

# Agenda

## Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Thursday, 1 February 2024 at 6.00 pm**  
**At Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Members to declare any interests in, or party whips related to the matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**3 Minutes** 7 - 20

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 4 and 15 January 2024 as correct records.

**4 Additional Items of Business**

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

**5 Draft Budget 2024/25 - Recommendations to the Cabinet** 21 - 24

That the Scrutiny Management Board consider the recommendations it wishes to make arising from its consideration of the Draft Budget 2024/25.



- |     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
| 6   | <b>Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations</b>  | 25 - 44 |
|     | To consider and note progress on the implementation of actions and recommendations.   |         |
| 7   | <b>Cabinet Forward Plan and Work Programme</b>  | 45 - 70 |
|     | To note and review the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Board's Work Programme 2023/24.   |         |
| 8   | <b>WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report</b>  | 71 - 98 |
|     | To consider and comment upon the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority.  |         |
| 9   | <b>Exclusion of the Public and Press</b>  |         |
|     | That the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting. This is to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information. |         |
| 10. | <b>WMCA Activity - Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council</b>  | 99 -    |
|     | 3   | 122     |
|     | To consider the information presented by the WMCA on activity taking place in the Sandwell area and to identify if the Board wishes to make any recommendations.  |         |

**Shokat Lal**

**Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House

Freeth Street

Oldbury

West Midlands

**Distribution**

Councillor Moore (Chair)

Councillors Fenton, Chambers, Fisher, E M Giles, Hinchliff, Lewis, Taylor,  
Tipper, Trumpeter and Owen

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## Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Wednesday 4 January 2023 at 6.02pm**  
**In the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Moore (Chair);  
Councillors E Giles, Hinchliffe, Owen, Taylor and Tipper.

**In attendance:** James McLaughlin (Assistant Chief Executive), Brendan Arnold (Interim Section 151 Officer), Claire Spencer (Acting Assistant Director of Finance), Kate Ashley (Strategic Lead for Service improvement), Kayleigh Walker (Senior Lead for Corporate Performance) and Alexander Goddard (Scrutiny Lead Officer).

### 1/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fenton and Lewis.

### 2/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### 3/24 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meetings held on 22 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.



## 4/24 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business.

## 5/24 **Performance Management Framework – Q2 Monitoring**

The Board considered the Quarter 2 monitoring reports for the Corporate Performance Management Framework.

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

### **The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People**

It was reported that for 'financial performance against budget (Sandwell Children's Trust(SCT)) performance was below target and SCT were projecting an annual deficit against the Contract Sum. The Council had therefore requested details of mitigations that SCT were implementing to address the overspend

The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan in Sandwell was slightly above Statistical Neighbour Average – 54.4 and 52.6 per 10k respectively. Reasons given for this were some delays in core groups (review meetings) impacting on plans being updated and progressed, and threshold discussions not taking place consistently prior to a conference being arranged, meaning less challenge on how to manage risk.

The Board was informed that various elements of performance were to be considered by the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board.

### **People Live Well and Age Well**

The Board noted that proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified, and the reported outcome was that the risk was reduced or removed was below target. This was reported as being due to a change in management structure staging in the team creating an increased backlog.

There was slippage around implementing the new day opportunities model, which was on hold whilst barrier to Direct Payments and delays in processing are resolved.



### **Strong Resilient Communities**

There had been an increase in fly-tipping incidents in Quarter 2, this was in part due to a system issue that impacted reports in July 2023 and linked to industrial action causing reduced attendance by Serco colleagues at such incidents. The Board suggested that investing in street cleansing could help reduce fly-tipping.

### **Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods**

The Board was informed that Fire Safety Checks and Asbestos Safety Checks were both below target and rated 'red'. For Fire Safety, this was because the team were completing the data collation, verification and registration of high-rise buildings (55) to the Building Safety Regulator by the 1 October 2023. For Asbestos Safety Checks, it was reported that performance had been impacted as the in-house team that handled such checks was also responsible for carrying out other building surveys. Due to an increased in Housing Disrepair claims the team had been required to focus on this area of work. Recruitment was underway however to increase capacity to manage the Disrepair claims.

It was reported that the number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights was below target; this was due to an increase in complex cases which required officers to spend longer on each case. The service had recruited two new temporary members of staff to help increase the support to residents. The Board acknowledged that this situation had not hindered performance on the monetary gains for Quarter 2, with the service being successful in gaining £1,621,554 for residents, which was above target.

### **A Strong Inclusive Economy**

Performance against the 'number of businesses supported' had been negatively impacted due to delays in funding to support/start business support programmes coupled with lower enquires for business support than anticipated. The Board noted that the delay in funding was a result of the West Midlands Combined Authority being late in releasing the budget for the business support programmes. The funding had now been released and it was anticipated that performance would be on target by the end of the next quarter.

### **A Connected and Accessible Sandwell**

It was reported that four more road safety improvement schemes had been completed than target in Quarter 2.

Following feedback from indoor market traders in Blackheath there was a low level of support for the Blackheath Interchange scheme, this was therefore subject to review.

### **One Team One Council**

The Board noted that sickness absence levels had increased for the last two consecutive years since the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-21. Housing achieved a reduction in sickness compared to the previous year, and decreases were achieved by Children and Education and Public Health. All other directorates had seen increases, with Adult Social Care and Borough Economy experiencing the highest increases. The most significant increase was for stress-related sickness, but there had been a decrease in absences due to infections due to a decrease in coronavirus cases.

The Board queried what was being done to improve the statistics around complaints. It was suggested that there might be a training need amongst officers to ensure the importance of responding in a timely manner was understood.

Members requested additional detail and clarification on a range of elements of the Quarter 2 monitoring of the Performance Management Framework that had been discussed.

The Chair acknowledged that as the Performance Management Framework continued, the richness of data was growing. He undertook to meet with officers to discuss Scrutiny's needs around future monitoring reports.

6/24

### **Q2 Budget Monitoring 2023/24**

The Board received the budget monitoring report for 2023/24 Quarter 2, this set out the financial position as at the end of September 2023. It was reported that there was an ambition to bring more regular financial reports to both Cabinet and Scrutiny to allow oversight of finances by members.

It was reported that, at the end of September 2023 there was a forecast overspend of £2m. This had to be considered within the context of the operations and financial scale of the Council, where the budget was £317m net and £743m gross.

In relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), there was a forecast year end overspend of £500k; although this would be addressed by year end as the Council was obliged to balance the HRA.

The Interim Section 151 Officer confirmed that there were no financial issues to raise regarding the Quarter 2 financial position.

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

- Members of the Board were asked to provide feedback on how future budget reporting could be improved.
- The Council had managed its resources wisely; debt charges as a percentage of the budget were very modest. This meant there was more capacity within the revenue fund retaining a level of flexibility that was not available to some other large metropolitan boroughs.
- Value for Money Panels had been established to encourage managers to carefully consider purchasing decisions. There was a new level of review and control over larger expenditure.

7/24

### **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.

A query was raised around transition to adulthood and the impact due to the delays in recruiting a project lead. The Chair undertook to discuss this with the Director of Adult Social Care.

8/24

### **Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme**

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

The Chair reported that he had discussed with officers the readability of the Cabinet Forward Plan and that titles needed to provide greater clarity about the topic of the decision. The Chair invited members to submit any suggestions for improvements.

It was also reiterated that where questions are asked, and officers undertake to respond directly to a member that must be carried out.

Meeting ended at 7.07pm.

Contact: [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)

# Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Monday 15 January 2023 at 10am**  
**In the Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Moore (Chair);  
Councillors Fenton, E Giles, Hinchliffe, Owen and Taylor.

**In attendance:** Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance (Councillor Piper), Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care (Councillor Hartwell), Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA (Councillor Hughes), Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism (Councillor Padda), Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities (Councillor Khatun) and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education (Councillor Hackett).

Shokat Lal (Chief Executive), James McLaughlin (Assistant Chief Executive), Brendan Arnold (Interim Section 151 Officer), Rashpal Bishop (Director of Adult Social Care), Alice Davey (Director of Borough Economy), Tony McGovern (Director of Regeneration & Growth), Liann Brookes-Smith (Interim Director of Public Health), Matthew Huggins (Assistant Director – Green Spaces, Green Services, Events), Dean Epton (Assistant Director – Housing), Nigel Columbello (Assistant Director – Housing Management), Sue Moore (Assistant Director for Education Support Services), Claire Spencer (Acting Assistant Director of Finance), Mark Satchwell (Assistant Director – Law and Governance), Dave Guest (Assistant Director - ICT), Craig Pugh (Financial Strategy Manager), Kay Murphy (Divisional Manager - Brokerage), Abi Asimolowo (Head of Financial Business



Partnering – People), Ramesh Prashar (Interim Head of Business Partnering (Place)), Sally Giles (Strategic Partnerships and Commissioning Manager), Kate Ashley (Strategic Lead for Service improvement), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic and Member Services Manager) and Alexander Goddard (Scrutiny Lead Officer).

9/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fisher and Tipper.

10/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

11/24 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business.

12/24 **Draft Budget 2024/25 – Budget Scrutiny Review**

On 22 November 2023, the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the Autumn update of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (see Minute No. 83/23). That report set out the assumptions that had been made when developing the MTFS, including spend pressures, as well as a series of options available to address the estimated budget shortfall at that time.

The Draft Budget for 2024/25 had been developed following a further review of pressures and assumptions and a period of consultation on options to address the budget shortfall set out in November 2023 and the announcement of the Council's Provisional Finance Settlement from Government on 18 December 2023. The Draft Budget was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2024 and was being reported to the Scrutiny Management Board to provide an opportunity to scrutinise the proposals, seek assurances and identify any recommendations the Board wished to make to the Cabinet.

Directors, Assistant Directors and Cabinet Members attended throughout the meeting to present the budget proposals for their respective areas of responsibility. Arising from the presentations and questions and comments that arose, the following items were of particular note:-

### **Corporate**

The proposals for the Budget aimed to deliver required savings whilst keeping service delivery up to date and continuing a programme of investment. They had been through a range of processes, including member involvement, to ensure they were acceptable and appropriate.

The Budget had been prepared based on the assumption of a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, with an additional 2% precept for Adult Social Care. The Council Tax increase was the maximum allowable within the referendum limit set by the Government.

It was reported that Sandwell had been able to protect its reserves, unlike many other councils, with unearmarked reserves preserved at the 5% level. These reserves were to manage risks and could only be used for specific reasons, not to fund council service delivery. The Board requested a briefing note on this topic.

### **Assistant Chief Executive**

This was a new directorate and included Human Resources (HR), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Strategy and Performance, Corporate Customer Services, Communications, Democracy and the Leader's Office.

The introduction of Oracle Fusion would help deliver efficiencies and once the capabilities of the system were understood, it would be possible to explore commercial opportunities.

Queries were raised around HR income targets, the proposed savings within the supplies and services within Democratic and Member Support and the services that received Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funds for services.

### **Finance**

The establishment of a Project Management Office within ICT and Corporate Transformation would help services across the Council to deliver improvements and efficiencies through providing technical knowledge to help maximise and optimise the use of technology.

The Board requested further clarity around the use of penalty clauses where contractual requirements were not met by providers.

### **Adult Social Care**

Particular areas of pressure for Adult Social Care were inflation, staff vacancies, the development of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and the new inspection regime from the Care Quality Commission – Assurance of Adult Social Care.

There was a national shortage of social workers and mental health assessors, which had worsened by 20% in the last year. A Workforce Strategy had been created to look at recruitment and retention.

Members requested further information on vacancies within Adult Social Care, the use of agency staff and the costs of internal and external care placements.

### **Regeneration & Growth**

It was reported that increases in fees for planning applications were set nationally by government. Sandwell had received fewer major planning applications, which attracted higher fees, but with regeneration coming to the borough over the coming years, it was anticipated that more major applications would be submitted. Other fees were set locally, such as for Building Regulations, however, as this was a trading account, the fees had to be set at a competitive level, with regular benchmarking carried out.

Other areas of pressure within this directorate included the Tipton Unity Walk premises which the Council was leasing until February 2025, but circumstances had changed due to the library and associated services relocating to the Tipton Carnegie building. The Council was exploring options around this lease.

There was a proposal to reduce fees for the indoor market traders in recognition of the delay to the redevelopment of the West Bromwich Indoor Market.

Members discussed the potential for disposal or redevelopment of Council-owned sites. It was confirmed that the Council did not dispose of assets purely to create income, but to help in the delivery of strategic objectives, for example the sale of Providence



Place for a new secondary school or the disposal of Grafton Lodge to a Housing Association for a 100% affordable housing scheme.

It was reported that energy costs remained a significant budget pressure, the Council had invested in technology to help reduce these costs such as solar panels and heat pumps.

The Board requested details of income generation for the 2023-24 financial year, as well as further information on numbers of vacant Council-owned retail and industrial units and the costs of any security for sites that were vacant or under construction.

### **Capital Programme**

It was reported that the Council had a significant Capital Programme, this was due to the success in drawing down funding over the last two years. The Council worked to maintain and develop relationships with key funders such as the West Midlands Combined Authority, Homes England and Government departments.

Members discussed the merits of having a dedicated officer resource to apply for funding opportunities. However, the scarcity of the required skills made it a more cost-effective approach to take on consultancies for specific bids.

The Board noted that the debt service costs in Sandwell were low, and even with enhanced programming were not expected to rise above 6%, whereas other metropolitan boroughs had debt service costs of 15% or more.

### **Borough Economy**

It was reported that energy price inflation necessitated an increase in the Highways budget to cover street lighting. It was noted that there were proposals around part night lighting that could help offset some of this. Any such initiative would be subject to consultation and assessment.

Libraries and Museums had struggled to meet their income targets. This was attributable to service changes, such as paid-for loans for CDs and DVDs being phased out and a reduced demand for printing. There was a proposed budget correction to address this.

Green Spaces, Visitor Services and Events was a high cost service area when benchmarked against similar local authorities. Furthermore budget corrections had been proposed due to

unachievable income targets for Sandwell Valley and Lightwoods House. Members raised concern at the levels of savings proposed for this service and queried the potential for a negative impact on income generation.

The Board was advised that increased car parking charges did not go to the general fund; it could only be used for limited purposes.

Questions were raised about if the booking system for the Household Recycling Centre impacted on the number of fly-tipping instances in Sandwell. Generally fly tipping was a criminal act and from national data, there was not a link with booking systems for municipal waste centres.

It was confirmed that there were no proposals within the draft Budget 2024/25 to move to alternate weekly household waste collections.

Members requested further information on income generation for the 2023-24 year from this directorate.

### **Public Health**

It was reported that the final two GP practices had now signed up to help drive the uptake of Health Checks in Sandwell. These had also been promoted through an online media campaign, leaflets, through partners including Health and Leisure as well as inclusion in the winter health booklet that had been distributed.

It was confirmed that more work would be carried out around the community health offer, including social prescribing over the next 12 months.

The Board noted that it had proven particularly difficult to recruit to the vacant consultant posts within Public Health. It was noted that a consultant would be taking up post in February 2024.

### **Housing**

The Board was advised that the majority of Housing funds came from the HRA.

The directorate had undertaken work to understand the implications of the increasing costs within the construction industry, which also impacted on repairs.

The Shopmobility operating model had been reduced by 50% last year and the Council did approach other organisations to gauge interest for taking on the service. However, the heavy subsidy coupled with user fees representing a fraction of operating costs had made it difficult to identify any potential service partners. An Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out on this matter.

Further information was requested on when and where the Council could utilise HRA reserves.

### **Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme**

There was a programme of capital investment covering the next five years. There was an important balance to achieve between investing in current housing stock and increasing the stock to meet demand. The Council was undertaking stock condition surveys which, based upon a representative sample, would inform the balance.

### **Children & Education**

In line with the national situation, Sandwell was experiencing particular pressures around placement sufficiency, increased placement costs and workforce recruitment and retention. The Council was working with Sandwell Children's Trust.

Another area of budget pressure related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transportation. There had been a significant increase in demand for this service, necessitating an increase of budget and the creation of a contingency fund. The increase in demand, coupled with both an increase in the complexity of cases as well as inflationary costs created a significant budget pressure.

Concerns were raised about the cost of out of borough placements, although it was acknowledged that there were instances when this was in a child or young person's best interests. Changes to modern delivery meant that a change to in-house provision was a possibility. The Trust was already working with existing residential providers in Sandwell.

Members requested further details on exclusions, home-schooling parents who did not engage with the Council, new Focus Provision and what resources had been used to help children and young people involved in county lines or gang-related crime.

The Chair put on record his thanks to all for attending and for their hard work to organise the meeting. He also thanked the Cabinet for taking a transparent approach to the budget process.

**Resolved** that the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board consider the information presented and that recommendations to Cabinet be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

Meeting ended at 6.47pm  
(following adjournments between 1.16pm and 2.15pm,  
3.33pm and 3.52pm and 5.11pm and 5.27pm)

Contact: [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)

## Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

1 February 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Budget 2024/25 - Recommendations to the Cabinet
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Chief Executive, James McLaughlin
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Scrutiny Lead Officer, Alex Goddard <a href="mailto:alexander_goddard@sandwell.gov.uk">alexander_goddard@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board is broadly assured that there is a clear plan, underpinned by data, for the Council's Budget 2024/25.
- 1.2 That the Cabinet and the Executive team review the proposals for Borough Economy again to ensure the assumptions upon which they are based are robust and take account of the missed income targets from 2023/24.
- 1.3 That the Cabinet and Executive team review:-
  - (a) Council, the Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme, Public Health and Sandwell Children's Trust contracts and agreements to ensure they are fit for purpose, take a whole-council approach to meeting the Council's strategic objectives and represent value for money;



(b) contract monitoring management processes to ensure they are robust and ensure value for money.

1.4 That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board consider reports within the next three months on detailed proposals to achieve savings in:-

- (a) Children’s External Educational and Care Placements; and
- (b) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport.

1.5 That the following topics be included on the work programme of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:-




- (a) the customer journey;
- (b) the effect on performance and sickness levels of reduced budgets;
- (c) funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the draft Budget 2024-25 proposals at its meeting on 15 January 2024. Cabinet Members, Directors and Assistant Directors attended to present the proposals to the Board and to answer questions from members.

2.2 The Board subsequently held a workshop to discuss potential recommendations to the Cabinet on the draft Budget 2024-25 proposals, these are set out in this report and need to be approved for submission to the Cabinet.

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

	Effective scrutiny of the Council’s budget supports all objectives of the Corporate Plan.
	
	



## 4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Based on the information presented to it, and the arising discussion and questions, the Scrutiny Management Board identified a number of recommendations and actions which are set out in section 1 of this report. If agreed, the relevant recommendations will be submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2024.

## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The Scrutiny Management Board considered the Council's Draft Budget 2024/25 which covers all anticipated income and expenditure for the period.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set a budget and Council Tax precept by 11 March each year. Scrutiny involvement in the processes strengthens decision making and ensures transparency.
<b>Risk:</b>	The Council must set a risk-assessed, balanced budget each year and maintain a prudent level of reserves to mitigate the financial risks that it faces. Information on this was presented to the Scrutiny Management Board on 15 January 2024.
<b>Equality:</b>	No specific implications
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	No specific implications
<b>Social Value:</b>	No specific implications
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No specific implications
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	No specific implications



## 6 Appendices

None.

## 7. Background Papers

[Report and appendices submitted to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board meeting held on 15 January 2024](#)





## Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**1 February 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Chief Executive James McLaughlin
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Scrutiny Lead Officer, Alex Goddard alexander_goddard@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><b>Resources:</b></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><b>Legal and Governance:</b></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><b>Risk:</b></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><b>Equality:</b></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>



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

## 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
<b>Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board</b>				
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><b>Current position</b>  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"> <li>a) that “back-office” staff take ownership and accountability of customer requests received via Contact Centre Agents;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>c) a standard approach to the complaints process and deadlines for responding to</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>b) Email issued to all ADs and Directors instructing a reminder be sent to all Officers..</li> <li>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</li> <li>d) Named Officers in each Service Area are identified and meetings are taking place on a regular basis.</li> </ul>
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		<p>complaints are clear and accessible across all Council services;</p> <p>d) that key contacts are identified within each service area to aid Customer Service Agents in their enquiries;</p> <p>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	
22 November 2023	Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress Report	That a 'Members Digest' be developed to provide Members with regular briefings on policy and strategy updates.	James McLaughlin	
		That a variety of methods to consult members are utilised, which should include face- to- face interviews, attending ward and town meetings and online consultations and surveys.	Member Development	

4 January 2024	Performance Management Framework – Q2 Monitoring	Additional information and clarification on a number of topics to be provided to the Board.	Various	
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## Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**1 February 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Chief Executive James McLaughlin
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Scrutiny Lead Officer, Alex Goddard <a href="mailto:alexander.goddard@sandwell.gov.uk">alexander.goddard@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 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

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

## 6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Forward Plan

Appendix 2 – Board Work Programme

Appendix 3 – Prioritisation Tool





## 7. Background Papers

None.



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**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council**  
**February 2024**  
**Forward Plan list of decisions to be taken by the Executive and**  
**Notice of Decisions to be taken in private session**

Representations to a decision being taken in Private Session, where indicated must be e-mailed to [Democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk) or in writing to Democratic Services, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury, B69 3DP.

The Council defines a Key Decision as:

- (a) an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which exceeds that included in any approved revenue or capital budget or the limits set out within an approved borrowing or investment strategy and was not the subject of specific grant; or
- (b) an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to £1m or more;
- (c) an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough

All items listed in the Executive Notice will be listed as a key decision using the above criteria. Business items which are not defined as a Key Decision may be referred to the Cabinet for information and/or decision but will not be listed in the Executive Notice.

Items listed in the notice of Executive Decisions to be taken in Private Session will list the relevant exemption information as related to the Local Government Act 1972 12A as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 set out as follows:-

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:-
  - to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

The Cabinet/Members of the Executive are as follows:- Councillors Carmichael, Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Khatun, Millard, Padda, Piper and Rollins.

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

	<b>Title/Subject</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)</b>	<b>List of documents to be considered</b>
1	<p><b>Q3 Budget Monitoring 2023/24</b> Cabinet to note the current financial position and refer to Scrutiny</p> <p>Contact Officer: Clare Spencer</p> <p>Director: Brendan Arnold – Director of Finance</p>	<p><b>Cabinet – Finance &amp; Resources</b> (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
2	<p><b>Draft Budget 2024/25</b> To recommend, approve and note the policies set out in the draft General Fund, Housing Revenues Account and Capital Programme Budgets 2024/25</p> <p>Contact Officers: Claire Spencer/ Kate Ashley</p> <p>Director: Brendan Arnold, Interim Director - Finance</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Finance &amp; Resources (Cllr Piper)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>15 January 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet report for decision</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
3	<p><b>Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework 2024/25</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Ian Dunn</p> <p>Director: Brendan Arnold</p>	<p><b>Cabinet – Finance &amp; Resources (Cllr Piper)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>		



	<b>Title/Subject</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)</b>	<b>List of documents to be considered</b>
4	<p><b>Proposed Relocation of Causeway Green Primary School to Brandhall Village Development, Oldbury</b></p> <p>To approve the procurement of a school development to replace existing facility</p> <p>Contact Officer: Martyn Roberts</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett - Director of Children and Education</p>	<p><b>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Report by Director of Children and Education</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>5</p> <p><b>Highfields Primary School – Making significant changes (prescribed alternations) consultation outcome; change of age range.</b></p> <p>Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education</p> <p>Councillor Simon Hackett, Cabinet Member for Children and Education</p>	<p><b>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>N/A</p>	





	<b>Title/Subject</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)</b>	<b>List of documents to be considered</b>
6	<p><b>Schools Funding 2023/2024</b></p> <p>Contact officer: Elaine Taylor ACCA, Finance Business Partner – Children’s Services E: elaine_taylor@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Lesley Reynolds E: lesley_reynolds@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education</p> <p>Councillor Simon Hackett, Cabinet Member for Children and Education</p>	<p><b>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>		



	<b>Title/Subject</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)</b>	<b>List of documents to be considered</b>
7	<b>Regional Speed Enforcement</b>  Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	<b>Cabinet - Environment &amp; Highways (Cllr Millard)</b>		7 February 2024		
8	<b>Archives Centre</b>  Contact Officer: Dawn Winter  Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	<b>Cabinet – Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)</b>		7 February 2024		



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>9</p> <p><b>Boroughwide Public Spaces Protection Order Renewals / Extensions</b>                      Alcohol, Dogs &amp; Use of BBQs on public land</p> <p>Contact Officer: Tessa Mitchell</p> <p>Director: Alice Davey</p>	<p><b>Cabinet</b>                      Public Health &amp; Communities (Cllr Khatun)</p>		<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>January 2024</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
10	<p><b>A4123 Cycle, Walk and Bus Corridor – In Principle scheme approval</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Andy Miller – Strategic Planning &amp; Transportation Manager</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern – Director Regeneration &amp; Growth</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Regeneration &amp; WMCA</b> (Cllr Hughes)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>N/A</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
11	<p><b>Designation of Nature Conservation Sites</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Zoe Wilson / Peter Simpson</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Regeneration &amp; WMCA (Cllr Hughes)</b></p>		7 February 2024		Report



	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
12	<p><b>City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Update and Local Transport Capital Programme 2024/25</b></p> <p>Project progress and approval to annual works programme.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Andy Miller – Strategic Planning &amp; Transportation Manager</p> <p>Director: Tammy Stokes – Assistant Director Growth &amp; Spatial Planning</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Regeneration &amp; WMCA (Cllr Hughes)</b></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>7 February 2024</p>	<p>No</p>	



	<b>Title/Subject</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)</b>	<b>List of documents to be considered</b>
13	<p><b>Sandwell Local Plan additional housing sites – Approval to carry out consultation</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Patricia McCullagh – Planning Policy Team Leader</p> <p>Director: Tammy Stokes – Assistant Director Growth &amp; Spatial Planning</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Regeneration &amp; WMCA</b> (Cllr Hughes)</p>	Public	7 February 2024	No	



	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
14	<p><b>Levelling Up Zone</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Bart Shirm</p> <p>Assistant Director: Tammy Stokes – Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth</p>	<p><b>Cabinet - Regeneration &amp; WMCA (Cllr Hughes)</b></p>		7 February 2024		





# Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2023/24

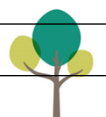
## Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

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### 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
15 January 2024	Budget 2024/25	Brendan Arnold/ Kate Ashley
1 February 2024	WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report	James Hughes WMCA
	WMCA work in Sandwell	James Hughes WMCA
20 March 2024	Improvement Plan – Quarterly Progress Report	Kate Ashley
	Midland Metro Hospital Update (Registrar Officer Demand)	Mark Satchwell
	Transition: Child to Adult Services	Michael Jarratt/ Rashpal Bishop
	Q3 Budget Monitoring PROPOSED	Brendan Arnold



**To be Scheduled**

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

Council's approach to Debt Collection and Management

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

Sandwell's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Programme

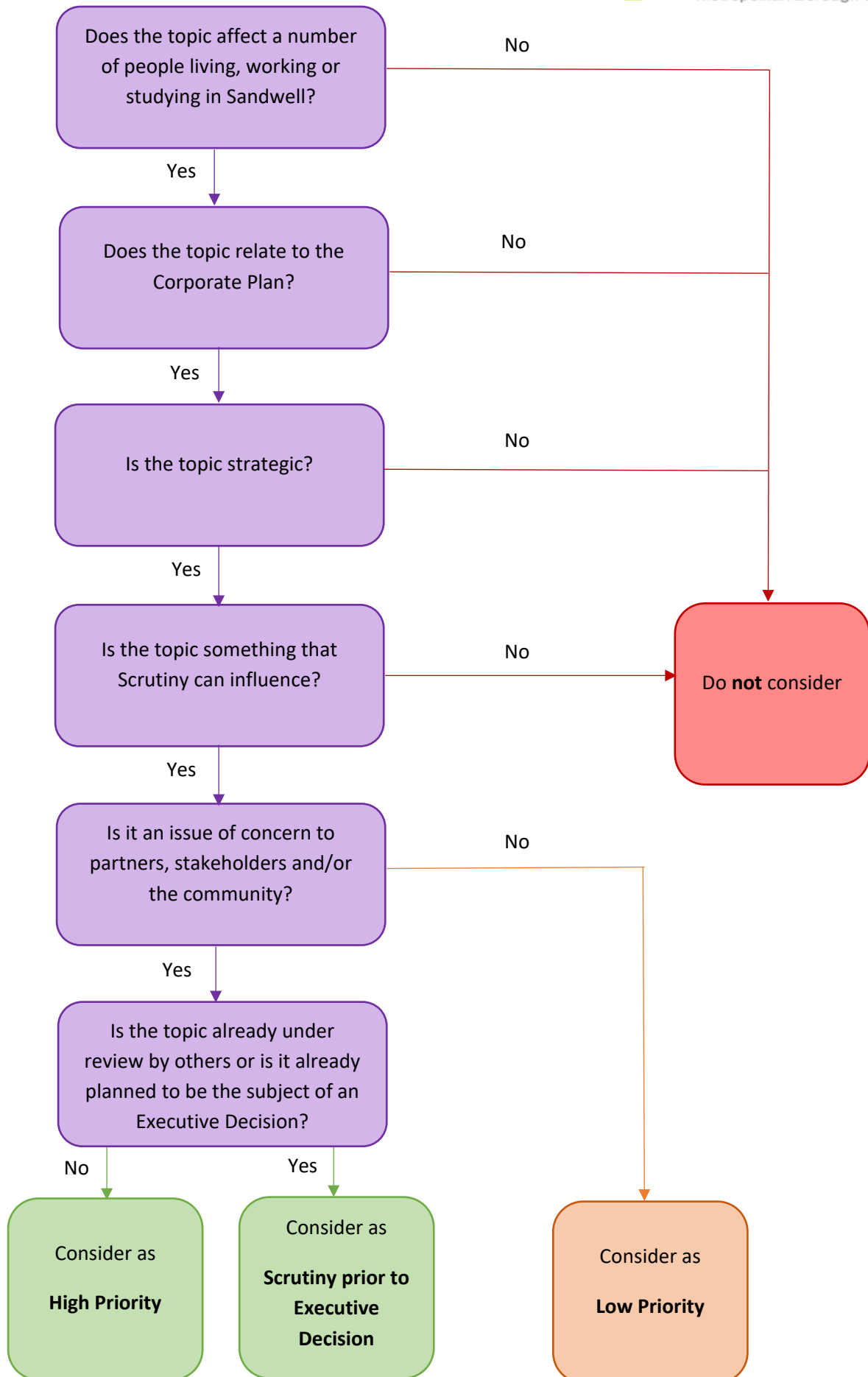
Levelling Up Partnership Update – Rebecca Jenkins

**ORACLE UPDATE – fit in before year end****Scrutiny Review:**

- Voluntary Sector Support and Grant Funding



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## Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

4 February 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report
<b>Director:</b>	Laura Shoaf – Chief Executive – WMCA
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Member Relationship Manager – James Hughes <a href="mailto:james.hughes@wmca.org.uk">james.hughes@wmca.org.uk</a>





### 1 Recommendations

That the Board considers and comments upon the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority.



### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

To consider the overview and scrutiny activity conducted by the West Midland Combined Authority.

### 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

These are set out in the WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report at Appendix 1.

#### 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Individual items considered by the WMCA’s Overview and Scrutiny function will consider relevant implications.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	
<b>Risk:</b>	
<b>Equality:</b>	
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	
<b>Social Value:</b>	
<b>Climate Change:</b>	
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	

#### 6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report

#### 7. Background Papers

None.







**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority

# **Overview & Scrutiny**

## **5th Annual Report 2022/23**



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# Foreword

The last 12 months have been the busiest year of scrutiny since I have been sitting on the committee from 2018!

We started the year with the news that, along with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, we had been selected as partners in the Government's Trailblazer Devolution Deal, with all 'asks' believed to be on the table. Scrutiny had a big role to play in shaping these asks and offering a sense-check on ambitions and the resources available to deliver them. We held five working groups over the summer months and looked at every aspect the WMCA was putting forward. This demonstrated the absolute value of pre-decision scrutiny, helped to shape the final proposals submitted to the Government and demonstrated the strength of good governance. The Deeper Devolution Deal, as it has finally been called, will also be the catalyst for Government seeking to increase and the strengthen the role of scrutiny across all combined authorities and local authorities to ensure robust oversight.

The year also saw two strands of the governance review progressed, with the transport governance recommendations hopefully being signed off at the WMCA's upcoming AGM.



**Chair – Councillor**  
Cathy Bayton

As Chair, along with the support of Lyndsey Roberts, we have convened two meetings of the chairs and vice-chairs of all combined authorities across England. This has helped share good practice and ideas for how we can all strengthen and improve our scrutiny functions. We have agreed it is a useful meeting and to convene three further meetings during the next year.

The members of both Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee have worked diligently, challenging and offering constructive observations to policy and delivery. I want to thank all of them as the demands on their time this year have been greater than ever and as their Chair, I have hugely valued their constructive support and contributions. I want to pay particular thanks to Councillor Naeem Akhtar from Coventry as Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Chaman Lal from Birmingham as Vice-Chair of the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee. I also wish Councillor Lal every success in his forthcoming role as Lord Mayor of Birmingham. We have struggled again with the quorum this year, and it is hoped that the proposals contained within the new Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill to give powers to remunerate statutory committees may well help this issue. But it is also really important when local authorities nominate members to sit on our committees, those individuals have the capacity to commit to the work programme ahead.

As always, the backbone of the scrutiny function at the WMCA is the support that we receive from officers Lyndsey Roberts, Dan Essex and more recently Julia Cleary. Without their continued hard work to ensure the meetings have all the information they require, and the support offered to me as chair, the scrutiny function would not be as effective.

## Introduction

We are pleased to present the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's fifth annual report which outlines its focus, key work activities and the outcomes achieved during the 2022/23 municipal year.

Overview and scrutiny are statutory functions of the WMCA. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee discharges these responsibilities through oversight of the work of the Mayor, portfolio lead members and the wider WMCA decision making process in order to hold decision makers to account and improve the quality of the decisions (whether planned, underway or implemented) that the WMCA takes.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee members may make recommendations to the WMCA Board and other committees, call-in decisions for further scrutiny and challenge those whether planned, underway or implemented. The committee acts as an advocate for residents of the West Midlands by investigating issues that are important to local people's lives and by looking further into matters brought to its attention by the public. From reviewing the asks of the 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal to understand the tangible benefits for residents of the West Midlands, value for money to scrutinising the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, comprising the region's local councillors and business sector representatives is the body that is charged with providing this critical challenge.

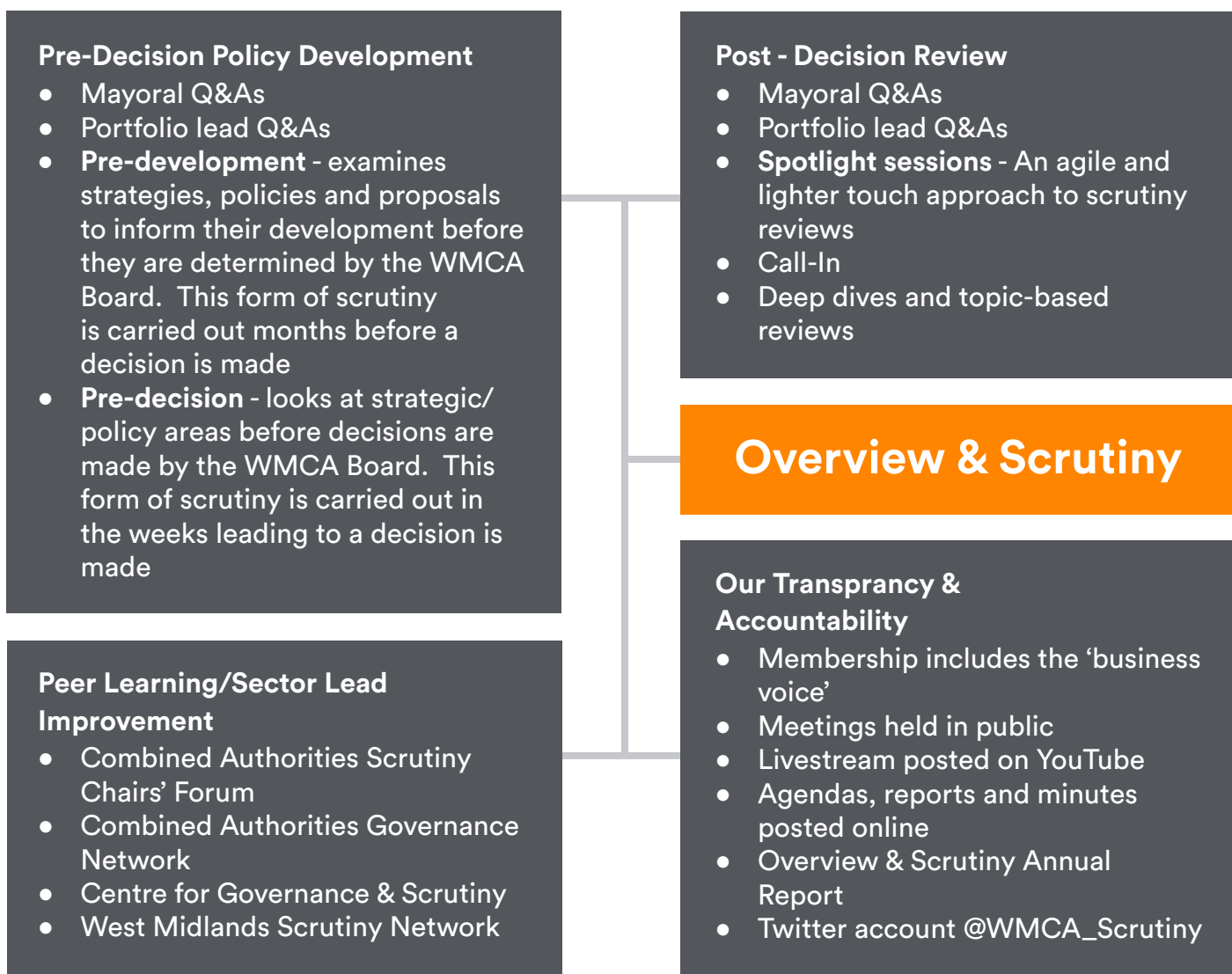
Scrutiny is a fundamental part of any efficient and equitable governance structure and decision-making process. Scrutiny is at the heart of good decision-making, which the WMCA has welcomed, encouraged and supported throughout the organisation.

While the committee's membership includes local councillors nominated by the WMCA's 18 member councils, it also has a representative from the business sector. This brings a business voice to discussions and ensures that the views of the region's commercial sector are heard at the highest levels of decision making.

The committee performs two functions 'overview' and 'scrutiny'. Overview focuses on the development of policy, and scrutiny that looks at decisions that have been made or are about to be made.



# What We Do and How We Do It



## Overview & Scrutiny's Focus for the Year

Due to the current economic situation in the region and the rise in the cost of living across the UK, it was important for Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the powers of the WMCA and its policies were delivering for the people of the West Midlands.

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2022/23

This past year the committee focused on the 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal proposals, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, progress against the delivery of the 'Five Year Plan' to make the West Midlands net zero by 2041, the affordable housing supply strategy and delivery pilot, and the impact of the Adult Education Budget and how it was meeting the needs of the area, the employer and the disadvantaged. The committee has continued to have broad oversight of the policies of the WMCA and has reviewed the effectiveness of its key decisions. It has an important role in reviewing and scrutinising the Mayor, portfolio lead members, the WMCA and Transport for West Midlands in respect of plans, priorities, corporate governance arrangements and financial matters.







# Holding The Mayor Of The West Midlands And The Portfolio Lead Members To Account

The committee has undertaken a number of public Mayoral Q&A sessions, structured around two core themes ‘accountability and investment’ with questions focusing on the key challenges, outcomes and benefits for the people of the West Midlands region.

In October, the committee questioned the Mayor on the delivery and impact of the WMCA’s policies. Questions focussed on:

- Cost of living pressures
- The WMCA’s ambition vs resource
- Investment Zones and potential unintended consequences for the wider economy
- WMCA’s ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal
- The Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill
- Environment
- Skills
- Transport

In December, the committee held its second Q&A and questioned the Mayor and the Lead Member for Finance on financial matters relating to the developing budget for 2023/24, with a particular focus on:

- Financial challenges and sustainability of the budget
- Investment Programme
- WMCA’s ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal (resource vs ambition)
- Investment Zones
- Transport (HS2 and approval of unfunded schemes)

“

*These public Q&A sessions were an important part of providing public accountability and transparency of decision-making for the WMCA’s only directly elected politician*

”





# Mayoral Q&A Sessions - Key Findings

## Delivery and Impact of the WMCA's Policies

The following matters were reported to the WMCA Board on 16 December 2022:

- **Adult Education Budget, Skills and Job Opportunities**  
The overall impact of higher education spend and the likelihood that any sub-regional disparity in this would affect the future of the region as individuals would seek employment and training opportunities outside of their boroughs. Access to learning and employment and how to change the mindset of individuals to take up the opportunities that were on offer was vitally important.
- **Investment and pace of delivery**  
Investment into the reliability and speed of investment to deliver the infrastructure and services needed to enable individuals to travel to work seamlessly and for businesses to operate effectively was important and remained a key challenge.

The 2041 net zero target was also reliant on improvements to the public transport offer.

- **Resource vs Ambition**  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognised that resource vs ambition had become a common theme and would be keeping a close eye on this throughout the year. Risk of shared failure and the consequences of this was highlighted as an-ongoing concern for members.

Whilst the breadth and diversity of the WMCA's ambitions was welcomed, along with the recognition of the challenges within the region, it was thought that focusing on those areas (housing, skills, transport and climate change) which caused the greatest concern for residents should be the priority focus for the WMCA.

- **Levelling Up Zones**  
Members were to be kept updated on the development of these Levelling Up Zones.
- **Communication**  
The committee stressed the importance of a strong communications strategy to counteract negative stories.



## WMCA's Budget 2023/24

The following matters were reported to the WMCA Board on 13 January 2023, during consideration of the WMCA's 2023/24 budget:

- **Regional Role in Energy Efficiency**  
Members expressed their concerns on the cost of energy and the impact that this had on the economy. There was a need to seek the introduction of alternative solutions, for example energy turbines.
- **Investment Portfolio**  
The committee questioned whether the WMCA was generating economic growth in specific areas, especially given the disparity of investment.
- **Greater Scrutiny - Arms' Length Companies and the Delivery of Outputs**  
The committee considered that there needed to be a greater focus on the outputs generated through investments and a greater scrutiny focus on arms' length companies and the outputs delivered for the region.
- **Carbon Neutrality**  
The committee stressed the importance of the work being undertaken to achieve carbon neutrality on projects that the WMCA was supporting.



## Areas of Focus 2022/23

### West Midlands Combined Authority 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal

The Levelling Up White Paper was published in 2022 and defined levelling up as “increasing opportunity across the UK and reducing disparities between and within regions”. The White Paper discussed deepening devolution and offering a number of devolved powers to regions that want them. The WMCA had been invited to negotiate a 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution Deal.

The committee had met with the Executive Director for Strategy, Integration & Net Zero to understand the emerging draft devolution proposals, the governance process and timescales for submission.

Key lines of enquiry focused on:

- The ask vs the ability and capability to deliver
- The development of a West Midlands outcome framework
- Drawing down powers and finance from Government
- Funding simplifications for transport, housing, skills and retrofit and increased public engagement
- The importance of the availability of up-to-date information

Questions also focused on the implications of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill for the WMCA, which was announced in the Queen's speech of 10 May 2022.

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Members considered a draft of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan prior to its submission to the WMCA Board. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was a central pillar of the Government's Levelling Up Agenda, providing funding for local areas to increase life chances across the UK and to build pride in place.

The committee met with the Executive Director for Economic Delivery, Skills & Communities to discuss:

- The allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to each local authority
- Its allocation for non-constituent authorities and the potential opportunities to work in collaboration
- The ability to spend year one funds by 31 March 2023
- The funding gap for 'people and skills' and challenges
- Risk assessments
- Outcomes

## WM2041 – Progress with ‘Five Year Plans’ to get to 2041

Members held a spotlight session with the Director of Energy Capital, Head of Environment and the Energy Infrastructure Lead to understand the progress against the delivery of the ‘Five Year Plan’ to make the West Midlands net zero by 2041.

Key lines of enquiry focused on:

- Resourcing
- The pace of delivery
- The ability of the supply chain to provide products and services that customers trusted
- A behaviour change programme, with a focus on affordability
- Carbon Zero Neighbourhoods
- Being aware of the obstacles that the business community faced
- The importance of the WMCA’s global ethical responsibilities

## Housing: Future Homes Strategy, Affordable Housing Supply Strategy, Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot

The committee met with the Lead Member for Housing & Land to discuss and answer questions on the development of a Future Homes Strategy, the Affordable Housing Supply Strategy and the Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot.

The following observations were considered by the WMCA Board:

### **Future Homes Strategy:**

As part of the development of the Future Homes Strategy, the proposal to hold a wider session with members and local authority officers to encourage the proactive utilisation of the opportunities available to deliver speedy, affordable and carbon neutral housing should be supported. The increase in the local supply chain and aim to drive the locally produced percentage of components was to be encouraged.

### **Affordable Housing Supply Strategy:**

There was an important need for genuine affordable housing, an improvement in the relationship between the WMCA, local authorities and developers to secure the delivery of a mix of tenure and the importance of local infrastructure to support the increase in car ownership.

### **Affordable Housing Delivery Pilot:**

The committee commended the pilot and the ambition to deliver 100% affordable homes.

“

*“Whilst it was **important** for homes to be **affordable to buy**, it was **equally important** for them to be **affordable in terms of location and running costs**”*

”

# Scrutiny Working Groups 2022/23

## WMCA ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal

Following the committee’s meeting in July, members tested each of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution proposals to ensure that they had a clear focus on drawing down powers and funding from Government (including opportunities for ‘double devolution’ to the WMCA’s constituent member authorities where appropriate) and ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of those constituent authorities were not being devolved.

“

*The sessions have been extremely constructive and have helped to further illuminate how proposals may address some of the challenges faced by communities across the region*

”

A principle that the WMCA had adhered to throughout the development of the deeper devolution deal proposals was that **with more responsibility, there should be more accountability.**

Over the summer period (August 2022), a series of extensive working groups had been established to review each of the proposals in detail and to discuss the local benefits that would be delivered to each local authority and non-constituent authorities.

1

### Session One

- Transport
- Housing and Regeneration
- Smart City Region

2

### Session Two

- Industrial Decarbonisation
- Economy
- Skills
- Digital Inclusion
- Digital Infrastructure

3

### Session Three

- Social Economy
- Homelessness
- Prevention
- Funding Simplification & Fiscal Devolution
- Culture
- Health

4

### Session Four

- Data, Performance & Accountability
- Crime, Community, Safety and Resilience
- Net Zero
- Retrofit Commissioning Framework
- Local Area Energy Planning
- Climate Adaptation

5

### Session Five

Local benefits that could be delivered by the deeper devolution deal in each of the constituent and non-constituent authority areas.

“

*“Working Group members provided invaluable insight into some of the challenges that their communities faced. This ‘on-the-ground’ perspective was incredibly valuable for officers both in terms of greater understanding of the issues being faced by residents and businesses within the region, but also as evidence and case studies to bolster discussions with Government colleagues”*

”



# Effectiveness and Outcome

## Scrutiny of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution Deal

After considering each of the ‘Trailblazer’ Deeper Devolution proposals and the local benefits, a number of key themes and considerations emerged.

- **Investment sought compared to the scale of the ambition**  
The committee welcomed the scale of ambition outlined in the devolution proposals, but in some instances queried whether the investment being sought was bold enough to ensure delivery.
- **Priorities**  
Whilst the breadth and diversity of proposals were welcomed, the committee did reinforce the importance of prioritising these proposals. Key focus areas were identified as housing, transport, skills and climate change. Although this was not to the exclusion of other proposals, these areas reflected the greatest concerns for residents and there was genuine concern that spreading the capacity too thinly, given the level of resource being sought, would undermine delivery in these areas.
- **Impacts from the proposals**  
Members’ insights had reinforced the importance of representing people in the proposals rather than merely strategic measures and interventions.
- **Integration of strategic approaches**  
The interdependency between proposal areas became clear, for example the important relationships between skills and economic growth, or effective transport systems and easy access to employment opportunities. Members recognised that although many of these areas were already well-integrated and connected, the proposed devolution deal had highlighted even greater opportunities for the integration of approaches and measures.

“

*We are grateful to Cllr Bayton and her wider team for the time and commitment they have given to strengthening this work*

”

### Outcome

The conclusions of the work of overview & scrutiny were supported by the WMCA that helped to shape the Deeper Devolution Deal submission to Government.





## Deep Dive Review:

“

***A review of the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the WMCA on the delivery of local skills training***

”

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, members considered that it was now an appropriate time to undertake a further scrutiny review to assess the impact and outcomes that had been delivered through the Adult Education Budget since its devolution to the WMCA.

The review sought to understand the impact of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget on the delivery of local skills training within the region, and to identify the challenges and ways in which the WMCA and its constituent authorities could most effectively use skills development to address short- and longer-term challenges in the region, particularly in relation to the big economic challenges. The findings would be used to help shape future skills funding.

The review panel examined how the Adult Education Budget was meeting the needs of the:

- Area
- Employer
- The disadvantaged

The panel sought written evidence and undertook face-to-face interviews with a range of key witnesses to help inform the review including representatives from:

- Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
- Job Centre Plus
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Small/medium-sized enterprises
- Regional Business Council
- A local training provider

The findings of the review will be considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24, prior to its submission to the Skills Advisory Board.



## A Look Back: Scrutiny Reviews 2021/22 - Where Are We Now?

### Helping to Deliver Affordable and Social Housing Scrutiny Review

During 2020/21, members had identified the provision of affordable and social housing within the region as a key area of focus and agreed to undertake a review to examine the role and remit of the WMCA to deliver affordable and social housing within the West Midlands through the use of devolved housing and land funds.

The findings and recommendations of the review panel were considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and then subsequently reported to and supported by the WMCA Board on 18 March 2022.

During the course of this year, the committee requested a written update on the work of the WMCA and its partners in implementing and responding to the recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

On 5 September, members considered a report on the progress that had been made on the delivery of the eight recommendations that were supported by the WMCA Board. A copy of the report can be accessed here >> [Full Report](#)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive regular reports on progress with delivering affordable homes, providing members with the opportunity to inform and provide recommendations to guide the ongoing work in this area.



# Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

## Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Focus for the Year

Overview & Scrutiny Committee appointed Councillor Cathy Bayton to chair the sub-committee for 2022/23. With the scale and scope of the transport-related projects currently being delivered, the sub-committee had ensured that those responsible for transport were held to account, demonstrated through regular Q&A sessions with the Portfolio Lead for Transport, the Chair of the Transport Delivery Committee, and the Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands.

“

*To ensure that Transport for West Midlands together with constituent authorities and stakeholders, were delivering the best public transport services that it could, in the public interest and ensuring that the users experience was paramount and at the forefront of Transport for West Midlands thinking, policies and initiatives*

”

## Holding Those Responsible For Transport To Account

### Councillor Ian Ward, Portfolio Lead for Transport

In October, a Q&A session was held with Councillor Ian Ward, Portfolio Lead for Transport, on transport policy related matters. Members questioned him on:

- Passenger value for money
- Financial challenges
- Impact on capital projects on funding pressures
- Concessions in helping in cost of living pressures
- Cross boundary travel for school aged children
- Effectiveness of processes for holding bus operators to account
- Impact of any scaling back of transport policies in meeting the WMCA's net zero carbon objectives
- WMCA's transport governance review

The sub-committee's observations and recommendations were endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Lead Member for Transport.

### Councillor Richard Worrall, Chair of Transport Delivery Committee

In February, Councillor Richard Worrall attended a Q&A session to answer questions on transport delivery matters across the region. Questions focussed on:

- WMCA's transport governance review
- Metro City Centre Extension, Wolverhampton financial breach
- Holding Transport for West Midlands and arms' length companies to account
- Bus Franchising
- Behaviour change
- Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022 - lessons learnt and legacy

The sub-committee's observations and recommendations were endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Lead for Transport.

“

*Transport services needed to be more predictable and dependable*

”

# Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

This year the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee has focussed on the following areas:

## Metro Affordability (Wednesbury - Brierley Hill)

The sub-committee invited the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub to answer questions on the affordability issues related to the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill metro extension.

Members questioned and received feedback on the current challenges, potential mitigations to fund the scheme and future funding opportunities.

## Bus Network Review

Members examined the content of the bus network review that was supported by a suite of information, including an update on the delivery of the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan in the context of wider challenges faced in the bus market and the latest performance of bus services in the West Midlands. This information was used to help inform the lines of enquiry.

## Bus Franchising

Members reviewed the measures Transport for West Midlands was undertaking to address ongoing challenges in delivering bus services that met the ambitions of the region's Vision for Bus, including the on-going Enhanced Partnership and a Full Franchising Assessment.

Whilst the potential challenges associated with the introduction of a Bus Franchising model across the region were recognised, in terms of delivery, quality and encouraging behaviour change, members challenged the current commercial model and questioned whether it delivered what was needed for the residents of the West Midlands.

## Transport Governance Review

Members continued to be engaged in the development of the transport governance review that would provide clarity on roles and responsibilities, consistency and alignment with other WMCA boards and committees, simplification, clear lines of accountability and transparency of the transport decision-making arrangements within the WMCA.

Throughout 2022/23, the committee has continued to meet with the Director of Law & Governance on the emerging governance structures.

## Commonwealth Games 2022 - Lessons Learned in Transport

Between 28 July and 8 August, Birmingham hosted the 22nd Commonwealth Games, the largest multi-sport event held in England for the last 10 years. The games brought over 1.5m spectators and visitors to the region and transport had to answer to a complex set of challenges, including a complex and congested transport network, a compressed timescale for planning, impacts of COVID-19 and navigating the realities of industrial action on the rail network.

“

*Transport for West Midlands be commended on the success of the Commonwealth Games in terms of transport*

”



## Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee Continued

### West Midlands Local Transport Plan 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' - Final Core Strategy and draft Big Moves and draft Area Strategy Guidance'

Following the sub-committee's engagement on the Local Transport Plan Green Paper, it was then consulted on the final version of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan 'Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands' Core Strategy prior to its submission to the WMCA Board.

Key points raised by the sub-committee included:

- The need for a creative approach on the strategy to connect with younger members of the public and that were representative of the region.
- Creative solutions needed to be sought as to how retail outlets supported and encouraged its customers to use alternative modes of transport to access its facility.
- The importance of consumer affordability within the strategy.
- The provision of infrastructure to accommodate alternative modes of transport; and
- Benchmarking

“

*It was important for Transport for West Midlands to **develop a transport network** that would allow **passengers** to have the same **freedom to move around the region** as was currently enjoyed by car owners*

”



# Peer Learning and Sector Lead Improvement

## Centre for Public Scrutiny Training Events

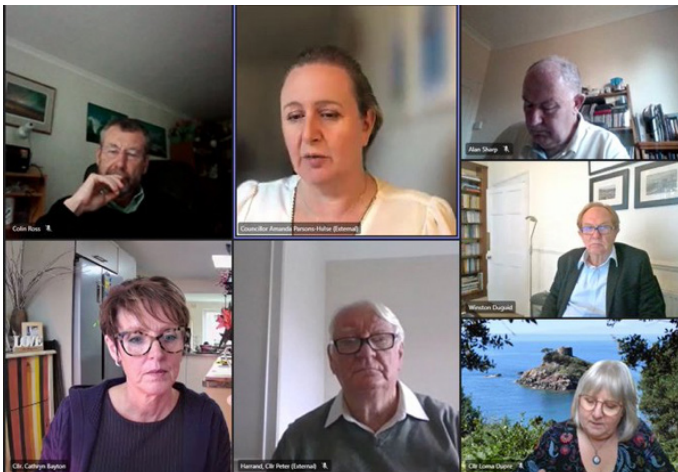
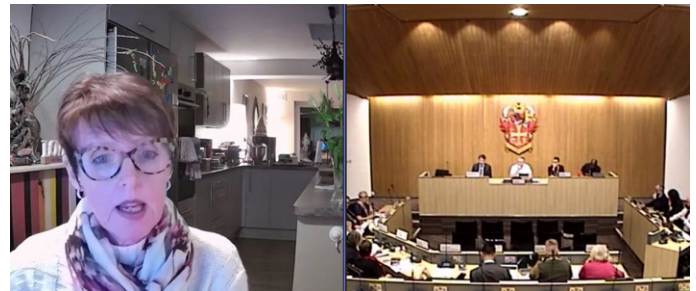
In addition to internal training, officers of the WMCA and members of the committee were informed of training and events that are led by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, as appropriate.

## Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chairs' Forum

The WMCA has been instrumental in setting up the new Combined Authorities Scrutiny Chairs' Forum, enabling the chairs from the country's ten combined authorities' scrutiny committees to meet to share best practice, discuss areas of common interest and to build relationships.

## Working with Local Authorities

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee attended meetings of local authority partners to discuss and answer questions on the work of the WMCA's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.



## Combined Authority Governance Network Group – ‘A Collective of the Combined Authorities’

The Combined Authority Governance Network Group is a group of officers from combined authorities across the country that meet on a regular basis and share best practice and learn from others on governance matters, including overview and scrutiny issues. The WMCA was a regular participant of the network group, which was facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on behalf of the Local Government Association.

# Looking Forward 2023/2024

Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function within the WMCA, undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that has responsibility to review the work of the Mayor and the WMCA and hold decision makers to account.

## Earlier and Regular Engagement between the Executive Board and Scrutiny

Whilst engagement with particular departments has improved during the course of the year, members would welcome a closer working relationship with Transport for West Midlands to enable them to understand the challenges, performance and outcomes of transport priorities and strategies.

## 'Trailblazer' Deeper Devolution - English Devolution Accountability Framework

The Government will, in the English Devolution Accountability Framework, develop a new scrutiny protocol. The WMCA will engage in the development of the protocol and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would seek to also be engaged in this process.

Successfully implementing the protocol will be a key factor when Government will be determining eligibility for single funding settlements and deeper devolution deals.

## Greater scrutiny of the WMCA's Portfolio Lead Members

This area of scrutiny has been identified as 'needs improving' and therefore members will strengthen this area of scrutiny during 2023/24 by inviting Portfolio Lead Members on a regular basis to Q&As and Spotlight sessions to discuss and answer questions within their portfolio area.

## Public engagement within the scrutiny process

Through the establishment of a written questions process and public involvement in 'deep dives'

## Scrutiny of the WMCA's performance and outcomes

This is another area that has been identified as 'needs improving' and members would welcome the engagement of the Executive Board on the availability of performance, outcome and metric information that could be examined by the committee.



## Committee Members 2022/23



**Councillor Cathy Bayton**  
Dudley  
Committee Chair



**Councillor Naeem Akhtar**  
Coventry  
Committee Vice-Chair



**Councillor Andrew Burrow**  
Solihull



**Councillor Mike Chalk**  
Redditch



**Councillor Ellen Fenton**  
Association of Black  
Country Authorities



**Councillor Martin McCarthy**  
Solihull



**Councillor Nigel Lumby**  
Shropshire



**Councillor Ian Kettle**  
Dudley



**Councillor Lauren Rainbow**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Karen Simms**  
Sandwell



**Councillor Mike Sutherland**  
Cannock Chase



**Councillor Paul Sweet**  
Wolverhampton



**Councillor Jamie Tennant**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Ken Wood**  
Birmingham



**Councillor Vera Waters**  
Walsall



**Amanda Tomlinson**  
Business Voice - Black  
Country Housing Group



## Sub-Committee Members 2022/23



**Councillor Cathy Bayton**  
**Dudley**  
Sub-Committee Chair



**Councillor Chaman Lal**  
**Birmingham**  
Sub-Committee Vice-Chair



**Councillor Martin McCarthy**  
**Solihull**



**Councillor Barbara McGarrity**  
**Wolverhampton**



**Councillor Karen Simms**  
**Sandwell**



**Councillor Rupinder Singh**  
**Coventry**



**Councillor Alan Taylor**  
**Dudley**



**Councillor Vera Waters**  
**Walsall**







**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

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