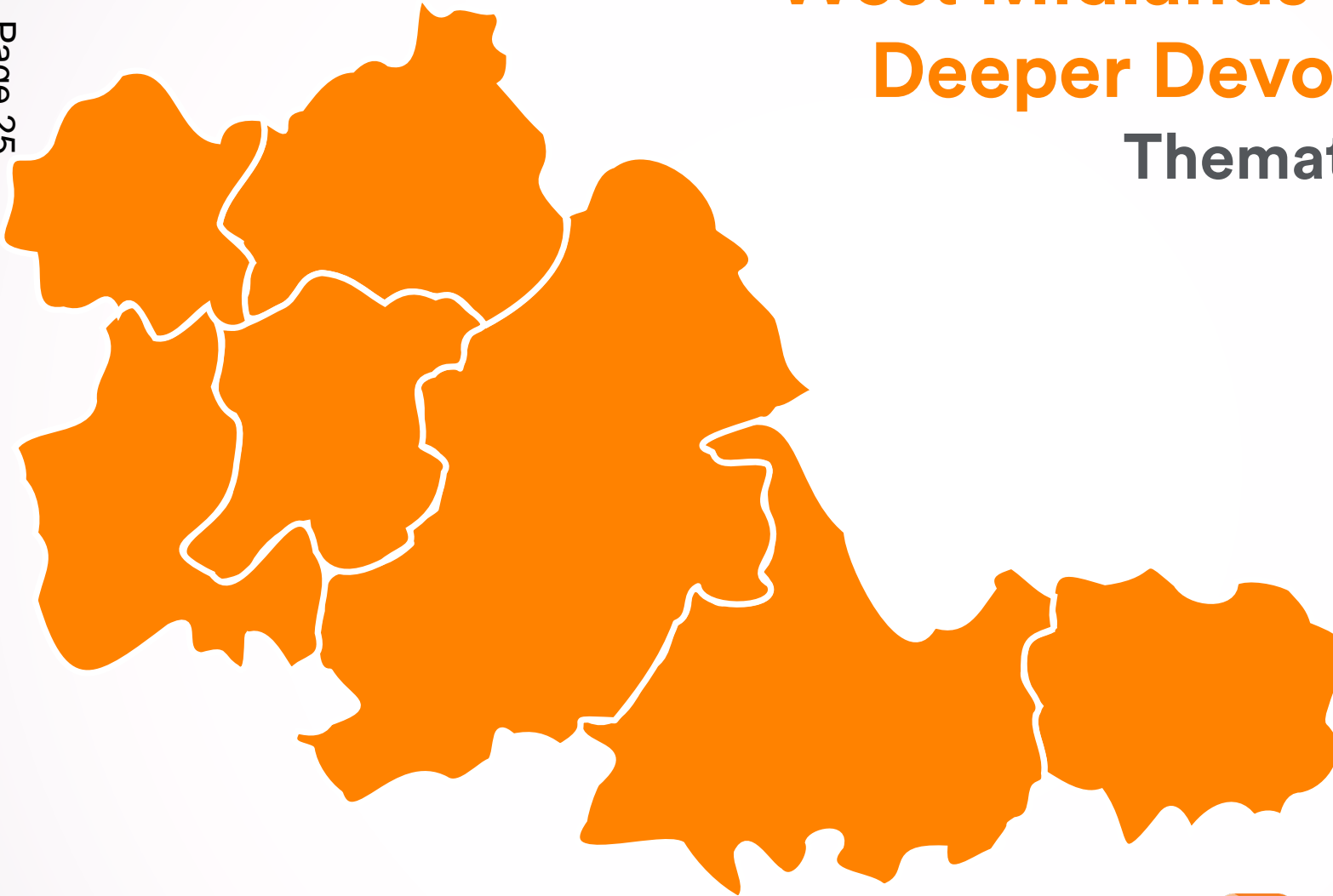
7. Background Papers

[West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal – Sandwell Cabinet Report](#)



West Midlands 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal: Thematic Summaries

August 2023



West Midlands
Combined Authority



4	Introduction
6	Operating more effectively
9	Special Feature: Single Settlement
10	Economy
12	Employment and skills
14	Special feature: A transport network closer to the standards of London
16	Transport
18	Supporting clusters
20	Net Zero and Environment
24	Special Feature: Unlocking Regeneration through Levelling Up Zones
26	Transforming Places
28	Pride in Place



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide local authorities (LAs) an overview of the trailblazer deeper devolution deal (the deal) between the region and Government. It sets out how the commitments in the deal will be implemented, how LA partners will be engaged in decision-making, LAs roles in delivery and indicative timescales for commitments to be progressed and implemented. A more detailed breakdown of deal implementation activities is set out in the fuller implementation plan that follows these summaries. The different policy areas in the deal have been grouped into the following themes:

- Operating more effectively. This covers governance and accountability, data and the single settlement;
- Economy. This covers business support and finance, innovation, trade and investment and visitor economy;
- Employment and skills. This covers adult skills, careers and employment support;
- Transport. This covers rail, buses, transport innovation, transport planning and infrastructure capital support;
- Supporting clusters. This covers digital, social economy and Places for Growth;
- Net zero and environment. This covers energy efficiency, industrial decarbonisation, heat zoning, natural capital, local area energy planning and air quality;
- Transforming places. This covers housing, regeneration, Levelling Up Zones and business rate retention;
- Pride in place. This covers homelessness, anti-social behaviour and early years.

In addition, there are three further special features that cover areas of the deal in more detail. These are:

- Single settlement;
- Transport;
- Levelling Up Zones.

Plans on a page

For every thematic summary, a 'plan on a page' is provided to show indicative timescales for implementation activities.

A bar like the below with a single diamond is used to indicate a deadline:



A bar like the one below with a diamond at either end is used to indicate the duration of an activity:



- Operating more effectively
- Economy
- Supporting nascent clusters
- Pride in Place
- Transforming places
- Adult Skills and Employment Support
- Net Zero and Environment
- Transport

Overview of the deal

There are over 190 different commitments in the deal. The commitments are of different kinds, including:

1. Commitments to provide new funds to the region;
2. Commitments to increase flexibility and local decision-making power over existing and future funding;
3. Commitments to new partnerships to plan and manage the delivery of government programmes; and
4. Commitments to enable the region to co-design new policy initiatives with Government.

The highest number of commitments relate to the themes of economy, operating more effectively and transport. Taken together, these commitments, the policy levers and funding they include, represent a step-change in our ability to realise our collective vision of a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands.

Financial value of the deal to the region

The total value of the deal in fiscal terms to the region is estimated at c£1.5 billion. This estimate is to a large extent influenced by the ability of the region to establish Levelling Up Zones as intended, and the economic growth in the region which will flow back to LAs through the Business Rates system.

Fund	Potential Value	New Money?
Levelling Up Zones ¹	c.£0.5bn Minimum	Yes
10-year Business Rates Retention	c.£450m	Difficult to assess
Affordable Housing Programme	£200-400m	Yes
Single Regeneration Fund	£100m	Yes
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension	£60m	Yes
Smart City Region	£10.0m	Yes
Air Quality Sensors	£0.5m	Yes
Digital Devices	£4.0m	Yes
Industrial Decarb	£10.5m	Yes
Natural Environment	£1.0m	Yes
Cultural Infrastructure Fund	£4.0m	Yes

¹ Estimate based on incremental Business Rate Retention if all 6 LUZs are given Government consent and delivered.

Operating more effectively

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Power and Participation

Page 30
Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Governance, Scrutiny and Accountability

What will the deal achieve?

A condition set by government for the region to receive the benefits of the deal is strengthening existing WMCA scrutiny arrangements and introducing new processes to enhance our accountability, both to central government and to our residents.

What will we deliver?

- Quarterly MPs/Mayor/Portfolio Leader sessions.
- Review of WMCA overview and scrutiny arrangements.
- Revised outcome reporting to Government.
- Publication of a Scrutiny Protocol by Government.
- Enhanced Mayoral Question Times.
- Enhanced resources and profile for WMCA scrutiny committee chairs.

How will local authorities be involved?

- The Terms of Reference for MPs Quarterly Sessions will be shared with Regional Chief Legal Officer and Senior Local Authority Officer Group for feedback;
- LAs will have the opportunity to vote on a resolution to implement the MPs Quarterly Sessions at WMCA Board;
- Through the Regional Chief Legal Officers Meeting, local authorities will be consulted on the recommendations of the review of WMCA overview and scrutiny practices by DLUHC and the Centre for Local Governance and Scrutiny.

Data

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will increase the range of central government data that WMCA and partners have access to, improve data sharing within the region and support our ability to use outcomes evidence in decision making. Improvements in the region's data sharing capability are key to supporting the realisation of benefits across multiple other elements of the deal, for example, partnership agreements in housing and adult skills.

What will we deliver?

- Changes to WMCA data governance;
- Access to the Chief Data Officer's Council;
- A Data Partnership with Government;
- Data sharing gateways with Government departments.

How will local authorities be involved?

LA leaders will be asked to agree proposed changes to enhance WMCA Data Governance and get WMCA ready for enhanced data sharing and agree new data sharing practices and principles at a regional level.

The West Midlands Insights on Society and Economy group with local authorities will develop proposals for local data sharing and scope out what data is held within local authorities and WMCA and what data would be beneficial from central government. Together, they will build on the process used to create the Birmingham Data Charter and lead to the co-creation of a West Midlands Data Charter.

Single settlement

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Exec Lead: Linda Horne

What will the deal achieve?

The deal offers the region the opportunity to receive government department-style multi-year financial settlements. This will reduce the amount of competitive bidding for government funding, provide more certainty over levels of funding and enable joined-up, strategic funding delivery. The single settlement will also streamline reporting and evaluation processes associated with bidding to multiple competitive pots. The single settlement will provide us with greater power over investment decisions locally, and greater ability to fund our priorities.

What will we deliver?

- A Memorandum of Understanding covering the design principles for the single settlement.
- Reduction in competitive bidding for government funding.
- Streamlined monitoring, evaluation and assurance processes.
- Funding from central government with fewer prescribed spending conditions.
- Greater funding certainty for greater time periods, enabling simpler financial planning.

How will local authorities be involved?

- The decision on whether or not to sign the MoU will be taken to WMCA Board for agreement.
- The Senior Local Authority Group (SLAOG) will be used to co-develop negotiating positions to be communicated to DLUHC and Treasury. Finance Directors and other subject matter experts from local authorities will also be engaged.
- Special sessions with Leaders will be arranged over Summer and early Autumn to update them on negotiations and refine negotiating positions.
- After the MoU has been developed, there will be further engagement through Chief Execs on the changes that are required to WMCA governance and decision-making structures to make most of single settlement funding.
- As part of our approach to funding delivery, we currently expect place-based plans to set out local funding priorities and strategies that join up the multiple functions – and funding streams – of the single settlement.

Operating more effectively

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Governance and Scrutiny	◆ Develop <u>ToRs</u> for Mayor/MPs Sessions ◆					◆ WMCA Board resolution			◆ First session	
				◆ Publication of Scrutiny Protocol		Publication of Plain English Guidance			◆	
	◆ Review of WMCA/GMCA governance and scrutiny with DLUHC									
Single Settlement	◆ Negotiate MoU with GMCA, HMT and DLUHC ◆						◆ MoU to Board		◆ Assumed SR	
	◆ Co-develop MoU with Local Authority partners ◆									
							◆ Review WMCA decision making ◆		◆	
							◆ Develop data, M&E capability ◆		◆	
							◆ Develop assurance and scrutiny ◆		◆	
Data	◆ Improvements to WMCA data governance ◆									
	◆ Develop Data Partnership with Government ◆									
	◆ Establish data sharing Gateway(s) ◆									
	◆ Build Local Data Sharing Network ◆									
	◆ Attend Chief Data Officer's Council ◆									
									◆ Data Symposium ◆	



Special Feature: Single Settlement

Challenge & Opportunity

The region has proved its capability to deliver large-scale funding programmes that make a real difference to people, communities and businesses.

Whether it's the 100 derelict sites that have been unlocked, the 200 transport projects the region will deliver by 2026 or the tens of thousands of adult learners who have received support to boost their skills – we have shown we can work in partnership to deliver change at scale.

With the right tools, the region could do more. We receive funding from government through a myriad of funding streams, each with a separate delivery timetable, different output prescriptions and overlapping reporting and accountability arrangements. This gets in the way of our ability to take joined up, strategic decisions drawing on all our resources in the round.

How the deal addresses it

The commitment to a single department-style settlement for the region will change this.

It will allocate a single capital and revenue settlement to the region spanning multi-year Spending Review periods, supporting medium-term, strategic planning.

It will allow us to realise the benefits of delivering local growth and place, local transport, housing and regeneration, adult skills and net zero functions in parallel, generating more impact for the region.

It will give the region greater flexibility and more control to deliver projects and initiatives aligned to local needs and place-based opportunities.

It will significantly reduce pressures on officer time from having to make repeat bids into national funding competitions, with decisions routed through regional decision-making structures instead.

Why that's different from pre-deal

The single settlement represents a significant step forward relative to the status quo.

The single settlement will change the way the region works with and receives funding from government for the better, underpinned by new accountability arrangements and a jointly agreed outcomes framework.

It will see new ways of working between partners across the region, with more local control over decisions routed through local decision-making and accountability structures.

When things will happen

- Summer 2023: Early engagement within the region on the design of the single settlement;
- Autumn 2023: A memorandum of understanding between the region and government;
- 2024: Further work across the region to prepare for single settlement implementation, working towards an allocation at the next Spending Review (timing tbc, but assumed to be Autumn 2024);
- 2025 (tbc): Following the next Spending Review, the first single settlement would be allocated to the region.

Economy

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Inclusive economy

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Trade and investment

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will help to bring greater foreign direct investment into the region and help more businesses to export by strengthening the region's influence over the Department for Business and Trade, increasing the region's visibility to overseas investors, securing support from the Office for Investment and better connecting businesses to sources of export and investment support.

What will be delivered?

An International Strategy, joint agreement of future High Potential Opportunities and joint delivery with the Department for Business and Trade.

How will local authorities be involved?

Directors of Economic Development will work with the WMCA and West Midlands Growth Company to progress the commitments in the deal, feeding into the Economic Growth Board and Combined Authority Board.

Innovation

What will the deal achieve?

The deal gives the region greater influence over national innovation funding and makes a number of commitments that will help businesses across the region to innovate and adopt new technologies, building on the region's status as an Innovation Accelerator and the recently-published WMCA – Innovate UK Action Plan.

What will be delivered?

A new Strategic Innovation Partnership, bi-annual meetings with HMG Science Ministers and a knowledge transfer partnership with Innovate UK.

How will local authorities be involved?

LA officers will be engaged via Business Support Officers Group and Directors of Economic Development. Directors of Economic Development are, with Innovation Board and universities, shaping the direction of the Partnership, with the Economic Growth Board and Combined Authority Board in decision-making roles.

Visitor Economy

What will the deal achieve?

The deal strengthens the West Midlands Growth Company's role in coordinating the region's visitor economy.

What will be delivered?

West Midlands Growth Company to be granted Destination Development Partnership pilot 2 status and support more LAs to achieve Local Visitor Economy Partnership status.

How will local authorities be involved?

As have been engaged in the development of SPP proposals through signing off the Growth Company’s Business Plan, while two LAs have already received LVEP status. LAs will be engaged through ongoing quarterly meetings.

Business support and finance

What will the deal achieve?

The deal gives the region greater influence over national business support programmes now and the ability to make the case for devolved business support in future. The deal will also help to better align sources of SME finance and infrastructure investment with regional opportunities.

What will be delivered?

A new Strategic Productivity Partnership, regional engagement in the future of Growth Hubs, a role for the region in the governance of the British Business Bank’s regional fund (MEIF2).

How will local authorities be involved?

With input from the Business Support Officers Group and Business Insights Forum, Directors of Economic Development are shaping commitments in this section of the deal to feed into Economic Growth Board and CA Board. Across this theme, data and intelligence gathered through the Business Growth West Midlands Service will be used to inform policy design in the economy and skills partnership.

	May	June	July	August	Sept	October	November	December	2024	2025
Business support								Report to SoS on outcomes of SPP	Bi-annual SPP meetings	
				First Strategic Productivity Partnership Meeting						
				Agree new Brit Bus Bank relationship					MEIF2 launch	
Innovation	Launch new WM Growth Hubs									
		Engage government on future of Growth Hubs								
Trade and Investment			Launch of Innovation Accelerator							
		Mayor and VCs agree steer					Meeting with Science Ministers			
		Innovation Board ratify asks						Stocktake with Mayor and VCs		
Trade and Investment			WMGC 'lead agency' recognition by WMCA and geographic footprint alignment; decision on DBT membership of WMGC							
			Working arrangements in place to assess UK business environment and HMG-WMGC data sharing							
			MoU between WMGC, WMCA and Office for Investment; signposting arrangement between DBT							
				International Strategy complete						

Employment and skills

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Education and Learning

Exec Lead: Clare Hatton

Adult skills and employment

What will the deal achieve?

Although the deal has separate chapters on adult skills and employment support, we continue to advocate to Government that these are complimentary and should be treated as one workstream. This will ensure adult skills and employment support are properly integrated and mutually reinforcing.

In adult skills, the deal commits to the creation of a joint governance board to provide oversight of post-16 technical education and skills in the WMCA area, ensuring our training offer is aligned to local skills needs, providing strategic oversight of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, supporting better data sharing and providing oversight for the development of an all-age careers strategy. The deal offers greater flexibility over how existing adult skills funding (Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps) can be spent and a commitment to fully devolve these funds as part of the single settlement. The deal recognises WMCA as the central convenor of careers provision, with joint governance of the current National Careers Service contract and a commitment to co-designing future careers provision for all ages in the region.

On employment support, the deal commits to the creation of a new regional Labour Market Partnership Board to oversee the development and implementation of a regional labour market strategy. It provides a new role in co-designing future contracted employment programmes for young people and adults, which the CA will commission on behalf of DWP on a WMCA footprint.

We continue to push for the Joint Governance Board for Adult Skills and the Labour Market Partnership Board to be combined into one.

What will be delivered?

- Terms of reference for an integrated adult skills and employment support board;
- Sign-off of the Local Skills Improvement Plan and of the application for the Local Skills Improvement Fund that supports LSIP implementation;
- An all-age careers strategy;
- Co-design of future contracted employment support programmes, on a WMCA footprint (N.B. no new contracted employment support programmes expected during this SR period);
- Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps expanded to create a stronger training offer that meet labour market and skills needs across the economy;
- Better access to data that supports planning and delivery of adult skills provision and demonstrates outcomes and impact;
- Joint governance of the current National Careers Service contractor and role in shaping future specifications.

How will local authorities be involved?

LAs will have a key role in new governance structures for skills and employment support programmes within the WMCA area. These are currently in development. In the interim, we will engage with LAs via Directors of Economic Development, with governance decisions taken at Economic Growth Board;

The CA will also work closely with individual LAs and our LA Employment & Skills Officers Group to understand and respond to employment and skills needs in their area – to inform adult skills procurement in each area;

- Adult skills provision will continue to be delivered through an ecosystem of LAs, FE colleges, independent training providers, universities and the VCS. LAs will continue to receive grant funding for community learning provision;
- The CA will also work closely with individual LAs and our LA Employment & Skills Officers Group to understand and respond to employment and skills needs in their area – to inform commissioning of employment support provision.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Adult Skills and employment	Develop new governance structures – with agreed Terms of Reference - for employment and skills									
	Deploy greater flexibility in Adult Skills funding									
	MoU signed with HMT and DLUHC on Single Settlement									Assumed SR



Special feature: A transport network closer to the standards of London

Challenge

After decades of underinvestment, our region is beginning to turn our transport network around. But significant challenges remain in tackling the defining issues of our time, such as climate change, air quality, our health, and now the cost of living and energy pressures facing our citizens.

To enable Inclusive Growth means improving people's access to opportunities. But the pandemic and the cost of living crises have resulted in problems to overcome. Public transport costs have gone up whilst demand to travel has dropped, this has put levels of service at risk. And although people are driving less as fuel has increased in cost, this has not resulted in a proportionate uptick in travel by other modes; people are less socially and economically active.

Progress has been made to strengthen the West Midlands' transport since the first two devolution deals in 2015 and 2017: the next five years will see at least 40% more investment in transport capital compared to the last five years. Moreover, the region remains a world leader in the future of transport.

Connectivity reduces production costs, enables businesses to reach customers more effectively, links employers to a wider pool of potential employees and ultimately encourages business development. Without an integrated network, our progress on levelling up and economic standing relative to other regions will be constrained.

How the deal addresses it

- The deal commits to explore a fully integrated, multi-modal fares and ticketing structure alongside pay as you go ticketing infrastructure pilots and co-development of a regional branding proposition for rail – key tenets of regional transport integration;
- A formal partnership between the West Midlands Rail Executive and Great British Railways (GBR) will increase local, democratic accountability over the region's railway;
- The deal unlocks an additional £60 million for the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension;
- With the devolution of the Bus Service Operators Grant, we can change the mechanisms for providing public subsidy to private bus operators to improve accessibility across the region and support the decarbonisation of bus fleets.

Why that's different from pre-deal

We have made great improvements to our network since the first devolution deal was agreed. However, the pandemic has shifted patterns and behaviours, with patronage remaining below pre-pandemic levels. The bus industry, in particular, is facing acute challenges.

The deal gives the region a greater set of tools to face these challenges and create an integrated transport system that is fit for the future. In line with our Local Transport Plan, we will use the provisions of the deal to deliver a network with improved accessibility, reduced traffic and decarbonised public transport.

When things will happen

- 2024/2025: Reformed commercial BSOG devolved;
- January 2025 onwards: WMRE – GBR Partnership goes live;
- 2027 onwards: Full very light rail routes could form part of the second round of the City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme.



Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Connected Communities

Exec Lead: Anne Shaw

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will lead to a partnership agreement between West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) and Great British Railways (GBR). This will enhance local accountability and influence over the regional rail network. It will increase our ability to influence rail planning with local growth and social priorities, better integrate rail with other modes of transport and support the roll out of integrated smart ticketing.

What will we be delivered?

A new partnership agreement between WMRE and GBR and a pilot for fully integrated fares and ticketing.

How will local authorities be involved?

The partnership agreement will be approved through the WMRE Board.

Infrastructure and planning

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will drive further investment in the regional transport network, alleviate cost pressures on existing schemes and support regional transport planning. This is additional to the announcement of a further round of funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme.

What will be delivered?

£60m of additional funding towards the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension and additional transport planning resources for the Combined Authority implement new data and analytical tools.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Senior Transport Officer's Group will support the development and oversight of relevant business cases, with strategic decisions taken by the Combined Authority Board. Coventry City Council is leading the development of very light rail infrastructure.

Buses

What will the deal achieve?

The deal hands more power to the region over payments to bus operators; commits to investigate additional powers to tackle anti-social behavior on the transport network; and to further work to obtain pavement parking powers for local authorities.

What will be delivered?

Devolution of the Bus Services Operator Grant (BSOG).

How will local authorities be involved?

Transport Support Group will test and refine advice to DfT on the design of the BSOG scheme and its appropriate boundaries. The BSOG Governance Review and Scheme is provided alongside this document for local authority feedback and will be approved at WMCA Board in October.

Transport innovation

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What will the deal achieve?

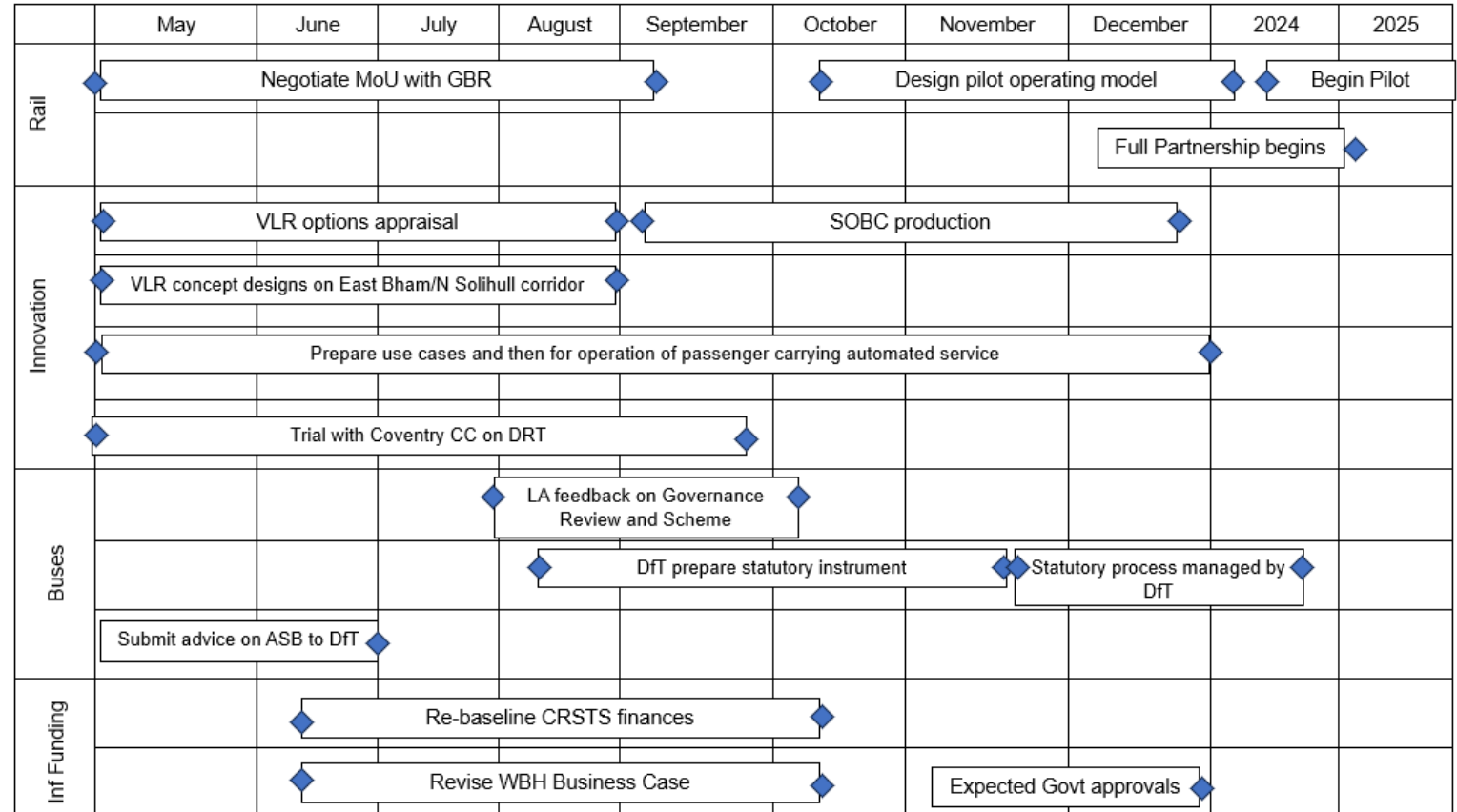
The deal will enable the region to test and demonstrate new, innovative technologies to drive behaviour change in transport usage, including through low-emission and autonomous vehicle trials.

What will be delivered?

Funding and sponsorship from the Department for Transport to develop proposals and evidence.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Senior Transport Officer's Group will support policy development, with strategic decisions taken by the Combined Authority Board.



Supporting clusters

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Economy

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Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Digital

What will the deal achieve?

The commitments in the deal recognise West Midlands 5G's contribution to mapping and closing digital connectivity gaps in the region. The deal includes a commitment from government to engage with the WM Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group to accelerate broadband roll-out, provides funding to purchase devices to boost digital inclusion and provides funding for the Smart City Region project. This will introduce a network of sensors in healthcare settings to enable remote monitoring and the deployment of 5G technology to underpin remote health diagnosis.

What will we deliver?

- £4m fund for digital inclusion to roll out 20,000 devices;
- £10.1m for Smart City Region project;
- Greater high speed broadband coverage across the region.

How will local authorities be involved?

Accelerating broadband roll out will be coordinated by WM5G, but local authorities will be essential in managing the delivery of broadband through intelligence on forthcoming works and use of planning powers to deliver works.

The Smart City Region project will be project managed by WM5G and delivered by NHS partners in each local.

For digital inclusion, local authorities will take receipt of the purchased devices and distribute them to their networks of voluntary sector organisations, who, in turn, will distribute them to vulnerable residents.

Social Economy

What will the deal achieve?

Recognising WMCA's commitment to double the size of the social economy, the deal will enable WMCA to provide specialist business support to social economy organisations to grow their trading activity. It will also enable local areas develop their own circular, inclusive local social economies.

What will we deliver?

The £1.75 million Social Economy Business Support programme will provide an opportunity for social enterprises, community-owned businesses, co-ops and trading charities, the opportunity to gain the business skills and confidence needed to grow their businesses. This programme will provide incentive grants to encourage increased trading income, leading to more employment, volunteering and beneficiary impact.

The local place-based Cluster development will provide £50,000 each to 8 localities – one per constituent LA and one identified by Power to Change.

How will local authorities be involved?

For the Business Support programme, local authorities will be asked to help recruit participants from their area. For the place-based cluster development, local authorities will identify and offer their support for place-based economy clusters.

Places for Growth

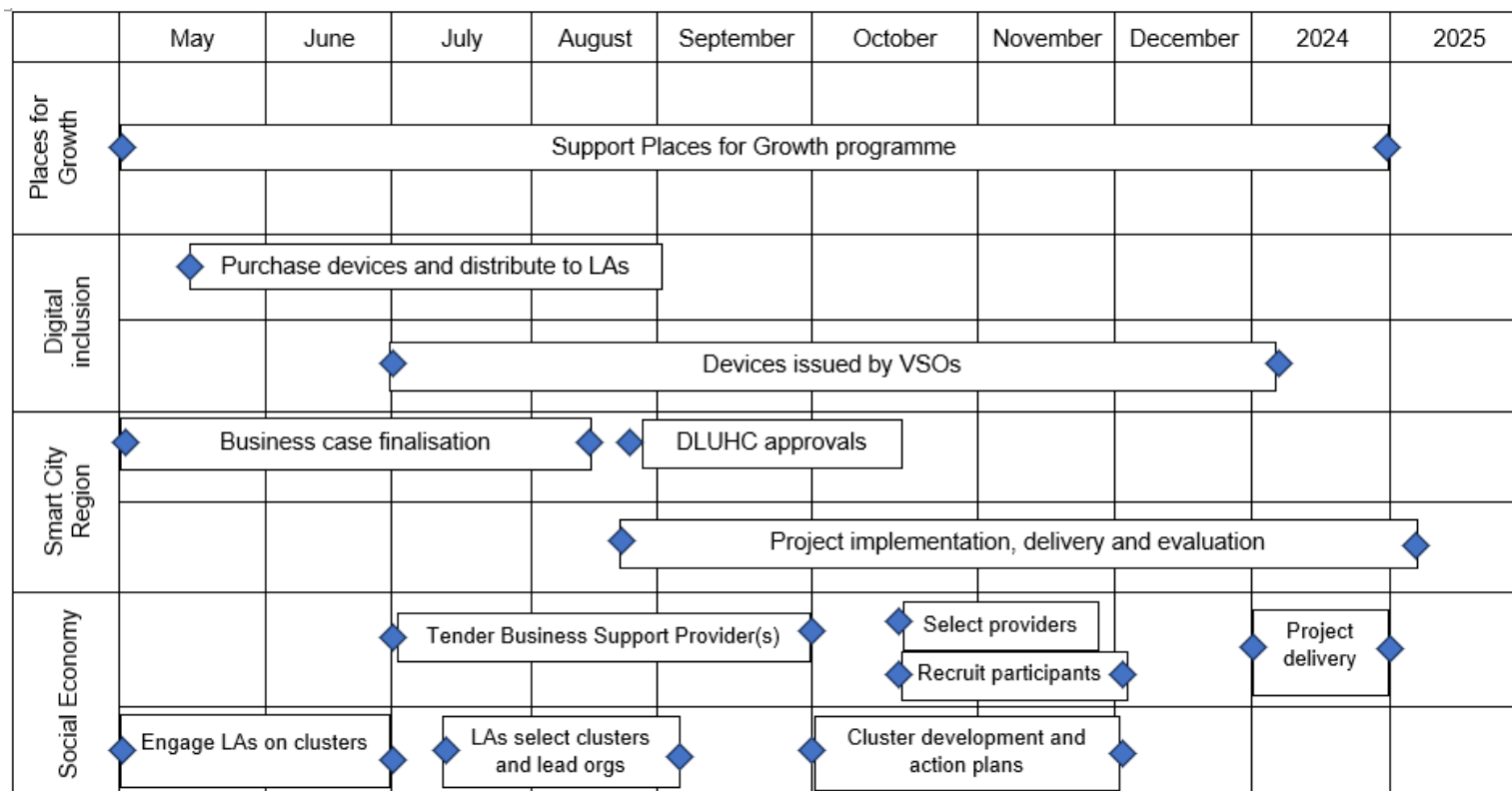
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What will the deal achieve?

Recognition of the region's growing skills clusters such as in transport and infrastructure a new West Midlands Fast Stream pilot will set a blueprint for establishing long term career pathways for people in the region by delivering a pipeline of civil service talent and skills

What will we deliver?

We will support Government to relocate 2,100 civil service roles to the West Midlands by 2025.



Net Zero and Environment

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Climate resilience

Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Domestic retrofit and minimum energy efficiency standards

What will the deal achieve?

The deal secures a greater role for the region in measures that will support retrofit and net zero delivery through the devolution of retrofit and potentially other net zero funding. The deal also opens up the opportunity for local authorities to adopt additional powers to enforce tighter minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES); and commits to further work to bring more private investment into energy efficiency upgrades.

What will be delivered?

Aside from the delivery of retrofit and market enabling activity through the single settlement, the deal provides the opportunity to strengthen MEES with enhanced energy efficiency requirements, allowing the region to maintain its trajectory regardless of national policy decisions in this area. However, this needs to be considered within the context of adequately resourcing existing, as well as any additional, standards.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Local Authority Retrofit Officers Group meeting provides the opportunity to explore how these opportunities should be taken forward in partnership with LAs, with senior level engagement through the Net Zero Directors group.

Industrial decarbonisation

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will support efforts to increase businesses' energy efficiency and resilience to high energy costs, identified through the work of the Mayor's Industrial Energy Taskforce. The deal also re-affirms the greater role the region will be able to play in coordinating the roll-out of clean heat infrastructure, which will further support industrial and domestic heat decarbonisation.

What will be delivered?

The deal provides an additional £10.5m from DLUHC to compliment the £14.1m from DESNZ for businesses to undertake energy efficiency audits and invest in energy efficiency measures, agreed as a result of the groundbreaking work of the Black Country Industrial Cluster.

How will local authorities be involved?

The WMCA has worked with partners to align this funding with other publicly and privately funded programmes already in place, such as the recent Decarbonisation Net Zero programme tendered by WMCA using UKSPF funding. The WMCA will coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the outputs delivered through these programmes.

Local Area Energy Planning

What will the deal achieve?

The deal encourages the WMCA to use its convening power and partnerships to drive local area energy planning across the region, and to use Energy Capital's expertise to inform approaches to energy system investment and management. This is backed in the deal by the expectation that National Grid will engage with the WMCA to ensure their investments will meet local needs and encouragement to engage with OfGEM on their future systems and network regulation workstream, focusing on network investment.

What will be delivered?

The WMCA will develop a Local Area Energy Planning programme in partnership with local authorities and industry across the region to provide partners with data, tools, expertise, resources and influence to support local area energy planning and investment. Collaborative decision-making structures are being established, which bring together private sector energy system investors, to consider energy infrastructure investment from a multi-vector perspective and feedback will be provided to OfGEM and government. This will ensure that the offer in the deal and its underlying intent are achieved.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Local Area Energy Planning-Coordination Group will oversee this programme, working closely with an industry Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel. Additional workshops will be led by LAs to drill down into specific issues in specific areas. Energy Collaboration Days will also continue to be held monthly to enable joint working between energy officers across both the public and private sector.

Heat Zoning Network Pilot

What will the deal achieve?

Heat networks will be an important element of our energy infrastructure going forward and form important anchor projects in the delivery of local net zero solutions. The deal commits to heat network zoning as a national programme and identifies the WMCA and its constituent authorities as heat network zone coordinators (by 2025), with the ability to require buildings, within designated zones, to connect to heat networks.

What will be delivered?

Heat Network Zones are currently being scoped and piloted by Birmingham and

Coventry. This will lead to the identification of potential heat network zones across the region, supported by LAEP, providing the necessary scale to engage key partners, including commercial investors, to bring schemes forward that meet local needs. For the new role established by Government for Heat Zone coordinators, this role will be scoped with Local Authorities and resources sought to enable implementation.

How will local authorities be involved?

Where local authorities have the potential for heat networks, they will be approached directly to collaborate with the WMCA. LA's will remain central to the development and delivery of heat networks and associated zone(s) but may choose to work collaboratively with the WMCA to share resources and expertise to drive the delivery of these networks and zones.

Net Zero and Environment

Natural capital

What will the deal achieve?

The region will enable the region to attract more investment in natural capital schemes, supporting the development of the region's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

What will be delivered?

£1m to the region through the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) Programme to boost regional capacity.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Natural Capital Officers group is supporting the development of the LINC Programme and will work to develop and bring forward projects from the constituent authorities to the LINC project pipeline. The pipeline will attract significant private investment into the region to help delivery of our targets for nature recovery, climate adaptation and mitigation and connecting people with nature. This will be fed into both the Environment and Energy and WMCA Boards.

Air Quality

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides £0.9m in capital funding to install air quality monitors across the region in areas where there are gaps in coverage. The data from these sensors will be fed into a web-based dashboard accessible to the public.

What will be delivered?

Air quality sensors and a live web-based dashboard.

How will local authorities be involved?

Officers working on air quality in the different local authorities will help decide where the low-cost sensors provided through this funding are located, ensuring that they are being placed in areas with no coverage currently. Data from the sensors will be published on an air quality web platform that will be developed in collaboration with local authorities through the West Midlands Environment Protection Group. This work will support the aims and outcomes identified in the West Midlands Air Quality Framework, currently out for consultation following consideration by the WMCA Environment and Energy Board.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025	
MEES						LA engagement on MEES					
LAEP		LAEP development & implementation									
Industrial Decarb	DESNZ and DLUHC Develop Business Case										
						Project delivery					
Heat Zoning	Government to have established Heat Zoning Coordinators										
Air Quality	Develop Business Case										
			DLUHC approvals			Project delivery					
Natural Capital	Create and manage pipeline of investable projects										
		Create Natural Asset Register									
							Setup Fund				



Special Feature: Unlocking Regeneration through Levelling Up Zones

Challenge & Opportunity

The West Midlands has a strong track record of regenerating brownfield land, unlocking over 100 derelict, stalled and contaminated sites across the region and delivering thousands of new homes, workspaces and jobs.

However, the speed of delivery and breadth of outcomes that could be achieved have been hindered by the complexity, prescriptive measures and cyclical nature of funding streams.

The trailblazer deal presents an opportunity to overcome these barriers to high-impact regeneration.

How the deal addresses it

Through our pioneering Levelling Up Zones, the region will be able to bring together multiple regeneration levers – funding simplification, optimisation of publicly owned land and greater influence over affordable housing provision – and pursue a joined-up approach to the design and delivery of regeneration programmes, aligned to regional priorities and complementing existing activity.

As part of this package, the deal allows the region to establish areas that could attract 100% business rate growth retention for 25 years. This greater degree of revenue retention certainty will support local authorities to make longer-term, strategic investments in infrastructure and regeneration projects.

Taken in conjunction with the single settlement, the Zones represent a game-changer for the region, its financial position and the economic prospects of some of its most deprived communities.

Investment Zones

In addition, in March 2023 Government also announced the West Midlands as one of 8 Investment Zones – innovation-led economic clusters offering both tax incentives and business rate retention.

In the West Midlands, our approach will be to ensure Investment Zones complement and add value to Levelling Up Zones.

This will give the region an expansive toolkit to drive growth and investment across the region and build its comparative economic advantage over other parts of the country.

Why that's different from pre-deal

Instead of fragmented, output-driven funding approaches, the deal puts the region in a position to adopt a strategic and empowered approach to regeneration that meets the needs of, and opportunities for, local communities.

The package of measures will ensure the West Midlands is a beacon for private sector investment.

When things will happen

- Autumn 2023: Levelling Up Zone proposals are submitted to Government in line with the national Investment Zone programme;
- April 2024: It is anticipated that Levelling Up Zones – particularly those that contain business rate retention powers – will commence, aligned to the Investment Zone programme.



Transforming Places

Inclusive Growth Fundamental: Affordable and Safe Places

Exec Lead: John Godfrey

Regeneration

What will the deal achieve?

The deal will give the region more influence over Homes England policy and funding decisions, ensuring different programmes align for maximum impact and better reflect our priorities; more influence over the disposal of government owned land in the region, to help unlock land assembly opportunities for regeneration schemes; and a flexible source of funding to support commercial, employment and mixed-use development on brownfield land.

What will we deliver?

A Strategic Place Partnership between Homes England, government departments and arm's length bodies; a Public Land Partnership with the Cabinet Office; and a £100m Single Regeneration Fund, which will deliver 4,000 homes across the region.

How will local authorities be involved?

The pipeline of sites for the Single Regeneration Fund will be co-produced by LAs and the Combined Authority. Projects will be approved via the existing SAF process, with local authority leaders and deputies approving funding via Investment Board.

Housing

What will the deal achieve?

The deal gives the region increasing levels of influence and direction over Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) funding and spending decisions, beginning with an Affordable Homes Partnership with Homes England between 2023 and 2026 and leading to the devolution of AHP to the region at the next Spending Review. In addition, the region will now, for the first time, be able to use AHP funds for estate regeneration purposes.

What will we deliver?

At least £200m, and up to £400m, will be spent in the region via the Affordable Homes Programme between 2023 and 2026. This delivery will inform the negotiations for the successor programme post-2026.

How will local authorities be involved?

Local authorities will be key in identifying suitable sites for AHP, informing the joint pipeline and supporting the delivery of sites through coordination of planning processes and social housing development plans. Local authorities are still able to bid for AHP funding separately and can leverage the region's improved access to Homes England to escalate and resolve issues.

Business rates retention and Levelling Up Zones (see special feature)

Exec Lead for BRR: Linda Horne

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides local authorities with certainty that they will be able to retain 100% of their business rates for the next 10 years, a marked improvement on the one year rolling arrangement at present and estimated to be worth £450 million to the region. This certainty will help to underpin additional, longer-term investment decisions where business rates incomes are likely to be stable.

The deal also allows the region to bring together regeneration levers to drive joined up investment and regeneration in up to 6 Levelling Up Zones – including, for example, areas that could attract 100% business rate growth retention for 25 years – complementing the national Investment Zones programme.

What will we deliver?

Retained business rates would flow to local authorities. Once operational, the Zones would have local management structures with some outcome reporting to the Combined Authority.

How will local authorities be involved?

Constructive engagement across the region is already underway to co-design the designation of Levelling Up Zone sites, as presented to Board in August.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Growth Zones	◆ Negotiate Zone criteria with DLUHC ◆									
	◆ Co-develop Zone proposals with LAs ◆		◆ WMCA Board approval for Zone proposals ◆							
			◆ negotiate interventions with DLUHC ◆				◆ Sites announced at assumed SR ◆			
SRF	DLUHC Bus Case to HMT ◆		◆ Negotiate Fund T&Cs ◆		◆ Funding begins for projects up to FY 25/26 ◆					
AHP	◆ Engage LAs to ensure pipeline is <u>uptodate</u> ◆									
	◆ Create joint AHP team with HE ◆		◆ Develop strategy, joint pipeline ◆						◆ Full devo of AHP from assumed ◆	
Partnerships	◆ Negotiate Strat Place Partnership, Public Land Reform, AHP agreements with Govt ◆									
					◆ Consult LAs on emerging proposals ◆			◆ WMCA Board approval ◆		
BRR	◆ Negotiation with DLUHC on design of 10yr BRR ◆						◆ Scheme announced at assumed SR ◆			
	◆ Consult LAs on DLUHC proposals ◆								◆ Beginning of 10 Year BRR ◆	

Pride in Place

Inclusive Growth Fundamentals: Affordable and Safe places, Connected Communities

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Exec Lead: Ed Cox

Homelessness

What will the deal achieve?

The deal commits to further work between the WMCA, Homes England and DWP to secure investment and systems change to join up the homes and jobs agenda for young people across the region. Additionally, in Birmingham, investment has been secured to enable homeless families living in Temporary Accommodation to move into the private rented sector.

What will be delivered?

An expansion of the Live and Work model in additional localities across the region and a Rent Simplification pilot for young people in supported accommodation to enable transition into work. Birmingham City Council will use the £3.8m secured to lease good quality private sector accommodation for homeless families living in Temporary Accommodation.

How will local authorities be involved?

For the Live and Work expansion and Rent Simplification pilot local authority partners will be engaged regularly via the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce and the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce Members Advisory Group. The Rent Simplification pilot proposal is being developed in partnership with DWP and local authority benefits teams. As we progress the feasibility of the model and establish mechanisms for delivery, we will work with our local authority partners to establish how this could be delivered across local authorities within commissioned supported accommodation for young people. The investment to lease good quality private rented sector properties in Birmingham for homeless families, supporting Birmingham City Council's ongoing work to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, will be managed and delivered directly by Birmingham City Council and overseen by DLUHC.

Early Years

What will the deal achieve?

The deal invites engagement with government to explore pilot opportunities in relation to early years provision.

How will local authorities be involved?

The Combined Authority has encouraged the Regional Directors of Children's Services to take forward this opportunity.

Anti-social behaviour

What will the deal achieve?

The deal commits to further work between the region and Department for Transport (DfT) to explore how devolution could help to address anti-social behaviour on the public transport network. The deal also recognises the street-based anti-social behaviour issues facing local authorities.

What will be delivered?

Engagement between local authorities, the Combined Authority, central government and the Police and Crime Commissioner to explore ways to address these issues.

How will local authorities be involved?

Further engagement is needed to understand the policy options that could be available to the region.

What will the deal achieve?

The deal provides the means to coordinate and strengthen our cultural and heritage offer. The Regional Culture and Heritage Framework will align and maximise funding from arm’s length bodies, such as the Arts Council, including opportunities for co-investment and greater collaboration. DLUHC will also fund a Cultural Infrastructure programme to extend, refurb and improve cultural venues to better support our places, communities and citizens.

What will be delivered?

- A new partnership agreement with between the region and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its arm’s length bodies, to align different funding streams and a Regional Cultural and Heritage Framework to guide its work;
- £4 million capital funding to support regional culture projects, building on the £4.1 committed through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund for culture.

How will local authorities be involved?

- Local authorities will be engaged in the development of the Culture and Heritage Framework through the Local Authority Cultural Officers Group;
- Each of the seven constituent authorities will receive a grant through the Cultural Heritage Infrastructure Fund.

	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	2024	2025
Partnership Agreement	Develop Regional Culture and Heritage Framework									
	Develop Arm's Length Body Partnership Agreement and Forward Plan									
Cultural Infrastructure	Business case finalisation					DLUHC approvals				
	Project implementation, delivery, evaluation									
Homelessness				monthly discussions with DWP to consider simplifying benefits systems, develop and design pilot						
	Follow-up with Homes England on LAs and RPs' bid development									
	Support DWP developed Shared Outcomes Fund bid									



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

22 November 2023

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress
Director:	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
Contact Officer:	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Lead Officer – Service Improvement Dawn Webster dawn_webster@sandwell.gov.uk Democratic and Member Services Manager Suky Suthi-Nagra Suky_Suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Board considers and comments upon the progress of the Improvement Plan up to November 2023.
- 1.2. That any recommendations or comments in relation to 1.1 above are reported to Cabinet.
- 1.3. That the Board considers any additional areas of focus for its work 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 Grant Thornton 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 On 22 September 2022, Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board received the Improvement Plan and requested regular updates on progress. This report is the sixth quarterly progress report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.
- 2.3 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 November and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet's consideration.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The findings from the follow-up visits from Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA are incorporated into a refresh of the Improvement Plan which has been managed through the established change control process.
- 2.6 Scrutiny's consideration of progress of the Improvement Plan and scrutiny of specific areas within the plan contributes to creating an effective scrutiny function.

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 can 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 management mechanisms.

4.1.3 This report is the sixth quarterly update to Scrutiny on progress of the Improvement Plan.

4.2 Improvement Plan Progress

4.2.1 Over the three months to 1 November, we have continued to deliver at pace and embed changes. We are seeing more evidence of the impact of our improvements. We have received an Area SEND inspection and have now moved up a level, we achieved a key milestone with the signing of our 2020-2021 accounts and implemented our Asset Management System providing the tools for us to address an area of concern previously raised by external reviewers.

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 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.

4.3 Organisational Culture Theme

4.3.1 Achievements this quarter:

- Proposal of new approach to Employee Performance Review presented to Trade Unions to further embed the One Team Framework
- Forward plan of all Member briefings is in place for the next three sessions to ensure topics covered are relevant and timely.



- Social media policy completed with engagement/support of Trade Unions

4.3.2 Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **New Member Survey conducted, and any required amendments made to Member Development Programme (MDP)/New Member Induction programme**
 - Lower than expected return rate for New Member survey means results cannot be relied upon.
 - Members have been completing analysis after each training session.
 - Further analysis of these will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face-to-face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025.
 - Review will commence in November.
- **Governance Training and Development**
 - 23 attendees completed Decision making training in October for key decision makers which included scenario-based learning on procurement and financial regulations, Training material and guidance available to all staff on intranet.
 - Regarding broader scenario-based learning, Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel.
 - Next step is still to bring a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Amber rating reflects need to bring project group together and progress the planning.
- **Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training**
 - Training carried out 31 October, 20 members attended along with 5 officers The training session was recorded and will be made available for others to view. This training will be delivered annually. Amber rating reflects that training date is later than originally intended.



- The reason for the exception report is that training date is later than originally intended of July 2023.

4.4 Corporate Oversight Theme

4.4.1 Achievements this quarter

- Oracle Fusion approval for Gateway 2 Exit from Modelling phase for HR and Payroll
- Oracle Fusion system configuration for Finance, Procurement and EPM complete
- Q1 monitoring to Leadership Team, Scrutiny and Cabinet
- Workforce development plan skills gap analysis and training programme complete
- Corporate Debt Policy agreed
- 2020/21 accounts signed off by external auditor with no qualifications
- Verto project management software user acceptance testing complete

4.4.2 Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Develop a Continuous Improvement Framework**
 - Service planning approach developed to build corporate agendas and improvement areas into business planning discussion - evidence bundle to include performance, resident feedback, internal audit and risk management to identify improvement activity at service level.
 - Business planning workshops scheduled for November and December 2023.
 - Approach to be reviewed in early 2024 following completion of workshops and business plans; continuous improvement built into service planning and performance management framework.
- **Directorate level restructuring and review of Spans and Layers- On hold**
 - Senior Leadership Team structure approved at Full Council 24/10/23 and analysis of spans and layers due to be discussed by senior officers in November 2023.



- The new roles have gone out to advert on 9th November 2023 and a recruitment timetable is in place.

4.5 Strategic Direction Theme

4.5.1 Achievements this quarter

- Corporate Procurement Strategy action plan finalised
- Refreshed Corporate Procurement Strategy approved?
- Corporate Narrative engagement carried out with stakeholders from across the organisations
- Contract commenced on Stock Condition Surveys for housing stock
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion draft audit presented to Leadership Team
- Equality objectives approved

4.5.2 Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Customer Journey Strategy**
 - Customer engagement sessions need to take place but due to resourcing issues an external partner will be required.
 - Director of Finance along with Assistant Chief Executive has agreed funding will be provided for external support to produce Customer Engagement Strategy, due to limited resources and other commitments.
 - Specification work commenced but in early stages.
 - The reason for the exception report is that there is a need to procure a delivery partner and delivery will take a longer time period than was originally planned.

4.6 Decision Making Theme

4.6.1 Achievements this quarter

- Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report presented to Council 24 October 2023

4.6.2 Decision Making Progress Issues



- No issues in this theme

4.7 Procurement and Commercial Theme

4.7.1 Achievements this quarter

- SEND Transport Project team members identified, launch meeting scheduled.
- Completion of Phase 2 Tech Forge Asset Management System implementation

4.7.2 Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Performance Management System: Options Appraisal**
 - A performance management system is being explored to support improved 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 pushed back due to supplier availability for system demos. The final system demo was held August.
 - Options appraisal and business case are being finalised, further engagement with service areas being conducted to refine requirements.

4.8 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

4.8.1 Achievements this quarter

- Transitions Projects: Review of the transition from children's' to adults' services Benchmarking findings report complete and draft shared with Corporate Transformation Manager.

4.8.2 Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Sandwell Childrens Trust- KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2**
 - KPIs and tolerances are currently under review by the DfE appointed independent chair of the SCT Improvement Board and in negotiation with the DCS and CEO of SCT.



- **Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy**
 - Annual report on 2022/23 grants produced and shared with Leader, Cabinet Member for Communities and Chair of Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management. Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement.
 - Relationship with VCS continues to be positive - second Cost of Living Summit involved 30 local partner organisations to launch the joint Tackling Poverty Plan

5 Statutory Recommendations

- 5.1 The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review 2021 included three statutory recommendations (Appendix 3) 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.
- 5.2 In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.
- 5.3 **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 – agreement reached to extend SLT’s operation of leisure centres to March 2027.
- Handover of Sandwell Aquatic Centre to SLT
- 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.
- Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. Monitoring provided to Cabinet in November 2022 and July 2023.

5.4 **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 the Constitution 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 rolled out during 2023-2024.
- Commercial Strategy approved in March 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November.
- SEND Transport lessons learnt completed and shared with Wider Leadership Team

5.5 **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. Member Handbook created for Municipal Year 2023-24.



- 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. Values and behaviours launched.
- Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.

6 Specific Recommendations from External Reviews relating to Scrutiny

- 6.1 The Statutory Directions set out that the Council must secure improvement in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny and associated audit functions.
- 6.2 In the original Value for Money Governance Review (2021) Grant Thornton set out 3 recommendations that relate to scrutiny. In their follow up review in Autumn 2022, Grant Thornton commented that *‘positive progress has been made to improve the culture and professionalism of key Council committees, with the scrutiny function making particular progress.’* The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Follow up review also found that scrutiny is *‘going from strength to strength’*.
- 6.3 No further improvement recommendations relating to the role and function of scrutiny were made by CIPFA, Grant Thornton or the LGA in their follow-up reviews of Autumn 2022.
- 6.4 Appendix 4 provides an overview of progress against the original recommendations relating to scrutiny, along with related findings from the Grant Thornton and LGA follow-up visits.

7 Scrutiny Work Programme

- 7.1 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board have included regular reports on overall progress of the Improvement Plan on their work programme.



7.2 Scrutiny’s consideration of overall progress of the Improvement Plan and of specific areas within the plan contributes to creating an effective scrutiny function. This will also assist scrutiny to identify any additional work planning items linked to the Improvement Plan. An update on the work programme is provided below.

Work Programme Item Requested	Update
Combined Authority	The WMCA Chief Executive will be attending the next scrutiny meeting to discuss the devolution deal and opportunities for funding for Sandwell to ensure there are stronger links between Sandwell and the WMCA and transparency of decisions that impact on Sandwell.

8 External Reviews - Follow up reports

8.1 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. Scrutiny received the follow up reports in March 2023.

8.2 Reports from Sandwell’s Commissioners have been submitted to the Secretary of State on a six-monthly basis. In their June 2023 report, Commissioners noted the considerable progress made over the first fifteen months of the intervention towards addressing the significant challenges facing the authority. In their third report, the Commissioners outlined that their focus over the coming months will be in the following areas:

- Developing the strategic capacity of the organisation
- Implementation and embedding of the council’s values and behaviours (One Team Framework)
- Establishing a comprehensive transformation programme linked to the delivery of the medium-term financial strategy



- Approval of the 2020/21 accounts by the external auditors and a clear timetable for approval of the 2021/22 accounts

8.3 Grant Thornton returned to Sandwell in October 2023 to conduct a further follow up review and monitoring the council's further progress in addressing the Statutory Recommendations made in 2021 and the additional key and improvement recommendations made in 2022. Following the receipt of the second follow-up report, the Improvement Plan will be reviewed to ensure the council is addressing any further recommendations at either corporate level or within 'business as usual' mechanisms. Changes to the Improvement Plan will be reported to members through the normal quarterly reporting schedule.

9 Risk Management

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 6. The main risks are associated with:
- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the corporate programme management office. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June. To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from September 2023.
 - **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.
 - **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

10 Changes to the Improvement Plan

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

10.2 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.

10.3 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 5. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour.

10.4 The changes made are summarised below.

- 3 changes made to action delivery timescales (with 1 being more than three months)
- 1 assurance action has been added
- 7 sub-actions have been added (marked in red within IP).
- 4 main actions are proposed to be closed (2 actions closure will result in closure of workstream)
- 3 Assurance actions are proposed to close
- 3 changes to delivery lead

11 Reporting Framework and Governance

11.1 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 7 sets out the governance framework.

- 11.2 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. Reports were submitted in December 2022 and June 2023. The next report is due December 2023
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 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.
- 11.5 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 Any recommendations or comments from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board will be reported to Cabinet.

12 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
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	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>
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>



	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.
Equality:	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.
Health and Wellbeing:	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.
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.

13 Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool October 2023
2. Improvement Plan Theme Summary October 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting October 2023
4. Scrutiny and Audit Recommendations Reporting October 2023
5. Changes to the Improvement Plan October 2023
6. Improvement Plan Risk Register October 2023
7. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram

14 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:
 - June 2022 Reports
 - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities](#), June 2022
 - December 2022 Reports:



- [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 \(March 2023\)](#)

- [June 2023](#)
- [Sandwell Council Commissioners: third report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, June 2023 \(published July 2023\)](#)
- [Ministerial response to third letter \(July 2023\)](#)

- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
 - To Council:
 - [13 June 2023](#)
 - [13 December 2022](#)

 - To Cabinet:
 - [September 2023](#)
 - [June 2023](#)
 - [March 2023](#)
 - [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
 - [September 2022](#)

 - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - [September 2023](#)
 - [June 2023](#)
 - [March 2023](#)
 - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)
 - [June 2022](#)

 - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
 - [September 2023](#)
 - [June 2023](#)
 - [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)	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	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Evidence of status rating (October 2023)
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.0	Create the right environment for that organisational culture to thrive	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	Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Workforce Strategy themes and priority documents on track for Leadership Team 17.10.23. DS	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	People Strategy has been presented to Leadership Team on 17.10.23. Discussions and steer to amend and add some additional points. Also need to incorporate Organisational narrative
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.3	Project Plan for launch of One Team Framework and alignment to people management practices - 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	Mar-23	Jul-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Update or programme containing all workstreams was presented to Leadership Team 7.9.23. DS	On Track- little or no slippage	Projects to embed continue to progress as per plan presented in September (DS.11.10.23)
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.4	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	Mar-23	Mar-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Entering phase on consultation for the new approach to Appraisals with key stakeholders. Potential dependency/risk around TU consultation. Also dependency on Oracle Fusion module role out and whether the performance module	On Track- little or no slippage	Proposal of a new approach presented to Trade Unions to commence information and consultation. Further meeting planned next month with TUs to continue dialogue. Change management support and training being developed. Risk to technical/process
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.0	Develop a clear programme of management development	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Focus 2	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.5	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				Further discussions around scope and desired outcomes required with SL/IM and to align to Leadership restructuring plans. Research into potential providers and good practice from other councils has been explored (DS. 17.10.23)
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.0	Assurance Activity to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23		Focus 2	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	Dec-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Due to launch face to face sessions with a random sample of Members in October underpinned by a survey open to all Members. Questions for Officers embedded in EES. Following this insight gathering consideration will be given to ongoing insight mechanism.	On Track- little or no slippage	Emails have been sent to members to offer face to face interviews and a survey link. Questions for Officers embedded in EES. Following this insight gathering consideration will be given to ongoing insight mechanism.
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.2	Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA around the Member-Officer Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jul-23	Nov-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Sessions with LGA will be confirmed following the insight gathering on EES and Member face to face sessions. Expected end November.	On Track- little or no slippage	Sessions with LGA will be confirmed following the insight gathering on EES and Member face to face sessions. Expected end November. Democratic services are compiling feedback from member training sessions to analyse.
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.0	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development	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	Jun-23	N/A	Complete	Forward plan of all Member briefings is in place for next 3 sessions. Agendas are routinely discussed by Leadership Team. ST to confirm the forward plan	Complete	complete
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.0	Member development programme	Director - Law & Governance						Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (September 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
												Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (October 2023)
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.2	New Member Survey conducted and any required amendments made to MDP / New Member Induction programme	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee			Jul-23	Aug-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	New Member survey conducted. 1 return. Members have been completing analysis after each training session. Further analysis of these training evaluation forms will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face to face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025. MDP Review will commence in November. New action req'd around review of MDP and its completion in March.	Complete	New Member survey conducted. 1 return. Members have been completing analysis after each training session. Further analysis of these training evaluation forms will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face to face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025. MDP Review will commence in November. New action req'd around review of MDP and its completion in March.
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.3	New action: Review of MDP	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee			Nov-23	TBC	N/A	New Action Added	New action october	New Action Added	New action october
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.4	New action: Agreement of revised MDP	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee				Mar-23	N/A	New Action Added	New action october	New Action Added	New action october
Internal Communications	OC.E2.0	Deliver the communications strategy to assist with more effective internal communications	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Feb-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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	Development of Employee Recognition Scheme is being linked to values and behaviours roll out. Aiming for October for proposal for scheme.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Development of Employee Recognition Scheme is being linked to values and behaviours roll out and exploring options for building recognition into future all staff briefing events. Timescale for development of proposal to be extended to allow for involvement of volunteer staff from the Launch & Share Task & Finish groups in the development. Further call for action at All Staff Briefing 26/10/23. Aiming for November for proposal for scheme.
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	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Internal Communications	OC.E2.8	Protocol For working with MPs	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council					N/A	New Action Added	New action october	New Action Added	New action october
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.0	Governance review training Phase 2	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	TBC	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.3	Governance Training and Development	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director-Finance		Jan-23	May-24	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Decision making training in place early October for key decision makers. Regarding broader scenario-based learning. Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel. Next step is bring a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Intention to deliver in November. Overall timeline is still achievable. Amber rating reflects need to bring project group together and progress the planning over September and October.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Regarding broader scenario-based learning. Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel. Next step is bring a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Intention to deliver before the end of the year in November/ December. Overall timeline is still achievable. Amber rating reflects need to bring project group together and progress the planning over September and October.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.4	Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			June 2023	Dec-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	ST will update with date for delivery	On Track- little or no slippage	Scheduled to the end of Dec with CIPFA to carry out the Code of corporate governance training.

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (October 2023)
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.5	Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training	Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jul-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected	Date confirmed 31st October. Offer to be extended to Officers with council appointments to boards etc. Amber rating reflects later than planned delivery of training.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected	Date confirmed 31st October. Offer to be extended to Officers with council appointments to boards etc. This training will be delivered annually. Amber rating reflects later than planned delivery of training.

Theme 2- Corporate Oversight

Static data													October Update Due						
Workstream			Ref			Action			Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date) (October 2023)						
ERP	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader	Director-Business Strategy & Change Director- Law		Apr-22	Apr-24	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						
ERP	CO.A1.9	Completion of the modelling phase	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Feb-23	Sep-23	N/A	Complete	Programme Board on 21st Sep provided approval for: Gateway 2 Exit from Modelling Phase for HR & Payroll.	Complete	complete						
ERP	CO.A1.10	Go live	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO Lead	Apr-24	Apr-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Go Live still planned from April 2024.	On Track- little or no slippage	Finance and Procurement will go-live in April 2024. HR & Payroll will go-live in July 24.						
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 May Aug Nov Feb	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live.	On Track- little or no slippage	Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live. Working group established with HoS to progress financial benefits.						
ERP	CO.A1.12	New action: Completion of realisation phase/development stage					Sep-23		N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Programme Board on 21st Sep provided approval for: Gateway 2 Exit from Modelling Phase for HR & Payroll. Gateway 3 Exit from Realisation Development Phase and entry to SIT for Finance, EPM and Procurement. The programme will continue in to work in a phased approach with SIT commencing on time on 25th September.	On Track- little or no slippage	Programme Board on 21st Sep provided approval for: Gateway 2 Exit from Modelling Phase for HR & Payroll. Gateway 3 Exit from Realisation Development Phase and entry to SIT for Finance, EPM and Procurement. The programme will continue in to work in a phased approach with SIT commencing on time on 25th September.						
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.0	Single Improvement Plan Phase 1	Leadership Team	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Ongoing	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	Report due to Cabinet 6 Dec, Scrutiny 30 Nov, ARAC 30 Nov and Council 12 Dec.	On Track- little or no slippage	Report due to Cabinet 6 Dec, Scrutiny 30 Nov, ARAC 30 Nov and Council 12 Dec.						
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 & December each year throughout intervention	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Next report due in December 2023	On Track- little or no slippage	Next report due in December 2023						
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.6	Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan monitored and reviewed by Leadership Team	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jan July each year	Focus 2	Complete	complete	Complete	complete						
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.7	Conduct Employee Engagement Survey for 2023 and consider actions required in response to the findings	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		AD - HR Strategic Lead Service Improvement	Jul-23	early 2024	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Employee Engagement Survey being conducted currently; initial report to IPRM on 02/11/23	On Track- little or no slippage	Employee Engagement Survey closed at end September 2023, results being analysed. Session arranged with Directors and Wider Leadership Team in early November to receive corporate level results and consider actions required in response to the findings.						
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.0	Continuous Improvement	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Oct-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						

Static data							Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating			
												Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)			
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement framework	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Oct-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Resource allocated to development of LUP leading to delay in overall continuous improvement framework. Service planning approach developed to build corporate agendas and improvement areas into business planning discussion - evidence bundle to include performance, resident feedback, internal audit and risk management to identify improvement activity at service level Planning of improvement activity and assurance at corporate level for period of post-intervention in progress	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Service planning approach developed to build corporate agendas and improvement areas into business planning discussion - evidence bundle to include performance, resident feedback, internal audit and risk management to identify improvement activity at service level. Business planning workshops scheduled for November and December 2023. Approach to be reviewed in early 2024 following completion of workshops and business plans; continuous improvement built into service planning and performance management framework			
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.2	Develop a lessons learnt framework	Chief executive	Leader of the Council			23-Jan	Oct-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Lessons learnt template and guidance prepared. Shared with business planning and performance management groups to disseminate.	On Track- little or no slippage	Further promotion required to encourage use of lessons learned template and guidance.			
Performance Management	CO.C1.0	Performance Management Framework (PMF)	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		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Ongoing action	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Q1 report went to leaders meeting in september and will fo to Cabinet next month (october)	On Track- little or no slippage	Q1 Report went to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in October and scheduled to go to Cabinet on the 18th October. Q2 report is being prepared and will go to Leadership Team on the 28th November.			
Performance Management	CO.C1.4	Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	January 2023	Mar-24	N/A	Complete	Organisational Health KPIs have been reviewed and are now included in the quarterly reports.	Complete	complete			
Performance Management	CO.C1.8	Corporate performance team in place	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	dec 22	Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Senior Lead Officer in place since February. G Grade post to start in September, F Grade post to be re-evaluated following some minor changes to the job spec, with the view to this going out later in the year.	On Track- little or no slippage	Senior Lead Officer in place since February. G Grade post to start in September, F Grade post to be re-evaluated following some minor changes to the job spec, with the view to this going out later in the year.			
Performance Management	CO.C1.9	Consider integrating revenue, Capital and Performance reporting	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Mar-24	Aug-24	N/a	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start			
Performance Management	CO.C2.0	Budget Monitoring	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	Q1 monitoring to Cabinet and Leadership team. Scrutiny due in a couple of weeks.	Assurance Action	due december 23			
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				
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	Benchmarking used in budget planning up to date. Next round is starting now.					

Static data				Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.0	Restructuring	Leadership Team	Deputy Leader			Dec-20	on hold	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	TBC	TBC	N/A	Action on Hold		Action on Hold	Senior Leadership Team structure presented to Full Council 24/10/23 for approval - WILL NEED UPDATE FOLLOWING THIS		
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		Head of HR	July 23	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	C.Co work underway. Head of HR meeting C.Co lead 29.09.24. LT update to follow	On Track- little or no slippage	Report to Leadership Team scheduled for 14 November 2023 (KA)		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.0	Embedding Finance Business Partner role	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Jul-23	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		Jul-23	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete		
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	Quarterly	Jun Sep Dec Mar	N/A	Assurance Action		Assurance Action	update missing from september		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.0	Reduction of financial transactional activity	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.6	Implement recommended processes for a single view of debt	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			Jun-23	Mar-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	The Corporate Debt Policy has been completed and includes all types of debts the council collects. This will go to Cabinet in February for approval for 24/25. A process has been created and signed of for dealing with the council's top debtors (highest). In order to contact these residents and provide	On Track- little or no slippage	The Corporate Debt Policy has been completed and includes all types of debts the council collects. This will go to Cabinet in February for approval for 24/25. A process has been created and signed of for dealing with the council's top debtors (highest). In order to contact these residents and provide		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			May-22	May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	The project team is collaborating with Directorate nominees, who have provided details of core business support processes. The review of the processes is on target to commence in September for completion in accordance with project plan.	On Track- little or no slippage	C.co report due 4.11.23 re future model.		
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	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.7	Develop Business case for Transactional Finance Unit	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader				TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Work continues to develop the Transactional Finance Unit, the activity analysis has been issued to relevant staff and completed returns are being analysed. The project remains on target.	On Track- little or no slippage	C.co report due 4.11.23 re future model.		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.0	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	AA- ongoing	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		

Static data		Owners					Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
												Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
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	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
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	The 2021/22 accounts are in production at the moment. The organisation has closedown timetable processes that it adopts for each financial year and these are being completed having started after the 2020/21 accounts were	Assurance Action	as September 23- The 2021/22 accounts are in production at the moment. The organisation has closedown timetable processes that it adopts for each financial year and these are being completed having started after the
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.0	Corporate Transformation programme	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21		Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.3	Corporate Transformation PMO established - Local Partnerships Review Concludes - Establishment of PMO	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		AD-Transformation		Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	PMO framework currently being revised to reflect local assurance/governance arrangements. Review of current CTO structure / roles to align to PMO&CTO function moving forward	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	On Track for completion Novemberr 23
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		AD-Transformation		TBC following 08/08/2023 meeting	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Format for testing currently being established and identification of end users to be involved.	On Track- little or no slippage	User acceptance testing complete, refinements underway. Verto launch date for CTO early November
Customer Journey	CO.F5.0	Customer Journey Programme	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	22-Sep	TBC	Focus 1	N/A		N/A	
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	Strategic Improvement Manager will be feeding back initial solutions being worked on at the next Cabinet Member, Town & Vice Chair Meeting on the 2 October 2023.	On Track- little or no slippage	Meeting with Cabinet Member, Town & Vice Chairs on 2 October 2023, work to date shared on issues raised and further work planned. Agreed to attend all upcoming Town Meetings to provide feedback to all Members.

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Customer Journey	CO.F5.5	Ward and Casework Management - Action plan in place Plan for Responsiveness re: Ward & Casework Management 2023/24.	Director – Regeneration & Growth			Strategic Lead - Customer	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	See above update. LT are also continuing to receive weekly updates on Cllr Portal cases.	On Track- little or no slippage	See above update. LT are also continuing to receive weekly updates on Cllr Portal cases. Once all meetings have been attended, to attend future quarterly meetings to gain any further feedback as an on-going improvement mechanism. Also trialing new 'Member stall' event Pre Full Council as a further way to improve Officer/Member relationships and information sharing. New Ward Co-ordinators have commenced in post and will be working closely with Members to come up with Ward Plans & Priorities and ensure a live action plan is in place for all Wards.
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.0	Strategic Planning framework	Chief Executive					2024	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	Key messages shared with Cabinet and LT at their Away Day 19 September. To be shared with WLT on 28 September. On track for partnership event 30 November.	On Track- little or no slippage	Workshop with analysts from across the council being held on 25 October to examine State of Borough report in further detail - with view to planning content of partnership wide event on 30 November.
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	Entering phase on consultation for the new approach to Appraisals with key stakeholders. Potential dependency/risk around TU consultation. Also dependency on Oracle Fusion module role out and whether the performance module actually goes live 1.4.24 . DS	On Track- little or no slippage	Proposal of a new approach presented to Trade Unions to commence information and consultation. Further meeting planned next month with TUs to continue dialogue. Change management support and training being developed. Risk to technical/process recording as Oracle Talent module may not be live until July 2024 (Ds. 11.10.23)
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		On Track- little or no slippage	Following LT direction to implement BP's at AD level three workshops are planned for Nov/Dec with the aim being to drive quality and consistency.

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.0	Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Autumn 2021	Apr-27	Focus 2	Complete	complete -removed sept change contol	Complete	complete -removed sept change contol
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Narrative workshops with LGA held. Draft narrative engagement with staff representatives has commenced	On Track- little or no slippage	Engagement with staff on the corporate narrative will conclude this month. All staff briefing being held to update colleagues on the progress of the improvement plan and the next steps on how we become an outstanding council as we get ready for exiting intervention.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.0	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 2021	Jul-23	Focus 2		update required- new action required- when is procurement strategy to be signed off.-		update required- new action required- when is procurement strategy to be signed off.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.4	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	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.0	Develop and Implement the Commercial Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Autumn 2021	Ocr 23	Focus 2	N/a		N/a	

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
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	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage more than 2 months	Dedicated PM recruited to support leads and sponsors to develop business cases, monitor progress and produce highlight reports. Update on commercial workstreams to be presented at 09.10.23 CTB	On Track- little or no slippage	The 4 workstreams are at various stages. Education commercial services – BC in development, completion date end of October H&S – scoping underway Neutral vendor – Pre OBC activity due to commence Pest control – alternative options been considered. Updates to be presented at next CTB
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.4	Recruit Commercial Project Officer	Director- Finance					Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Commercial PM recruited via Hays.. Introductory meetings with business leads in progress	Complete	Complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.0	HRA 30 year Business Plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Assistant Directors - Housing Management and Asset Management		Autumn 2021	Jun-23	Focus 2				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.4	Procurement of stock condition surveys	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing				Sep-23	N/A	Complete	contract has commenced for the first tranche of stock condition surveys	Complete	complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.5	Stock Condition Surveys Undertaken to inform HRA business plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing			Sep-23	Sep-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Contract has started for the first 5000 stock condition surveys		
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.6	New action:refresh of HRA Business plan?	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing			TBC	TBC	N/A	New Action Added	new action sept	New Action Added	new action sept
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.7	New action: Procurement of second tranche of Stock condition Surveys	Director- Housing	Director- Housing			TBC	TBC	N/A	New Action Added	new action sept	New Action Added	new action sept

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A7.0	Refresh the Early Help Strategy	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	ongoing	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 24	Assurance Action	Due April 24
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.0	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan-22	Ongoing	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	This action (assurance) forms part of the CPB work programme and led by the Cabinet Member, CYP and Education.	Assurance Action	due sept 2024
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.0	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.14	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment - appointment of consultant for data analysis - appointment of consultant for strategy development	Director- Law & Governance			Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Jul- 24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Draft Audit was presented to Leadership Team on 8 August. It was then shared on 9 August with directorates for further comment/amendments. The EDI audit was finalised on 25 August. An update report is scheduled with Leadership for 10 October to present an action plan for next steps. On track for strategy approval in July 2024. No issues to report	On Track- little or no slippage	Revision of equality objectives approved at leadership 10 October. The update report has been rescheduled with Leadership for mid November to present an action plan for next steps. On track for strategy approval in July 2024. No issues to report
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.15	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved and published	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Jun-24	Jul-24	N/A	Not due to start	due July 24	Not due to start	due July 24

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.0	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Ongoing	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	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	Due feb 2024	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	MTFS currently being refreshed - due to Cabinet 15 November 2023. Capital programme being reviewed
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.0	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Customer Journey	SD.F1.0	Customer Journey Strategy	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strate	Strategic Lead - Customer	Oct-22	Mar-24	Focus 2	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Proposal to look at external resource for this was discussed at CI Programme Board on the 15 September, request was to put on hold for 4 weeks but to work on producing a Specification in the meantime.	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	Director of Finance along with ACE has agreed funding will be provided for external support to produce CES, due to limited resources and other commitments. Specification work commenced but in early stages.

Theme 4 - Decision Making

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 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	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C3.1	Assurance action: Watching brief to ensure that historic matters do not re-surface	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Quarterly	Sep Dec Mar June	N/A	Assurance Action	No issues to report relating to historic reports.	Assurance Action	Scrutiny committee have produced the annual report which will go to council in October. (update due dec)

Theme 5- Procurement & Commercial

Static data							Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)			
Waste Contract	PC.A1.0	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring	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 Nov	N/A	Assurance Action	Due November 23	Assurance Action	Due November 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	Due November 23	Assurance Action	Due November 23			
Waste Contract	PC.A1.5	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	On Track- little or no slippage	Work progressing with Intend	On Track- little or no slippage	Work continues with Intend - scheduled go-live end October.			

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 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	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.A2.5	Delivery of recommendations – as appropriate	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Apr-23	Mar-24	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Waste Contract	PC.A4.0	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mar-23	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	

Static data							Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)				
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	due november 23	Assurance Action	due november 23				
Waste Contract	PC.A5.0	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	End 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				End 2023	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Next tranche of fleet replacement remains due end 2023	On Track- little or no slippage	Next tranche of fleet replacement remains due end 2023				
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	Due November 23	Assurance Action	Due November 23				
SEND Transport	PC.B3.0	Procurement of 2024 SEND Transport Contract	Director - Children and Education				Nov-22	Apr-25	Focus 2	N/A	n/a	N/A	n/a				
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	Aug 23	Sept 23	N/A	Not due to start	not due to start	On Track- little or no slippage	Project Team members identified/ launch meeting diarised / ToR's to be agreed				

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
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	Jan-24	Sep 23	N/A	Not due to start	Procurement to commence January 2024	On Track- little or no slippage	SEND 3 to be a strand of the overall transformation plan / Task & Finish Group to drive delivery
SEND Transport	PC.B3.4	Working with contract management consultant to introduce and embed robust contract management arrangements	Director-Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education		Jan-23	Ongoing	N/A			On Track- little or no slippage	Report findings to be considered by Transformation Project Team with agreed recommendation embedded in SEND 3
New System Procurement	PC.C1.0	Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system	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		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		Oct-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Options appraisal is being drafted.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Options appraisal and business case being finalised, further engagement with service areas being conducted to refine requirements.
New System Procurement	PC.C1.2	Business Case and Implementation Plan Considered	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC based on selected option	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	October Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)
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	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism			Autumn 2021	May-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asset Management	PC.F1.0	Asset Management	Director – Regeneration & Growth				23-Jan		Focus 2				
Asset Management	PC.F1.3	Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge: Configuration and organisation of data Implementation of supplementary modules.	Director – Regeneration & Growth			Assistant Director – Property, Strategic Assets and Land Transforming Local services- programme manager	23-May	Sep-23	N/A	Complete	The phase two for Techforge implementation has now been completed. The team are currently undertaking a project closedown exercise detailing everything that has been completed across both phases along with any workstreams/actions that will now become BAU.	Complete	complete

Theme 6-Partnerships & Relationships

													October Update Due	
Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 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	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.A1.7	New KPIs reported through PMF	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Aug-23	Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	With Q1 PMF report. KPIs under review - Independent Chair of the Improvement Board reviewing these alongside DCS and CEO of SCT.	On Track- little or no slippage	With Q1 PMF report. KPIs under review - Independent Chair of the Improvement Board reviewing these alongside DCS and CEO of SCT.	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.8	KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Dec-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	KPIs and tolerances are currently under review by the DfE appointed independent chair of the SCT Improvement Board and in negotiation with the DCS and CEO of SCT.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	KPIs and tolerances are currently under review by the DfE appointed independent chair of the SCT Improvement Board and in negotiation with the DCS and CEO of SCT.	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.0	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level	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	The action is embedded and the last report to C&E scrutiny board was Monday 11 September 2023 with further updates timetabled across the municipal year.	Assurance Action	due January 24	
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	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2		Updates provided and there is also the SCT governance structures inc OPB, SPB and Improvement Board supported by a range of senior meetings inc the Cabinet Member, DCS, Chair of the SCT Board, CEO of SCT. N/A		Updates provided and there is also the SCT governance structures inc OPB, SPB and Improvement Board supported by a range of senior meetings inc the Cabinet Member, DCS, Chair of the SCT Board, CEO of SCT. N/A	
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	Action completed, timetable confirmed and the process is embedded.	Complete	Action completed, timetable confirmed and the process is embedded.	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.4	Outcomes around early help and corporate parent reporting through PMF at Q1	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Sep-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Part of PMF	On Track- little or no slippage	Part of PMF	
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.0	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere'	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		Action completed since the formation of the overarching 5 Boards.		Action completed since the formation of the overarching 5 Boards.	
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	Benchmarking meetings have now been completed with Dudley MBC and Birmingham City Council re pathway arrangements. Development of benchmarking findings report commenced w/c 18 th September. Case file audit and post-17yr referral analysis has commenced. Shortlisting completed for PM post with interview date proposed the 4th October. Meeting has taken place with Claire Mawby Transformation Lead- Care leaver and SEND Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services. Claire is also the SEND Project Manager (3 days) within delivery of the new ecosystem for inclusion which includes a workstreams for PFA and transition ambitions.	On Track- little or no slippage	Benchmarking findings report complete and initial draft shared with Corporate Transformation Manager. Case file audit and post-17yr referral analysis ongoing and on track for completion end of October. PM post interview completed 4th October, post not filled. Corporate Transformation Manager to meet with Directors to discuss future scope of Transitions / PFA pathway in early November.	
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	July update required	Assurance Action	ICB in place and MoU signed with ICB around alliance. Workstreams are in place and performance is being scrutinised. All plans are up to date and are working well but this should be reviewed every 6months across DPH, DAS and DCS. Close this assurance action and create a new one for 6monthly review.	

Static data													October Update Due	
Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (September 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(September 2023)	Status (October 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 2023)	
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.6	New Assurance action: Receive a 6 monthly 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		6 monthly	April 24 October 24	N/A	Assurance Action	New assurance action- added october	Assurance Action	New assurance action- added october	
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.0	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector.	Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities			Mar-22	Jul-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.3	Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy	Leadership Team			Director - Housing	Jan-23	TBC	N/A	Action on Hold	Report to Cabinet in the Autumn with next steps on developing the strategy	Action on Hold	Annual report on 2022/23 grants produced and shared with Leader, Cabinet Member for Communities and Chair of Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management. Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement. Relationship with VCS continues to be positive - second Cost of Living Summit involved 30 local partner organisations to launch the joint Tackling Poverty Plan	
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.4	Approval of VCS Strategy	Leadership Team			Director - Housing	TBC	TBC		Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	

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Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary October 2023

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
<p>Organisational Culture</p>	<p><u>Establishing Organisational Culture</u></p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Team Framework has been agreed and is in the process of being implemented across the Council. Launch and Share events with managers have now concluded with positive feedback from managers around the events and the implementation of the values and behaviours. Framework was introduced at all staff briefing in July. People Strategy is in final stages of preparation. • Organisational Health indicators have been reported for 2022-23 and the trends are being used to inform the People Strategy and roll out of the One Team Framework. Employee Engagement Survey conducted in September 2023 to provide a temperature check on culture, with results due to be available in early November. • The Member and Officer relationship continues to be positive and is enabling the Council to move forward with decisions. To support continuous improvement, further insight was collated in Autumn through the Employee Engagement Survey and semi-structured interviews with a sample of Members and Officers. <p>Progress this month:</p>	<p>October</p> <p>Proposal of new approach to Employee performance review presented to Trade Unions</p> <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward plan of all Member Briefings in place for next 3 sessions • Project plan for launch of One Team Framework- Update of programme containing all workstreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture - March 2023. Complete • Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture - March 2023. Complete • Workforce Strategy approved- Due for approval in November • Management Development Programme Agreed- Pilot held in April • Corporate Induction Revised. Complete

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Strategy has been presented to Leadership Team on 17.10.23. Discussions and steer to amend and add some additional points. Also need to incorporate Organisational narrative which is still subject to further consultation. • The workstreams within the strategy continue to be actioned. • Projects to embed the One Team Framework continue to progress as per plan presented to IPRM in September • Proposal of a new approach to Employee Performance Review presented to Trade Unions to commence information and consultation. Change management support and training being developed. • Risk to technical/process recording as Oracle Talent module may not be live until July 2024 • Semi-structured interviews with a sample of Members have been carried out. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further meeting planned next month with TUs to continue dialogue on Employee Performance Review? <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC.A2.1- Workforce strategy amber rated due to slippage on due date. New due date November 2023 to be amended on change control. <p>Focus 2 Exceptions</p>	<p>presented to Leadership team</p> <p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal for Employee Performance Review created with Values embedded • Feedback from launch and Share sessions fed back to leadership • Social Media Policy review complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Team review of All Member briefings - Meeting held in July • Processes relating to employment of Chief Officers included in induction programme for committees at start of Municipal Year- Included in MDP • Approval of refreshed Member Development Programme for start of Municipal Year. Complete • Employee Recognition Scheme launched- Date tbc • Guidance in place for effective working with MPs- August 2023 work commenced • Social Media policy reviewed- August 2023 Complete
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC.G1.3 Governance Training and Development- Amber rated Due May 2024 Progress commentary: 23 attendees completed Decision making training in October for key decision makers which included scenario-based learning on procurement and financial regulations, Training material and guidance available to all staff on intranet. Regarding broader scenario-based learning, Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel. Next step is still to bring a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Amber rating reflects need to bring project group together and progress the planning. • OC.G1.5 Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training - Amber rated Due in July 23. Progress commentary: Training carried out 31 October, 20 members attended along with 5 officers The training session was recorded and will be made available for others to view. This training will be delivered annually. Amber rating reflects that training date is later than originally intended 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Governance Development Programme Agreed – approach agreed to deliver via scenario-based learning. New Project Group to be formed. • Delivery of Corporate Governance Programme commences- Commenced
<p>Corporate Oversight</p>	<p>Focus 1 <u>Customer Journey Programme</u></p>	<p>October VERTO user acceptance testing complete</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oracle- Discovery phase complete- Feb 23. Complete

	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme governance remains in place. Housing Solutions have carried out a number of process mapping workshops covering the areas highlighted- Adult Social Care, Borough Economy, Housing Options and Revenues and Benefits. A sharing event was carried out 23 August 2023. • The council has collectively (including Housing, Regeneration, Borough Economy) been working to improve the response to cases on the member portal. <p>Progress this month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Cabinet Member, Town & Vice Chairs on 2 October 2023, work to date shared on issues raised and further work planned. Agreed to attend all upcoming Town Meetings to provide feedback to all Members. • Leadership Team are continuing to receive weekly updates on Cllr Portal cases. • Once all Town meetings have been attended, to attend future quarterly meetings to gain any further feedback as an on-going improvement mechanism. • New Ward Co-ordinators have commenced in post and will be working closely with Members to come up with Ward Plans & Priorities and ensure a live action plan is in place for all Wards. • Director of Finance along with ACE has agreed funding will be provided for external support to produce CES, due to limited resources and other commitments. <p>Next steps:</p>	<p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills gap analysis complete for financial services and a training programme is now complete and in place- delivery will take place over the next 6 months <p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft State of Borough report received from Economic Intelligence Unit. • Business Planning Framework drafted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oracle- Modelling phase complete- June 23. Complete • Oracle Fusion implemented- April 24. On track • Corporate debt recovery processes reviewed- Complete April 23 • Sign off of 2020/21 accounts Complete • Sign off of 2021/22 accounts Due to be submitted to GT in November • Transformation PMO in place – Local Partnerships Review complete. Final report to LT due 11 July. • Corporate PMO in place – Local Partnerships Review complete. Final report to LT due 11 July
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident engagement to be rescheduled once agreement is reached on external resourcing • Trialling new 'Member stall' event Pre Full Council as a further way to improve Officer/Member relationships and information sharing. • Resident engagement specification work commenced but in early stages for provision of external support. • Customer Service Specification to be finalised. <p>Issues raised: Customer Strategy development showing as amber progress this month due to timeline slippage- external support agreed- specification work to commence.</p> <p><u>Resolve Issues relating to the completion and sign-off of final accounts</u></p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020/21 accounts have been signed off by the auditor with no qualifications. • 21/22 accounts – agreed with Grant Thornton that audit dates will be moved to October to allow more internal quality assurance process before external audit takes place <p>Progress this month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2021/22 accounts are in production. The organisation has closedown timetable processes that it adopts for each financial year, and these are being completed having started after the 2020/21 accounts were produced. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verto system implemented – Commenced • Corporate Transformation Board operational- ToR and Membership to be re-set following Local Partnerships Review - Complete
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	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of 2021/22 accounts to Grant Thornton in January. <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No issues raised <p><u>MTFP</u></p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MTFP projects are being managed within the Corporate Transformation Programme and project management methodology and transformation design principles are being applied.• Work to develop and review MTFS and MTFP for 2024/25 with members conducted over Summer and Autumn 2023, to develop achievable/deliverable savings and a balanced Budget for 2024/25.• Use of benchmarking information to inform services to include in future transformation activities.• Update to MTFS to be presented to Cabinet in November 2023 at same time as seeking approval to commence consultation on proposed savings for 2024/25. <p>Progress this month: Reviews being conducted to identify future transformation opportunities for 2025/26 onwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MTFS currently being refreshed.		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital programme being reviewed. • Approach to consultation on savings proposals being finalised <p>Next steps: MTFS Update approved at Cabinet 1 November 23, due at Scrutiny 16 November 23.</p> <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Issues raised <p><u>Corporate Transformation</u></p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation Design Principles agreed. • Review was held with Local Partnerships and the report is informing the establishment of Corporate PMO. • The Corporate Transformation Board’s terms of reference have been revised and regular meetings scheduled. <p>Progress this month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Transformation PMO establishment on track for completion November 2023 • Verto User acceptance testing complete, refinements underway. Verto launch date for CTO early November. Corporate Transformation Board’s focus has been on establishing progress of current transformational programmes and service reviews, as part of development of the MTFS 		
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	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verto Launch - November <p>Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No issues raised <p>Focus 2 Exceptions</p> <p>CO.B3.1 Develop a Continuous Improvement Framework – Amber rated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress commentary: Service planning approach developed to build corporate agendas and improvement areas into business planning discussion - evidence bundle to include performance, resident feedback, internal audit and risk management to identify improvement activity at service level. Business planning workshops scheduled for November and December 2023. Approach to be reviewed in early 2024 following completion of workshops and business plans; continuous improvement built into service planning and performance management framework. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CO.D1.1 Directorate level restructuring• Progress commentary: Senior Leadership Team structure approved at Full Council 24/10/23.		
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<p>Strategic Direction</p>	<p>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme</p> <p>Focus 2 Exceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD.F1.0- Customer Journey Strategy- Amber rated Due March 24 <p>Progress commentary: Director of Finance along with ACE has agreed funding will be provided for external support to produce CES, due to limited resources and other commitments. Specification work commenced but in early stages. Rated Amber as resources have been allocated but timelines will be subject to slippage.</p>	<p>October Narrative workshops to conclude this month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Project Officer recruited <p>September Narrative workshops held with LGA to inform communications approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Procurement Strategy Action plan finalised <p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative workshops held with LGA to inform communications approach • Corporate Procurement Strategy Action plan finalised 	<p>Commercial Strategy Approved- Approved March 23 Regeneration Pipeline: Strategic delivery partner in place- Cabinet report approved July 23 Approval of Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy- Date tbc ED&I Strategy Approved- September 2024. On track Regular Residents' Survey & Budget Consultation in Place – Contract in place for 2023 and 2024 for corporate consultation exercises. Budget consultation completed Summer 2023. Resident's Wellbeing & Perception Survey conducted in Autumn 2023, results due November. Customer Journey Strategy Approved-</p>
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			<p>Expected March 2024. Approval of Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy- Approved February 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA 30-year Business Plan approved- Approved February 2023
Decision Making	<p>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme Focus 2- no exceptions to report</p>	<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny committee produced annual report- due at October council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader to confirm Executive's position on any further review relating to the Wragge and Cox reports – Complete-
Procurement & Commercial	<p>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme Focus 2 Exceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PC.C1.1- Performance Management System- Options appraisal- Amber rated Due Oct 23 <p>Progress commentary: Options appraisal and business case being finalised, further engagement with service areas being conducted to refine requirements. Amber rated due to slippage of timescales.</p>	<p>October SEND3- Project team identified, launch meeting diarised and ToR agreed.</p> <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Phase 2 Tech forge complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste and Leisure Contracts added to In-tend contract management module- Steady progress. Additional enhancement work underway Street Cleansing Recovery Plan implemented- Ongoing delivery

		<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery of recommendations for Waste contract complete- lessons learnt booked in following industrial action in June/July 2023	<p>Fleet replacement complete- Expected end 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND Transport Contract Monitoring arrangements in place- On track• SEND3 procurement commences – Complete• Corporate Performance Management System in place- Options appraisal due October• Lion Farm - Report to Cabinet on determination of position of developer- Transferred to 'business as usual' management• Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure services- Complete
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 Tech Forge implemented- Complete
<p>Partnerships & Relationships</p>	<p>Focus 1- no Focus 1 in this theme</p> <p>Focus 2 Exceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR.A1.8- Sandwell Childrens Trust- KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2- Amber rated. Due Dec 23. Progress commentary: KPIs and tolerances are currently under review by the DfE appointed independent chair of the SCT Improvement Board and in negotiation with the DCS and CEO of SCT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR.D1.3- Consultation on VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Draft Strategy- On hold <p>Progress commentary: Annual report on 2022/23 grants produced and shared with Leader, Cabinet Member for Communities and Chair of Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management. Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement.</p> <p>Relationship with VCS continues to be positive - second Cost of Living Summit involved 30 local partner organisations to launch the joint Tackling Poverty Plan</p>	<p>October Benchmarking findings report complete for the project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adult's</p> <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for Adulthood Project- Benchmarking meetings completed with Dudley MBC and Birmingham City Council <p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Initial findings report for Preparing for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SCT (Sandwell Children's Trust) Contract concludes- - complete. 2 remaining KPIs under discussion. Transitions Project Commences- Project commenced and 'as is' modelling started in May. PM recruitment out to advert. Transitions Project incorporated within Corporate Transformation Programme- Complete VCS Strategy approved- On hold

		Adulthood Project shared with the Preparing For Adulthood Project Board in July	
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Appendix 3 – Statutory Recommendation Status Summary October 2023

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Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<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 and to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ongoing mechanisms for insight and assurance around the Officer Member Relationship include views from external reviews, standards cases, feedback from Directors, Group Leaders and Chief Whips. • New Member sessions will be held with the LGA to bring them up to speed on the content delivered in Autumn 2022 to other Members. • Semi-structured interviews with Members carried out early October. The data will feed into LGA sessions planned for January, delayed due to LGA availability, alongside regular insight. Ongoing approach to be determined following those results <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u> ERP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling phase complete- Programme Board on 21st Sep provided approval for: Gateway 2 Exit from Modelling Phase for HR & Payroll. • Gateway 3 Exit from Realisation Development Phase and entry to SIT (Systems Integration Testing) for Finance, EPM and Procurement. • The programme will continue in to work in a phased approach with SIT commencing on time on 25th September. • Finance and Procurement will go-live in April 2024. • HR & Payroll will go-live in July 24. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oracle Fusion Implemented- Modelling phase complete. Next phase to focus on realisation phase/development stage. Go live date April 2024. • Regeneration pipeline: strategic delivery partner in place – Cabinet approval to procure July 2023 <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

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live. Working group established with Heads of Services to progress financial benefits. <p><u>Strategic Direction</u></p> <p>Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regen Strategy and Pipeline: Pipeline 6 monthly update presented to Cabinet July 23. Regeneration pipeline- approval to procure a strategic delivery partner was agreed at Cabinet in July 23. Report will return to Cabinet once procurement has been successful. VERTO- build is currently underway. User Acceptance Testing complete and Go live anticipated for November. <p><u>Decision Making</u></p> <p>No actions in this theme</p> <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u></p> <p>Waste Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of quarterly corporate monitoring through PMF. Annual reports on Leisure and waste due November 2023 Work continues with Intend – scheduled go-live end October Waste Contract Review reported to Leadership Team. Proposed to progress "Shared Improvement Plan" with Serco. Lessons Learned on industrial action has commenced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan Implementation - Complete Street Cleansing Recovery Plan approval – Resubmission to Waste Management Board in - Complete 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

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next tranche of fleet replacement remains due end of 2023. <p>SEND Transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Team members identified, launch meeting diarised and Terms of Reference's to be agreed SEND 3 to be a strand of the overall transformation plan. Task & Finish Group to drive delivery. Report findings to be considered by Transformation Project Team with agreed recommendation embedded in SEND 3 <p>New System Procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Management System- Systems demos have taken place. Options appraisal and business case being finalised, further engagement with service areas being conducted to refine requirements. Asset Management - The phase two for Techforge implementation has now been completed. The team have undertaken a project closedown exercise detailing everything that has been completed across both phases along with any workstreams/actions that will now become business as usual. <p>Lion Farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Determination process has been completed and removed from the Improvement plan to be managed as Business As Usual. <p>Leisure Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplementary agreement with SLT agreed 13.07.23 to extend SLT's operation of leisure centres (including SAC) to 31.03.27. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF-Complete

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced contract management regime and framework in place. Aquatic Centre Handover to operator (Sandwell Leisure Trust) took place as scheduled on 13 July, open to the public 24 July Continuation of quarterly corporate reporting through PMF. <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u></p> <p>Sandwell Children's Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new KPIs along with accompanying tolerances will be finalised in Q1 for implementation in Q2 due to start in September 2023 Continuation of quarterly reporting through PMF alongside Sandwell Children's Trust governance arrangements Monthly schedule of meetings will recommence in Autumn Term, and include the Chair of SCT Board and CE of Trust, Lead Member and Director of Education and Children's Services KPIs and tolerances are currently under review by the DfE appointed independent chair of the SCT Improvement Board and in negotiation with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and CEO of Sandwell Children's Trust. 	
S2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are	<p><u>Organisational Culture</u></p> <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value embedding on existing learning is on-going. Senior Leadership development programme: Further discussions around scope and desired outcomes required and to align to Leadership restructuring plans. Research into potential providers and good practice from other councils has been explored. <p>Embedding Constitutional Changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Governance Training Delivery –Commenced and approach to next phase agreed <p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Resident Survey in place – 2023 surveys in place Commercial Strategy approved – approved

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
understood through the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making training in place early October for key decision makers. • Regarding broader scenario-based learning, Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel. • Next step is bringing a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Intention to deliver in November/ December. • Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training -Date confirmed 31st October. Offer to be extended to Officers with council appointments to boards etc and will be carried out on an annual basis • CIPfA to carry out the Annual refresher of Corporate Governance Training scheduled to the end of December. <p>Member Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Team conversation held 18/07/23 around All Member briefings and agreed level of detail to be shared and approach. • New Member survey conducted. 1 return. Members have been completing analysis after each training session. Further analysis of these training evaluation forms will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face-to-face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025. MDP Review will commence in November. • New Member sessions will be held with the LGA to bring them up to speed on the content delivered in Autumn 2022 to other Members. <p>Corporate Oversight</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<p>Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly reporting of corporate performance management framework in place to senior officers and members via Cabinet and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. Q2 report due to Scrutiny and Cabinet in January 2024. • Corporate Performance Management resources in place from February 2023. • Budget pressures and mitigations are discussed at LT each month • Benchmarking used in budget planning up to date and used as part of refresh of MTFs and planning for 2024/25 budget onwards. <p>Strategic Direction</p> <p>Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Strategy: Engagement with staff on the corporate narrative will conclude this month. All staff briefing being held to update colleagues on the progress of the improvement plan and the next step. The 4 workstreams are at various stages. Education commercial services – BC in development, completion date end of October, H&S – scoping underway Neutral vendor – Pre OBC activity due to commence. Pest control – alternative options been considered. Updates to be presented at next Corporate Transformation Board • Engagement with staff on the corporate narrative will conclude this month. All staff briefing being held to update colleagues on the progress of the improvement plan and the next steps on how we become an outstanding council as we get ready for exiting intervention. <p>Procurement & Commercial</p>	

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<p>Corporate Asset Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 implemented. Phase 2 commenced. The integration of data into the system complete Phase 2 Configuration and organisation of data completed – September Project closedown exercise complete detailing everything that has been completed across both phases along with any workstreams/actions that will now become BAU. <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u> No actions in this theme</p>	
<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</p>	<p><u>Organisational Culture</u> Establishing Organisational Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Strategy themes and priority documents on track for Leadership Team 17.10.23. Projects to embed the One Team Framework continue to progress as per plan presented in September Proposal of a new approach to Employee Performance review presented to Trade Unions to commence information and consultation. Change management support and training being developed. Risk to technical/process recording as Oracle Talent module may not be live until July 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Strategy – Due to be agreed at October Leadership Team. <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

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<p>behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.</p>	<p><u>Officer Learning and Development</u> -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Leadership development programme: Further discussions around scope and desired outcomes required and to align to Leadership restructuring plans. Research into potential providers and good practice from other councils has been explored. <p><u>Officer and Member Relationship</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ongoing mechanisms for insight and assurance around the Officer Member Relationship includes views from external reviews, standards cases, feedback from Directors, Group Leaders and Chief Whips. Semi-structured interviews with Members early October are being conducted to capture insight into relationship. The data will feed into LGA sessions planned for January 2024 alongside regular insight. Ongoing approach to be determined following those results Sessions with LGA will be confirmed following the insight gathering on Employee Engagement Survey and Member face to face sessions. LGA sessions planned for January, delayed due to LGA availability, alongside regular insight. New Member sessions will be held with the LGA to bring them up to speed on the content delivered in Autumn 2022 to other Members <p><u>Member Learning and Development</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward plan of all Member briefings is in place for next 3 sessions. Agendas are routinely discussed by Leadership Team • New Member survey conducted. 1 return. Members have been completing analysis after each training session. Further analysis of these training evaluation forms will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face-to-face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025. MDP Review will commence in November. • New Member sessions will be held with the LGA to bring them up to speed on the content delivered in Autumn 2022 to other Members. <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u> No Actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Strategic Direction</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Decision Making</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u> No actions in Theme</p>	

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Appendix – Scrutiny & Audit Recommendation Status Summary October 2023

Grant Thornton Key Recommendation 7 (2021): Members in key statutory roles, in particular in relation to Cabinet, scrutiny, standards and audit, need to be provided with effective development training and support. The Member Development Programme should be reviewed to ensure corporate governance forms part of the training for members with governance roles	
External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings	<p>Grant Thornton acknowledged the progress of the Member Development Programme and noted that it has been augmented with additional training sessions delivered by the LGA (Local Government Association) focusing on the Member and Officer Relationships, and in delivering a development programme for Cabinet.</p> <p>In their follow-up review, Grant Thornton made a further recommendation in relation to the Member Development Programme as a whole but did not make any points around learning and development in relation to scrutiny specifically, as they acknowledged the improvements made.</p> <p>The recommendation made by Grant Thornton relating to the MDP (Member Development Programme) was: Improvement Rec 19 (2022): The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.</p> <p>The LGA commented on the council's commitment to review the member development programme at regular intervals and set out that it is important to ensure that the pace of delivery is made to feel sustainable. The LGA follow-up review acknowledged that the improvements to scrutiny have been supplemented with a range of training.</p>
Summary of activity and next steps	<p>The current MDP has been updated to reflect the review of Member PDPs and updated arrangements for new Member Induction following the number of new Members elected in May. A new Member survey is being conducted, however, there has been a low return rate as yet. Members have been completing analysis after each training session. Further analysis of these will be undertaken and this, along with findings from face-to-face Member sessions on the Member-Officer relationship and engagement with LGA will be used to inform the Autumn review of MDP and inform new Member induction for 2024-2025. A review will commence in November.</p>

	<p>Scrutiny Members’ and ARAC Committee Members’ learning needs remain under review by the Chairs together with supporting Officers. Scrutiny Chairs are also receiving coaching and mentoring training from external providers. A learning and development plan for audit members is currently being drafted to ensure that key skills needed for the role is clear. This is linked in with CIPFA’s ‘Audit committees: practical guidance for local authorities and the police’ guidance.</p> <p>Over Municipal Year 2022-23, a regular survey was offered to Audit and Scrutiny Members and Officers attending. This included questions around Learning and Development received and any new needs arising to help ensure that the Member Development Programme is flexible to meet emerging needs. Discussions are underway around the continuation of the survey for Municipal Year 2023-2024 and has thus far been helpful in identifying any gaps in learning or identifying where improvements can be made. Work is being mapped out on the member officer insight mechanism including surveys and face to face interviews where required.</p> <p>Further training with external providers is being explored including with neighbouring authorities to ensure shared learning and the opportunity to engage with peers to discuss new ways of working.</p>
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Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation I4 (2021): Officer and Member Relationships – the forward plan of the Cabinet should be shared with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Board to help structure their agenda planning	
External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings	<p>Grant Thornton acknowledged that the ‘forward plan of Cabinet business has been made available to all members to improve awareness and transparency.</p>
Summary of activity and next steps	<p>The forward plan is shared with all scrutiny boards (in so far as it relates to that respective scrutiny board) to help identify areas for pre-decision scrutiny activity and to ARAC at every meeting to assist with the Committee’s work planning. This will continue.</p>

Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation 12 (2021): Officer and Member Relationships – There is a need to ensure that members of scrutiny and audit committees are aware of their governance roles including how to interrogate reports and ask the right questions	
External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings	<p>Positive feedback was received about scrutiny and audit in the follow up reviews.</p> <p>In their follow up review Autumn 2022, Grant Thornton set out that ‘There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across the different committees across different Council committees and a greater level of professionalism in how business is conducted by these committees.’... and ‘Overall, positive progress has been made to improve the culture and professionalism of key Council committees, with the scrutiny function making particular progress.’</p> <p>The LGA commented that ‘it is clear from the people we spoke to that this key strand of the council’s governance arrangements [scrutiny] is going from strength to strength’. And commented on scrutiny’s ‘renewed sense of energy and drive’.</p> <p>Grant Thornton did not make any further recommendations around the role of scrutiny or audit.</p>
Summary of activity and next steps	<p>Ongoing activity is in place to ensure that scrutiny and audit continue to make an effective contribution to the Council’s governance arrangements.</p> <p>This includes the regular meetings to develop and nurture strong, healthy working relationships with members and officers. Chairs of scrutiny boards have regular agenda setting meetings with Directors and officers to ensure that the content of reports enables a rich discussion and debate at Scrutiny and not just information sharing. Scrutiny Board chairs collectively are meeting regularly, whether it is a pre-meeting or prior to Cabinet to agree lines of questioning in advance as well monitoring performance of Boards, attendance, engagement, etc. Audit are having pre meetings and work is ongoing to ensure shared learning and cross cutting areas are discussed at regular meetings between the overarching Chair of Scrutiny and the Audit Chair as well as regular meetings with the Chair of Audit and the Section 151 Officer.</p>

	<p>Job roles, scrutiny protocols and a framework have been developed and embedded to guide the way scrutiny is conducted, details how Cabinet members and officers interact with scrutiny and also helps to support and drive a change in culture and mindset of both members and officers to ensure that Sandwell has an effective overview and scrutiny function.</p> <p>A learning and development plan for audit members is currently being drafted to ensure that key skills needed for the role is clear and members of ARAC can work towards the skills identified as part of their PDP.</p> <p>These arrangements will continue over Municipal Year 2023-2024.</p>
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<p>Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation 34 (2022): Audit Committee – now that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has agreed the action to bring this long-standing matter to resolution [review into the Cox and Wragge Report], it will be important that – as the Audit and Governance Panel recognised – the Council manages its position so that the matter does not resurface, so that it can move on and focus on its corporate objectives</p>	
<p>External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings</p>	<p>In their follow up review, Grant Thornton outlined that: ‘The Audit Committee has continued to operate throughout the year in a manner focussing on significant governance matters’ and that ‘Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks’. Grant Thornton noted that the Council Leader is due to confirm the Executive’s position on any further review and made an additional improvement recommendation as follows:</p> <p>Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation 22 (2022): A final decision on the Cox report needs to be made by the Leader before this matter can be considered formally closed.</p>
<p>Summary of activity and next steps</p>	<p>A report was received by ARAC on 5 June which set out the Executive’s position and the matter has been concluded. The ARAC minutes were reported to Council in July 2023.</p>

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Summary of Changes to the Improvement Plan – October 2023

IPRM Decision Required: To agree changes to the Improvement Plan as set out in detail in the accompanying change control log and as summarised below.

1. The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes are considered by Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.
2. The list of all changes is attached. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour.
3. The changes proposed are summarised as follow:

- 3 changes made to action delivery timescales (with 1 being more than three months)

Ref	Theme	Action ref	Action Title	Date from	Date to	Rationale
324	Organisational Culture	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews	May 23	Nov 23	C.co report due 4.11.23 re future model.

- 1 assurance action has been added
- 7 sub-actions have been added (marked in red within IP).
- 4 main actions are proposed to be closed (see below- 2 action closures will result in closure of workstream)

- 3 Assurance actions are proposed to close (see below)
- 3 changes to delivery lead

4. The actions proposed to be closed along with the rationale are as follows:

Change Ref	Theme	Action Title	Rationale for closure
322	Strategic Direction	Refresh the Early Help Strategy	Proposal to remove from IP on basis that Early Help Partnership Board is in place and conducted an annual review, and KPIs included within PMF.
315	Partnership & relationships	Assurance action: 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.	Proposal to lose this assurance action and create a new one for 6monthly review
325	Corporate Oversight	Assurance Action: GT sign-off of 2020/21 Accounts (assurance that previous issues raised have been resolved)	Propose closure of assurance action- action complete
332	Partnership & relationships	Assurance action- Twice yearly performance reports tabled at Children and Education Scrutiny Board	Action completed, timetable confirmed, and the process is embedded.

333	Procurement & Commercial	Asset management	Phase 2 Techforge implemented. Impact will be monitored through the completion of accounts strand
334	Strategic Direction	Closure of workstream and main action- Regen pipeline development and Delivery	actions complete- Continued monitoring through updates presented to Cabinet.
335	Procurement & Commercial	Closure of workstream and main action- Governance arrangements to manage, develop and support the current and future delivery of leisure services across the borough, including the new Aquatic Centre	All actions complete- report was taken to Cabinet October 23 and can now be taken off IP monitoring tool.

Improvement Plan Risk Register

October 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 (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 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 and/or that there is unclear ownership of actions and workstreams, then the programme will proceed with no clear direction, may become unmanageable (incl. scope creep), and/or missed opportunities resulting in slower progress than planned, failure to meet external review recommendations and a prolonged Government intervention</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 Objectives for each Theme within the Improvement Plan identified Regular reporting to Cabinet, ARAC and Scrutiny in place. Council approval of Improvement Plan and reports to SoS. Regular Staff communications on progress of Improvement Plan in place Improvement Plan Actions embedded into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement Key components of Finance Improvement Plan embedded in IP and Corporate Plan All Improvement Plan actions have an identified Responsible Officer and Cabinet Member Arrangements in place to provide business continuity following SH & GD departure <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Plan delivered including all staff briefings including key messages around Improvement Plan Staff and member engagement through Organisational Culture change programme
IP3	<p>Allocation of sufficient resources to project management and project delivery/ maintaining Business as Usual while delivering the Improvement plan</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

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 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>If sufficient resources (capacity and capability) and where 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"> Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan have been 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 and Register maintained Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity Improvement Plan Actions embedded into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement Local Partnerships Review of PMO concluded <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. Establishment of resourced Corporate PMO National Graduate Development Scheme - placements to be focused on IP priorities
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 Improvement Plan

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 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>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 well-established and on forward plan for 2023-24 • 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, LGA and CIPFA follow-up reviews <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny regular review on Culture Theme progress • 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 from GT and LGA and presented to Cabinet. Review report from CIPFA received Jan 23 and presented to ARAC. Due to be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny in March • 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. • Communication with stakeholders to share progress update and annual report June 2023. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with stakeholders to share details of Improvement Plan • Recruitment to vacancy within comms structure

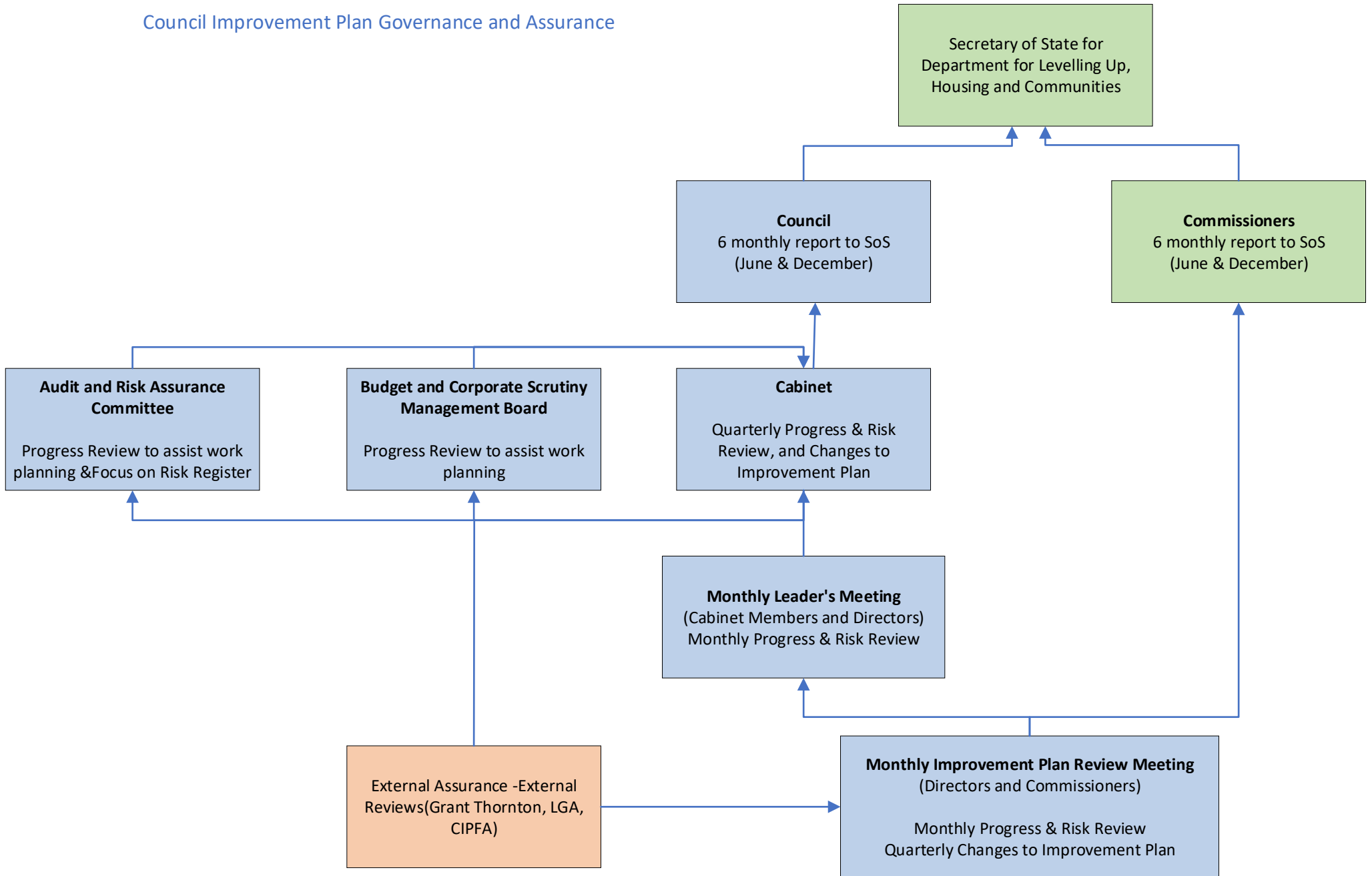
Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
IP6	<p>Investment and Financial Resources</p> <p>If sufficient/ 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 Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity 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
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>	4 (Green)	4 (Green)	4 (Green)		<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

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 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"> • 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 • Improvement Plan activity embedded in Corporate Plan and Business Plans • Refreshed KPIs included in Corporate Plan refresh and streamlined reporting to Leadership Team (from Q1 report) • Development of Customer Experience metrics as part of Corporate Plan refresh <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 • Performance Management System options appraisal and procurement to provide capability for performance management • Refresh of Member Officer Survey / alternative mechanism conducted to provide a temperature check on the relationship
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 • Leader has confirmed executive's position in relation to a further review in relation to Wragge/Cox and this was reported to ARAC in June 2023

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
						Further Actions <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 Maintain watching brief of council activity to ensure resources are not diverted to historical issues
IP12	Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias) 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 appropriately manage the programme and a loss of confidence in its delivery.	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	6 (Green)		Current and Ongoing Controls <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 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). Further Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reporting to Cabinet, Scrutiny and ARAC and Commissioners' views
IP13	Constitutional Changes 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.	9 (Amber)	9 (Amber)	6 (Green)		Current and Ongoing Controls <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

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (July 23)	Current Risk Score (Oct 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"> • Member Development Plan Refreshed • Decision-making arrangements (forward plan, report sign off etc.) reviewed. • Governance Review Phase 2 project plan in place to embed the constitutional changes (Corporate Governance Development Programme) <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Phase 2 of Mod.Gov • Implement a programme of learning for Officers around effective-decision making • 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)

Council Improvement Plan Governance and Assurance



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Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

22 November 2023

Subject:	Medium Term Financial Strategy - Autumn 2023 Update
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bob Piper, Finance & Resources
Director:	Brendan Arnold, Interim Section 151 Officer
Contact Officer:	Interim Assistant Director – Finance, Claire Spencer Claire_spencer@sandwell.gov.uk Strategic Lead – Service Improvement, Kate Ashley, kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considers the Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update report and identify any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.







2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act requires the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the council’s financial affairs. Budgetary control, which includes the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets is an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility. The recommended treatment of the year end variances supports the financial sustainability of the council.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

The Council’s financial status helps to underpin the Council’s Corporate Plan and the associated aspirations.



	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 The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has been requested to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update to ensure the Council can conduct its business efficiently, act to provide for the security of the assets under its control, and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 If the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board does not consider the information presented, the opportunity to make recommendations would be lost.

6 Implications

Resources:	Further details on the financial implications will be presented to the meeting.
Legal and Governance:	The Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on local authorities to provide Members with regular financial monitoring.



Risk:	This information is contained within the main body of this report.
Equality:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Health and Wellbeing:	The financial prosperity of the Council provides a foundation for health and wellbeing across the remit of the Council.
Social Value	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Climate Change	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Corporate Parenting	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report to Cabinet – Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update

Appendix 2 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

8 Background Papers

None



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Report to Cabinet

15 November 2023

Subject:	Medium-Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources Cllr Bob Piper
Director:	Interim Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer Brendan Arnold
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Interim Assistant Director – Finance, Claire Spencer Claire_spencer@sandwell.gov.uk Strategic Lead – Service Improvement, Kate Ashley, kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and embedded Medium-Term Financial Plan as an estimate of the Council’s current financial position as at October 2023 noting that the figures will change as further updating takes place.
- 1.2 That the Director of Finance be authorised to commence a period of consultation regarding the savings opportunities referred to in Annex 6.
- 1.3 That the Guiding Principles be approved as a framework for financial planning for the period of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.4 That the Capital Planning Principles be approved to guide the preparation of the Capital Programme in the years ahead.









- 1.5 That the planned development of the Transformation Programme to date and through 2024/25 be noted and approval be given to endorse the extension of the transformational approach to other services of the Council.
- 1.6 That the Budget Timetable be noted.
- 1.7 That approval be given to submit to the Department for Levelling Up and Homes and Communities a proposal for the flexible use of capital receipts in financial year 2023/24 to support transformation and to delegate the approval of this proposal to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Interim Director of Finance together with the Assistant Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.8 That the Council be recommended to approve the Autumn 2023 update of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at its next meeting.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set a balanced, risk assessed budget each year and approve a Council Tax precept by 11 March.
- 2.2 The Council has a duty to consult with those who are liable to pay council tax or non-domestic rates, as well as those who use or are likely to use services provided by the authority. A public engagement exercise on the Council's budget was conducted in Summer 2023 seeking residents' views on how the Council should reduce spend in order to deliver a balanced budget. In order to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, the Council has developed a long list of savings options which, if adopted for 2024/25, will impact residents and businesses in the Borough.
- 2.3 This report presents the current position of the medium-term financial strategy and seeks approval to commence consultation on a range of potential savings options to support the Council in setting a balanced budget in February 2024.



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

     	<p>Under the One Council, One Team strategic outcome, the Council's aim is to make the most of our resources. The Council has stated that we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">update the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at least annually;set a sustainable and balanced budget each year; andensure that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is underpinned by a realistic savings plan. <p>This report sets out an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy as at Autumn 2023 and details proposed actions required to work towards a sustainable and balanced budget in 2024/25.</p>
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4. Key Points of Briefing

Medium-Term Financial Strategy – Update Autumn 2023

- 4.1 The MTFs and accompanying Medium Term Finance Plan (MTFP) - following a detailed and extensive review - suggests that there is an estimated Budget shortfall of £13m in 2024/25 at the date of this report. This figure has changed in the course of financial year 2023/24, reflecting the expected refinement and testing of initial planning assumptions. Accordingly, the fact that the figures have changed is not a surprise given (a) the financial position of the Local Government sector in general and (b) given that the financial estimates inevitably change as fresh information becomes available and is taken into the budget forecasts.
- 4.2 The reasons for the increases in forecast net expenditure are shown in Annex 9 of the MTFs and include the net effect of:
- Additional savings identified.



- b. Downward adjustment of anticipated savings following a review of the underlying assumptions.
 - c. The challenging and adjustment of cost pressures previously admitted to the MTFP.
- 4.3 From the analysis presented it is clear that the Council must select savings amounting to £13m to balance the 2024/25 Budget and that the overwhelming proportion of these must be recurring in nature to remove the relevant costs in years following and to prevent the avoidable growth of future budget shortfalls.
- 4.4 In any local authority the overall suite of savings selected to ensure that the MTFP is balanced in the medium term will reflect a blend of (a) savings gathered from efficiencies and adoption of best practice (b) the adjustment of service levels (sometimes suspension or cessation of previous service levels) and (c) transformational savings. The Council will need to explore all of these dimensions as it considers the means of setting a balanced Budget for 2024/25.
- 4.5 As part of this process the Council is keen to further develop a *transformational* approach to delivering savings and has already taken steps in this direction. To this end a transformation programme to implement *Oracle Fusion* - a corporate Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system - is already underway and set to go live in April and July 2024. In addition, a Transformation Strategy has been prepared, and a Corporate Transformation Board has been established to guide and control the use of transformational approaches in the years ahead. These materials are attached to the MTFS at Annex 11. It should be clear that the benefits of the transformational endeavours described are to develop better value for service users and to enhance the customer journey.
- 4.6 As part of these ambitions the Council acknowledges the need to organise many of its activities along more commercial lines including adopting the Corporate Landlord Model (itself a transformational programme) for management of its property estate. As part of this emergent Property Transformation programme the Council acknowledges a need to further develop its proposals for significant asset disposals and to bring these to



decision at pace. Equipping these approaches with policies around flexible working, team building and to develop a One Team approach to service delivery are already underway and will be further developed.

- 4.7 Additional opportunities in the application of transformational approaches exist with regard to the delivery of transactional services generally; significant work has been undertaken to inform development of a clear business case in this area during 2024/25 and 2025/26. Further transformational approaches are expected in the operation of the Housing Revenue Account to assure its future financial sustainability. In addition to significant programmes that are service focussed, a range of other projects has been assembled that have transformational characteristics.
- 4.8 The Council has commenced a resident engagement exercise through the summer of 2023 and this - together with the Consultation and Engagement Plan (See Annexes 4 & 5 to the MTFS) - forms the Council's proposed approach to meeting its responsibilities in this area as part of setting the Budget for 2024/25. Accordingly, the MTFS includes proposals to launch the Consultation and Engagement Plan for savings amounting to £18m in response to the gross budget shortfall of £13m currently identified. The savings for which Cabinet is asked to launch consultation are included at Annex 6 to the MTFS.
- 4.9 A Budget Timetable for the 2024/25 Budget process is also presented and appears at Annex 3. In line with the highest standards of transparent governance this timetable includes opportunity for specific challenge and review by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Boards.
- 4.10 The MTFS (and MTFP) will be further updated for the meetings of the Executive, Budget Scrutiny and Full Council in January and February 2024 based on receipt of the Provisional Finance Settlement from Government which is expected in late December 2023 and other adjustments to assumptions.



Savings Options

- 4.11 Over summer 2023, Cabinet and Leadership Team undertook a 'Star Chamber' exercise for the second year running to challenge existing budgets and identify savings options. The Council has also continued to make use of benchmarking costs against our nearest neighbours.
- 4.12 This exercise has resulted in a basket of savings options being put forward to Cabinet for approval to consult on further, prior to making formal decisions to adopt in February 2024. These initial savings options amounting to £18m in 2024/25 are attached at Annex 6 of the MTFS.

Consultation Approach

- 4.13 The Council's proposed approach to consultation is set out in paragraph 49 and Annex 5 in the attached report.
- 4.14 Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted for all savings options, with outcomes also being built into the decision-making process.

Scrutiny of Budget

- 4.15 Effective scrutiny of the Council's financial position and strategy is integral to the Council's ability to deliver a sustainable MTFS that is aligned to its strategic priorities. Scrutiny Boards will be engaged throughout the 2024/25 budget setting process and have ample opportunity to review and challenge the Council's MTFS and proposed savings to achieve a balanced budget. This will take place between November 2023 and January 2024 in advance of the Cabinet meeting in February 2024.



Next steps

4.16 The assumptions and estimates currently being used in the draft budget will be constantly monitored and the funding position will be revised, if needed, once the Local Government Finance Settlement has been announced. Separate reporting arrangements are in place with regard to the general Fund Capital Programme and also the Housing Revenue Account and Capital programme.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget during March 2024. There are no alternative options.

6. Implications

Resources:	This report sets out the Autumn 2023 update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
Legal and Governance:	<p>This report forms a preparatory part of the process under the Council's obligation to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.</p> <p>As identified within the report, various options require consultation with the public and/ or recognised trade unions and authority is sought through this report to commence relevant consultation exercises. Such consultation must take place in the formative stages of decision-making, as is proposed in this report.</p> <p>In turn and under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council must consult with persons or persons representative of bodies subject to non-domestic rates each financial year and before the rates become due for payment. Any consultation activity must engage those directly affected by any proposed decision by providing sufficient information to allow for intelligent response and with adequate time to do so.</p>



	<p>The Local Government Act 1999 requires that the Council must consult with representatives of persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liable to pay council tax, precepts or levies in respect of the authority; • liable to pay non-domestic rates in the authority area; • use or likely to use services provided by the authority; and • who have an interest in the area within which the authority carries out its functions. <p>The consultation outcomes must then be conscientiously considered by decision-makers. The process set out in this report provides clear and structured arrangements for consultation to take place in advance of 2024/25 and will allow for decisions to be made after the budget is set taking account of individual consultation outcomes. It must in turn be open to Cabinet not to proceed with an individual savings option as proposed in this report following consultation but, if so, compensatory savings will need to be made to balance the Council's budget.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Allocation is identified as a risk on the Strategic Risk Register (SRR 27) in that if the council is unable to identify sufficient savings and put in place necessary policies, processes and actions to manage pressures, inflation and manage its plans, then this will impact on the council's financial resilience and its ability to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities including the setting of a balanced budget for future years.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 obliges the Council to have due regard to its equality duties in the budget setting process. To achieve this, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be conducted on all savings options where required ahead of the final options being put forward to Cabinet for approval.</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	The Medium-Term Financial Strategy and draft Budget for 2024/25 sets out how the council will allocate its resources to deliver its statutory functions and the priorities within the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way.
Social Value:	No specific implications arising from this report.
Climate Change:	Certain budget options may have beneficial environmental and climate change impacts.
Corporate Parenting:	No specific implications arising from this report.

7. Appendices

1: The Medium Term Financial Strategy

8. Background Papers

None



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Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council



Finance Directorate

Autumn 2023

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Introduction

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a key document in the Council's financial planning cycle. This document sets out the strategic financial approach that the Council will adopt in supporting delivery and completion of the Improvement Plan and the portfolio of other strategies and plans that support delivery of the services in the Borough. The MTFS will explain - when fully developed for Full Council in February 2024 - how the Council will distribute its resources in this endeavour over the next five years. In order to deliver the Corporate Plan the Council will need to operate carefully within specific quantitative financial targets. These targets manifest themselves as budget limits, within which the Council must deliver its services over the period of the MTFS. There will be no room for overspends on the future journey and the Council needs to refresh its approach to operate with highly disciplined financial management arrangements. By doing so, the Council will be able to minimise the risk of the financial perils which have engulfed some local authorities in the recent past and demonstrate a level of financial stability and good management that the community in Sandwell is entitled to expect.

Brendan Arnold FCPFA
Interim Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer

29 October 2023

The MTFS - Form and Purpose

1. The purpose of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is to set down the approaches that will be used by the Council in assembling, organising and deploying its financial resources to (i) deliver the objectives set down in the Improvement Plan presented to Full Council on 7 June 2022, and updated in December 2022 and June 2023.
2. The MTFS contains a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which sets out the planning assumptions and financial limits formed by the relevant funding constraints presently assumed. These will be updated quarterly moving forward. This is the first presentation of a quarterly update to frame the development of the 2024/25 Budget at Full Council on 20 February 2024. The updated MTFP appears at Annex 8. Further updates will be required as further insight is gained regarding the Local Government Finance Settlement generally (expected to be released by Government in late December 2023) and as savings options within the Council are more fully developed.
3. It should be noted that development of the Council's MTFS is a key recommendation of the VFM Governance Review undertaken by Grant Thornton in 2021 and forms a notable action within the Council's Improvement Plan. Accordingly, the suitable development and use of the MTFS has been identified by Commissioners as one of the key considerations in advising the Secretary of State of progress made by the Council on its journey to improvement. More generally, it is important to note that like all Councils, the Council is *required under statute* to set a balanced Budget for 2024/25 during March 2024.
4. The MTFS sets out (i) a set of Guiding Principles which are presented for agreement by Cabinet and Council in seeking to obtain sustainable financial balance in the medium term and (ii) the design and operation of specific programmes and other initiatives that will - when fully developed - contribute to savings and cost reductions which are able to be considered in balancing the 2024/25 Budget on 20 February 2024.
5. This being so, the MTFS (incorporating the MTFP) provides a framework within which the annual Budget can be considered, and eventually set, by Council. Accordingly, this document is to be seen as a dynamic part of the Council's financial operations in the future and is of critical importance on the Council's improvement journey.

Background & Context

6. On 22 March 2022 a process of Intervention was initiated by the Secretary of State in response to the issuance by the External Auditor of their report following the Value for Money Governance Review containing statutory recommendations.

7. In seeking to address the recommendations from the External Auditor's report as well as those resulting from the CIPFA Financial Management Review and a Local Government Association Peer Challenge, the Council has – with the oversight of the Commissioners – adopted an Improvement Plan which is closely monitored by the Leadership Team, the Cabinet, Scrutiny function and Full Council. Although Intervention was not driven from a financial perspective as part of this process the Council needs to be able to assure that its financial affairs can be managed in a sustainable way.

Strategic Goals

8. The MTFs has the following strategic goals:
 - a. To provide a framework within which the Council is able to achieve a series of balanced budgets in the medium term to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan, demonstrating sustainable improvement.
 - b. By so doing to reach for and assure both financial stability and sustainability and to deliver these in the short, medium and long terms.
 - c. To enable successive budgets to be balanced using a set of Guiding Principles that are commonly adopted across the Local Government Sector and to apply these rigorously; and
 - d. To provide a budget and risk structure within which the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan can be completed to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Key Points of Briefing

9. The MTFs and accompanying MTFP - following a detailed and extensive review - is suggesting that there is an estimated Budget shortfall of £13m in 2024/25 at the date of this report. This figure has changed in the course of financial year 2023/24, reflecting the expected refinement and testing of initial planning assumptions. Accordingly, the fact that the figures have changed is not a surprise given (a) the financial position of the Local Government sector in general and (b) given that the financial estimates inevitably change as fresh information becomes available and is taken into the budget forecasts.
10. The reasons for the increases in forecast net expenditure are shown in Annex 9 and include the net effect of:
 - a. Additional savings identified.
 - b. Downward adjustment of anticipated savings following a review of the underlying assumptions.
 - c. The challenging and adjustment of cost pressures previously admitted to the MTFP.

11. From the analysis presented it is clear that the Council must select savings amounting to £13m to balance 2024/25 Budget and that the overwhelming proportion of these must be recurring in nature to remove the relevant costs in years following and to prevent the avoidable growth of future budget shortfalls.
12. In any local authority the overall suite of savings selected to ensure that the MTFP is balanced in the medium term will reflect a blend of (a) savings gathered from efficiencies and adoption of best practice (b) the adjustment of service levels (sometimes suspension or cessation of previous service levels) and (c) transformational savings. The Council will need to explore all of these dimensions as it considers the means of setting a balanced Budget for 2024/25.
13. As part of this process the Council is keen to further develop a *transformational* approach to delivering savings and has already taken steps in this direction. To this end a transformation programme to implement *Oracle Fusion* - a corporate Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system - is already underway and set to go live in late Spring and Summer 2024. In addition, a Transformation Strategy has been prepared, and a Corporate Transformation Board has been established to guide and control the use of transformational approaches in the years ahead. These materials are attached to this report at Annex 11. It should be clear that the benefits of the transformational endeavours described are to develop better value for service users and to enhance the customer journey.
14. As part of these ambitions the Council acknowledges the need to organise many of its activities along more commercial lines including adopting the Corporate Landlord Model (itself a transformational programme) for management of its property estate. As part of this emergent Property Transformation programme the Council acknowledges a need to further develop its proposals for significant asset disposals and to bring these to decision at pace. Equipping these approaches with policies around flexible working, team building and to develop a One Team approach to service delivery are already underway and will be further developed.
15. Additional opportunities in the application of transformational approaches exist with regard to the delivery of transactional services generally; significant work has been undertaken to inform development of a clear business case in this area during 2024/25 and 2025/26. Further transformational approaches are expected in the operation of the Housing Revenue Account to assure its future financial sustainability. In addition to significant programmes that are service focussed, a range of other projects has been assembled. The Transformation Strategy appears at Annex 11.
16. The Council has commenced a resident engagement exercise through the summer of 2023 and this - together with the Consultation and Engagement Plan (See Annexes 4 & 5) - forms the Council's proposed approach to meeting its responsibilities in this area as part of setting the Budget for 2024/25. Accordingly the MTFP includes proposals to launch the Consultation and Engagement Plan for savings amounting to £18m in response to the gross budget shortfall of £13m currently identified. The potential savings of £18m for which Cabinet is asked to launch consultation are included at Annex 6.

17. A Budget Timetable for the 2024/25 Budget process is also presented and appears at Annex 3. In line with the highest standards of transparent governance this timetable includes specific challenge and review by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny function through the Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board as part of the consultation process.
18. The MTFS (and MTFP) will be further updated for the meetings of the Executive, Budget Scrutiny and Full Council in January and February 2024 based on receipt of the Provisional Finance Settlement from Government which is expected in late December 2023 and other adjustments to assumptions..

The Guiding Principles

19. In undertaking its financial operations over the period of the MTFS the Council is asked to adopt the following Guiding Principles ('The Principles'). The Principles are based on sound management and professional practice. They are presented as *Guiding* Principles because there may be occasions where – after careful consideration - the exigencies of strategic or operational management may necessitate from time to time a departure from the Principles.

No.	Guiding Principles
1	Fees & Charges will be reviewed annually and adjusted for inflation, comparability and competitiveness.
2	As a compassionate Council, in setting charges, the impact on vulnerable groups will be considered carefully and equalities impact assessments prepared where needed.
3	Service level spend will be benchmarked regularly with a suitable peer group and proposals to align with the benchmark will be brought forward.
4	The Council will seek to adopt incrementally a policy of Digital First in service delivery generally but as a compassionate Council will be mindful of the risks of <i>digital exclusion</i> in doing so.
5	A rolling programme of Service Reviews launched as part of the Star Chamber process will continue from time to time within the timeframe of the MTFS and will be used to ensure that operating models, organisational design and cost footprints are subject to regular review and adjustment across the Council.
6	Service developments, savings and investment will be brought forward on the basis of business cases that must demonstrate feasibility, deliverability, and appropriate financial pay back and other investment appraisal techniques.
7	The Council will consult with residents and other stakeholders in the Borough in forming budget options.

8	Where business cases are prepared for decision a proactive approach will operate encompassing review in depth prior to such presentation; this will include rigorous application of investment appraisal techniques, peer review and use of the Scrutiny function to achieve searching review and challenge before business cases are adopted.
9	The Council will welcome approaches from regional and other partners for joint working and joint management initiatives.
10	The Council will seek to reach and maintain Unearmarked Reserves at a level of at least 5% of Net Expenditure (i.e. £16m based on current net expenditure of in 2023/24 of £317m).
11	Given the financial position of the Council and the need to maintain key statutory services the Council will seek to maximise receipts from Council Tax and optimise receipts from fees and charges and other income over the period of the MTFs.
12	Growth in service budgets must be funded from (a) grants or other contributions, (b) realistic estimates of commercial income and fees and charges or (c) revenue savings. Following the setting of the 2024/25 Budget there will be a general planning assumption that no other growth will be adopted into the Budget within the period of the MTFs unless under the most pressing circumstances.
13	Council will develop moving forward enhanced means of assessing and managing risks at both strategic and operational levels and these will be used to inform the annual Budget process.
14	The Council will seek to make Value for Money decisions and be mindful of its obligations to obtain best value for the 'public purse' generally.
15	The Council will consider invest to save proposals in preparing the MTFs generally.
16	In making decisions to buy goods and services the Council will be mindful of powers to seek social value in procurement and reduce the carbon impact of decisions to assist with Net Zero.

Financial Challenges: Governance & Decision Making

20. A full Budget Timetable appears at Annex 3 to this report. It must be noted that - following the Intervention already referred to - the Commissioners will in support of Cabinet - consider and receive the materials referred to below and will guide and advise the Council in fulfilment of their supporting role as part of the overall Improvement journey.

21. In summary, the following arrangements are envisaged for Budget decision making in the period to the setting of the 2024/25 Budget on 20 February 2024.

- a. The Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board will hold a Budget Enquiry and Review meeting during January 2024 to consider the Draft Budget options and consultation responses. The recommendations by Scrutiny will be incorporated into overall

consultation feedback and submitted to Cabinet for consideration in the formulation of the final budget proposals. The meeting of Cabinet at which this information will be received is 7 February 2024.

- b. That the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is further updated for the meeting of Full Council on 20 February 2024; this to enable (i) the capture of any further savings (ii) the impact of the Provisional Finance Settlement from Government and (ii) updated corporate assumptions to be incorporated within the Draft Budget.
- c. Full Council to consider the setting of the 2024/25 Budget on 20 February 2024 following a decision of Cabinet to recommend the Draft Budget to Full Council.

Consultation & Engagement

22. The views of Sandwell's residents, businesses and communities are integral to the development of a MTFs that reflects the priorities of the Borough. A two phased approach to engagement and consultation has been devised to support the development of the 2024/25 Budget and the MTFP. This has been designed to align to the Council's Consultation Principles:
- a. Consultation lies at the heart of effective public policy development and service to the public. It should be a first thought and not an afterthought.
 - b. Consultation should never be used to communicate decisions already taken, and the outcome of consultation should never be pre-determined.
 - c. Consultation should be inclusive. Whenever possible, it should involve all parties/groups, including our children and young people, who can contribute to or are affected by the outcome of the consultation.
23. Phase One consisted of a face-to-face public engagement exercise with a representative sample of residents in Summer 2023. Building on the budget consultation activity conducted in 2022, this survey offered the opportunity for residents to provide input on their local priorities and preferences for delivering further council savings going into the budget setting process for 2024/25. The results of this helped inform the development of options for future savings. Details on the methodology used and responses are included at Annex 4. At the same time, the Council also conducted the SHAPE survey with primary and secondary school age children across the Borough. This survey captured the experiences of children and young people in Sandwell and what matters to them. The final results of this survey are expected in mid-November, and will be included in the outcome of Phase Two.
24. Phase Two will commence from 15 November 2023 and will involve further consultation with residents, businesses and communities. The approach will be to seek views on the whole basket of possible savings options which will feed into the Cabinet decision making process. Where savings options impact on groups of staff, engagement and formal consultation with affected staff and Trade Unions will be conducted as appropriate.

25. The timing of this consultation period is scheduled to feed into the meetings of Cabinet and Full Council in February 2024 that will be asked to take decisions on the Budget for 2024/25.
26. The Council will comply with its obligations under statute in all respects in undertaking these activities.

Scrutiny of Budget Options

27. The role of Scrutiny in this budget process is key to providing assurance that the council's budget and MTFs is sustainable and aligned to priority areas over the short, medium and longer term. It is important that sufficient time is given to this process to allow for effective scrutiny and review of budget options prior to decisions being made.
28. The budget generally will be scrutinised as follows:
 - a. A consideration of this MTFs (Autumn 2023) by the Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on 22 November 2023.
 - b. An in-depth consideration of the 2024/25 Budget and the basket of savings options; this to take place in January 2024 prior to the meeting of Cabinet on 7 February to consider the Draft Budget and the meeting of Full Council on 20 February 2024.

The National Financial Background

29. The National economy is being driven by international economic events not least the impact of the war in Ukraine, ongoing issues with international supply chains and the ongoing impact of the Pandemic. One of the key issues that has emerged is the emergence of high levels of inflation in energy, food and other products and commodities which has caused very significant inflationary pressures in wholesale and retail markets across a range of goods and services; naturally these pressures have also related to increases in labour costs. The resulting inflationary pressure has not been seen in the UK economy since the very high levels experienced during the late 1970's and early 1980's.
30. In recent years Local Government has received a much higher proportion of funding from local rather than national sources as has historically been the case. It follows that Government has inherited a position where it no longer has the appropriate levers or – following the support afforded to communities and businesses through and following the Pandemic and energy crisis – the resources to meet the inflationary pressure in the cost of service delivery.
31. The result is that much of the financial pressure has been left for local councils to manage and this has resulted and will continue to entail a need for largescale savings across the Local Government sector. That said, the savings currently required in this Council are currently forecast to be at the lower end of the savings envelope faced by some other local authorities.

32. On the back of these developments a 'cost of living' crisis has been described. This is something of which the Council is keenly aware. Accordingly, the Council will be invited subsequently in this budget approval process to maintain the Council Tax Support Scheme in Sandwell for 2024/25 without any downward adjustment to the level of support provided. There also needs to be an awareness that in the UK economy where inflation is forecast to continue rising at beyond 6% per annum in the foreseeable future, levels of Council Tax are set to become less costly in real terms given the expected thresholds set by Government for the level of potential increase to the Council Tax.

The Pandemic and ongoing Societal Changes

33. The ongoing impact of the Pandemic has resulted in a number of behavioural changes at a societal level which result in additional costs for local authority budgets. Examples nationally have included - but are not confined to - higher waste collection costs, pressure on the collection of commercial rents, changes in the demand for office accommodation associated with the emergence of 'working from home' as a 'new normal' and a consequential adverse impact on car parking income..
34. Although some of these effects are estimated to recover towards former levels in the medium term (particularly commercial rental income and car parking revenues) the evident financial pressures are expected to continue into the medium term. This is the case in Sandwell as for other councils.

General Budget Planning Assumptions

35. The following paragraphs set out a suite of headline planning assumptions which inform the construction of the MTFP; greater detail is presented in Annex 7. These will be reviewed on an ongoing basis for the next quarterly update of the MTFP to be prepared for the meeting of Full Council on 20 February 2024.

Council Tax

36. As a response to the inflationary pressures in the economy the Government at the last Finance Settlement (2023/24) set the referendum threshold for Council Tax increases to an overall total of 2.99% and an additional 'Adult Social Care Precept' of 2% for upper tier councils such as Sandwell. The level of the council tax cap for 2024/25 is presently unknown but for planning purposes - in expectation that inflationary pressures will continue to be significant in the economy – it is assumed that an annual increase of 2.99% will continue to apply in future years. Even at this level, the Council's spending power will decrease in real terms if - as seems likely - inflation continues to erode the value of money in the short and early medium term. This is why the development of a *transformational* approach to service delivery is so important to the Borough in the period ahead.
37. The increase in Council Tax will be a decision of Council in each year moving forward but to do other than maximise potential increases would imperil the Council's ability to sustain statutory services at a reasonable level.

National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)

38. The Government has for some years been considering reform of the NNDR system amid concerns from the business sector that the Rate imposes an unwarranted burden on the commercial sector. To this point no firm proposals have been brought forward by Government and so the MTFP uses the existing methodology to forecast the yield in the forward period of the Plan. In addition, for Sandwell, the proposed Devolution Deal negotiated between the West Midlands Combined Authority and Government envisages maintenance of the existing NNDR pooling arrangements in the West Midlands to which the Council presently belongs for a further 10 years.

The Capital Programme

39. Services have been provided with a list of provisional capital programme budgets based on information included within the February 2023 budget report, taking into account any potential slippage in the current programme. They are in the process of re-affirming these estimates taking into consideration any potential changes in pricing or rephrasing or to request removal if sums previously earmarked for particular schemes are no longer required.
40. Where a new scheme is put forward Services have been asked to complete an outline bid for capital funding which will be assessed against corporate priorities. Final proposals will be presented as part of the Draft Budget which is presented to the Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and then to Cabinet on 7 February and to Full Council on 20 February 2024. In the future it is envisaged that the Capital Programme will be prioritised and managed using a refreshed approach which is described below.

The Capital Planning Principles

41. For financial year 2024/25 and within the period of this MTFP the following *Capital Planning Principles* are proposed for use in forming the Capital Programme which will be presented to and approved by Full Council. Proposals that do not fall within these 'Capital Principles' will not – except in conditions of compelling exigency - be included within the Draft Capital Programme for the General Fund or the Housing Revenue Account.
- a. Items of programming that relate to essential health and safety works and deliver compliance to the regulations within in the Council's property estate.
 - b. Items of programming that have a measurable beneficial impact on the carbon footprint of the Council and the Borough and which have affordable cost implications.
 - c. Essential investment in Information & Communications Technology (both hardware and software) to ensure that the Council has fit for purpose and secure tools and infrastructure to support operations generally and transformational programmes where there are suitable business cases to support such investment.

- d. Items where - following provision of external grant support (principally from Government, Government Agencies or the West Midlands Combined Authority) - specific resources are provided to the Council by to complete or partially complete certain specified schemes that support the Council's objectives or wider regional ambitions such that match funding is required. Such match funding must be affordable to the Council and decisions made must demonstrate the Council's duty to achieve VFM in the decisions made.
 - e. Any schemes that can be shown to be wholly funded from external resources (e.g. Government Grants, external contributions) without implying additional cost burdens for the Council.
 - f. Where proposals are estimated to return a measurable revenue saving; for example, leasing of the Council's commercial property portfolio which may require modest upfront capital investment and which then return a beneficial income stream to the revenue budget.
 - g. Schemes for which there may be a perception of compelling need but where such schemes are wholly dependent on Council funding. In these cases, a rigorous business case must be prepared which demonstrates that additional cost pressures can be assuaged by alternative savings or removal of capital programming. This approach will ensure that the Council seeks to enhance the approaches already in play in forming the Council's Capital Programme in the years ahead.
42. For the avoidance of doubt, on grounds of affordability there will be no other new borrowing for capital purposes in the General Fund during the period of the MTFS.

Reserves

43. In previous years the Council has sometimes used significant contributions from Reserves to support service delivery. The Council – as has happened in other local authorities – may face the future prospect of compromising its ability to manage strategic risks at some future point. Accordingly, unless in case of grave exigency, or in respect of use of reserves that has been previously planned, The Draft Budget presented to Council in February 2024 is not expected to contain proposals to subsidise the budget shortfall of £13m currently estimated by drawing on reserves.

Debt Service

44. The Council's General Fund holds a current debt portfolio of £146m for which the annual debt service costs are estimated at c. £15m per annum which represents less than 5% of the Net Budget. The fact that this percentage is relatively modest compared with similar authorities is a significant factor in the budget shortfall in Sandwell being lower compared with such authorities. The position with regard to the Housing Revenue Account will be discussed within the separate HRA Budget report which will be presented later in the Autumn of 2023.

The Finance Settlement 2024/25: Forecast and Key Points

45. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 is to be published in late December 2023 and will become Final in late January or early February 2024. Accordingly, at this stage in the planning process an assessment is made of the forecast position with regard to the content of the Finance Settlement at that future date. These assumptions will be improved and revised as information becomes available, particularly on the 22 November when the Chancellor of the Exchequer is expected to release their Autumn Statement.
46. Currently, the key points of briefing in relation to the Forecast are:
- a. New Homes Bonus – The Government has been considering reform or phasing out of New Homes Bonus and currently the grant is calculated on a one-off annual basis. In the absence of detailed consultation by Government it is assumed that the Council will continue to receive a benefit similar in value to prior years.
 - b. Controls on use of packaging and waste volumes – the Government is planning to establish a system where the producers of packaging waste are charged a levy related to the waste volumes that result such that the proceeds - net of regulatory costs - are passed on to local Councils. The assumption made generally in the MTFP is that the incoming monies will need to be reinvested in waste services and that, accordingly, there will not be a net benefit to the Council from this scheme. This assumption will be reviewed for the next update of the MTFP; in addition Government has deferred implementation until 2025/26.
 - c. Planning Fees – in the period ahead Government is expected to re-set planning fees that are significantly higher than is presently the case. The results of this decision – if received by February 2024 – will be built into the Final Budget proposals.
 - d. Collection Fund – the working assumption is that Council Tax will increase by 2.99% throughout each year of the MTFP, the maximum permitted under current Government guidance. The Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax is currently estimated to be in deficit at end of 2023/24 and a charge to the General Fund of £0.5m has been included

in the current MTFP to account for this. The situation will be reviewed in depth for the next update of the MTFP. The setting of Council Tax at this level is for the purposes of modelling; the decision on the level of Council Tax increase is a matter for the meeting of Full Council on 20 February 2024.

- e. The NNDR Pool - it is assumed that the Council will continue to be a member of the West Midlands Business Rates Pool in 2024/25 and future years and it is also assumed that the Government will continue to permit the operation of such pools as a matter of policy within the Devolution Deal.

Other Planning Assumptions

- 47. Further planning assumptions made in the Medium Term Financial Plan appear at Annex 7.

Savings for Consultation

- 48. The Council has assembled a list of opportunities that could be led to generate savings in the region of £18m in 2024/25. The opportunities have been grouped into themed areas to align with the existing transformational savings in place for financial year 2023/24. It must be remembered that the forecast shortfall for Budget 2024/25 is £13m and so the savings opportunities highlighted in the table are designed to deliver a level of choice to Cabinet in drawing up final options following the end of consultation and when the Provisional Finance Settlement has been received in late December 2023. The List of Savings Opportunities appears at Annex 6.

Delivery of Savings in 2023/24

- 49. A review of savings has been undertaken to assess whether the targeted savings were delivered in 2022/23 and 2023/24 as planned. Should this not be the case, the additional cost this implies remains within the forward years of the MTFP as a pressure. At the present time there is evidence to suggest that – with minor exceptions – the savings for 2023/24 are set to be delivered by the end of the year or are capable of delivery in the near future. This position will be reviewed throughout out the Autumn of 2023 to inform the preparation of the Draft Budget for Cabinet, Scrutiny and Full Council by February 2024.

Flexible Use of Capital Receipts

- 50. The Council will wish to make use of the facility to use capital receipts to fund revenue expenditure used to fund business change and transformation. For this reason, a plan will be produced and included in the Budget Report for Council on 20 February 2024 following which the plan will be shared with the Government Department (DLUHC) as required in recent guidance from Government. Further, the Council wishes to submit a proposal for flexible use of capital receipts in financial year 2023/24.

Property

51. The holding and management of property assets is a significant activity for the Council and as previously described in this report work is proceeding on a number of strands to form a transformation programme in this service area. The principal components are considered to be:
- Operation of the Corporate Landlord model which is expected to drive efficiency by unified management of all property assets within the Council; this to release revenue savings in the cost of management of these assets and also to reduce significantly the property holding costs in the revenue budget.
 - The Council holds some 4,000 property assets including buildings and parcels of land of various kinds. This includes a number of properties for which the Council has no economic use and which drive a cost stream including maintenance, security, business rates and others which can only be assuaged through the disposal of the surplus property. The next update of the MTFs will contain a listing of surplus property for disposal and this will form part and parcel of the proposals set down in the Draft Budget.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

52. The Council's MTFP (MTFS Autumn 2023/24), is shown in Table 1. The MTFP is the product of (i) detailed technical analysis (ii) detailed discussion with the Directorates and their respective management teams regarding the pressures identified and (iii) further engagement to assist the Directorates to identify savings to bridge the Budget shortfall identified.
53. In preparing to balance the 2024/25 Budget the Council produced an initial forecast shortfall of £8.9m for 2024/25 which has been revised to £13m following a process of review which led to the acceptance of additional net pressures. These arose from stress testing a number of key variables used to form the previous version of the MTFP. The full detail of the MTFP is shown in Annex 8 and the movements between the original figures and those now presented are shown in Annex 9.

Table 1: Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£m	£m	£m
Current Net Budget	317.103	317.103	317.103
Budget pressures and technical adjustments	28.272	49.723	66.727
Revised Net Budget	345.375	366.826	383.830
Funding	(332.412)	(338.158)	(344.476)
Net Deficit before savings options	12.963	28.668	39.354

The MTFS & MTFP: Governance & Reporting

54. The MTFP will continue to be updated on a rolling basis from this point forward and will be reported quarterly to Cabinet, Scrutiny Management Boards, Full Council, and the Commissioners moving forward. This will enable stakeholders to receive regular briefing on observed changes to the forecasts that are from time to time observed.

Risk Assessment & Management

55. The Council has a need to develop structured arrangements to manage risk with regard to strategic and operational dimensions of its operations. The principal risks associated with maintenance of the Council's services within the financial constraints identified in the MTFS and associated MTFP together with headline mitigations are set out in Annex 10.

Summary

56. This document has set out the MTFS and the embedded MTFP and the acceptance and application of these documents can be summarised as follows:
- a. The Council has identified a set of Guiding Principles which will assist in shaping responses to future revenue budget shortfalls.
 - b. The Council is aware of the challenging financial pressures that bear on the 2024/25 Budget and beyond and has understood the issues that this presents.
 - c. The Council has taken effective action to identify a portfolio of potential savings opportunities in the order of £18m which may be considered in order to balance the 2024/25 Budget shortfall of £13m currently forecast and wishes to consult the Borough on these options.
 - d. It will be key across the years of the MTFS for the Council to maximise funding streams including Council Tax and this should continue – as in previous years – to inform planning assumptions in the MTFS and MTFP.
 - e. MTFP Planning assumptions will continue to be refined and reviewed on an ongoing basis; accordingly, the figures contained in this report will continue to change, moving forward.
 - f. The Council has also identified *Capital Planning Principles* to inform capital planning moving forward and has acknowledged a need to review its capital programme methodology in the period ahead.

Recommendations

57. It is recommended that Cabinet.

- a. Approve the MTFS and embedded MTFP as an estimate of the Council's current financial position at October 2023 noting that the figures will change as further updating takes place.
- b. Give approval for the commencement of a period of consultation regarding the savings opportunities referred to in Annex 6.
- c. Approve the Guiding Principles as framework for financial planning for the period of the MTFS.
- d. Approve the Capital Planning Principles to guide the preparation of the Capital Programme in the years ahead.
- e. Note the planned development of the Transformation Programme to date and through 2024/25 and endorses the extension of the transformational approach to other services of the Council.
- f. Note the Budget Timetable set out in this report.
- g. Approve the submission to DLUHC of a proposal for the flexible use of capital receipts in financial year 2023/24 to support transformation and to delegate the approval of this proposal to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Interim Director of Finance together with the Assistant Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.
- h. Approve the onward submission of the Autumn 2023 update of the MTFS to the next meeting of Full Council.



Sandwell Council's Corporate Plan ([refreshed June 2023](#)) sets out six outward facing strategic priorities for the council to deliver on, underpinned by 'One Council One Team' – our seventh strategic priority to be a modern, outstanding council. Underpinning these strategic priorities, the council has established [145 'we will' statements](#) which indicate key actions the Council will work towards to help achieve delivery of the strategic outcomes. Performance in delivery of these 'we will' statements and the impact of our activity on the strategic priorities is monitored through the council's corporate performance management framework. This is reported to Cabinet and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on a quarterly basis.

The Role of Commissioners

On 22 March 2022 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced an [intervention package](#) and a set of [Directions](#) to ensure Sandwell Council was able to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. These Directions were in-part influenced by the Grant Thornton report following their [Value for Money Governance Review of December 2021](#). The Directions remain in force until 22 March 2024 unless amended by the Secretary of State.

In response to the Directions, the council developed a single [Improvement Plan](#) that combined the actions to address not only the Grant Thornton Review, but also the findings of the [CIPFA Financial Management Review \(January 2022\)](#) and the [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge \(February 2022\)](#). Robust programme management and assurance arrangements are in place to manage the delivery of the Improvement Plan and ensure that it remains a live document. A [revised Improvement Plan](#) was approved by Cabinet in March 2023 to incorporate recommendations from follow-up reviews by [Grant Thornton](#) and the [LGA](#). An [Annual Report](#) was approved by Cabinet in June 2023, setting out the council's improvement journey over the preceding 12 months and the priorities for further improvement during the intervention period.

The Directions of the Secretary of State (March 2022) enable the Commissioners to exercise the following functions:

1. All functions associated with the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority.
2. All functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers, to include:
 - a. The functions of designating a person as a statutory officer and removing a person from a statutory office.
 - b. The functions under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 of –
 - i. appointing and determining the terms and conditions of employment of an officer of the Authority, insofar as those functions are exercised for the purpose of appointing a person as an officer of the Authority principally in order for that person to be designated as a statutory officer; and
 - ii. dismissing any person who has been designated as a statutory officer from his or her position as an officer of the Authority

The Commissioners submit a report to the Secretary of State every six months on Sandwell Council's progress in addressing the issues that led to government intervention. In their [letter of June 2023](#), the Commissioners noted that they had seen "*significant progress on the single improvement plan*" since their last report, and that "*substantial progress has also been achieved on nearly all*" of the priorities highlighted in their previous report. In the same letter, the Commissioners stated that they believed the council needed to give particular focus to the following four areas:

1. Developing the strategic capacity of the organisation.
2. Further work on implementation of the culture and values work.
3. A comprehensive transformation programme linked to delivering the Council's MTFS.
4. The 2020/21 accounts approved by auditors and a clear timetable for the approval of the 2021/22 accounts.

Annex 3

The Budget Timetable for 2024/25 Budget

Timeline	Activity	Status
August '23	Budget Consultation feedback received; Star Chambers conducted	Completed
Early October '23	Business case development and review	Completed
15 November '23	Autumn 2023 MTFS report to Cabinet and commencement of next phase consultation	<i>In Progress</i>
Nov '23 –Jan '24	Consultation period on savings opportunities to include residents, businesses and communities. Completion of Equality Impact Assessments	<i>Decision at Cabinet 15 November</i>
22 November '23	Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board to consider Autumn 2023 MTFS	<i>Scheduled</i>
21 December '23	Finance settlement receipt expected 21 December 2023;	-
January '24	Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Sessions	<i>16-18 January</i>
February '24	Draft Budget 2024/25 and to Cabinet (7 Feb 2024) and Council (20 Feb 2024)	<i>Scheduled</i>

Sandwell Council Budget Survey report

Key Findings Report July 2023



Research objectives and method



In June and early July 2023 M·E·L Research interviewed a randomly selected sample of 1,100 Sandwell residents.

Following last year's budget consultation, in which residents stated that rationalising buildings and assets would be the preferred method to achieve required savings, Sandwell Council set itself savings targets and examined ways to reduce running costs.

This survey offered the opportunity for residents to provide input on their local priorities, and preferences for delivering further council savings going into the budget setting process for 2024/25.



A stratified random locational sampling approach was used. In each ward, Census Output Areas (COAs) were ranked by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). COAs were then selected at random as sampling points. The number of sampling points selected was proportional to the interviewing target for each ward. All addresses for each COA sampling point were made available to interviewers, with a target of 10 interviews set per sampling point.

At ward level quotas were set by age and gender to ensure that the sample reflected the characteristics of the borough's population. Quotas were set using Census 2021 data.

Spatial Analysis

The sample size of this research does not allow robust analysis at ward level. In order to analyse the data at a more statistically robust geographies, wards have been grouped into towns. These towns, as defined by the table on the right, will be used throughout the analysis.

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Towns and Wards in Sandwell



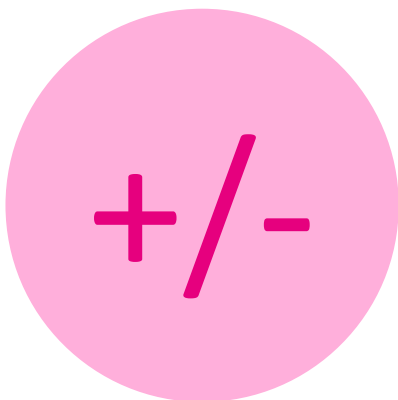
Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown copyright and database right 2018.

Town	Ward
Oldbury	Bristnall
	Langley
	Old Warley
	Oldbury
Rowley Regis	Blackheath
	Cradley Heath and Old Hill
	Tividale
Smethwick	Rowley
	Abbey
	Smethwick
	Soho and Victoria
Tipton	St Pauls
	Great Bridge
	Tipton Green
	Princes End
Wednesbury	Friar Park
	Wednesbury North
	Wednesbury South
West Bromwich	West Bromwich Central
	Hateley Heath
	Greets Green and Lyng
	Newton
	Great Barr with Yew Tree
	Charlemont with Grove Vale

Data weighting and confidence level



In total 1100 interviews were completed. While the application of quotas at ward level ensured a diverse mix of residents were interviewed, the final dataset was weighted. This weighting eliminated the effect of differential response rates by geography and between demographic groups so that the resulting data is fully representative of the borough. The final data has been weighted by ward, age and gender, using 2021 Census population data.



The sample size of 1,100 means that this dataset has a maximum confidence level of +/- 2.95 at the borough level (at a 95% level of confidence). This means that we can say with 95% confidence that the responses reported will be no more than 2.95 percentage-points different than if all residents of the borough were interviewed.

Sub-group analysis i.e., comparing responses from particular resident groups or from specific locations within the borough will have higher confidence intervals.

Note on analysis of priorities

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Contextual information given to respondents

In last year's budget consultation residents said their preferred way for us to achieve the required savings was to rationalise our buildings and assets, we have taken this on board and set a target saving in 2023/24 to look at ways we can reduce the running costs of the buildings that we currently operate from. This includes sharing our space with partners to generate more income and looking at running services from fewer buildings, especially where we have multiple buildings close together.

The Council is facing similar pressure to residents from inflation and rising costs. The cost of living crisis is also creating more demand for some council services. This means that difficult decisions need to be made when the Council sets its budget.

We have identified and delivering savings of over £30m in the last two years and our current Medium Term Financial Plan shows that further savings of around £8m will be needed for next year.

The Council spends around £318m on our day-to-day services, such as refuse collections, street cleansing, providing libraries and leisure centres and our adult and children's social care services. We must meet all our legal requirements but can make choices in how we deliver some of these services.

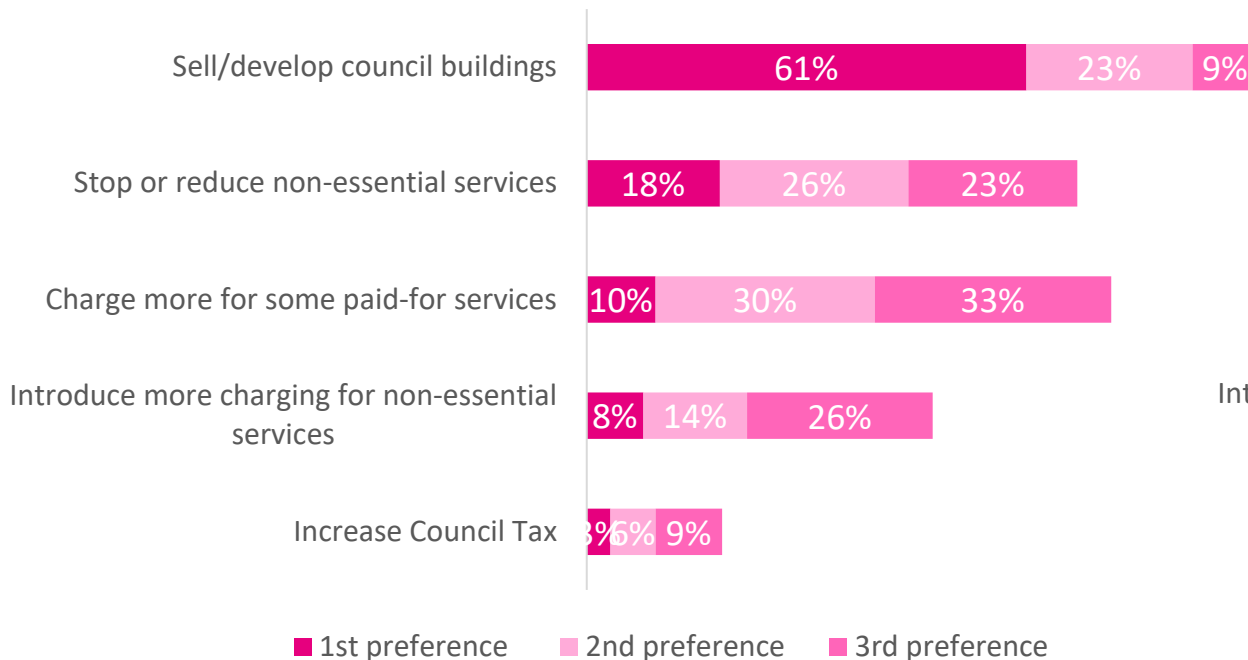


Preferred approach for delivering the Council savings needed

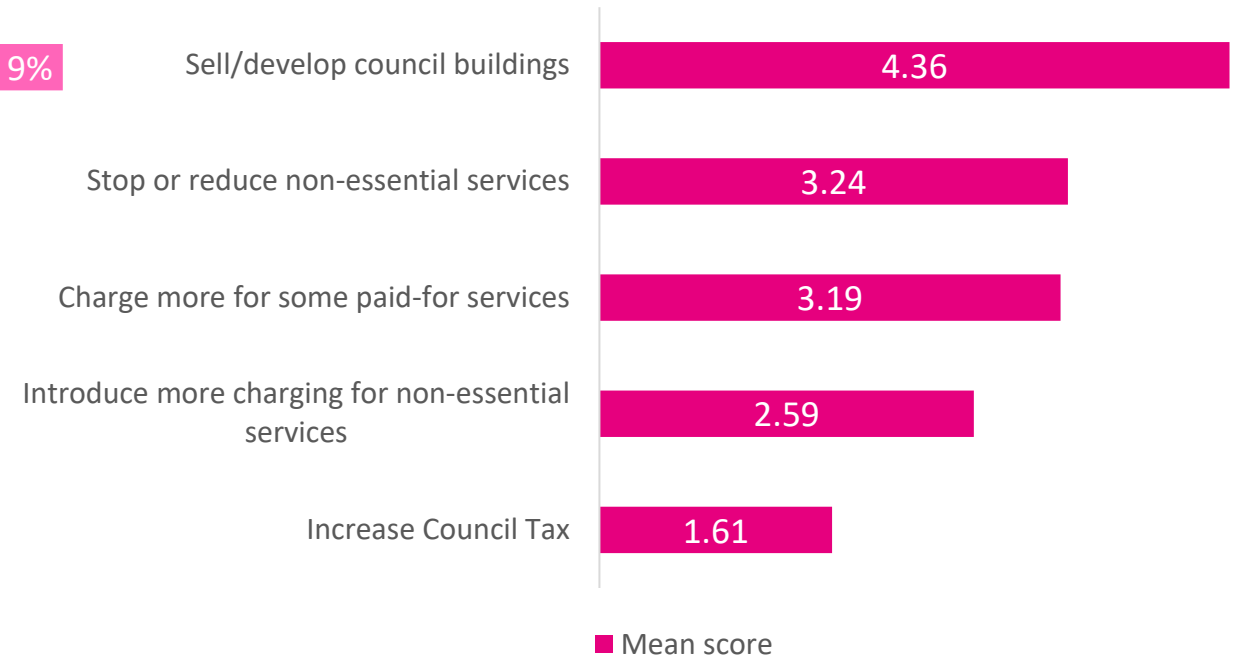
Selling or developing council buildings is the most preferred method of achieving Council savings goals rather than making changes to services or their cost at point of use. Increasing Council Tax, the option that would most directly affect residents financially is the least commonly favoured option.

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Top 3 choices



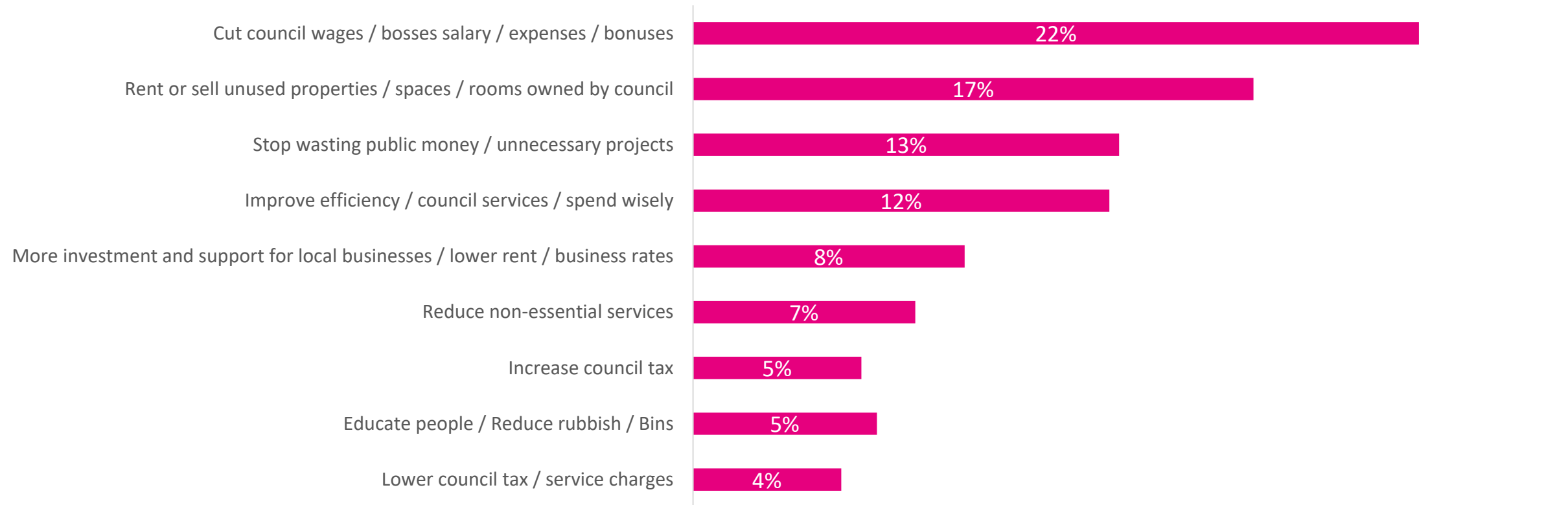
Mean score of choices



Suggested approaches for delivering the Council savings needed

Of the 120 residents who provided alternative suggestions as to how budget savings can be achieved, 22% suggested cutting wages of council workers, including reducing bonuses and expenses. 17% proposed renting or selling unused properties and spaces which go unused by the council and 13% suggested the council should be more stringent when deciding which projects to fund.

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All residents were presented with the Council's six strategic outcomes and were asked to consider how important these are to them...

Our Strategic Outcomes



THE BEST START IN LIFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



PEOPLE LIVE WELL AND AGE WELL



STRONG RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



QUALITY HOMES IN THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS



A STRONG AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY



A CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE SANDWELL



ONE COUNCIL ONE TEAM

Priorities when considering strategic outcomes

The best start in life for Children and Young People (Theme 1) is the strategic priority most commonly selected as important by residents (34%), followed by strong, resilient communities. Theme 1 is significantly more likely to be chosen by those aged 18 – 34 (44%), those who are struggling financially (35%) and women (38%). The best start in life is however less likely to be a top priority for those 55 -74 (26%) and 75+ (12%). These older age groups are significantly more likely to select Theme 2, People Living and Aging well as a top priority (26% and 48% respectively).



Residents' priorities for Sandwell: detailed analysis

- **Theme 1: The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People** – this theme is most likely to be selected by those aged 18-34 (44%), females (38%), and residents who are economically active (38%) This could be a reflection of these demographics being the most likely to be those who have young families. There is evidence of this within the explanations residents gave for their choices (examples in the next slide). Residents living in Tipton are significant less likely to prioritise Theme 1 (25% cf. 34%), along with older residents (55-74: 26%; 75+: 12%).
- **Theme 2: People Living Well and Aging Well** – This theme appears to be a more prominent priority in Wednesbury (26%) and among those who are economically inactive (perhaps as a result of being retired – 24%) and understandably, those aged 55-74 (26%) and 75+ (48%). Young people (18-34: 11%; 35-54: 12%) are less likely to prioritise spending in this area, along with those who are financially struggling (14%). Those who prioritised this theme, cited relevance to them as an ageing person as their primary reason for doing so, along with there being an ageing population in their area.

“I'm from that age group”
Theme 2

“They should look after the younger generation and for this community too”
Theme 1

“It's good for the health of this community”
Theme 2

“I HAVE A CHILD AND SUPPORT SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO HELP GET A GOOD START IN LIFE”
Theme 1

“Older generation needs some help and support”
Theme 2

“They need a good start especially if they are coming from a different background”
Theme 1

“I have children my own and it's good for our area”
Theme 1

“A lot of cut backs older people need company and somewhere to go and beat loneliness for their own mental health”
Theme 2

“Young people are the future of this country”
Theme 1

“People are not living well because of the cost of living crisis”
Theme 2

“We have some safety issues, so they should concentrate more for safety and security in this area”
Theme 3

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“Affordable housing is important for this borough”
Theme 4

“Safe place leads to safe place for kids, infrastructures will follow”
Theme 3

“Everything starts at home and having a good home”
Theme 4

“All are important but safety is more I don't want to be scared in my area”
Theme 3

“The streets were clean and safe years ago they are not anymore and people get mugged”
Theme 3

“We never have had quality homes”
Theme 4

“Safe and clean living environment is very important for everyone”
Theme 3

“There are poor condition of homes currently and need new improved homes”
Theme 4

“They need to spend on the safety and security of this area”
Theme 3

“We need affordable and quality housing services”
Theme 4

“It's important to feel happy safe and comfortable where we live”
Theme 3

Residents' priorities for Sandwell: detailed analysis

- **Theme 3: Strong, Resilient Communities – A safe, clean and green place to live** – This theme is significantly more likely to be selected as a priority by residents in Tipton (31%) and Smethwick (29%), more so than the overall and the other towns. Those in Rowley Regis are significantly less likely to prioritise Theme 3, (16%). Amongst tenure types, there is little significant variation in the priority given to this theme. The theme is also prioritised by a similar proportion of each age cohort.
- **Theme 4: Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods** – Theme 4 is the lowest priority theme for residents of Sandwell (7% selected this). Residents in Wednesbury are more likely to consider Quality Homes and Neighbourhoods a priority than residents of other areas (9%), though not significantly so. Residents in Oldbury are the least likely to indicate that Theme 4 is the most important to them.

Residents' priorities for Sandwell: detailed analysis

- **Theme 5: A Connected and Accessible Sandwell – good quality public transport and road networks. Good internet connectivity for residents and businesses** – There is no significant variation between towns in the proportion of residents who prioritise this theme, with between 6% and 8% selecting it as the most important to them. Selection of this theme was done consistently by age.
- **Theme 6: A strong and Inclusive Economy– spending money locally to grow the local economy -** Residents aged 35 -54 are significantly more likely than the survey average (16% cf. 11%) to value a strong and inclusive economy. Male residents are significantly more likely than women (14% cf. 9%) to rate a strong and inclusive as important to them. Perhaps surprisingly, those who are concerned about the cost of living crisis are significantly less likely to consider the economy as the most important theme, as mentioned, prioritising instead giving children and young people the best start in life.

“We need a good network routes”

Theme 5

“Good quality public transport will enable people to get around without congestion and associated air pollution”

Theme 5

“The way the economy is at the moment something needs to be done”

Theme 6

“Continuous growth if we haven't got that how are we going to live”

Theme 6

“It will benefit everyone locally”

Theme 6

“Good road network is very important for a better economy”

Theme 5

“It means we are able to our of Sandwell for work and education more easily”

Theme 5

“Mainly because the community will be a better place”

Theme 5

“We can build a strong economy it's going to help children”

Theme 6

“Money will stay in this area and can use for the local community”

Theme 6

“Encourages people to invest and look after property”

Theme 6

“We need a better condition of roads and a bigger network of buses”

Theme 5

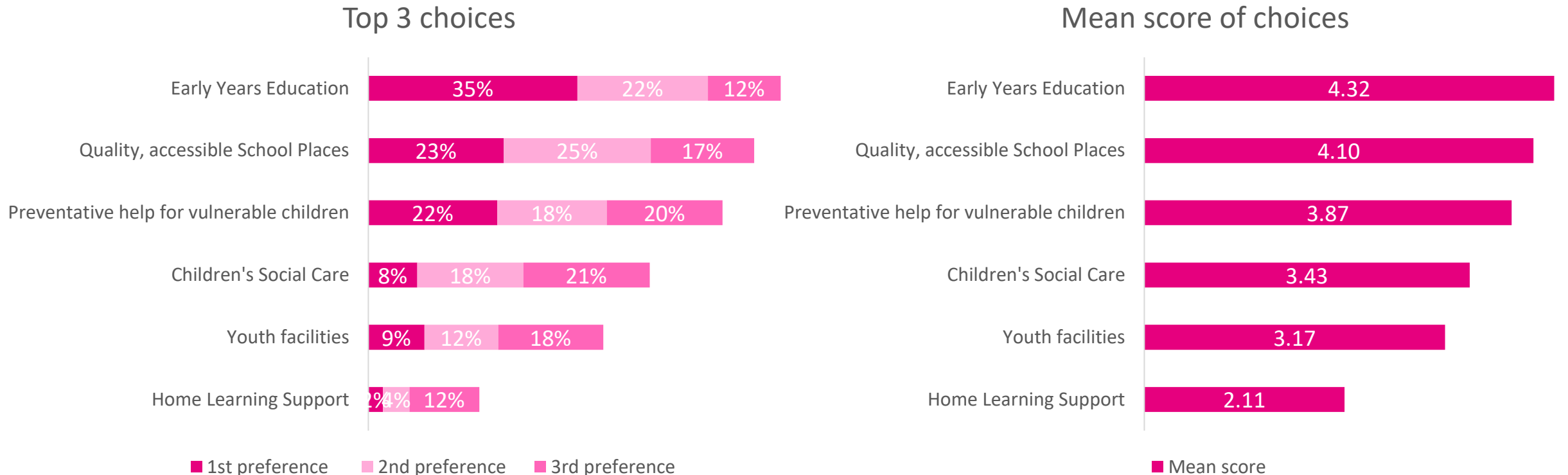
Theme 1: The best start in life for children and young people



Priorities within Theme 1: the best start in life for children and young people

All residents were asked for their top priorities within each strategic theme, regardless of which theme they considered to be most important. Within Theme 1, early years education (4.32), quality and accessible school places (4.10) and preventative help for vulnerable children (3.87) are the service areas most commonly favoured. Home learning support was least commonly chosen as a priority by residents.

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Theme 1: The best start in life for children and young people – notable variations in opinion

Looking specifically at those who earlier selected Theme 1 as most important, this group are even more likely than the total sample to rank early years education as their 1st priority (41% cf. 35%), Otherwise, the Theme 1 priorities among this sub-group of residents is similar to the overall sample, with home learning support least commonly prioritised along with youth facilities.



Those aged **18 to 34** are significantly more likely than the total sample to select early years education as their top priority (44% cf. 35%). This age group are also more likely than the overall to prioritise home learning support, though this is still their lowest priority.



Early years education is consistently the first choice in residents living in all five towns. However, beneath this there is slightly stronger support for quality and accessible school places being the top priority within Smethwick and Tipton.

Theme 2: people live well and age well

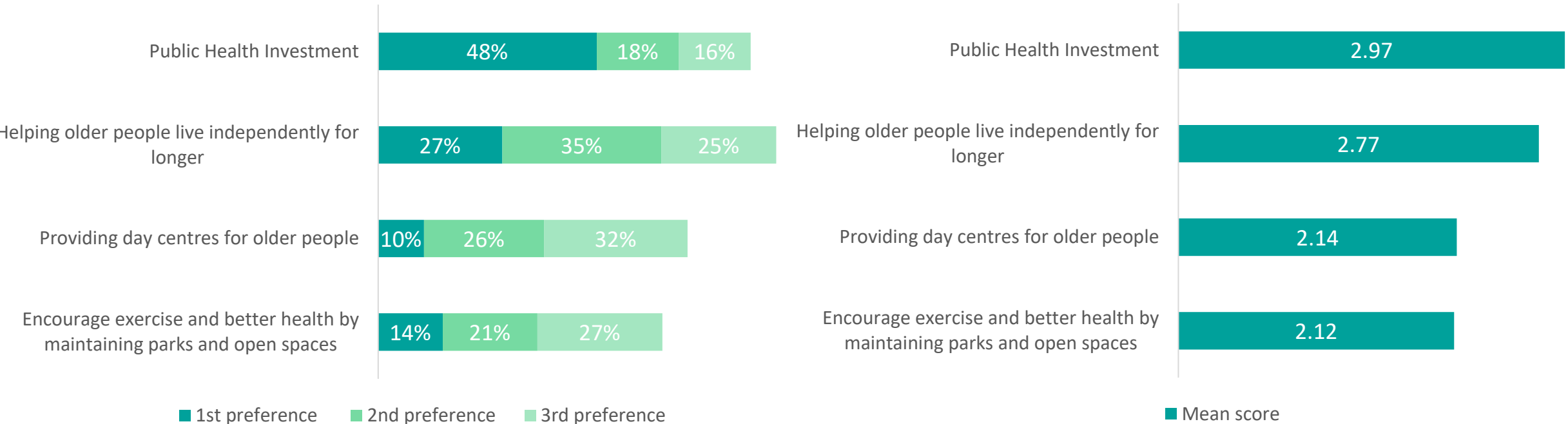


Priorities within Theme 2: people live well and age well

When asked for their priorities within Theme 2, residents most commonly chose Public Health Investment in their top 3, followed by helping older people to live independently for longer and providing day centres for elderly people. Public Health Investment is almost twice as likely to be chosen as a top priority than helping older people live independently for longer (48% and 27% respectively). Encouraging exercise and better health via parks and open spaces is the lowest priority for residents, with only 14% considering this the top priority.

Top 3 choices

Mean score of choices



Theme 2: People Live Well and Age Well – notable variations in opinion

While public health investment has the most support overall within this Theme, among residents who consider **helping residents to live and age well as the most important theme**, the top priority based on mean is 'helping older people to live independently' (2.95). 35% of this group consider this as the top priority, significantly higher than the overall population (27%).



Younger residents are significantly more likely than older residents to prioritise public health investment (18 – 34: 3.27; 75+: 2.57). Older residents are more likely to support budget spending on helping older people to live independently ahead of public health investment. Men and women prioritise the options similarly, with the exception of men being significantly less likely than women to prioritise providing day centres for elderly people (men: 2.09, women: 2.20).



Residents in **Smethwick** have slightly different priorities to the overall, considering encouraging exercise as a higher priority than providing day centres (2.39 compared to 2.12 in the overall).

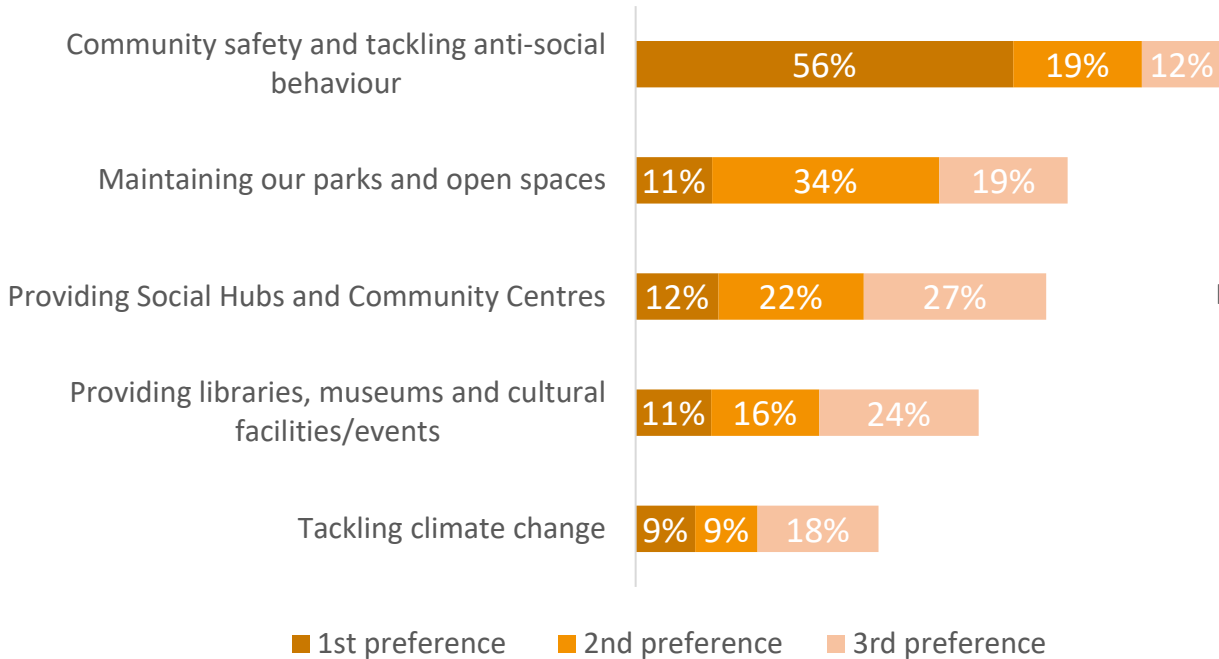
Theme 3: strong, resilient communities



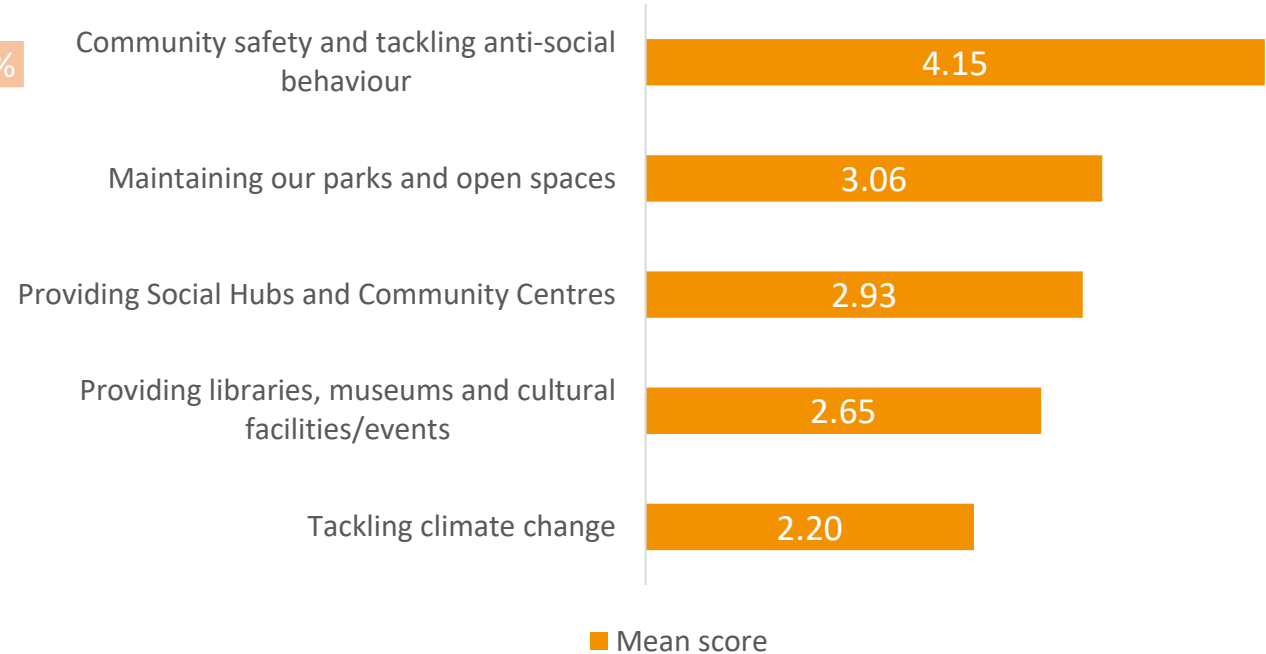
Priorities within Theme 3: strong, resilient communities

When considering detailed choices within Theme 3, community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour is most likely to be considered a top priority by residents (4.15). Over half chose (56%) this as their first choice, providing a clear message that this is a priority issue. In the context of this Theme, maintenance of parks and open spaces is a priority, whereas this did not seem to be the case in the context of improving public health (see slide 22).

Top 3 choices



Mean score of choices



Theme 3: Strong, Resilient Communities – notable variations in opinion

Among residents who **selected Theme 3 as most important to them** community safety is the key priority, with 69% of this group selecting this as their top priority compared to 56% of all residents. Residents who consider Theme 3 as most important rank the options in the same order as the total sample.



Ranking of priorities is largely consistent across different demographic groups, mirroring the overall results, with community safety and tackling ASB the top priority and tackling climate change the lowest priority. **Residents aged 35 and above** are likely to feel more strongly that community safety should be a priority with approximately 60% of each of these cohorts selecting this as the top priority compared with 49% of those **aged 18 – 35**.



Whilst community safety is consistently the top priority across towns in Sandwell, there is some spatial variation in the lower order priorities. **Oldbury, Wednesbury and Tipton** residents consider Providing Social Hubs and Community Centres as a higher priority than the survey average (with this the second highest scoring priority by mean for these areas, above maintaining parks). Whilst **Smethwick** residents chose a ranking of priorities that was consistent with those chosen by all residents, they are more likely to consider community hubs the lowest priority (23% cf. 14%).

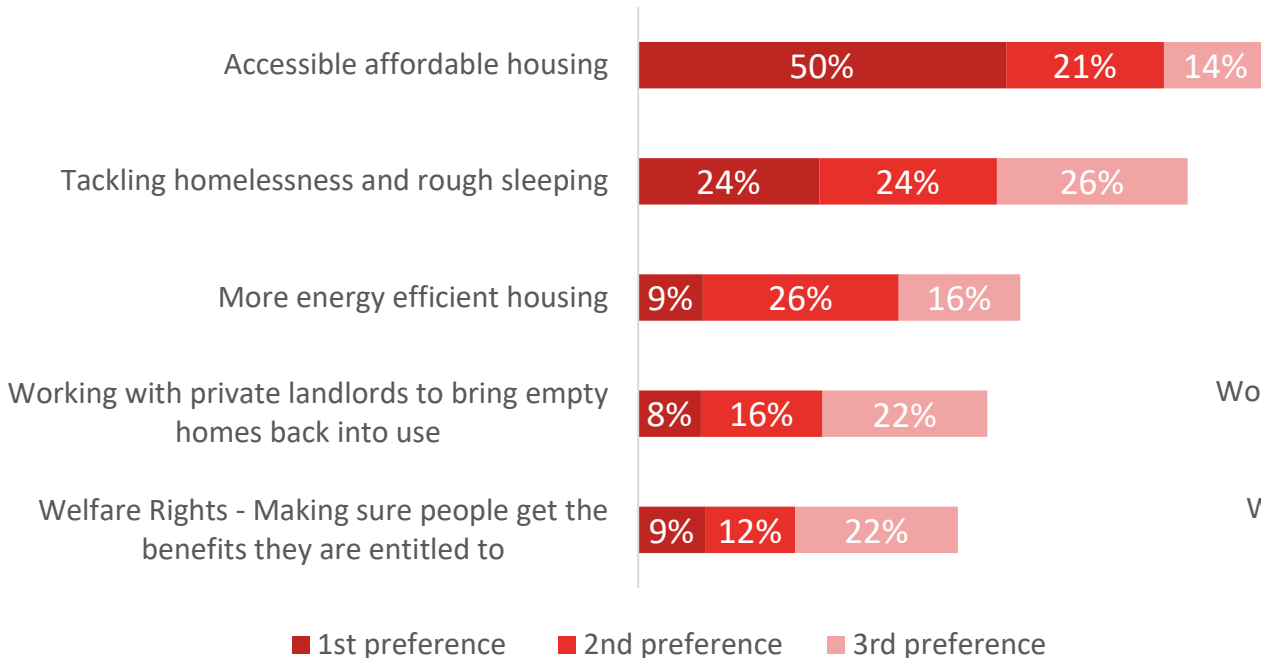
Theme 4: quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods



Priorities within Theme 4: quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods

Within Theme 4 accessible affordable housing is the top priority for Sandwell residents, with approximately 85% considering this a top 3 choice, and 50% considering this the ultimate priority. Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is also important to residents, though to a lesser extent than affordable housing. Welfare rights are much less of a priority. More energy efficient housing and working with private landlords on empty homes are considered to be of relatively similar importance to residents.

Top 3 choices



Mean score of choices



Theme 4: Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods - – notable variations in opinion

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Theme 3

The priorities of residents who earlier **selected Theme 4 as the most important** mirror those chosen among the overall population. Among this group affordable housing is the top priority, even more so than among all residents (64% selected this as their first choice cf. 50%).



The ranking of priorities within Theme 4 is largely consistent across demographic groups, with accessible affording housing a priority for all. **Those aged 18 to 34** are likely to feel more strongly that accessible affordable housing is the ultimate priority (57% cf. 50%).



Residents in **Oldbury** are less likely to rank more energy efficient housing as a priority, with this being considered a priority by a lower proportion of residents in this area than working with private landlords and welfare rights. Residents in **Rowley Regis** are more likely to consider homelessness and rough sleeping a top priority compared to the total sample (31% cf. 24%).

Theme 5: A connected and accessible Sandwell

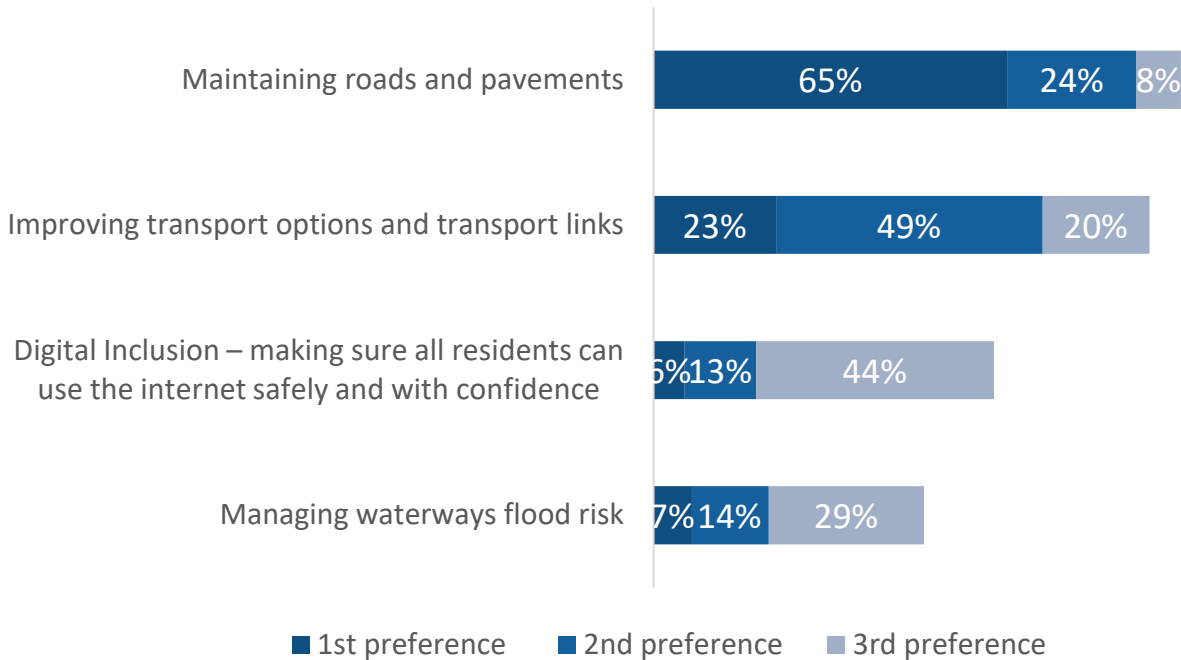


Priorities within Theme 5: a connected and accessible Sandwell

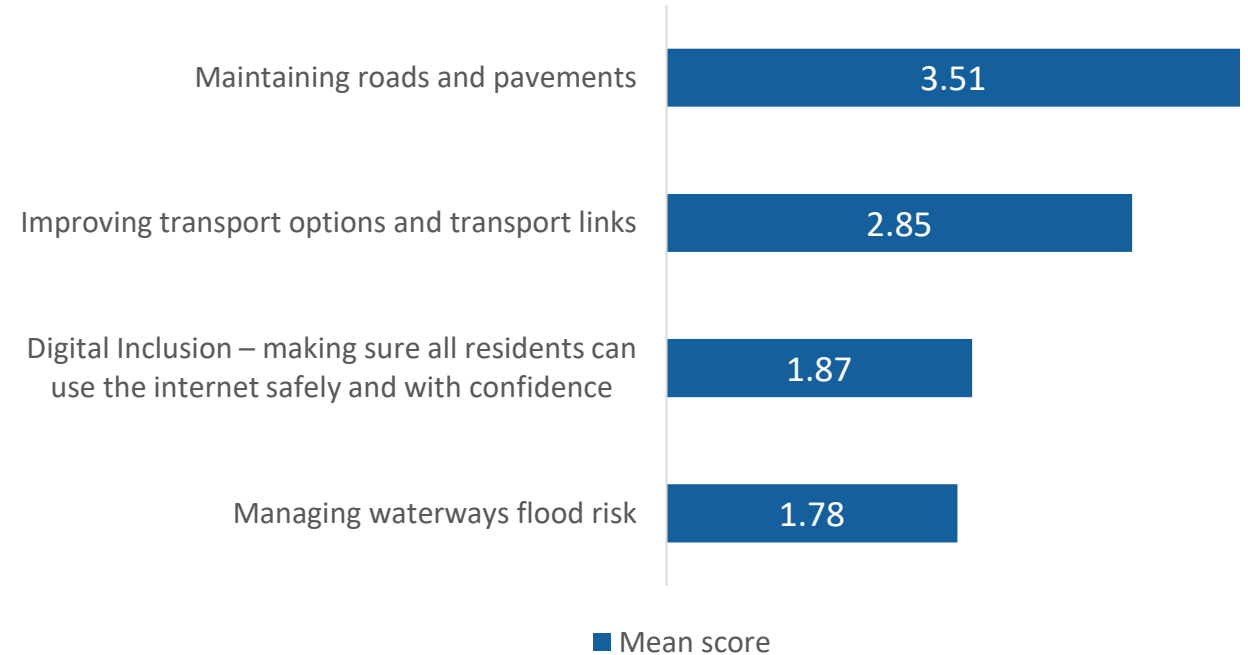
Within Theme 5 maintenance of roads and pavements is the dominant priority, with nearly two-thirds (65%) choosing this as their highest priority. Improving transport links is the second highest priority, with nearly half of residents (49%) choosing this as their second priority. Managing waterways flood risk is least commonly considered a priority within this Theme.

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Top 3 choices



Mean score of choices



Theme 5: A Connected and Accessible Sandwell – notable variations in opinion



Residents who earlier **selected Theme 5 as the most important** chose maintaining roads and pavements as the top priority (43%), albeit to a significantly lesser extent than the all residents (65%). Those suggesting a connected and accessible Sandwell is the key strategic priority for them, are equally likely to consider improvement of transport options and links as their ultimate priority (44%) alongside the maintenance of roads and pavements.



Residents' **aged 75+** are less likely to consider digital inclusion a priority, with 51% of these residents ranking it as the lowest priority, the highest proportion of any age cohort to do so.



Improved transport options are most commonly chosen as a top priority by residents of **Wednesbury** (57%) and **Smethwick** (54%). Residents in **Tipton**, consider managing waterway flood risk as a top priority more often than those in other areas (15% cf. 7%), suggesting that this may need to be considered more in relation to this town, despite being the lowest ranked priority overall.

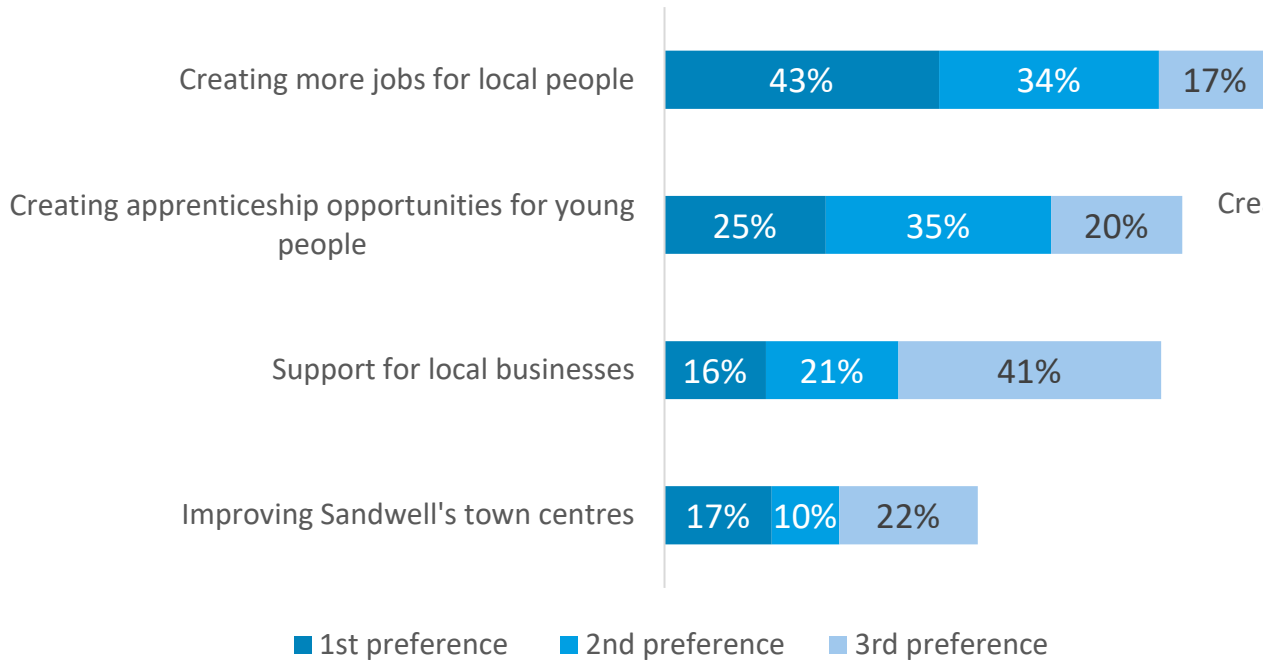
Theme 6: A strong and inclusive economy



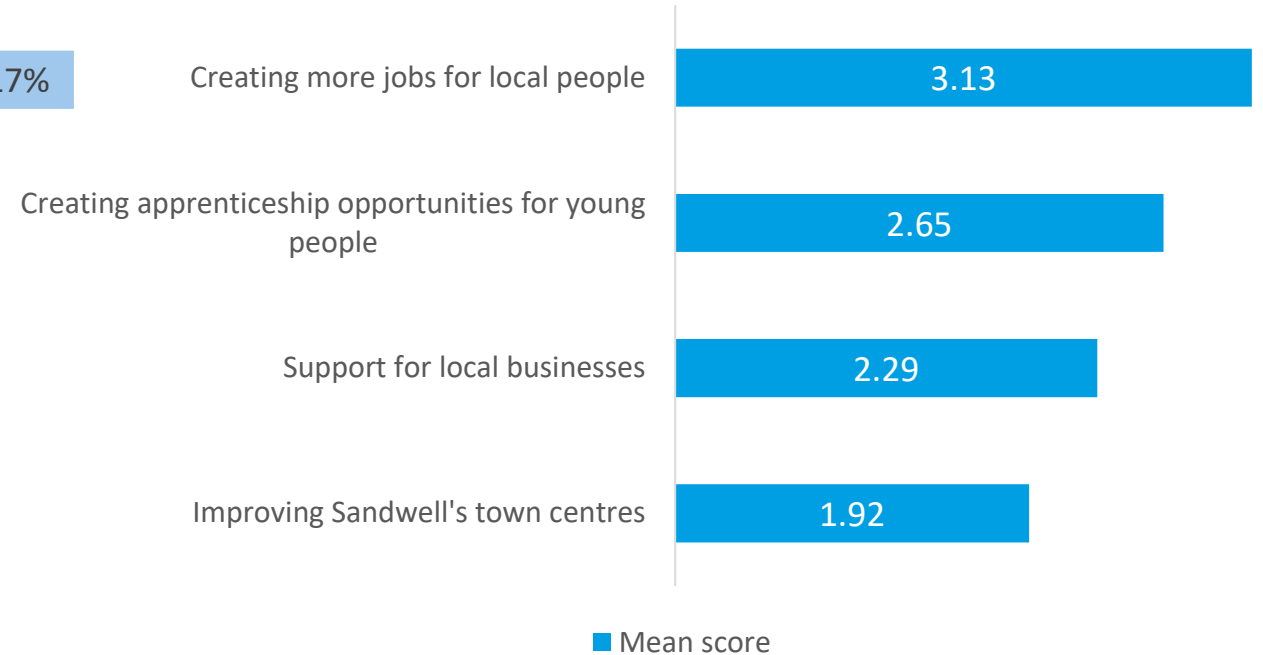
Priorities within Theme 6: a strong and inclusive economy

Page 209
 Within this Theme creating jobs for local people is the highest priority for Sandwell residents, with two in five (43%) selecting this as their top priority and a further third ranking this second. Improving Sandwell's town centre is the lowest priority in this question context of improving the local economy.

Top 3 choices

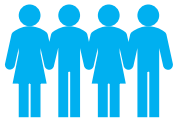


Mean score of choices



Theme 6: A strong and inclusive economy – notable variations in opinion

Residents who earlier said that **Theme 6 was the most important to them** most commonly prioritise job creation followed by creating apprenticeship opportunities.



Residents aged between 55 -74 are significantly more likely to prioritise the improvement of Sandwell’s town centres with 24% considering this their top priority (cf. 17%). This age group are significantly less likely to consider creating jobs as their top priority (34% cf. 43%). This pattern is reversed amongst **those aged 18 – 34** who are significantly more likely to prioritise job creation (47%) at the expense of improving town centres (12%).



By area, **Tipton** is most likely to advocate for supporting local businesses (2.38), significantly more so than the average and **Wednesbury** (1.87) and **Oldbury** (1.62). Across all areas, creating more jobs is consistently a top priority, indicating a desire for this to be area of focus.

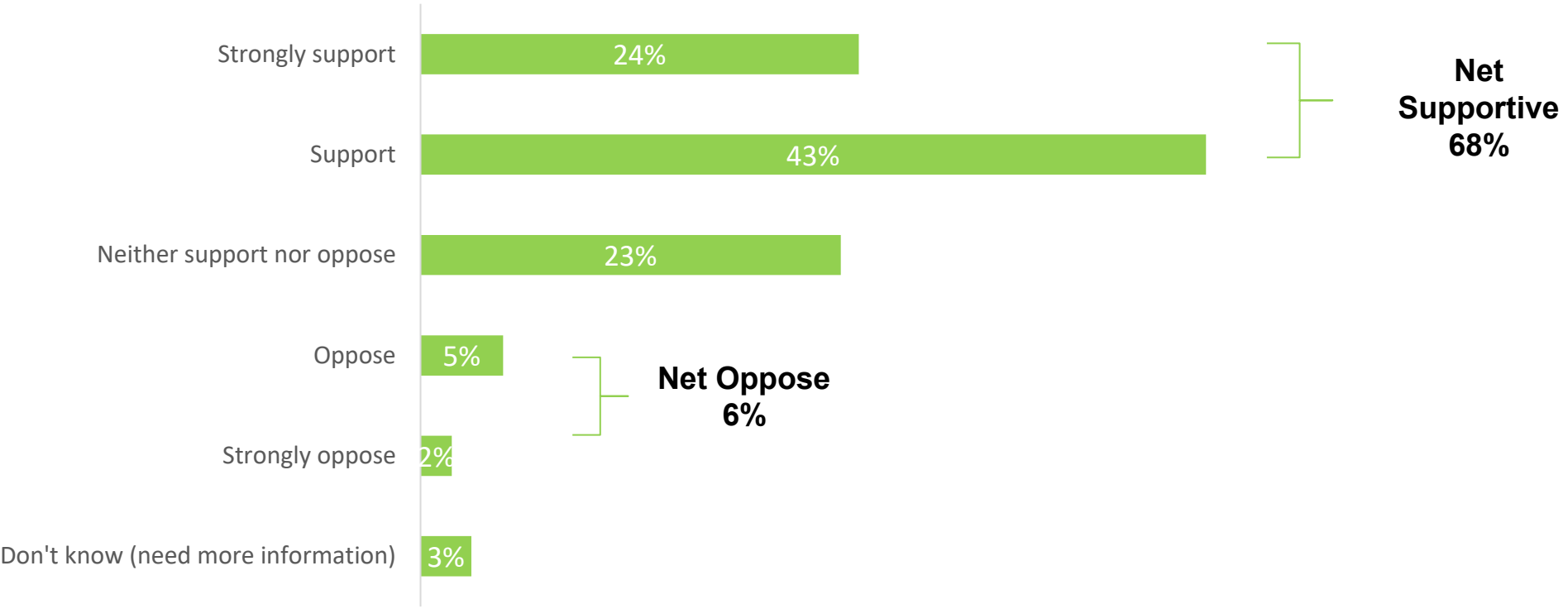


Support for renewable energy generation...

Two-thirds (68%) of residents actively support Sandwell Council exploring renewable energy generation opportunities, with a quarter (24%), strongly supporting such measures. Opposition is low with only 6% stating they are opposed. Please note that the question wording mentioned both energy security and tackling climate change as the rationale for this approach.

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Support for renewable energy



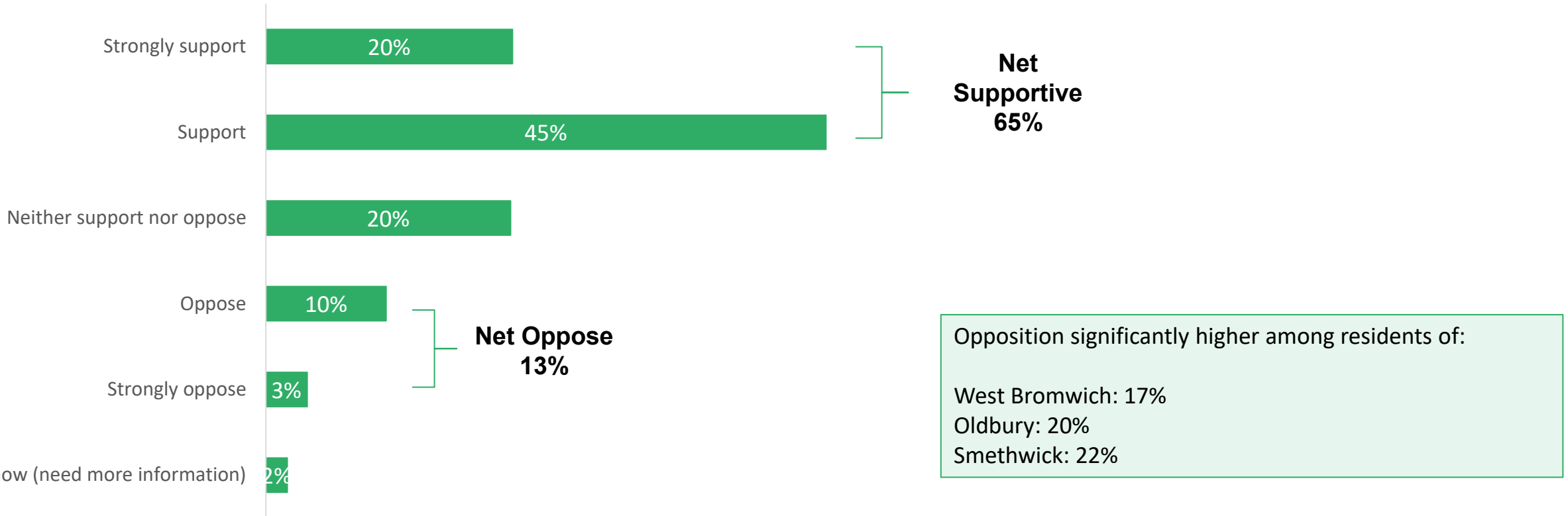
Q10. How supportive are you of the Council looking at opportunities to generate more renewable energy i.e. solar, to help tackle climate change and build greater energy security for its communities?
Unweighted sample base: 1100



Residents' support for rewilding

Support for rewilding some areas of Sandwell's parks and open spaces is expressed by two-thirds of residents (65%), including one in five (20%) who strongly supporting this approach. In total 13% oppose rewilding in Sandwell's parks and open spaces.

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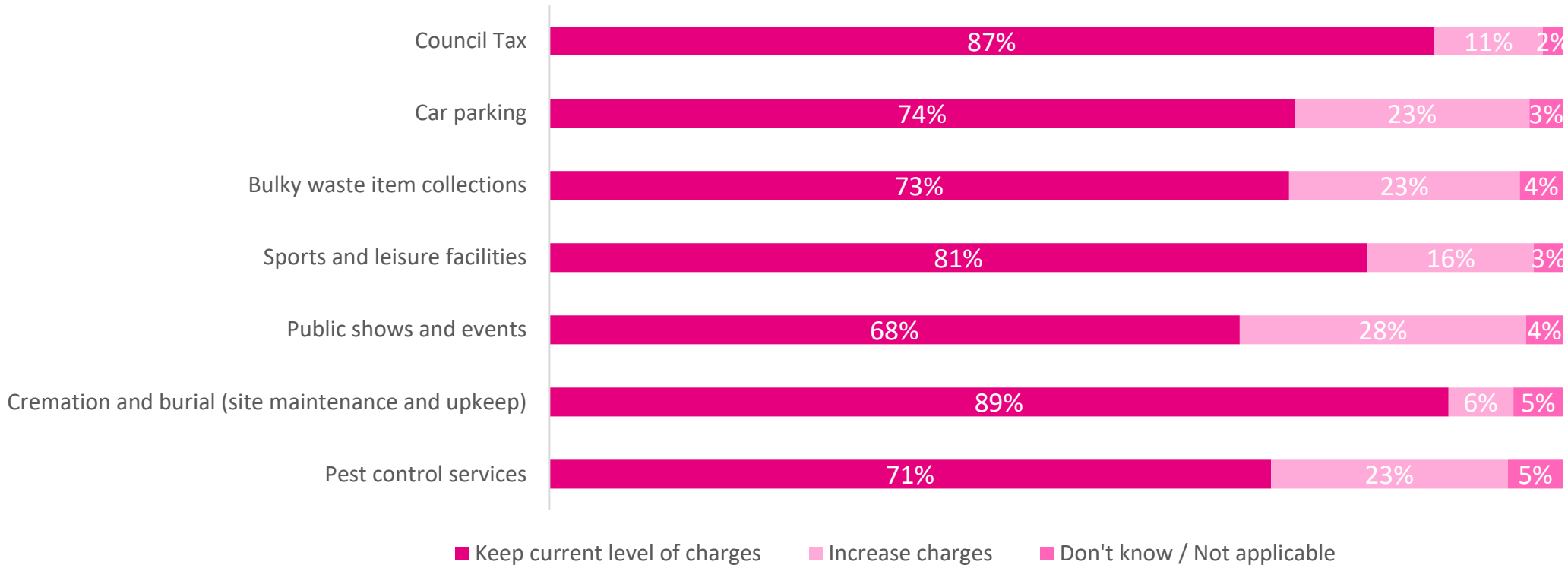
Service Changes



Paying more for Council services

Generally speaking, the majority of residents would prefer not to see changes to service related charges, with more than two-thirds stating that current charges should stay the same for each service. The most acceptable increases to service charges would be for public shows and events (28%) and for use of pest control services (23%), although even for these a majority remain opposed.

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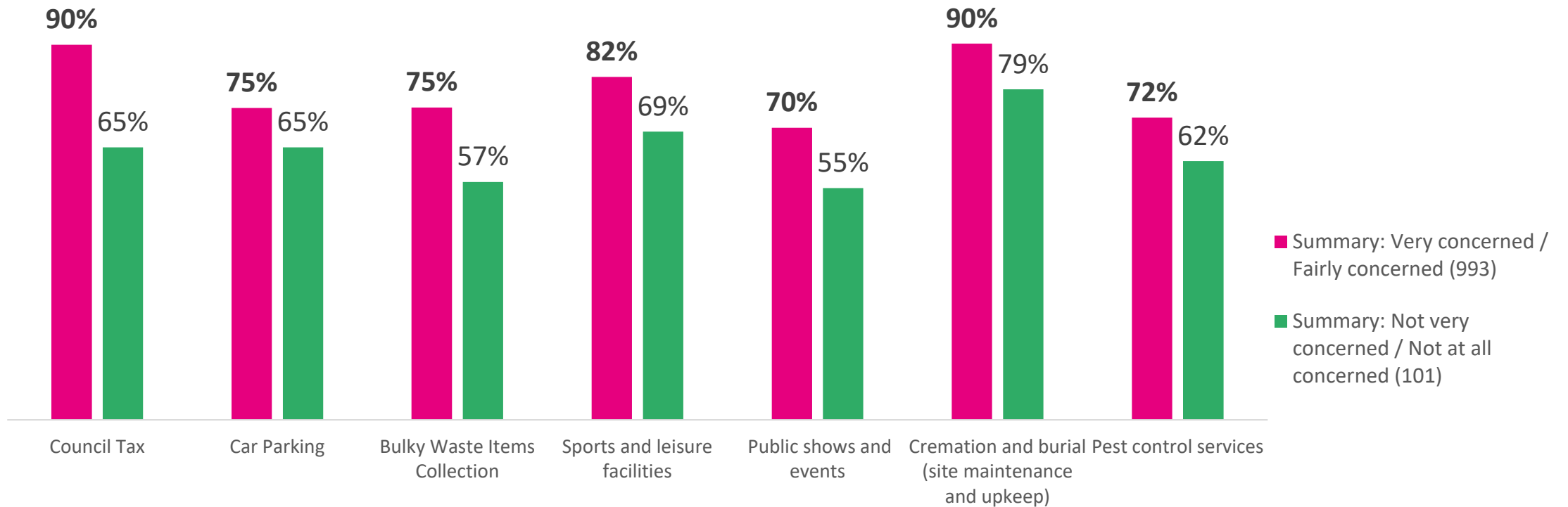
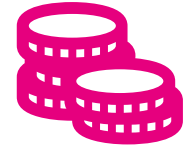


Summary: Q12. Taking into consideration the financial challenge the Council is facing, and in order to set a balanced budget and limit any reductions to services, which of the below would you be prepared to pay more for?
Unweighted sample base: 1100

Views on charging for services based on current financial circumstances

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the current cost of living crisis, those who are **fairly or very concerned about their financial situation** are more likely to oppose the increase of service charges.

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Summary: Q12. Taking into consideration the financial challenge the Council is facing, and in order to set a balanced budget and limit any reductions to services, which of the below would you be prepared to pay more for?
Base Sizes in Chart Legend

Views on Council Tax increases

87%
Keep the Same

Support for keeping the same higher among:

- Social Renters – 93%
- Private Renters – 91%
- Females – 90%
- Fairly / very concerned about cost of Living – 90%

11%
Increase Charges

Support for an increase is higher among:

- Those not very concerned about the cost-of-living crisis – 33%
- Those aged 75+ - 19%
- Homeowner - 17%
- Male – 15%

2%
Don't Know / Not Applicable

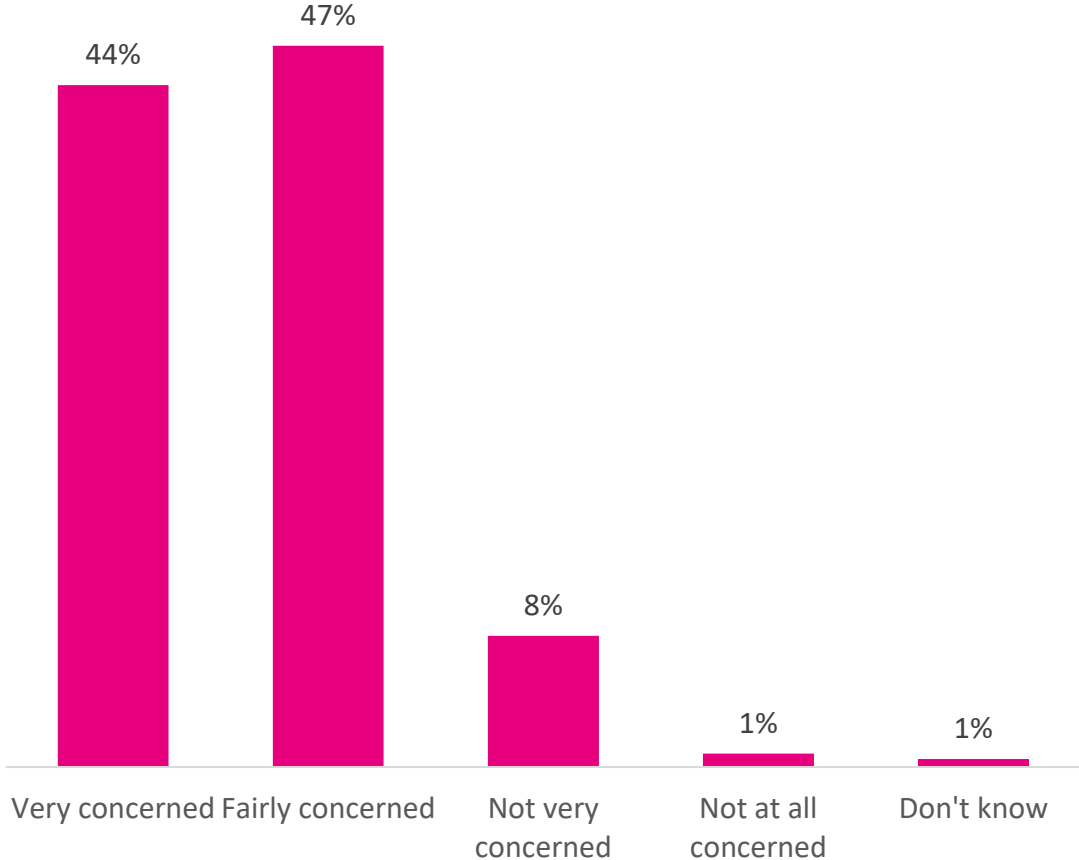
- Council Tax is the thing that residents most emphatically want to stay the same (87%).
- Younger cohorts are less supportive of increases in Council Tax charges than those aged 75+. Residents who are aged 75 and over are significantly more likely than the average to be willing to accept council tax increases (17%).

Financial Security



Concerns about the cost of living

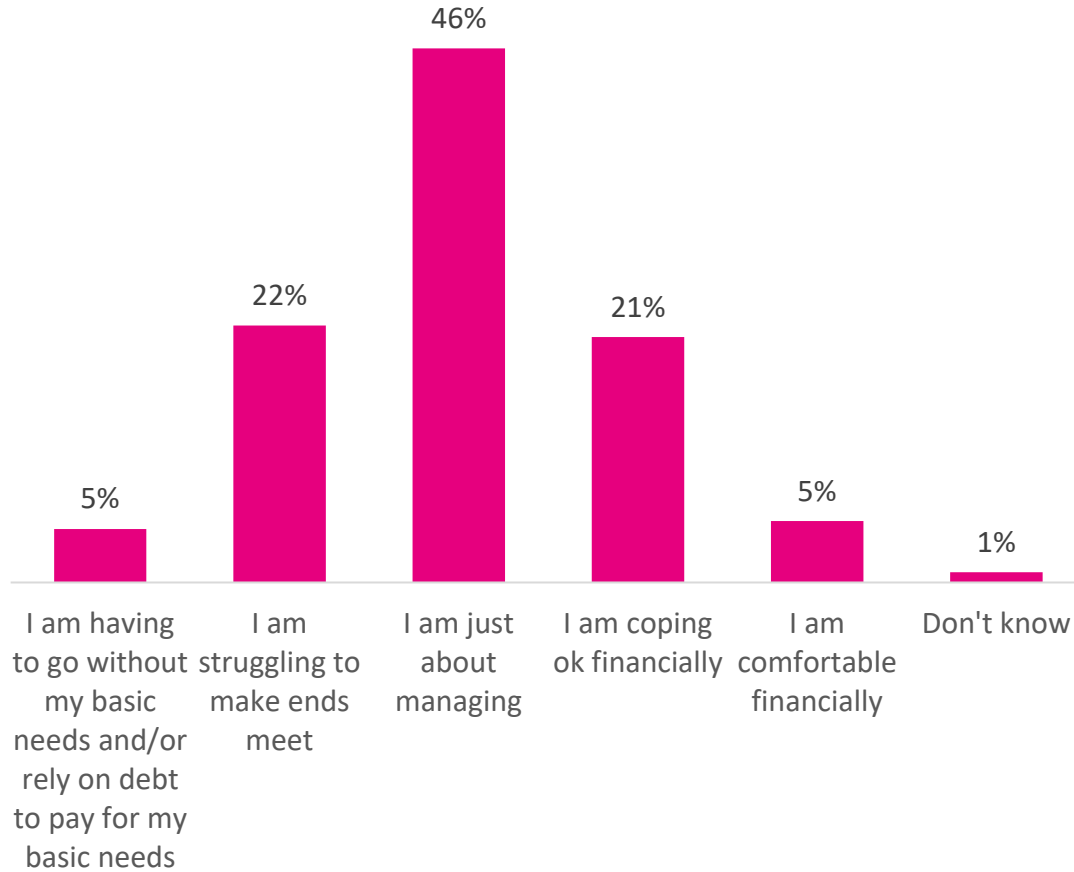
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- To put residents' views on how Sandwell Council sets its budget in 2024/25 into context, two questions were asked regarding personal financial circumstances.
- Nine in ten residents in Sandwell are at least fairly concerned about the current cost of living. Within this, two in five residents (44%) give the most extreme response of 'very concerned'. This demonstrates that the council's choices will have to be made when there is a heightened sensitivity to impacts upon household budgets.
- Concern about the cost of living is prevalent in all age groups, although older residents more commonly state that they are not very or not at all concerned about the current cost of living (75+: 18%; 55 -74: 13%).



Residents' financial security



- Approximately one quarter of Sandwell residents say that they are currently struggling to make ends meet (22%) or are having to go without basic needs (5%).
- This level of financial vulnerability has potential implications not only for the potential of the council to leverage extra revenue from Council Tax and service related charges, but also on future service demand.
- Regarding the strategic themes discussed in this report, residents who are going without or struggling are significantly more likely to prioritise Theme 1 – providing the best start in life for children and young people (42% chose this).

Contact Preferences

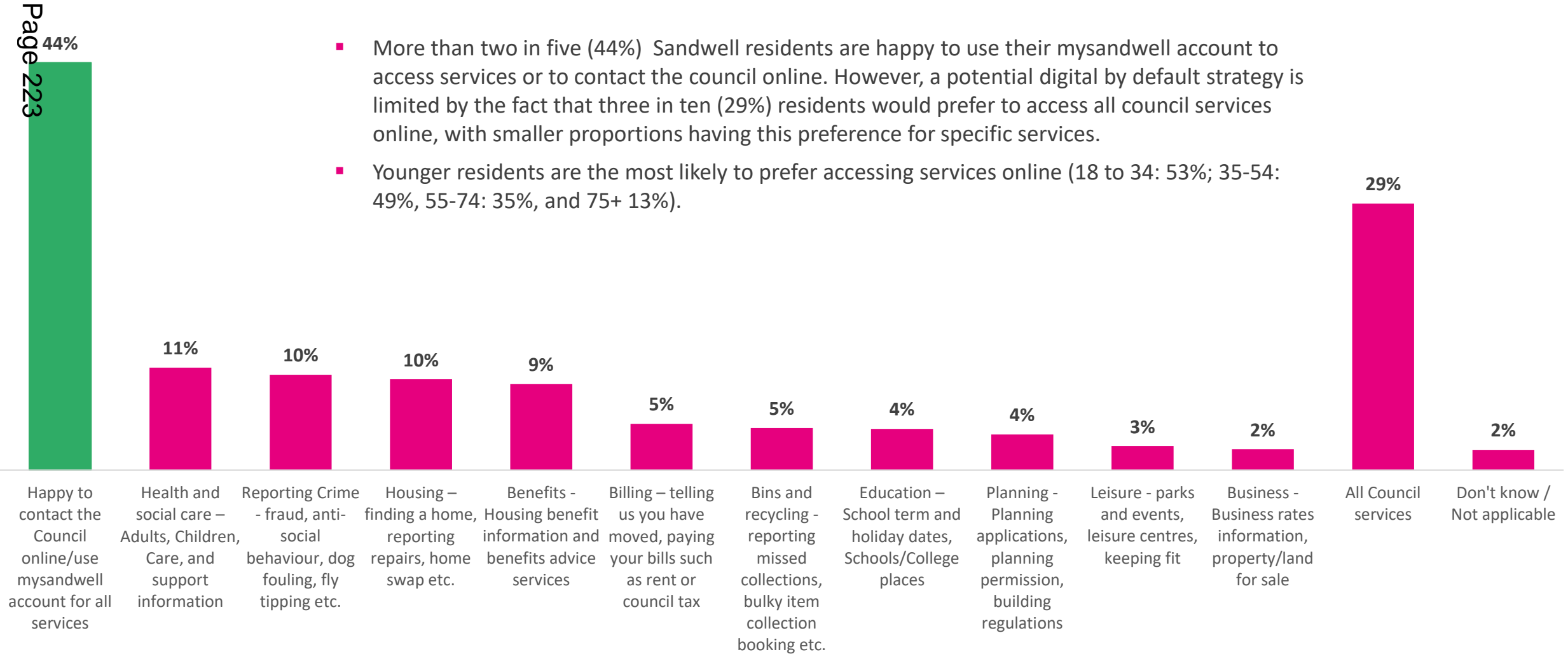


Preferred methods for accessing services

Are there any services that you would prefer to access in-person or on the telephone, rather than online/using mysandwell account?

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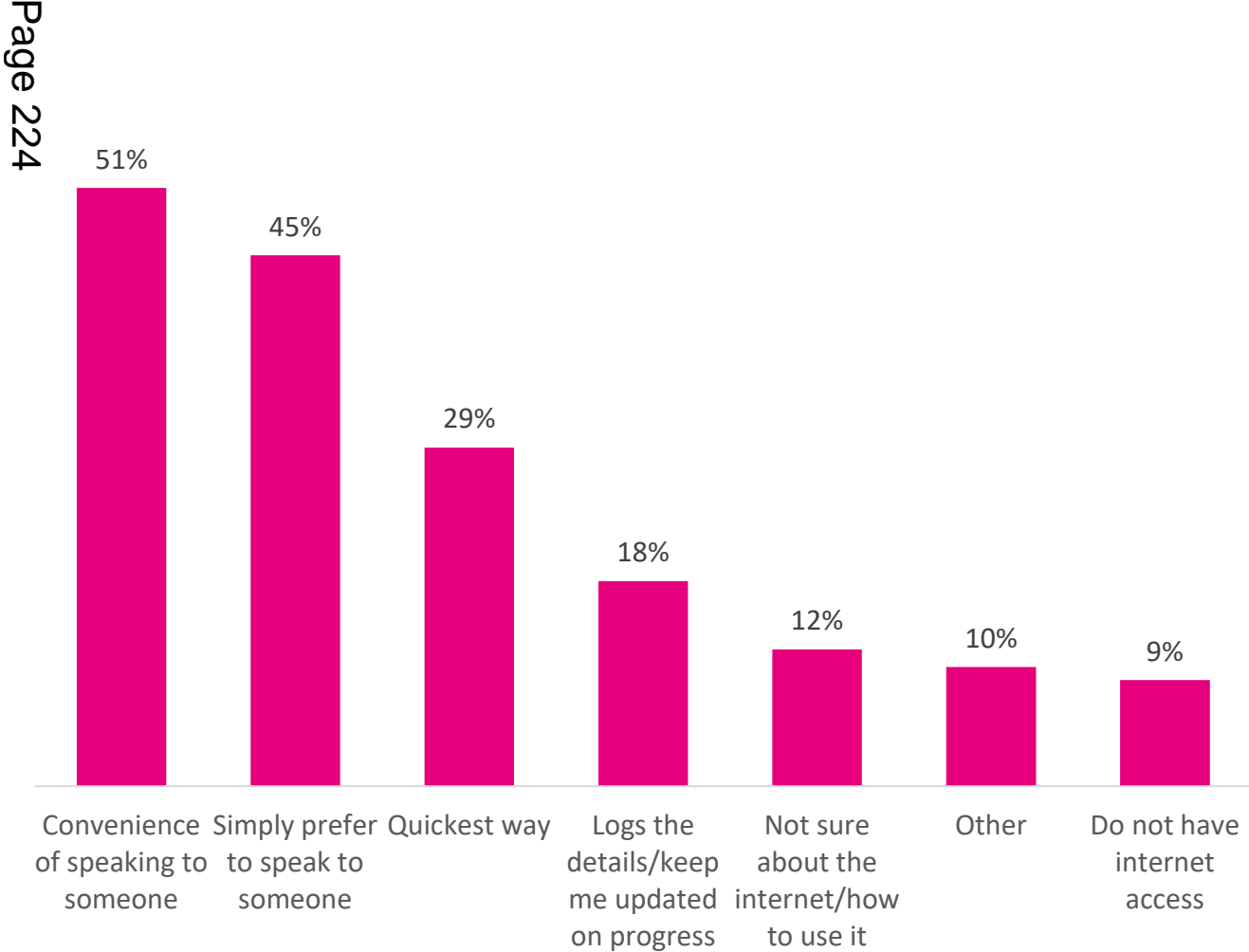
- More than two in five (44%) Sandwell residents are happy to use their mysandwell account to access services or to contact the council online. However, a potential digital by default strategy is limited by the fact that three in ten (29%) residents would prefer to access all council services online, with smaller proportions having this preference for specific services.
- Younger residents are the most likely to prefer accessing services online (18 to 34: 53%; 35-54: 49%, 55-74: 35%, and 75+ 13%).



Q15. Are there any services that you would prefer to access in-person or on the telephone, rather than online/using mysandwell account?
 Unweighted sample base: 1100 More than one response possible.

For those who would prefer to contact by telephone or in-person...

Why would you prefer to contact the Council in-person or by telephone?



- Residents who prefer to contact by telephone or speak to someone face to face, most frequently cite the convenience of speaking to someone (51%) and simply preferring to speak to someone as the reason why they prefer to do so (45%). On the basis of these responses, it is service quality, ease and speed that drive these preferences much more so than a lack of digital skills (12%) or internet access (9%).



Diversity and inclusion issues



Variations in response by ethnic origin

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Within the budget survey residents were asked to state their ethnic origin. Looking at the responses given by those who are White, those who have a Mixed ethnic origin, those who are Asian/Asian British and those who are Black/Black British there is no consistent variation in the responses given/the priorities chosen.

- The order of strategic properties chosen is largely consistent among each ethnic group. Whilst Theme 1 remains the top priority for Asian/Asian British residents, this group are significantly more likely to prioritise Theme 3: Strong, Resilient Communities – A safe, clean and green place to live (34% cf. 23%), and as a result significantly less likely to prioritise Theme 2: People Living Well and Aging Well (9% cf. 18%).
- Black/Black British residents are significantly more likely to prioritise Theme 4: Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods (15% cf. 7%). This shows that there is some variation in priorities in different communities, which the council must be sensitive to when making budgeting choices.
- Non-white residents are significantly more likely to oppose Council Tax increases. This may be related to their higher concern about the current cost of living crisis. That 95% of Asian / Asian British and 94% of Black British residents' feel fairly or very concerned about the cost-of-living crisis suggest that financial resilience may be lower among these communities.

Formal Consultation for Potential Changes to Discretionary Services

Background

1. The council's Consultation Principles sets out that:
 - a. Consultation lies at the heart of effective public policy development and service to the public. It should be a first thought and not an afterthought.
 - b. Consultation should never be used to communicate decisions already taken, and the outcome of consultation should never be pre-determined.
 - c. Consultation should be inclusive. Whenever possible, it should involve all parties/groups, including our children and young people, who can contribute to or are affected by the outcome of the consultation.
2. The views of our residents, businesses and communities are integral to the development of a MTFs that reflects the priorities of the borough. So that views could be captured in a timely manner to support the developed of the MTFs and savings options, a two phased approach to consultation and engagement has been devised for the 2024/25 Budget.

Consultation Process - Phase One

3. Phase One consisted of a face-to-face consultation exercise with a representative sample of residents in Summer 2023. Building on the budget consultation activity conducted in 2022, this face-to-face survey offered the opportunity for a representative sample of residents to provide input on their local priorities and preferences for delivering further council savings going into the budget setting process for 2024/25. The survey sought views on:
 - a. Preferred approach for delivering the Council savings needed
 - b. Suggested approaches for delivering the Council savings needed
 - c. Priorities when considering strategic outcomes
 - d. Paying more for Council services
 - e. Council Tax increases
4. The results of this helped inform options for future savings. The full report of the results of this survey are included at Annex 4.
5. Over the summer period, the council conducted the SHAPE survey with primary and secondary school age children across the borough. This survey captured the experiences of children and young people in Sandwell and what matters to them. At the same time, the council also conducted a Resident Wellbeing and Perception Survey with a representative sample of residents to gain insight into their experiences and views of living in Sandwell. The final results of both of these surveys are expected in mid-November, and will be reported with the results of Phase Two.

Consultation Process - Phase Two

6. Phase Two of the consultation process will commence following Cabinet approval on 15 November 2023 and will be scheduled to feed into the meetings of Cabinet and Full Council in February 2024 that will be asked to take decisions on the Budget for 2024/25. The council will comply with its obligations under statute in all respects in undertaking these activities
7. The form of the consultation will be to seek the views of residents, businesses and communities on the whole basket of savings options that have been developed for consideration by Cabinet and Council in order to meet the financial gap in 2024/25. These interests will be contacted using the following methods:
 - a. Focus groups with residents who participated in the summer budget consultation;
 - b. Focus groups with representatives of children and young people, businesses and the voluntary & community sector; and
 - c. Online survey hosted on the council's consultation hub open to all residents, businesses and communities, promoted through multiple avenues to ensure as wide participation as possible.
8. Where savings options impact on groups of staff, engagement and formal consultation with affected staff and Trade Unions will be conducted as appropriate.

Equality Impact Assessments

9. Service Leads will complete Equality Impact Assessments for each saving proposal to fully understand the risks and implications of removal, reduction, or a change in delivery. This will be undertaken in parallel to the consultation process.
10. The outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment, alongside the findings of the consultation process, will be assessed and used to prepare final recommendations that will be presented to Cabinet in February for approval.

Timeline for Public Consultation

11. Work will commence to prepare the consultations will commence once approval of the savings options has been received. The timing of this consultation period is scheduled to feed into the decision-making process for Cabinet in February.
12. The online survey will be launched from 20 November 2023 and run for a period of six weeks. Focus groups will be conducted during this time, with analysis built up over the period as feedback is received.

Savings Opportunities for Consultation

Savings Options	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<p>Maximising Budget Efficiencies and Making the Best Use of External Grants and Contributions Reducing our service budgets where projects have ended, or activities are no longer required, as well as making the best use of external grants and contributions to service costs with no direct impact on the public.</p>	5,200	5,300	5,300
<p>Making Best Use of Assets Implementing the Asset Rationalisation Strategy to sell assets that are no longer needed and making the best use of the assets we retain</p>	0	800	800
<p>Maximising Income & Commercial Opportunities Reviewing the fees and charges for services where we have discretion to set the value of changes to increase by 5%, and increasing the following by more than 5%:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals on Wheels • Registration Services • Green Waste Subscription • Pre-application Planning and Planning Fees • Building Regulation Fees • Private Rented Sector Fees • Streetworks Permit Charges • Development and Commercial Property Rates <p>Exploring Commercial Opportunities to generate income through reviewing our:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pest Control Delivery Models • Visitor Services and Events • Sandwell Residential Education Services • Data Services to Schools/Academies 	1,900	3,400	4,800

<p>Prevention & Promoting Independence Adult Social Care Transformation Programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistive technology and reablement to support people to live independently for as long as possible • expansion of our Shared Lives offer to increase the opportunity for people to live as independently as possible • reviewing the transition between Children's Services and Adult Social Care to make sure people are supported as they grow into 	2,200	3,500	3,500
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Savings Options	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
adulthood and that services are better able to meet their changing needs			
<p>Reducing the Cost of Discretionary Services through reviewing how we deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Spaces Services (including Parks, Ground Maintenance, Events and Sandwell Valley) • Christmas Lights programme • Arts Café • Shop Mobility service in West Bromwich 	900	900	1,000
<p>Reducing the Cost of High Cost Services Reviewing the way we deliver waste management service and leisure facilities to ensure they are meeting the broad aims of the council and needs of residents and are fit for future delivery models while delivering value for money</p>	800	4,500	4,500
<p>Smarter Support Services Reviewing how we deliver our support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining internal HR and Business Management processes to get the best out of the technology available • Being smarter with how we procure ICT contracts • Making our cash handling activities more efficient to reduce costs 	1,300	1,900	2,100

<p>Sustainable Delivery Models</p> <p>Reviewing the range, extent and way we deliver services to ensure they are meeting the broad aims of the council and needs of residents while delivering value for money. Service areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Appointeeship Service. • Customer Contact Centres. • Community Sports Plans. • School Crossing Patrols. • Investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector. • Enhancing Temporary Accommodation Provision. • The Climate Change Programme. • Introducing Part Night Street Lighting where safe to do so. • Exploring different options to provide home to school transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. • Making better use of the Council's vehicle fleet. • Improving support to individuals and families who have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' to reduce cost to public services. 	5,700	6,600	6,600
Savings Options	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing Children's Services to optimize the number of children looked after and the cost of residential care. 			
Total	18,000	26,900	28,600

General Budget Planning Assumptions

The key points of briefing in relation to the Forecast are:

- a. New Homes Bonus – The Government has been considering reform or phasing out of New Homes Bonus and currently the grant is calculated on a one-off annual basis. It is assumed that the Council will receive a commensurate sum in 2024/25 and in future years.
- b. Controls on use of packaging and waste volumes – the Government is planning to establish a system where the producers of packaging waste are charged a levy related to the waste volumes that result such that the proceeds - net of regulatory costs - are passed on to local Councils. The assumption made in this version of the MTFP is that the incoming monies will need to be reinvested in waste services and that, accordingly, there will not be a net benefit to the Council from this scheme. This assumption will be reviewed for the next update of the MTFP. Government has confirmed that implementation will be deferred until 2025/26.
- c. Collection Fund – the working assumption is that Council Tax is assumed to increase by 2.99% throughout each year of the MTFP, the maximum permitted under current Government guidance for core tax increases. The Collection Fund is currently estimated to be in deficit at the end of the current financial year and therefore £0.5m has been included in the MTFP as a charge to account for the Council's share of that deficit. The situation will be reviewed and final values will included in the February budget report.
- d. NNDR Income – the assumption is that Sandwell will continue to retain 99% of it's business rates (with 1% being provided for West Midlands Fire). From 2024/25 it is likely that the Council will be part of the new Devolution Deal which is effectively a continuation of the current retention arrangements. At this time it is considered unlikely that there will be a reset of the business rates baseline and therefore future income in the MTFP is a continuation of current baseline levels with no growth assumptions due to the current economic climate.
- e. Inflation is only provided on key contracts (e.g. SERCO waste management, Sandwell Children's Trust and utilities). Other inflationary pressures are to be managed within existing service budgets.
- f. Pay inflation is provided for at an estimated level, with year 1 of the MTFP taking into account an adjustment for the difference between budgeted and actual pay awards in the current year (i.e. 2023/24). Future estimated pay awards are currently calculated on a 4% increase in 2024/25 and 4% thereafter as core CPI inflation is brought back to target levels.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27 - Autumn 2023/24

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Notes
	£m	£m	£m	
Current Net Budget	317.103	317.103	317.103	
Pay inflation	9.601	16.171	23.006	Includes impact of increased offer for 23/24 plus 5% 2024/25 then 4% pa
Technical Adjustments: debt financing and investment income	0.300	2.550	3.850	Increased interest rates when refinancing debt maturities
Other Technical Adjustments	(12.023)	(12.023)	(12.023)	Earmarked reserves and contingency budget adjustments
Total Pay and Technical Adjustments	(2.122)	6.698	14.833	
Other Service Pressures:				
Growth	2.725	3.286	3.296	
Demographic Changes	8.662	10.924	13.186	
Inflationary Increases	12.801	23.353	29.950	
Loss of funding	0.189	-	-	
Changes in recharges	2.000	2.000	2.000	Revision to charges to/ from Housing Revenue Account
Budget correction	4.017	3.462	3.462	Re-basing of budgets
Total Service Pressures	30.394	43.025	51.894	
Total Budget Adjustments	28.272	49.723	66.727	
Revised Net Expenditure	345.375	366.826	383.830	
Funded by:				
Non Ringfenced Government Grants	(4.225)	(4.225)	(4.225)	Includes new homes bonus and services grant

Retained Business Rates (including Section 31 + topup grant)	(195.406)	(194.607)	(194.607)	Assumes no reset in business rates and nil growth in base
Council Tax Income	(133.281)	(139.326)	(145.644)	Assumes 2.99% pa
Collection Fund (Surplus)/ Deficit	0.500	-	-	Estimate as at end Sept 2023
Total Funding	(332.412)	(338.158)	(344.476)	
Net Shortfall	12.963	28.668	39.354	

The MTFP Change Log**Movement of Savings Target from June 2023 MTFP Report**

	2024/25 £m
Shortfall reported in June 2023	8.859
Changes in Council Net Expenditure:	
Reduction in Pressures:	(5.892)
Removal of assumed increase in ASC Service Grant pending autumn statement announcements and provisional local government finance settlement	10.009
Total Changes in net expenditure	4.117
Changes in Funding:	
Revised council tax base generating additional council tax income	(0.513)
Estimated Council Tax Deficit to be charged to the General Fund	0.500
Total Changes in Funding	(0.013)
Total Changes	4.104
Revised Shortfall	12.963

Annex 10

Risks: Principal Risks to the MTFS & Headline Mitigation

Risks	Headline Mitigation
Failure to constrain expenditures within relevant budget targets.	The Council's financial reporting arrangements including the chart of accounts, budget management approaches, and forecasting are under review. This will be completed in financial years 2023/24 & 2024/25.
Failure to prepare for balancing the 2024/25 Budget shortfall.	The preparation of this MTFS at this point in the financial year, the generation of savings options, the planned launch of consultation and engagement and the promulgation of the Budget Timetable incorporating two meetings of Full Council to take decisions on savings.
Failure to increase Reserves.	The Council has a medium term intention to maintain essential reserves at a level to maximise assurance that strategic exigencies can be met within the term of the MTFS. Accordingly, there are presently no plans to employ significant reserves to balance the 2024/25 Budget shortfall.
Failure to assure Commissioners that sufficient progress has been made in building a robust MTFS	The preparation and endorsement of this MTFS and MTFP by the Statutory Officers, Leadership Team and Cabinet, together with the development of a robust approach to consultation and review by the Scrutiny function is relevant here.
Failure to deliver savings.	The Council has reviewed savings delivery in 2023/24 and is enhancing monitoring for the Leadership Team, Cabinet and the Scrutiny function.

<p>Failure to arrange cover for expected cost increases</p>	<p>The Council has set in place a process whereby the MTFP is updated quarterly and the thoroughness of review and analysis will be enhanced on each occasion as additional information becomes available and insight gained. In addition the Council will adjust its fees and charges annually in the future to ensure that the net cost of services is moderated where it is equitable to do.</p>
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<p>Inability to Fund the Capital Programme arising from continued rises in interest rates and higher cost of borrowing.</p>	<p>Capital Principles to set down a clear and affordable framework for capital planning have been recommended to Cabinet. Further work to develop an affordable Capital Programme will be undertaken for inclusion in the Draft Budget to be received by Full Council in February 2024.</p>
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CREATING A COUNCIL FOR THE FUTURE



Purpose and Vision

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We are fortunate to work in a Council that has an ambitious and determined vision to create a modern and agile organisation, that is laid out in clear terms in the Strategic Outcomes of our plan. At the heart of the Plan, and front and centre of everything we do is to ensure we improve our Borough by investing in what matters for the positive benefit of the residents of Sandwell.

In such uncertain and turbulent times, we should be proud of the enormous amount that has already been achieved in the last two years. The Council now feels stable, safe and has a clearer appreciation of what it needs to achieve, building on the foundations of our Improvement Plan. And with that clarity also comes an understanding that there is still much more to be done, not only to invest in the vital services that our residents need, but to also make the Council sustainable and relevant for the future. We must challenge ourselves to ensure everything we do has real measurable impact, because to deliver everything we want to do affordably and effectively we will need to have a clear focus on how and why we do things and how we work together with each other and in partnership with the community to codesign services for the future. We will need to do more of the things that matter and reduce or stop the things that do not.

We must not forget that these are not easy times for our residents and thousands of them are living with poverty and hardship, but together we have a real opportunity to address these challenges and deliver the outcomes that will make a real difference.



Where We Are Now

Page 240
To achieve the impact that we want needs a step change in how we do business. We face critical funding and growth pressures and the way that our budgets are currently constructed means that our planned level of future expenditure leaves significant challenges to deliver savings in the later years of the MTFs that can only be met through transformation. It should be clear that whilst the Council was not put into statutory intervention because of its financial position at the time, it is likely that without a plan for transformation and a steadying of the finances it is highly likely that we would have been.

We cannot afford to reduce the pace of the change needed as delivery of some savings will take time to embed. We also cannot meet this challenge through incremental and marginal savings – often described as ‘salami slicing’ – to all areas of expenditure. Instead, there needs to be a clear focus on the services we provide now and want to provide in the future, taking a standard approach to managing our projects and programmes of change. We need a fresh look at the contribution that everything we do has to the outcomes that we want to achieve as part of our vision. Rather than a threat or a burden, we need to treat this as an opportunity to ‘reset’ ourselves and re-imagine our Council for the future.

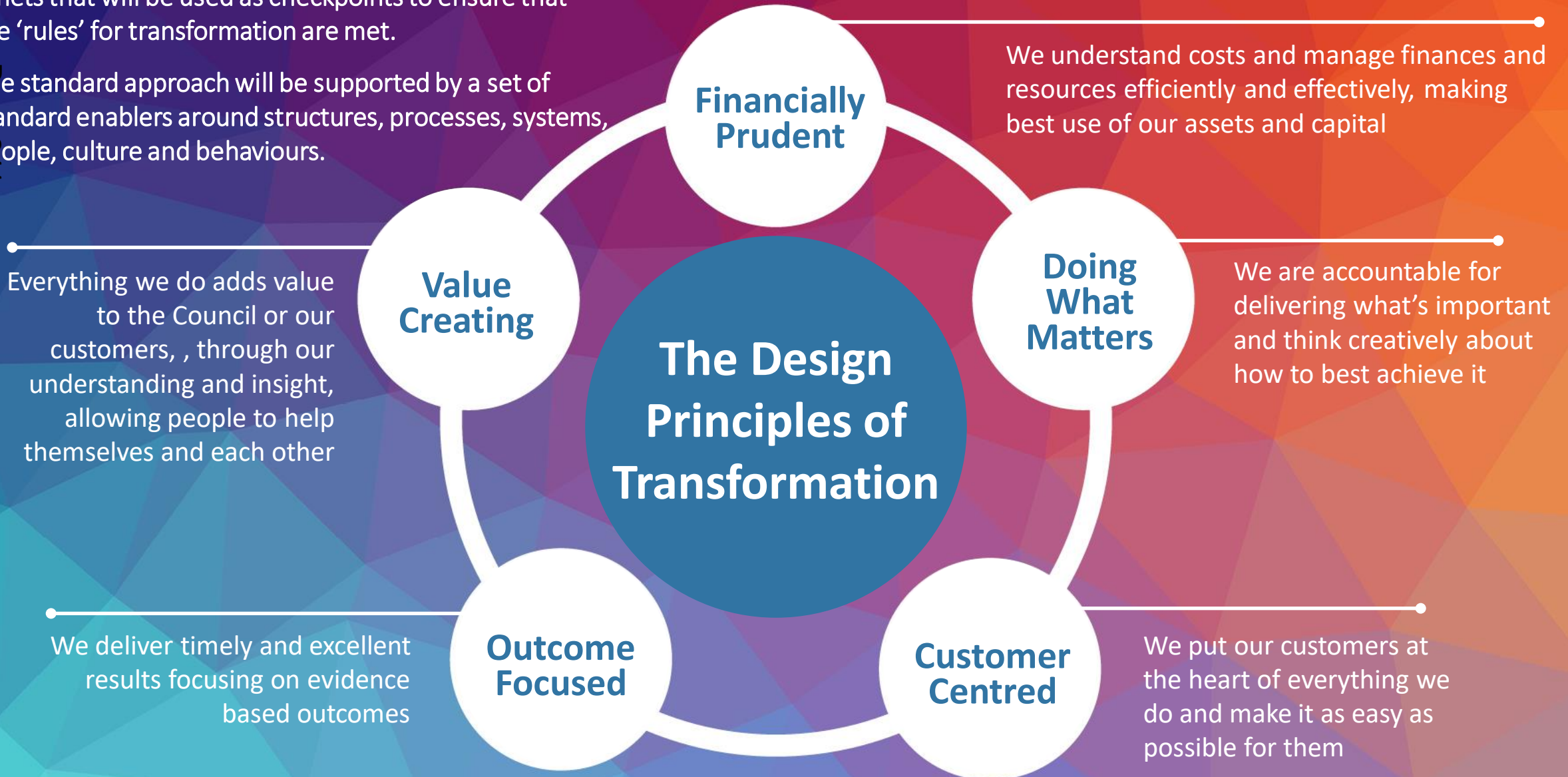
The transformation needs to be challenging but achievable and capable of being delivered in the timescales we say it can. Without this level of commitment and focus on evidence to show impact, we cannot be certain of moving out of intervention.



The Design Principles for Transformation are the guiding tenets that will be used as checkpoints to ensure that the 'rules' for transformation are met.

The standard approach will be supported by a set of standard enablers around structures, processes, systems, people, culture and behaviours.

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Transformation Fundamentals – The Brilliant Basics

The starting point for our transformation is a blend of key Directorate projects prioritised to deliver in the next year and some critical cross cutting projects.

Page 242

Key Directorate projects include...

SEND Service Transformation
SEN Transport

Transitions

Community Hubs, Enforcement
Leisure Review, Waste Review

Housing Repairs Transformation
Housing Asset Mgt System

Major contracts & commissioning review

Asset & Estate Rationalisation Strategy,
Neighbourhood Working

Governance & Decision Making

Key Corporate projects include...

A **business support** project is underway which aims to provide a single professional service with consistent standards, staff training and career prospects; gaining greater efficiencies by utilising new technology and applying lean business processes across the organisation.

Ensuring the best customer experience is a critical element of our improvement journey and our **customer journey** programme will ensure we deliver on this so we add maximum value to our customer in everything we do, making it as easy as possible for them to interact with us.

Developing a comprehensive **digital strategy** means embedding the new tools currently under development, such as Oracle Fusion, which will allow for improved processes and more self-service. It also means ensuring all our other systems are optimised to allow us to work intelligently and seamlessly across the organisation for the benefit of our customers.

Ongoing Transformation – Sustainability

Page 243

The key to the delivery of a sustainable transformation programme to ensure that we can link everything we do to the outcomes we want to achieve. As part of this we will have a Framework that ensures a clear link between...

Purpose

Inputs

Outputs

Outcomes

Impact

It is a way to show the direct relationship between *what we do* and the *difference we make*.

Projects that are considered to form part of the programme will be tested against the design principles and then assessed to ensure they have positive impact, either on our customers, or our finances, or both. They will also be looked at in terms of risk – and issues such as capacity to deliver addressed.



What it will mean for staff

Page 244
To deliver this kind of transformation there will need to be positive leadership at all levels of the Council. This means having a mindset that is open to the possibilities of thinking what the Council can be in the future. They will uphold the agreements of the transformation and help their staff to deliver the change, providing the opportunities, the moral conviction and the learning.

The transformation cannot be seen as a distraction from current priority programme of delivery. On the contrary, it must be recognised as the critical enabler for our future success. We will continue to invest in and develop our people as we know they are our greatest asset and continue to work hard to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our workforce, so they represent our community.

We value our people and want to see them thrive. Whilst this transformation means we will see a change in what people do and how they do it and this may mean that we stop, reduce or re-think how we do many things, equally there will be new things to do and new opportunities. We will also look at how we are structured in terms of our hierarchies and spans of control, and how each person contributes to our outcomes, ensuring synergies with performance management.



As we change, grow and develop, we will invest in staff – in their learning and development - to help them achieve new things for the maximum impact of Sandwell and for themselves.

THE TIMELINE FOR CHANGE

2023/2024

**Brilliant
Basics**

2024/2028

**Sustainable
Transformation**

Beyond

**Continuous
Improvement**

To make such a fundamental shift in how we do business is a long-term commitment, not an overnight fix, with a new model that may emerge from the work that will not only be around process and structure, but also culture and behaviours. That is not to say there will not be short- and medium-term changes in how we do business, focused around our Brilliant Basics programme - and we will take every opportunity that arises, as long as it aligns to our long-term vision and strategic outcomes.

Our Brilliant Basics programme will commence immediately – in fact the majority of projects are already in hand. So, this is our focus for 2023/24. And whilst work will also commence on the longer-term sustainable transformation programme, this will be our focus from 2024 onwards. As we move forward, there will of course be new challenges and opportunities and our programme will adjust to reflect that, as well as continuing to improve everything else we do. We will ensure we measure, manage, test and learn from all projects as we go along, ensuring we focus our efforts on what works.

How will this be delivered in practice

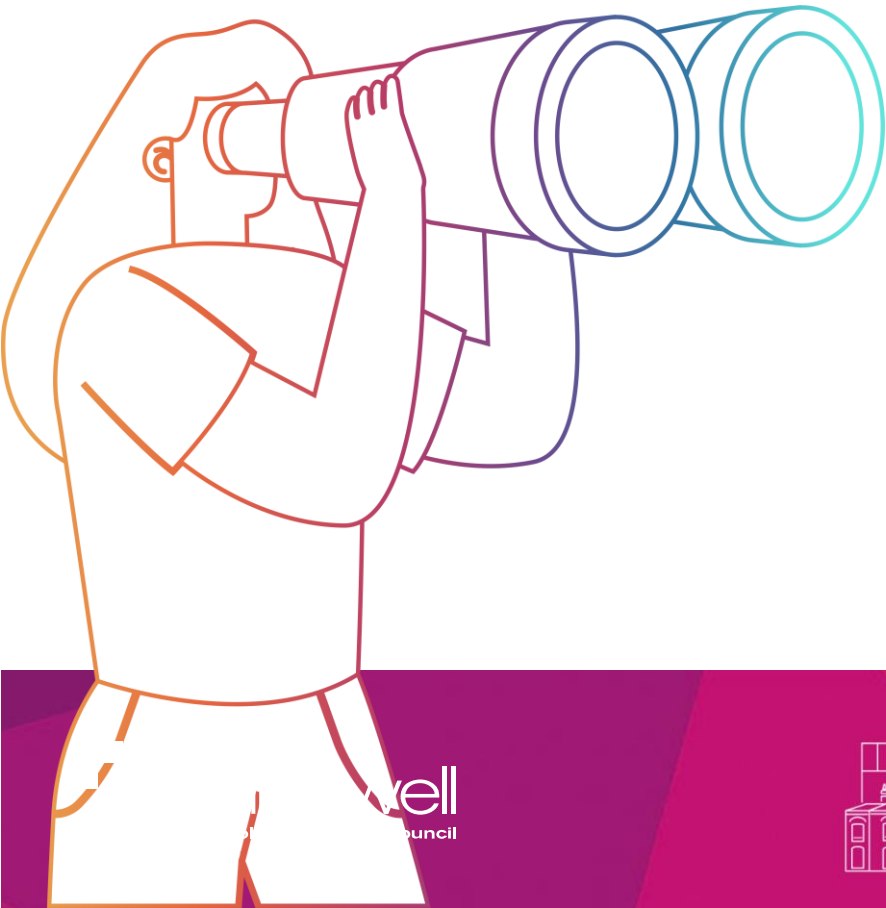


Alignment to the Vision

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Our Vision is

‘to create a modern, outstanding council,
one where our organisational structure,
business systems, process and people and
cultural working practices are fully aligned
to deliver our strategic outcomes’.



Strategic Outcomes Framework

Page 249
Our Strategic Outcomes are the basis on which we deliver our services:

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

The development of a Strategic Outcomes Framework ensures a coherent linkage between purpose, inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. It is a way to show the direct relationship between what we do and the difference we make.

Design Principles

These are the 'rules' we will apply to ensure all change is aligned to the Transformation Vision.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

We put our customers at the heart of everything we do and make it as easy as possible for them

Customer Centred

Everything we do adds value to the Council or our customers, through our understanding and insight, allowing people to help themselves and each other

Value Creating

We deliver timely and excellent results focusing on evidence-based outcomes

Outcome Focused

We understand costs and manage finances and resources efficiently and effectively, making best use of our assets and capital

Financially Prudent

We are accountable for delivering what's important and think creatively about how to best achieve it

Doing What Matters

TRANSFORMATION VISION

To create a modern, outstanding council, one where our organisational structure, business systems, process and people and cultural working practices are fully aligned to deliver our strategic outcomes.



The enabling mechanisms

Design Principles

Customer Centred

Value Creating

Outcome Focussed

Financially Prudent

Doing what matters

The best start in life for children and young people

People live well and age well

Strong, resilient communities

Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods

A strong and inclusive economy

A connected and accessible Sandwell

One Council, One Team

Structures

Systems

Processes

People

Culture & Behaviours

The Enabling Mechanisms

Vision

To create a modern, outstanding council, one where our organisational structure, business systems, process and people and cultural working practices are fully aligned to deliver our strategic outcomes.

Understanding the Enabling Mechanisms

Mechanism	Structures	Systems	Processes	People	Culture & Behaviours
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Governance

PMO & Gateways

Approach

Spans of Control and contribution to outcomes	Digital Blueprint and improved self service	Redesign Toolkit and methodology	Workforce Strategy and succession planning	Behaviour framework and Organisation Development approach
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Overview

Structures ensure there are the right people in the right place	Systems ensure the right technology is there to deliver on the programme	Processes ensure the right work is being done in the most efficient way	People ensures that we have a sufficient capacity of people with the right skills and capabilities	Culture cuts across all themes and without it none of the other enablers will deliver
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The Strategic Outcome-led Transformation Portfolio



Assessing the Significance

Page 255

The council has adopted a system that uses a number of inputs to consider the level of support and assurance required. A PM Threshold Tool has been created and based on the inputs the project will be identified as level 1, 2, 3 or 4 – this can then be the basis of a discussion with the PMO in terms of resourcing and requirements. This is illustrated below:

Thresholds	Tiering		Menu of PMO Support	Scoring
Value	1	Intense	Full range of support including project management	1
Complexity	2	High	Project officer support working alongside service on delivery	1
Risk	3	Medium	Oversight of the project giving advice and guidance	1
Capacity	4	Reporting	Templates and tools available for services to use	1



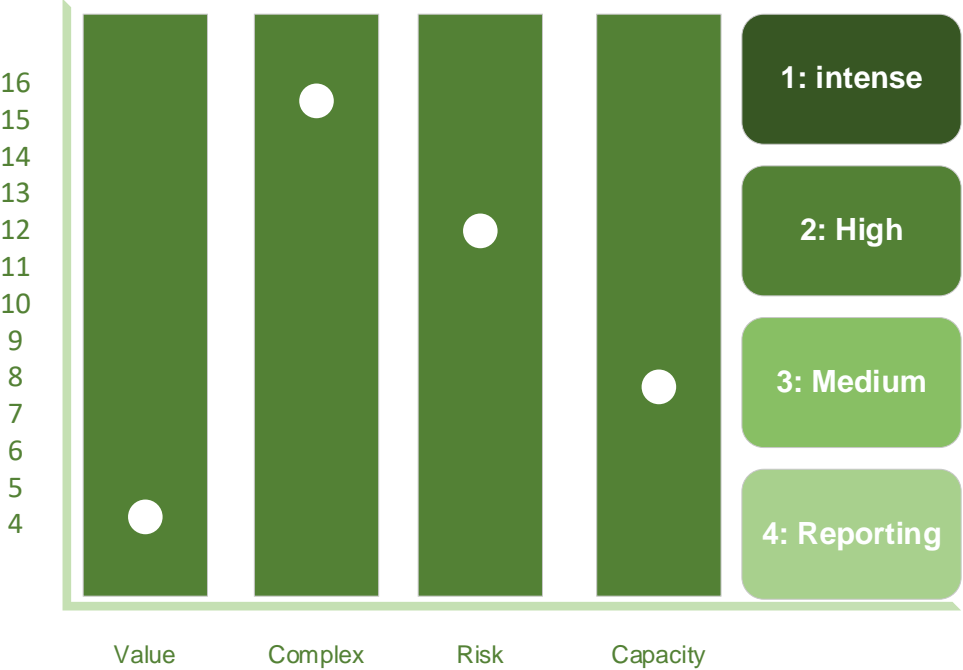
Assessing the Significance

The threshold inputs cover the following:

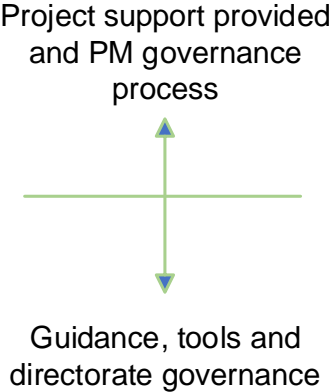
- Value and status
- Complexity
- Risk
- Capacity

The scoring will result in an overall rating.

This is illustrated as follows:



Total overall score:



A PHASED APPROACH

2023/2024

Brilliant Basics

Brilliant Basics:

- Portfolio Structure
- Design Principles and Strategic Framework
- Existing Transformation aligned to Outcome-led Portfolio
- Strategic Outcome Mapping and Service Planning

2024/2028

Sustainable Transformation

Sustainable Transformation:

- Outcome-led Portfolio
- Long-Term Planning

Beyond

Continuous Improvement

The best start in life for children and young people

People live well and age well

Strong, resilient communities

Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods

A strong and inclusive economy

A connected and accessible Sandwell

One Council, One Team

Brilliant Basics Portfolio

SEND Service Transformation
SEN Transport

Transitions

Community Hubs, Enforcement
Leisure Review, Waste Review

Housing Repairs Transformation
Housing Asset Management System

Major Contracts and Commissioning Review
Asset and Estate Rationalisation Strategy

Customer Journey, Digital Blueprint
Neighbourhood Working

Oracle Fusion, Business Support,
Governance and Decision-Making

Informing Sustainable Transformation and Outcome-led Decision Making

Strategic Outcome	What this means	Activity	VfM	Service Plan Actions
The best start in life for children and young people	Remove barriers to education & learning, prioritise consistent support to families, check in with all children			
People live well and age well	Offer healthy choices for health & social care, respectful treatment in safe, clean environments			
Strong, resilient communities	Offer safe, non-threatening places, encourage outdoor activities			
Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods	Provide fair & efficient assessments to provide homes to those in need			
A strong and inclusive economy	Incentivise local businesses and recruit & train locally based staff			
A connected and accessible Sandwell	Maximise location, transport network, promote alternative transport in schools			
One Council, One Team	Streamline processes, staff training & support & encouragement			

EFFECTIVE

Is what we are doing contributing to the outcomes? First pass

EFFICIENT

Are we delivering the best outcomes for the resources being input? ¹⁰⁵ Second pass

ECONOMIC

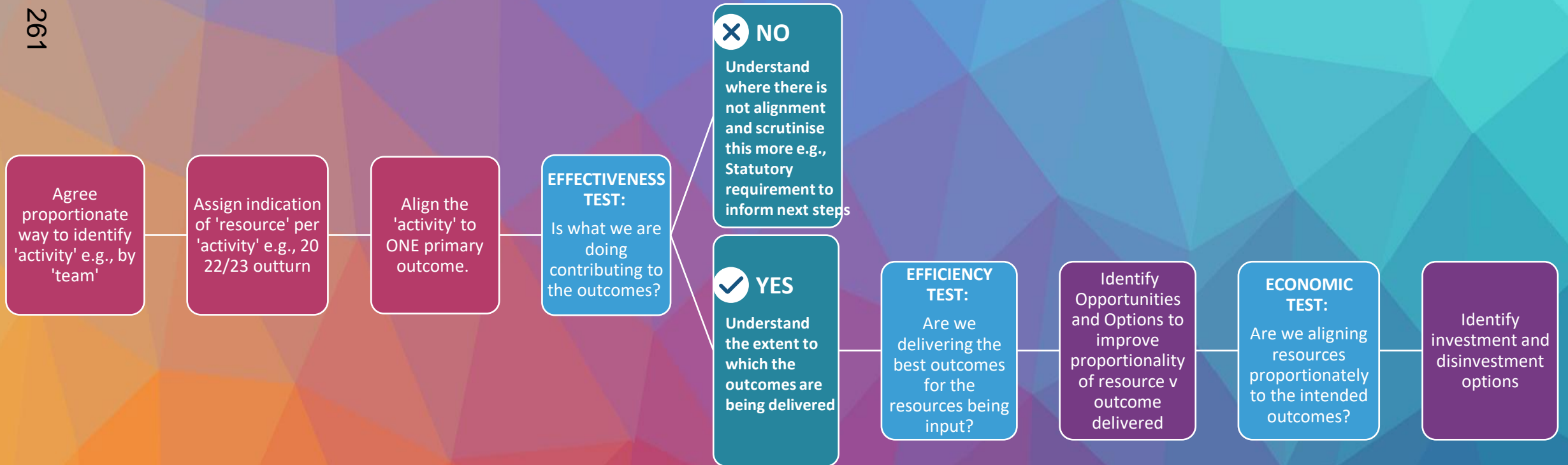
Are we aligning resources proportionately to intended outcomes? Strategic Pass

Applying Value for Money tests to Sustainable Transformation

<p>EFFECTIVE</p> <p>Is what we are doing contributing to the outcomes? First pass</p>	<p>EFFICIENT</p> <p>Are we delivering the best outcomes for the resources being input? Second pass</p>	<p>ECONOMIC</p> <p>Are we aligning resources proportionately to intended outcomes? Strategic Pass</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service and activity identification. ▪ Collaborative alignment to the interpretations of the Strategic Outcomes. ▪ Gap Analysis. ▪ Opportunity Identification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding of Impact (e.g., KPIs, customer feedback). ▪ Benchmarking. ▪ Cost vs benefit analysis. ▪ Opportunity Identification. ▪ Opportunity Quantification (BAU/ Transformation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prioritisation of cost & impact. ▪ Benchmarking. ▪ Opportunity Identification. ▪ Opportunity Quantification (BAU/ Transformation). ▪ Collaboration with SLT. ▪ Transformation Portfolio. ▪ Service Plan inputs.

The Approach

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WE ARE SANDWELL!





West Midlands Combined Authority

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 10 July 2023 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Andrew Burrow	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Paul Moore	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jamie Tennant	Birmingham City Council
Amanda Tomlinson	Business Representative
Councillor Vera Waters	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Dan Essex	Governance Services Manager
Clare Hatton	Interim Director of Employment & Skills
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Laura Shoaf	Chief Executive

Item Title No.

- 130. Appointment of Chair**
The committee noted that at the WMCA Board meeting held on 9 June 2023, Councillor Cathy Bayton had been appointed as the Chair of this committee for 2023/24.
- 131. Appointment of Vice-Chair**
The appointment of Vice-Chair was the responsibility of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and had to be a member from a different political group to the Mayor. The Chair proposed that Councillor Naeem Akhtar be appointed as Vice-Chair of this committee for 2023/24.
- 132. Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lauren Rainbow (Birmingham) and Councillor Ken Wood (Birmingham).

133. Chair's Remarks

(a) New Members

The Chair welcomed new members to the first meeting of the year and thanked former and returning members of the committee for their work and contributions during last year.

(b) Councillor Ian Brookfield

The Chair expressed her sadness at the recent death of Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council, and member of the WMCA Board. Members of the committee observed a minute's silence in his memory.

134. Terms of Reference

The committee considered its terms of reference.

Resolved:

- (1) The terms of reference be noted.

135. Minutes - 13 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

136. Matters Arising

(a) Site Visit to Green Square Accord

In preparation for the next meeting of the committee on 4 September, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer agreed to arrange a site visit to Green Square Accord's LoCal Homes facility in Walsall.

(b) Grant Register

At the last meeting, it was reported that the Mayor and Portfolio Lead Members were in dialogue as to how the Social Housing Fund of £14.9m would be devolved to local authorities. The Chief Executive agreed to provide a further update at the next meeting of the committee.

137. Scrutiny within the WMCA

The committee received an introduction to overview & scrutiny within the WMCA that was supported by a joint presentation from the Governance Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

The presentation included information on the overview and scrutiny function, pre-development and pre-decision scrutiny, the different ways in which scrutiny could be undertaken, the power of call-in, the difference between local and combined authority scrutiny, work programming and the role and expectations of a scrutiny member.

With the announcement of the WMCA's Deeper Devolution Deal, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the forthcoming additional powers and responsibilities, the committee highlighted the importance of governance and accountability and the important role of scrutiny within the decision-making process.

Resolved:

- (1) That the introduction to overview & scrutiny within the WMCA be noted.

138. An Introduction to the West Midlands Combined Authority

The committee received a presentation from the Chief Executive on the WMCA's vision & values, the role of the WMCA and its six aims based on the key challenges within the region. Members welcomed the presentation and considered the simple and clear explanation helpful to understand the role and responsibilities of the WMCA and how it worked in partnership with local authorities.

With regards to Warwickshire County Council becoming a constituent member of the WMCA, the committee discussed the wider implications of councils applying to become a constituent member of the WMCA. The Chief Executive added that, in accordance with the law an application to become a member of the WMCA would be considered by the WMCA Board. However, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill as proposed, would change the way in which this decision could be made. The Chief Executive assured the committee that, if Warwickshire County Council were to explore becoming a member of the WMCA, it would examine the wider implications and would ensure that there was no financial detriment to local authorities.

To improve the partnership arrangements with constituent and non-constituent authorities, the committee emphasised the need to strengthen the links and communication arrangements between the WMCA and local authorities. During discussion, members shared the different ways in which the work and activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was reported into their respective authorities.

Resolved:

- (1) The presentation be noted;
- (2) A regular update on Warwickshire County Council becoming a member of the WMCA to be provided to future meetings of the committee; and
- (3) The WMCA to explore options as to how communication between the WMCA, constituent and non-constituent authorities could be improved.

139. Scrutiny Review: The impact of the delivery of local skills training following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA

The committee considered a report from members of the Skills Scrutiny Panel outlining the findings of the scrutiny review that examined the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and identified the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and local authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short- and longer-term challenges in the region.

Following the findings of the 2020/21 review to ascertain whether the regional economic recovery proposals were meeting the needs that had been identified within the Black Country sub-region, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered that now was an appropriate time to undertake a further review to assess the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the Adult Education Budget since its devolution to the WMCA in 2019.

In terms of the gaps highlighted within the review, it was recognised that an area of focus for the forthcoming year could be in relation to employer behaviour and how the Adult Education Budget could assist in terms of training employees.

In addition, members were informed of the various products and services available through the Adult Education Budget as an alternative to exam-based courses including community learning and skills bootcamps.

The Chair enquired about the levels of worklessness and age profile within the region and questioned whether this was currently measured and monitored through key performance indicators. The Interim Director of Employment & Skills confirmed that an outcomes framework was currently being developed and would be shared with the committee at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) The conclusions and recommendations of the scrutiny review group be endorsed for submission to the next meeting of the Skills Advisory Board on 25 September 2023.

140. Deeper Devolution Deal - Scrutiny Implications

The committee considered a report of the Governance Services Manager on the activity and developments relating to the WMCA's Deeper Devolution Deal negotiations with the Government since the matter was last reported to the committee on 13 March.

On 15 March, as part of its Spring Budget statement, the Government announced that it had agreed with the WMCA a Deeper Devolution Deal that would provide for wide ranging provisions to devolve policy making and control over spending decisions to the region.

In announcing the Deeper Devolution Deal, the Government had highlighted the importance of governance and accountability and these enhanced accountabilities had been framed within the English Devolution Accountability Framework, which was published in March. The accountability framework would seek to ensure that mayors and other local leaders were subject to robust and effective scrutiny by local politicians.

To help build a culture of greater scrutiny and accountability, the WMCA was currently in dialogue with the Government on the development of a scrutiny protocol that would set out the relationship between the mayor, the WMCA and its scrutiny and audit functions. It was envisaged that the protocol would

be published prior to the next meeting of the committee and that a further report would be submitted for consideration.

Forming part of the WMCA's wider accountability and scrutiny framework, the Deal also introduced the idea of the region's Members of Parliament scrutinising the Mayor in four public sessions a year. The committee discussed and shared comments on the importance and critical role of scrutiny within the WMCA, the benefit of it being non-party political and the requirements for scrutiny to evolve to address the new challenges.

In response to comments regarding the region's Members of Parliament scrutinising the Mayor and the possibility of these Q&A sessions overshadowing the work of the combined authority and local authority scrutiny functions, the WMCA was currently working with the Government to develop the terms of reference for these public sessions. Members were assured that the committee would be kept abreast of developments.

Resolved:

- (1) The announcement of the Government's Deeper Devolution Deal with the WMCA, along with its expected ratification by constituent authorities during September and by the WMCA Board at its meeting on 13 October, be noted;
- (2) The publication of the English Devolution Accountability Framework and the forthcoming scrutiny protocol, setting out the Government's expectations for local accountability within institutions exercising devolved powers be welcomed;
- (3) A further report be submitted to the committee when it meets on 4 September setting out in more detail the content of the scrutiny protocol and how the WMCA intended to apply it to its overview & scrutiny function be agreed; and
- (4) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee be kept abreast on the development of the terms of reference for the region's Members of Parliament and Mayoral public sessions.

141. Grant Register

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub that provided an update on the grant register which contained all current 'live' grants where the WMCA was the accountable body and captured a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivered.

Councillor Phil Bateman enquired about the opening of the Wolverhampton Metro extension. It was agreed that a response would be provided to Councillor Phil Bateman following the meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) The grant register be noted.

142. Work Programme

The committee received a draft work programme of items that were to be considered at future meetings of the committee.

In addition to the Mayoral Q&A sessions, the Chair indicated that she would also like to explore how the Overview & Scrutiny Committee could hold the WMCA's statutory and senior officers to account.

With regards to the regeneration of brownfield land, Councillor Andrew Burrow proposed that a deep dive could be undertaken to review the cost benefits of brownfield land projects, how brownfield strategies affected and connected the region, and whether the sites identified would have been developed without the contributions from the WMCA.

The committee enquired as to whether a transport officer could also attend its next meeting to help support discussions with housing colleagues when reviewing the Affordable Homes Strategy, as transport also needed to be considered when building homes.

In terms of its focus for 2023/24, the committee agreed to focus on the performance of the WMCA and would examine the outcomes delivered against its Annual Business Plan, aims and objectives.

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft work programme be noted; and
- (2) The observations and contributions regarding the draft work programme be considered.

143. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 4 September at 10:00am

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 4 September 2023 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Vice-Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Andrew Burrow	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Ewan Mackey	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Lauren Rainbow	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Jamie Tennant	Birmingham City Council
Amanda Tomlinson	Business Representative

In Attendance

Deborah Casey	Homes England
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Linda Horne	Executive Director of Finance and Business Hub
Rob Lamond	Head of Strategy & Analysis (Housing)
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Jaspal Seehra	Performance Manager
Laura Shoaf	Chief Executive
Councillor Vera Waters (joined via MS Teams)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Item Title
No.

144. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Paul Moore (Sandwell).

145. Chair's Remarks

(a) Oversight & Monitoring of Arm's Length Companies

The Chair reported that the WMCA had now established a formal process to monitor the activities of its arm's length companies and the outputs delivered for the region. The Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee and the Executive Board would receive activity reports on a regular basis.

(b) Challenging Year for Scrutiny

The Chair reminded the committee that although it was going to be a challenging year for scrutiny with the forthcoming Mayoral election in May 2024, the committee needed to remain impartial whilst continuing to hold the Mayor and the WMCA to account on its aims and objectives.

146. Minutes - 10 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

147. Matters Arising

(a) Social Housing Fund (minute no. 136(b))

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Task & Finish Group that comprised of officers from the seven local authorities had proposed that the Social Housing Fund of £14.9m was to be devolved to local authorities in an equal share. In response to a question raised by Councillor Jamie Tennant, she agreed to confirm the officer representing Birmingham City Council on the Task & Finish Group.

(b) Grant Register (Wolverhampton Metro Extension) (minute no. 141)

The Chief Executive confirmed that passenger tram services to Wolverhampton railway station would commence shortly, subject to driver training. Councillor Phil Bateman emphasised the need to be kept apprised on potential opening dates and any issues so that he could address these matters directly with the City of Wolverhampton Council.

148. English Devolution Accountability Framework - Scrutiny Protocol Progress Update

The Governance & Scrutiny Manager reported that the Department for Housing, Levelling Up & Communities had convened a small working group to help develop the contents of the scrutiny protocol, which was expected to be published in October. Members sought assurances that an opportunity to review and comment on the protocol as soon as it was published would be provided and that a full report would be presented to the committee.

The committee also noted the progress being made with the development of the terms of reference for the region's MPs and Mayoral Q&A sessions and the practical arrangements with regards to hosting the session within the region.

Resolved:

That the latest position regarding the development of the scrutiny protocol and the terms of reference for the forthcoming MPs and Mayoral Q&A sessions be noted.

149. Affordable Homes Programme

The committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director of Housing, Property & Regeneration on the trailblazer approach to delivering the affordable homes programme in the West Midlands, as set out in the Deeper Devolution Deal agreed by WMCA and the Government in March.

Within the Deeper Devolution Deal, the Government committed to piloting a new, two-phase trailblazer approach to the Affordable Homes Programme in the West Midlands. The Affordable Homes Programme was the Government's flagship programme for delivering affordable housing in England, providing grant funding towards the supply of new social and affordable housing.

The committee discussed and shared comments on estate regeneration, the proportion of housing tenures to be delivered through the affordable programme, including affordable and social rents, the opportunities available to utilise the investment to deliver more social and affordable homes by 2026 and the proportion of affordable homes to be delivered as part of the Ladywood estate regeneration scheme.

[Amanda Tomlinson declared an interest in this item, as a member of the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership]

Resolved:

- (1) The progress following the announcement of the Deeper Devolution Deal in March 2023, specifically on the joint working of the Homes England and WMCA teams relating to the Affordable Homes Programme, be noted;
- (2) The ongoing engagement with local authorities and other partners be noted, and members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be encouraged to contribute to the ongoing engagement within local authorities and provide links where necessary; and
- (3) The observations and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the need to be kept apprised on the use of the grant to regenerate estates, together with examples as to where local authorities were seeking to work with the WMCA to regenerate estates, resource and funding post 2026, be noted.

150. Affordable Housing Supply Strategy

The committee considered a report of the Interim Executive Director for Housing, Property & Regeneration that provided a progress update on the emerging Affordable Homes Supply Strategy.

Since the last report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2023, the agreement of the Deeper Devolution Deal and the significant implications for the delivery of affordable housing in the region had resulted in a pause for the development of the strategy in order to focus on the short-term mobilisation and implementation of joint working with Homes England.

Members welcomed the development of zero carbon homes but also highlighted the importance of the creation of green spaces. In addition, the provision of information to enable benchmarking to be undertaken in future years was also considered to be important. The Head of Strategy & Analysis provided an overview of the development of the strategy, together with the ongoing work with local authorities and assured the committee that Transport for West Midlands was involved in the development of the strategy, as the provision of transport infrastructure was key when building homes.

[Amanda Tomlinson declared an interest in this item, as a member of the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership]

Resolved:

- (1) The work on developing an 'Affordable Homes Supply Strategy', as commissioned by the Housing & Land Delivery Board, which was progressing in light of the additional remit for Affordable Homes Programme in the region as confirmed in the Deeper Devolution Deal, be noted;
- (2) The work to co-develop an integrated strategy with partners, directly supporting key policy agendas of the WMCA and local authorities through enabling affordable housing delivery and addressing issues of affordability in a co-ordinated and holistic way, be noted;
- (3) The observations and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the creation of green spaces in addition to zero carbon homes and the importance of key performance indicators and the provision of information to undertake benchmarking in future years, be considered further; and
- (4) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee to have sight of the draft Affordable Housing Supply Strategy when available for consideration.

151. Affordable Housing Pilot

The committee considered a report of the Head of Strategy & Analysis on the ongoing work of the WMCA and housing association partners to establish a more comprehensive collective approach to the delivery of additional affordable housing across the region.

The Chair welcomed the report but expressed concern at the pace of delivery and sought assurances that the delivery of modular builds had been considered by the housing association partners. The Head of Strategy & Analysis confirmed that within the current negotiations there was a recognition of his type of build, with a view to use a local supplier.

The Head of Strategy & Analysis agreed to keep the committee appraised on next steps and timescales.

[Amanda Tomlinson declared an interest in this item, as a member of the West Midlands Housing Association Partnership]

Resolved:

- (1) The continuing progress of collaboration between WMCA and registered providers of affordable housing, including the ongoing work to establish a pilot project, between the WMCA and a consortium of West Midlands housing associations as part of testing the strategic intent of a joint approach to deliver additional affordable housing, be noted; and
- (2) This work in the context of the emerging 'Affordable Homes Supply Strategy' and the Deeper Devolution Deal implications for the Affordable Housing Programme with Homes England to improve the collaboration and co-investment in the region and to enable more social and affordable housing delivery to meet local needs, be noted.

152. Performance Reporting against Annual Business Plan Deliverables

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub on the monitoring and reporting of the Annual Business Plan, which set out all activity to be delivered in-year.

In terms of July's performance, there were seven red and amber high-level deliverables, of which one red was currently at risk that was in relation to the establishment of the 'Life Chances Commission'. The commission was a Mayoral commitment to better understand the barriers for young people within the region and the targeted initiatives that could be developed by the WMCA to address these barriers.

Resolved:

- (1) That the performance of the WMCA against the Annual Business Plan deliverables be noted; and
- (2) The observations and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the need for future reports to include additional information on the amber risks and consideration be given to the possibility of a holistic dashboard that identified the outcomes considered by the WMCA's respective committees and boards, be considered.

153. Grant Register

The committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub that provided an update on the grant register which contained all current 'live' grants where the WMCA was the accountable body and captured a comprehensive total of grants, awarding body, time period for delivery and a description of what the grant delivered.

In relation to the capital funding for the Pothole Fund announced as part of the 2023 budget, the detail on the allocation of the fund was set out within the current WMCA's Financial Monitoring Report, in which the funds would be 'passported' through to the individual local authorities.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

154. West Midlands Combined Authority Loan to Woking Borough Council

The Chair reported that a focus for the committee for this year was to involve the WMCA's Statutory Officers in scrutiny and had invited the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub to provide an update on the WMCA's loan to Woking Borough Council and the action taken as a result of the council issuing a Section 114 Notice.

Resolved:

That the update on the WMCA's loan to Woking Borough Council and the action undertaken by the WMCA, as a result of Section 114 Notice, be commended.

155. Work Programme

The committee considered its work programme of items that were to be considered at future meetings of the committee.

With regards to the regeneration of brownfield land, the committee agreed to undertake a scrutiny review to assess how the WMCA exercised its powers and funding in respect of brownfield land redevelopment and assess how the region's communities have benefited from this.

Resolved:

That the work programme be noted.

156. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19 October 2023 at 10:30am.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 19 October 2023 at 10.30 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton (Chair)	Association of Black Country Authorities
Councillor Naeem Akhtar (Vice-Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor David Barker	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Andrew Burrow	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Nigel Lumby	Shropshire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Ewan Mackey	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Paul Moore	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jamie Tennant	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Adrian Warwick	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Vera Waters	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Ed Cox	Executive Director for Strategy, Economy & Net Zero
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Councillor John McNicholas	Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Andy Street	Mayor of the West Midlands

**Item Title
No.**

157. Welcome & Introductions

The Chair welcomed the Mayor and members of the committee to the first mayoral question time for 2023/24 that would be focussing on WMCA policy-related matters.

158. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Amanda Tomlinson (Business Representative) and Councillor Lauren Rainbow (Birmingham).

159. Questions to the Mayor from Members of the Committee

The committee pursued a number of general lines of enquiry with the Mayor, including governance and accountability, the economy, skills, green policies and housing.

The Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill that was expected to receive Royal Assent shortly would simplify the process for amalgamating the Police & Crime Commissioner role into that of the Mayor. If agreed, the WMCA together with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner would consider the practical arrangements of such a merger, including its governance structures. In terms of managing workloads, the Mayor considered that the appointment of a deputy, the use of delegated decision making and efficient structures were key elements to support the Chief Constable to improve the delivery of operational policing.

In respect of the events within the Middle East, the Mayor had met with the Jewish and Muslim communities, and both were understanding of the importance of each other's reactions to the Israel-Gaza conflict, which was critical for harmony between the different communities within the region. Discussions were also held with the Chief Constable regarding the guidance provided by the Home Secretary and how police officers were responding to events within the community.

Through the Deeper Devolution Deal, it had been agreed that the region's MPs would be able to scrutinise the Mayor in four Q&A sessions throughout the year. The Mayor shared his thoughts on the value of these Q&A sessions and believed that he was accountable to citizens of the West Midlands through members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as their democratically elected representatives.

The Government and the WMCA recognised that the current system of funding for mayoral combined authorities was fragmented and reliant on centrally administered funds. With a single settlement arrangement, the Government would give the WMCA single capital and revenue funding that would provide long term certainty and would enable the WMCA to work more effectively. It was also recognised that there was a need to review the current process in which funds were allocated to improve the pace at which programmes and projects were delivered.

With regards to the economy, the Mayor provided an overview of the lessons learnt following the transfer of the key functions of the Local Enterprise Partnerships to the WMCA and explained how the authority ensured that the business voice continued to influence decision making within the WMCA. In relation to the cancellation of the Birmingham to Manchester leg of the HS2 scheme, it was reported that the WMCA would commission an economic impact review and would continue to look at how links to Manchester could be improved. A further discussion was held on the delivery of the Midland Rail Hub.

The committee explored questions regarding the current performance of the labour market, including high unemployment and vacancy rates, the nature of vacancies, reskilling and skills bootcamps. The Mayor also shared his views on the impact of the Government's announcements related to its net zero policies, climate emergencies and partnership working with local authorities to progress to net zero.

Whilst it was recognised that the 2023 scorecards published by Climate Emergency UK had shown that the WMCA had performed well in relation to its work around the climate emergency, the Chair highlighted that the four Black Country authorities were below average and therefore work needed to be undertaken to ensure that these authorities were on target and were able to deliver net zero.

In respect of the 'green' agenda, the importance of energy creation and security to enable the UK to be self sufficient was highlighted. It was noted that the WMCA had currently focussed on reducing energy consumption.

The committee explored the opportunities for the WMCA to encourage housing associations to use modern methods of construction to help deliver the number of affordable and social homes required. Although 20% of new homes in developments supported by the WMCA must be classed as 'affordable' under its funding programmes, members enquired about the energy standards that were being encouraged.

The committee highlighted the importance of the non-financial support options that might be available via the WMCA to help support local authorities that currently experienced financial difficulties.

[Councillor Philip Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item, in relation to Birmingham International Airport, as a Director representing Wolverhampton]

Resolved:

The following observations be shared with the WMCA Board for consideration and response as appropriate:

(1) HS2 (Cancellation of Birmingham - Manchester leg)

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee would like to understand when an analysis of the economic impact of the cancellation of the Birmingham - Manchester leg would be undertaken and would wish to review the report when completed.

It was considered that Overview & Scrutiny Committee members should be kept abreast of the transportation transformations to be delivered within the Network North document, the implementation of the Midland Rail Hub and on the timeline for delivery.

(2) Energy Creation

Although it was recognised that the current focus on the WMCA was to reduce energy consumption, Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered that the WMCA should also explore options for energy creation to help keep energy affordable for residents.

(3) Community Engagement

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognised the considerable work undertaken by the WMCA, but stressed the importance of ensuring that this was communicated to local authorities and the public to ensure that maximum benefit from its activities was being achieved.

(4) Labour Market Overview Information

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee would welcome sight on the local labour market information referred to by the Mayor within the Q&A session on a regular basis.

(5) Housing – New Builds and levels of energy standards to be supported by WMCA funding.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested to receive details of the levels of energy standards being encouraged by the WMCA.

160. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 6 November 2023 at 10:00am

The meeting ended at 12:30pm.

Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

22 November 2023

Subject:	Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations
Director:	Law and Governance Surjit Tour Surjit_tour@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Suky Suthi – Nagra Democratic and Member Services Manager Suky_suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the responses on recommendations referred since the Board's last meeting.
- 1.2 That the Board notes the progress on implementation recommendations made.
- 1.3 That the Board determines what action it wishes to take where progress is unsatisfactory.
- 1.4 That the Board determines which actions/recommendations no longer require monitoring.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To facilitate the effective monitoring of progress on responses to and press with implementation of recommendations made by the Board and identify where further action is required.
- 2.2 Effective monitoring of recommendations facilitates the evaluation of the impact of the scrutiny function overall.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	<p>The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.</p> <p>Effective monitoring of recommendations made supports this and allows scrutiny to evaluate its impact.</p>
	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 The attached Appendix details the responses to actions identified and/or recommendations made by the scrutiny function and progress on the implementation of those previously approved.



5 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Any resources implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific resources implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.</p> <p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on the Executive to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them.</p> <p>NHS service commissioners and providers have a duty to respond in writing to a report or recommendation where health scrutiny requests this, within 28 days of the request. This applies to requests from individual health scrutiny committees or sub-committees, from local authorities and from joint health scrutiny committees or sub-committees.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>Any risk implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific risk implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>Any equality implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific equality implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Any health and wellbeing implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific health and wellbeing implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Social Value:	<p>Any social value implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific social value implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>Any climate change implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific climate change implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Corporate Parenting	<p>Any corporate parenting implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific corporate parenting implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>

6 Appendices

Appendix 1– Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Action Tracker

7. Background Papers

None.



Tracking and Monitoring of Actions and Recommendations of Scrutiny Boards

Scrutiny Board Date	Agenda Item Title	Action/Recommendation	Responsible Director /Body	Activity Log
Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board				
1 March 2023	Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring	Submit a report to Cabinet recommending:	Surjit Tour	Approved at Cabinet on 12 July 2023
		1.1 that Directors review and update any pages they hold on the Council's website, in particular, the webpage where the Council have facilities/offices to rent.	All Directors	
		1.2 the introduction of additional financial controls on general spend, in particular, matters relating to recruitment and day to	Simone Hines Cllr Piper	

		day spend where necessary.		
		1.3 to explore the feasibility of providing in house care for young people in care, SEND placements and adult social care placements.	Simone Hines, Michael Jarrett, Rashpal Bishop Cabinet Members	
29 March 2023	Improvement Plan	1) A summary and chronology of events explaining where the Council is currently with regards to the proposed development on Lion Farm, and how it reached the Expert Determination process, be circulated to the Board.	Tony McGovern	A written response in relation to the Expert Determination Process will be circulated once the ED process has been fully concluded.

		<p>2) That a further report in relation to recruitment of the Children to Adults Transition Project Officer role be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.</p>	<p>Michael Jarrett/Rashpal Bishop</p>	<p><i>Previous update</i> <i>Initial meeting went ahead in December. PID reviewed and amendments being captured. Agreement reached to engage with key external stakeholders. The Trust's sign-off process incorporated into the Project Governance Structure. The project manager appointment was delayed and the post re-advertised. Closing date 6 Jan.</i></p> <p>Current position The re-advertisement of the project manager post was unsuccessful, the post is due to be advertised again shortly. To ensure no further delays, resource from within the business has been identified to progress actions identified in the PID.</p> <p>Regular monthly meetings have been diarised with key stakeholders, PID and TOR have been revised and signed</p>
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				<p>off. Remit of the first stage business mapping has been agreed, draft scope and comm's will be presented at the April meeting with the aim to undertake first stage business mapping in May.</p>
<p>29 June 2023</p>	<p>Customer Journey Review</p>	<p>(1) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and Cabinet Member for Adult</p>		<p>Commitments remain in draft form whilst engagement is ongoing as these may be updated further following feedback from residents. Delays in engagement as outlined in AP Point 3. Further work ongoing</p>

		<p>Social Care, be authorised to agree a customer care standards/charter, and staff responsibilities in relation to those standards to ensure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) that “back-office” staff take ownership and accountability of customer requests received via Contact Centre Agents; b) a standard approach is taken to making officer contact numbers available on Outlook and to customers to prevent additional calls being made to the Contact Centre; c) a standard approach to the complaints process and deadlines for responding to 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Key Service area links are in place for all calls taken by the contact centre. Ongoing development continues and proposed training will feature heavily on this areas. b) Email issued to all ADs and Directors instructing a reminder be sent to all Officers.. c) Complaints process is in place and detailed on the Council Website. Ongoing monitoring of the Complaints SLA target is in place. Complaints Training is currently being rolled out and will include a reminder of all processes and timescales d) Named Officers in each Service Area are identified and meetings are taking place on a regular basis.
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		<p>complaints are clear and accessible across all Council services; d) that key contacts are identified within each service area to aid Customer Service Agents in their enquiries; e) that residents are regularly updated and informed about the current process of their request/query.</p>		<p>e) Work is ongoing within the Technology Workstream of the CJ Board to provide automated updates where possible</p>
		<p>(2) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive be authorised to commission/develop a customer training package that incorporates the following topics:-</p>		<p>Research undertaken and discussions held. Awaiting feedback on potential costs prior to discussions taking place with procurement. Specification to be drafted. Response letters are also covered in Complaints training as per 1.1c. Identified individuals in each Directorate to input into specification and agree requirements.</p>

		<p>a) The completeness of response letters b) Methods to manage customer expectations and awareness around the Council's remit and responsibilities.</p>		
		<p>(3) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive ensure that all members of staff undertake training around customer care standards as identified in (2) and that staff performance against these standards be incorporated within the appraisal process;</p>		<p>As per 1.2 above. Training being considered will also look at including a coaching programme for supervisors/management staff. Discussions will be undertaken with HR re inclusion in Appraisal process</p>

		<p>(4) that mandatory corporate customer service training be included as part of the induction process for all staff;</p>		<p>As above. As part of the proposed training an online offer will also be procured which all staff will be expected to complete, and which will be included in inductions.</p>
		<p>(5) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance, investigate options for procuring a single joint Customer Relations System across the Council;</p>		<p>SOCITM currently engaged to undertake independent options appraisal on existing and potential CRM systems, reporting back to CJ Board. There are linked dependencies within this action which will impact timescales.</p>
		<p>(6) that the Director for Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive considers the</p>		<p>Automated feedback surveys are already in use across various service areas. Procurement of the new Telephony system will allow greater opportunities for this. CJ Board have also identified gaps and have provided approval and</p>

		introduction of automated feedback surveys and that regular feedback on Council enquires/complaints are analysed and shared with Directorates;		funding for new technology, eg tablets within the OSS
		(7) That the Director for Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive introduces corporate guidelines in relation to the use of Council contact numbers to ensure that all officers are contactable and that contact details are updated regularly;		Initial reminder to all staff as per 1.1b.
		(8) that the Director of Regeneration and		Initial Options appraisal undertaken and report presented to CJ Board and Leadership Team. Agreement

		<p>Growth/Assistant Chief Executive considers the feasibility of amalgamating the current three contact centres (Corporate Contact Centre, Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre and Adult Social Care Care) into a single contact centre number with staff specialising in various areas;</p>		<p>to pause the work to allow for the detailed process mapping to take place to better inform the decision. Work is ongoing to look at the single number and will be further considered with the implementation of the new telephony system.</p>
		<p>(9) that the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive, as part of the refresh of the Council’s website, ensures the Council continues to promote the use of Sandwell</p>		<p>Work ongoing within the Digital Workstream of the CJ Board to ensure promotion of all digital channels. OSS and Community Hubs are supporting people to set up My Sandwell accounts if desired. Financial year 22/23 and current stats for this year show that digital is now the main contact</p>

		<p>Digital First and the Council's website as the first point for accessing information and raising an issue/request;</p>		<p>channel. This will continue to be monitored.</p>
		<p>(10) that as part of the customer journey review being undertaken, the Director of Regeneration and Growth/Assistant Chief Executive reviews current timescales for responding to enquiries and consider a reduction, wherever possible, including member enquiries being reduced from 10 working days to 3-5 days.</p>		<p>This recommendation was NOT approved by Cabinet on 12 July 2023. A lack of resources meant that the request could not be feasibly met. However, officers would review the request at a later date:</p> <p>An existing wider piece of work is on-going with Members around the Councillor Portal. This work will look at the response time and any agreed standards, and ensure that this is considered as part of the wider remit of that work.</p>

27 July 2023	Sickness Absence Outturn 2022-23	Make a recommendation to Cabinet:		Recommendation to be received by Cabinet in October 2023.
		That the Head of Human Resources, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and resources, provide a further report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considering the feasibility of introducing bonuses and/or incentives to improve staff attendance.		
	That a briefing note, in relation to the impact of long-COVID on the Council's workforce, be circulated to the Board.	Victoria Lee	Briefing note requested. Note will be circulated once ready.	
	Customer Journey Progress update	That, in relation to customer service training, extra attention be given to the intricacies of cultural differences, especially regarding body language.		This will be included with any Customer Service training moving forward – officers will ensure that it is included in the Spec. At the moment, officers are exploring what training options are out there. A procurement exercise will then

				be required to appoint an organisation to deliver the training.
	Centre for Governance and Scrutiny – The use of call-in: guidance for English Authorities	That the Governance and Constitution Review Committee be recommended to consider and recommend to Council the expansion of the use of call-in to all executive decisions.		Governance and Constitution Committee meeting arranged to consider the request on 21 September 2023.
28 September 2023	Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring 2023/ 24	That, the Interim Section 151 Officer outline to the Board why the Directorate of Public Health had an outturn variance of a £3.219m overspend in Quarter 1 Municipal Year of 2023/ 24.	Brendan Arnold	A briefing note has been circulated to the board.
		That, a working group be established to review all areas of income, expenditure and staffing levels, particularly focusing on parks, green spaces, museums, tendered contracts and concessions within the Directorate of	Matthew Huggins Alice Davey	The working group has been established and the membership and scope for the group has been determined.

		Borough Economy, with the membership and scope of the working group to be determined by the Chair of the Board.		
5 October 2023	Corporate Performance Management Framework	That the Director of Regeneration and Growth be recommended to monitor usage of the cycling network via a representative sample to inform the Active Travel Policy.	Tony McGovern Andy Miller	

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Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

22 November 2023

Subject:	Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme
Director:	Law and Governance Surjit Tour Surjir_tour@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Suky Suthi- Nagra Democratic and Member Services Manager Suky_suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the Cabinet Forward Plan (Appendix 1), which sets out the matters programmed to be considered by the Cabinet;
- 1.2 that the Board notes its work programme (Appendix 2), which sets out matters to be considered by the Board in 2023/24;
- 1.3 that, the Board considers whether any changes or additions are required to its work programme and in doing so, has regard to the Prioritisation Tool (Appendix 3).



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 A strong and effective work programme underpins the work and approach of Scrutiny.
- 2.2 It is good practice for work programmes to remain fluid, to allow for scrutiny of new and emerging issues in a timely manner.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.
	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 Scrutiny is a member led and driven function, driven by members' commitment to improve services and thereby people's lives.
- 4.2 An annual work programming event, involving chief officers, executive members and key partners, was held in June 2023 and all boards approved their work programmes for 2023/24 at their first meeting of the municipal year.



- 4.3 Boards have responsibility for their own work programmes, and it is good practice to keep them under review, to allow for new and emerging issues to be scrutinised in a timely manner.
- 4.4 Scrutiny Procedure Rules allow any member of the Council to request that an item is added to a scrutiny board's work programme, subject to certain provisions.
- 4.5 Before including an item on its work programme the Board must have regard to the Prioritisation Tool attached at Appendix 3, to ensure that the scrutiny activity will add value and work programmes are manageable.

5 Implications

Resources:	<p>Any resources implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific resource implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.</p> <p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on the Executive to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them.</p> <p>NHS service commissioners and providers have a duty to respond in writing to a report or recommendation where health scrutiny requests this, within 28 days of the request. This applies to requests from individual health scrutiny committees or sub-committees, from local authorities and from joint health scrutiny committees or sub-committees.</p>
Risk:	<p>Any risk implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p>



	Any specific risk implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Equality:	Any equality implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific equality implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
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6 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Cabinet Forward Plan
- Appendix 2 – Board Work Programme
- Appendix 3 – Prioritisation Tool

7. Background Papers



None.



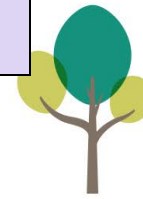
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The following items set out key decisions to be taken by the Executive:-

	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
2	<p>RIPA Policy</p> <p>Contact Officer: Vanessa Mahersmith</p> <p>Director – Surjit Tour, Director of Law and Governance</p>	<p>Cabinet – Leader of the Council (Cllr Carmichael)</p>		<p>6 December 2023</p>		



Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
<p>3 Improvement Plan update</p> <p>Quarterly update of the Improvement plan and 6 monthly report to Secretary of State and recommendation to Council</p> <p>Contact Officer: Dawn Webster</p> <p>Director: Shokat Lal</p>	<p>Cabinet – Leader of the Council (Cllr Carmichael)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>6 December 2023</p>	<p>22 Nov- Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board 23 Nov- ARAC</p>	<p>Improvement Plan Monitoring tool.</p> <p>Statutory recommendations Summary.</p> <p>Draft letter to Secretary of State.</p>

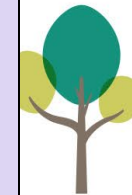


ONE COUNCIL
ONE TEAM

	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
4	<p>Q2 Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Cabinet to note the current financial position and refer to Scrutiny</p> <p>Contact Officer: Rebecca Maher</p> <p>Director: Simone Hines</p>	<p>Cabinet – Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>6 December 2023</p>	<p>Post -04/01/24</p>	<p>Appendices</p>



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
5	<p>10 Year Business Rates Retention Agreement</p> <p>Contact Officer: Claire Spencer</p> <p>Director: Brendan Arnold</p>	Cabinet – Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)	Public	6 December 2023	Post	<p>Report: 10 Year Business Rates Retention Agreement</p> <p>Appendix – West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal</p>



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
28	<p>Q3 Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Cabinet to note the current financial position and refer to Scrutiny</p> <p>Contact Officer: Rebecca Maher</p> <p>Director: Simone Hines – Director of Finance</p>	<p>Cabinet – Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>Post TBC</p>	<p>Appendices</p>



Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
<p>29 Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2024/25</p> <p>Contact Officer: Ian Dunn</p> <p>Director: Brendan Arnold</p>	<p>Cabinet – Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>		



Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2023/24

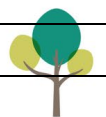
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Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Standing Items:-

- Tracking and Monitoring of Recommendations to the Executive
- Work Programme (including Cabinet Forward Plan)

Meeting Date	Item	Presented by
11 July 2023	Customer journey Review Report	Suky Suthi- Nagra
	Oracle Fusion Report	Simone Hines
	Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme 23/ 24	Suky Suthi- Nagra
	Financial Outturn 2023	Simone Hines
27 July 2023	Customer Journey Progress Update	Helen Green
	Managing Attendance and Sickness Absence	Victoria Lee
	CfGS Call- in Guidance	Elaine Newsome
	Approval of 2023/ 24 Municipal Year Work Programme	Democratic Services
28 September 2023	Q1 Budget Monitoring	Brendan Arnold
	Improvement Plan - Quarterly Progress Report	Kate Ashley/ Rebecca Jenkins
	Section 106 Spotlight Session Outcome	Democratic Services
5 October 2023	Q1 Corporate Plan – Progress Report and Corporate Performance Report	Sarah Sprung/ Kayleigh Walker
	Scrutiny Annual Report	Alex Goddard/ Democratic Services



	Lion Farm Update (Private Item)	Tony McGovern/ Surjit Tour
2 November 2023 (meeting cancelled)	Oracle Fusion Update	Brendan Arnold Victoria Lee/ Laura Maitland (laura.maitland@socitmadvisory.co.uk)
22 November 2023	Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress Report	Kate Ashley/ Rebecca Jenkins
	Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023 Update	Kate Ashley/ Brendan Arnold
	WMCA Devolution Deal – Impact upon Sandwell	Laura Shoaf/ Ed Cox (WMCA)
4 January 2024	Q2 Budget Monitoring	Brendan Arnold
	Q2 Corporate Performance Report	Sarah Sprung/ Kayleigh Walker
1 February 2024	Q2 – Corporate Plan progress report and Corporate Performance Report	Sarah Sprung/ Kayleigh Walker
20 March 2024	Improvement Plan – Quarterly Progress Report	Kate Ashley/ Rebecca Jenkins
	Midland Metro Hospital Update (Registrar Officer Demand)	Mark Satchwell
	Transition: Child to Adult Services	Michael Jarratt/ Rashpal Bishop

To be Scheduled

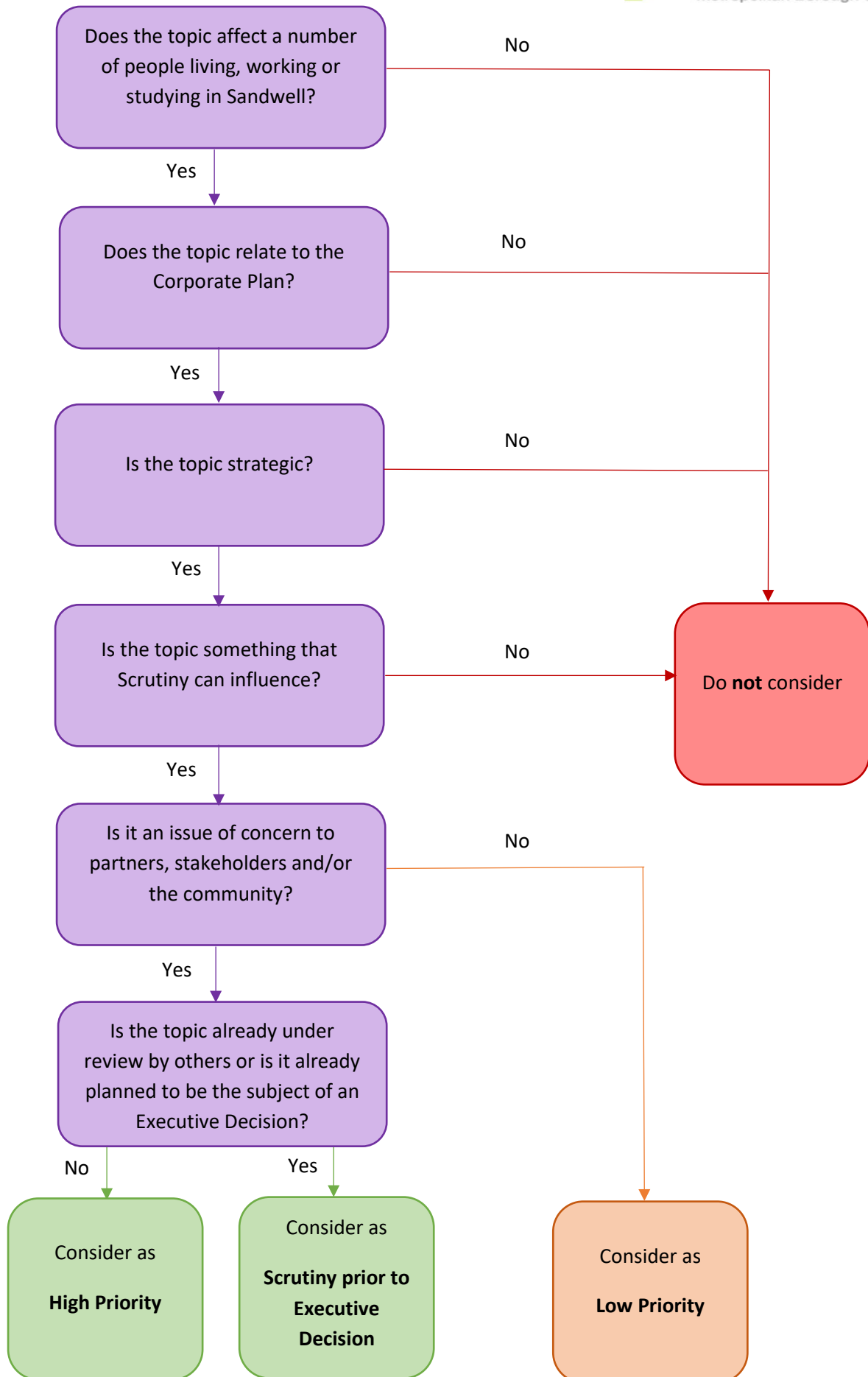
Development of Transformation Strategy – Director of Finance/ Ass. CEO

Digital Transformation (Customer Journey/ Accessibility for residents) – Helen Green (Routine Updates)

Scrutiny Review:

- Voluntary Sector Support and Grant Funding





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