

Agenda Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, to be held on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at 6.00 pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:-

The Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Bill Gavan, In the Chair

- | | | |
|----------|--|----------------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence | 7 - 8 |
| | To receive apologies for absence (if any). | |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest | 9 - 10 |
| | Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting. | |
| 3 | Minutes | 11 - 54 |
| | To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 12 December 2023 as a correct record. | |
| 4 | Announcements | |
| | To receive announcements from the Chief Executive and the Mayor. | |



To consider written questions under Standing Order No. 9 from

- (a) Elected Members
- (b) Members of the Public

to:-

- (i) the Mayor;
- (ii) the Leader of the Council;
- (iii) any other member of the Cabinet;
- (iv) any person appointed to preside at a committee, sub-committee or panel;
- (v) the members of the Council nominated pursuant to Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, on the discharge of the functions of the following Joint Authorities: -
 - (i) West Midlands Combined Authority (the Leader);
 - (ii) West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (Councillor Jalil);
 - (iii) Transport for the West Midlands (Councillor Choudhry);
- (vi) a member of the Council who is, as a result of action taken by or on behalf of the Council, a member or director of any company.

Decisions

To approve the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24.

- 7 **Appointment of Independent Person for Standards Matters** 75 - 78

To consider the extension of the appointment of Mr Richard Phillips, Independent Person for Standards Matters, for a further four-year period ending 11 March 2028.

- 8 **Proposed departure from the Development Plan at Land West Of Bridge Street North, Smethwick, B66 2BJ** 79 - 84

To consider a proposed departure from the local development plan in relation to Planning Application DC/23/67863.

Procedural Matters

- 9 **Political Balance of Committees and Boards** 85 - 90

To consider the political balance for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year.

- 10 **Revisions to Committees, Boards and Other Bodies** 91 - 94

To consider revisions to the appointments of Committees, Boards and other bodies.

- 11 **Notices of Motion**

To consider the following motions received under Standing Order No. 12:-

- 11(a) **Support the introduction of Bus Franchising in the West Midlands** 95 - 96

- 11(b) **Dependent Carers Allowance** 97 - 98

- 11(c) **Re-instating of a Justice Centre in Sandwell** 99 - 100

- 11(d) **A borough of Six Equal Towns!** 101 - 102

For information purposes, minutes of the following meetings are confirmed and included on the [Modern.Gov](#) website:-

- [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee](#)
- [Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board](#)
- [Cabinet](#)
- [Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee](#)
- [General Purposes and Arbitration Committee](#)



Shokat Lal
Chief Executive

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor

Councillors Abrahams, Akpoteni, Allcock, M Allcock, Anandou, Ashraf, H Bhullar, Carmichael, Chambers, Chapman, Chidley, Choudhry, Crompton, Davies, Dhariwal, Dhatt, Dunn, Fenton, Fisher, Fitzgerald, Gavan MBE, J Giles, L Giles, E M Giles, S Gill, W Gill, Hackett, Hartwell, Hemingway, Hinchliff, Hughes, A Hussain, Jalil, Johnston, Kalari, Kalebe-Nyamongo, Kaur, Khan, Khatun, Kordala, Lewis, Loan, Maycock, Mayo, Melia, Millard, Millar, Moore, Muflihi, Owen, Padda, Pall, Piper, Preece, Rahman, Randhawa, Rollins, Shaeen, J Singh, N Singh, V Smith, Taylor, Tipper, Tromans, Trumpeter, Uddin, Uppal, J Webb, Weston, Wilkes, Williams and Younis

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

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All agenda, reports, minutes for Sandwell Council's meetings, councillor details and more are available from our website (<https://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cm5/>)

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Apologies

To receive any apologies from members

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Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

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Minutes of Council

**Tuesday 12 December 2023 at 6.03pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: His Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Gavan (Chair);
Deputy Mayor, Councillor E M Giles;

Councillors Abrahams, Akpoteni, K Allcock, M Allcock, Ashraf, Bhullar, Carmichael, Chambers, Chapman, Chidley, Crompton, Davies, Dhariwal, Dhatt, Fenton, Fisher, Fitzgerald, E M Giles, J Giles, L Giles, S Gill, W Gill, Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Hussain, Jalil, Johnston, Kalebe-Nyamongo, Kaur, Khan, Khatun, Kordala, Loan, Maycock, Melia, Millar, Moore, Muflihi, Owen, Padda, Pall, Piper, Preece, Rahman, Randhawa, J Singh, N Singh, Taylor, Tipper, Tromans, Trumpeter, Uddin, Uppal, Webb, Weston, Wilkes and Younis.

Officers: Shokat Lal – Chief Executive; Mike Jones – Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer; Suky Suthi-Nagra – Democratic Services Manager; Trisha Newton – Deputy Democratic Services Manager; Anthony Lloyd – Democratic Services Officer; Kennedy Brown – Sergeant at Arms.

129/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anandou, Dunn, Hinchliff, Lewis, Mayo, Millard, Rollins, Shaeen, Smith and Williams.



130/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

131/23 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the extraordinary and ordinary meetings of Council held on 24 October 2023 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

132/23 **Urgent Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

133/23 **Announcements**

The Mayor gave details of Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral engagements that had taken place.

The Chief Executive welcomed Mike Jones as the new Monitoring Officer.

The Chief Executive welcomed and congratulated Joshua Singh following his accomplishment of winning the National Young Planner of the year 2023 award.

The Chief Executive announced that the Sandwell Transition Education Partnership Service (STEPS) and Youth Service, along with partners, had walked away with two wins in their respective categories at the November Children and Young People Now Awards 2023. STEPS had become the first winner of Children and



Young People Now - New Supporting Child Refugees Award. Colleagues had also won the Partnership Working Award for their work on Sandwell County Lines Intensification Week led by Sandwell Children's Trust's Horizons Exploitation and Missing Team.

The Mayor gave details on the Anchor Network Partnerships Charter. The Partnership was facilitated by the Council, comprising local anchor organisations” who had an importance presence in Sandwell due to being largescale employers and purchases of goods and servicesBy signing the Sandwell Anchor Network Partnership Charter, the Council would lead the way by example. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA also commented on the network before signing the Charter.

134/23 **Petitions**

No petitions were received under Standing Order No. 8.

135/23 **Written Questions**

Questions received under Standing Order No. 9. were asked of the relevant members and responses were received.

136/23 **Designation of Interim Statutory Chief Officer**

Brendan Arnold was appointed to the role of Interim Finance Director in September 2023 under delegated powers. The interim designation as Chief Officer/Section 151 Officer required confirmation from Full Council. The Council had a statutory



obligation to designate an individual as Section 151 Officer as required by s.151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Resolved that Brendan Arnold, the Council's Interim Finance Director, is designated as the Council's Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer.

137/23 Sandwell Council Improvement Plan

On 22 March 2022, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced an intervention package and a set of Directions to ensure the Council was able to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. These Directions were in-part influenced by the Grant Thornton report following their Value for Money Governance Review of December 2021. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022.

Under the Statutory Directions, the Council was required to report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities every six-months following approval of the Plan. The first report was submitted in December 2022 and the second report had been submitted in June 2023. The next report for submission was due in December 2023.

The Leader outlined the progress that had been made in delivering the actions contained within the Improvement Plan and provided an update on Cabinet's recommendation to Council.

Resolved that the Improvement Plan Progress Reports and an accompanying letter are submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to form the Council's six-monthly update on progress against the Improvement Plan.



Code of Corporate Governance

The Council was responsible for ensuring that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money was safeguarded, properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively and that robust governance arrangements were in place. The Council had adopted the Local Code of Corporate Governance as a mechanism to demonstrate that the Council's governance structures complied with the principles contained in the framework.

As part of its commitment to ensuring that the governance infrastructure remained appropriate, the Council undertook a review of its arrangements and updated the Code accordingly.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had considered the refreshed Code of Corporate Governance at its meeting on 23 November 2023 and recommended the matter to Full Council for approval.

Resolved that the updated Code of Corporate Governance is approved.



Consideration of Special Responsibility Allowance for Shadow Cabinet Members

The Council was required by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to undertake periodic reviews of its Scheme of Members' Allowances.

In 2022, the Independent Remuneration Panel met with members to seek views on the introduction and operation of a shadow cabinet member role and considered benchmarking data. The Panel subsequently recommended to Council on 23 May 2023 that the issue of formally recognising a shadow cabinet was a matter for Council and should the Council wish to progress this issue, it would be the Panel's recommendation that the roles should be afforded an allowance equivalent to 10% of the Leaders allowance. The Governance and Constitution Committee met on 21 September 2023 and set up a working group to consider a Shadow Cabinet protocol. The protocol was subsequently approved by the Chair of the Committee in October 2023 and was considered and approved by Council on 24 October 2023.

The Independent Remuneration Panel met on 6 November 2023 to consider whether any SRA should be applied to the shadow cabinet member roles. The Panel considered the Shadow Cabinet Protocol which provided clarity on the role of shadow cabinet members; benchmarking data of other local authorities which identified whether other local authorities had a shadow cabinet and whether there was an allowance attached to the role. The Panel was of the view that a Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable to Shadow Cabinet Members, to be set at 10% of the Leader's Allowance (i.e. £2,858.40), where the size of the majority opposition group remains at 5% and above of the size of the controlling group.



Councillor Piper moved the following amendment to the Motion, seconded by Councillor Carmichael:-

“Full Council notes and endorses the principles set out in the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to members of a Shadow Cabinet drawn from the largest qualifying opposition group only, subject to the threshold for payment being set at 15% of the overall Council size, giving a current threshold of 11”

The amendment was accepted, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was **Resolved** that a Special Responsibility Allowance of 10% of the Leader’s Allowance is approved for Shadow Cabinet Members, providing the size of the largest opposition group membership equates to at least 15% of the membership size of the controlling political group on the Council.

140/23

Proposed Departure from the Development Plan at West Midlands Foundry Co Limited, Blakemore Road, West Bromwich

Planning Committee had granted conditional approval at its meeting held on the 25 October 2023 in relation to DC/23/68467 (proposed 2 No. portal framed buildings to house 7 No. small units for general industrial/storage and distribution use with associated vehicle access, substation, sliding front gates, parking and covered cycle shelter) at West Midlands Foundry Co Limited, Blakemore Road, West Bromwich.

The site was initially a residential allocation and the proposed development would infill a vacant yard within an existing industrial estate. It was necessary for the Council to consider whether or not



to grant an exception to adopted policy to allow the application to proceed.

Resolved that approval is given to an exception to the Development Plan in respect of planning application DC/23/68467 (proposed 2 No. portal framed buildings to house 7 No. small units for general industrial/storage and distribution use with associated vehicle access, substation, sliding front gates, parking and covered cycle shelter) – West Midlands Foundry Co Limited, Blakemore Road, West Bromwich.

141/23 **Proposed departure from the Development Plan at Locarno Works, Locarno Road, Tipton**

Planning Committee had granted conditional approval at its meeting held on the 29 November 2023, which considered planning application DC/23/68518 (Retention of light industrial and storage use, vehicular access, car and vehicle parking, lighting and CCTV).

The site was currently a residential allocation and the proposed development would make use of a yard within an existing industrial estate. It was necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to grant an exception to adopted policy to allow the application to proceed.

Resolved that approval is given to an exception to the Development Plan in respect of planning application DC/23/68518 (Retention of light industrial and storage use, vehicular access, car and vehicle parking, lighting and CCTV) at Locarno Works, Locarno Road, Tipton.



142/23

Proposed departure from the Development Plan at Tata Cargo Ltd, Rigby Street, Wednesbury, WS10 0NP

Planning Committee had granted conditional approval at its meeting held on 25 October 2023, which considered planning application DC/22/67520 which sought approval for the retention of heavy goods lorry and trailer parking area with portable office at the site of Tata Cargo Ltd in Wednesbury.

The site was currently allocated for housing under the Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Policies Map. It was necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to grant an exception to adopted policy to allow the application to proceed.

Resolved that approval is given to an exception to the Development Plan in respect of planning application DC/22/67520 - Retention of heavy goods lorry and trailer parking area with portable office at the site of Tata Cargo Ltd, Rigby Street, Wednesbury, WS10 0NP.



Proposed departure from the Development Plan at land at the corner of Cleton Street and Sedgley Road East/Tipton Road, Tipton

Planning Committee had granted conditional approval at its meeting held on 29th November 2023, which considered planning application DC/23/68624 which sought approval for 2 no. detached light industrial units with new access, parking, landscaping and new retaining wall with railings to rear.

The site was currently allocated for housing under the Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Policies Map. It was necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to grant an exception to adopted policy to allow the application to proceed.

Resolved that approval is given to an exception to the Development Plan in respect of planning application DC/23/68624 - Proposed 2 No. detached light industrial units with new access, parking, landscaping and new retaining wall with railings to rear at land at corner of Cleton Street and Sedgley Road East/Tipton Road, Tipton.



144/23 **Planning Delegations Agreement**

The Council’s planning delegations agreement was last reviewed in 2012. The purpose of the planning delegations agreement was to ensure that planning applications are determined in an open and transparent manner.

Local planning authorities were closely monitored by the Government regarding the time taken to determine planning applications. The revised planning delegations agreement had been updated to align with new legislation and Council structure, clarify the reasons for reporting a planning application to the Planning Committee and to remove the need to report certain planning applications to the Committee that were not controversial.

Resolved that the revised planning delegations agreement is approved.

145/23 **Political Balance of Committees and Boards**

Council considered the political balance of the committees, boards and other fora for the remainder of the 2023-2024 municipal year.

Resolved that the political balance of the committees, boards and other fora for the remainder of 2023-24 be approved.



146/23 Revisions to Committees, Boards and Other Bodies

Council considered revisions to the appointments to committees, boards and other bodies.

Resolved that the revisions to appointments to committees, boards and other bodies, as set out in Appendix A, is approved with immediate effect.

147/23 To receive the minutes of Cabinet

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 18 October and 15 November 2023 were received.

147/23(a) Medium Term Financial Strategy – Autumn 2023

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 required the Council to set a balanced, risk assessed budget each year and approve a Council Tax precept by 11 March.

The current position of the medium-term financial strategy sought approval to commence consultation on a range of potential savings options to support the Council in setting a balanced budget in February 2024.

Resolved that the Autumn 2023 update of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Update is approved.



147/23(b) Council Tax Base 2024/2025

The Council Tax Base was an assessment required by each billing authority to determine the number of chargeable dwellings, converted to Band D equivalents (the average band), allowing for discounts, exemptions, non-collection and new properties. This information would later be used when setting the Council's budget.

The Council Tax Base was calculated in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 and used to determine the annual amount of collectable Council Tax.

Resolved that:

- (1) the Council Tax Base of 78,217,27 for 2024/2025 is approved;
- (2) in accordance with (1) above, the Section 151 Officer is authorised to adjust the Council Tax base as required.

147/23(c) Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/2025

The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme provided crucial support to low income families and vulnerable residents. Sandwell Council was one of only a few nationally that still provided 100% support towards Council tax.

Resolved that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 is approved.



147/23(d) **The review of council tenant rents and housing related property charges**

The Council had to achieve the right balance between supporting tenants to mitigate the continued cost of living pressures and protecting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to ensure that it could continue to provide affordable social housing for residents.

There was a recognition that the council needed to maintain the existing housing stock to a good standard and cover operational costs and to achieve the right balance between protecting tenants, protecting tax payers and ensuring that the council could deliver on its commitments to build new social homes.

For 2024/25, the government had not announced a rent cap, therefore the council was permitted to increase rents by CPI+1% in line with the Rent Standard and Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing issued annually in April.

Resolved that the Interim Director of Housing is authorised to adjust council rents and housing related charges with effect from 1 April 2024 as follows:

- (1) that the housing rental charges is increased by 7.7% which is the consumer price index 6.7% (September 2023) plus 1%, which is equivalent to a 7.7% increase;
- (2) that the housing service charges increase by the consumer price index (CPI)+ 1%, equivalent to a 7.7% increase;
- (3) that housing service charge is implemented on properties not currently being charged but are receiving the service in line with similar properties receiving the



service provision, including heating, water and laundry facility following consultation with residents;

- (4) that subject to consultation with the residents of the site, to increase rent at the traveller's pitch in Hills View, Tipton by 7.7%;
- (5) that properties managed by Riverside under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) agreement receive a 7.7% rental increase and a 7.7% increase in service charges to match the council's rent and service charge increase;
- (6) that properties that sit outside the Housing Revenue Account (including service tenants for Parks, Sandwell Valley and Caretaking) receive a 7.7% increase in rental charges and service charges equivalent to CPI plus 1%;
- (7) that the leaseholder annual management fee is increased by 7.7%, CPI + 1% in 2024/25 from £115.66 to £124.57;
- (8) that the Director of Housing is authorised to implement adjustments to council rents and housing related charges as set out in this report with effect from 1 April 2024; and
- (9) that the Director of Housing is authorised to introduce associated service charges in respect of Building Safety Regulation requirements for Leasehold properties.



147/23(e) 10 Year Business Rates Retention Agreement

Proposals were made for a new agreement with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) which allowed the seven West Midlands metropolitan local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates income for the ten years from 2024/25, with a share payable each year to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) (and 1% payable to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority).

The agreement was in accordance with the “West Midlands Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal”, which was set out in a paper to Cabinet on 13th September 2023. Cabinet resolved to approve the Deeper Devolution Deal, as set out in the report, and resolved that further reports would be received by Cabinet on specific issues relating to the detail of the Deeper Devolution Deal.

Resolved that:

- (1) approval is granted for the Council to enter into a 10-year business rates retention arrangement with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC), the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the six other West Midlands metropolitan local authorities;
- (2) the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, is authorised to complete any necessary agreements for the retention arrangement referred to in (1) above;
- (3) the Director of Finance is authorised to make an annual payment to the West Midlands Combined Authority of £1.264m in 2023/24, which constitutes the Council’s



proportion of the “WMCA Share” of regional business rates income collected in the current year under the existing 100% business rates retention pilot arrangements and;

- (4) subject to approval of recommendation 1.1, the Director of Finance is authorised to make an annual payment to the West Midlands Combined Authority in each year throughout the 10-year period commencing on 1st April 2024, comprising of the Council’s proportion of the “WMCA Share” of regional business rates income collected in that year.

148/23 To receive the minutes of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

The minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board held on 28 September 2023 and 5 October 2023 were received.

149/23 To receive the minutes of the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

The minutes of the meetings of the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee held on 3 August 2023, 22 September 2023 and 12 October 2023 were received.



149/23(a) Statutory Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023

On 4 December 2023, the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee received a report on the Statutory Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023.

The notice of review was published on 2 October 2023 and the consultation period was from 2 October 2023 to 2 November 2023. All elected members, Members of Parliament, local political parties and local disability and community groups were consulted. The review focused polling stations that required change due to the current venue no longer being available, or due to significant issues with the polling place identified at the local election in May 2023.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places, as set out in Appendix B, are approved to take effect at all elections from 2 January 2024;
- (2) The proposed changes to polling places, as set out in Appendix C, are approved to take effect at any future Parliamentary General Elections only; and
- (3) in the event of any or any unforeseen reason, and should there be a need to change any further Polling Places or Polling Stations prior to elections in 2024, the Returning Officer is authorised to effect further changes following consultation with relevant Ward Members.



150/23 **To receive the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 21 September 2023 were received.

151/23 **To receive the minutes of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee held on 7 November 2023 were received.

152/23 **Notices of Motion**

The Council proceeded to consider the following motions received under Standing Order No. 12.

152/23(a) **Modern Slavery**

The motion on Modern Slavery was withdrawn.



152/23(b) End Violence Against Women and Girls (White Ribbon Day)

It was moved by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Fisher:-

“Council acknowledges the concerns of women and girls regarding their safety on public transport particularly whilst engaging in the night-time economy and welcomes the work done by local community organisations to raise awareness of violence against women and girls.

Council notes and welcomes the Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Bill 2022-23 which introduces a new offence of causing alarm, distress, or intentional harassment to a person in public because of their sex.

Council therefore resolves to –

1. Request the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition write a joint cross-party letter to the Mayor of the West Midlands requesting a progress update on the WMCA’s recommendations set out for transport in the Combined Authority’s Violence against Women and Girls Strategy.
2. Call on all male Councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.
3. Request the Leader and Cabinet to work towards White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies which have already done so, with the Chief Executive as the authorities’ White Ribbon accreditation co-ordinator and for a cross-party working group to be established as our ‘action plan steering group’ during the accreditation process,



with all members of the working group to sign up for the White Ribbon Ambassador program.

4. Request that Council mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year and encourage participation among Councillors, council staff and local primary and secondary schools”

The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

152/23(c) **Community Policing**

The motion on Modern Slavery was withdrawn.

Meeting ended at 8.01pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk



Committee/Board/Other Body	Revision/nomination
Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board	Councillor Trumpeter to replace Councillor Anandou
Audit and Risk Assurance	Councillor W Gill to replace Councillor Anandou Councillor Dunn to replace Councillor Trumpeter as Substitute Member
Licensing Committee	Councillor Johnston to replace Councillor Abrahams Councillor Hemingway to replace Councillor Davies
West Bromwich Town Chair	Councillor Melia to replace Councillor Akpoteni



Appendix B

Proposals for changes to polling places 2023/24

Smethwick Constituency

Abbey Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Current Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
ABA	761	St Hilda`s Church Hall, Abbey Road, B67 5NQ	No change	
ABB	1406	Abbey Infant School, Nursery Building, Access via Abbey Road, B67 5LR	No change	
ABC	795	Thimblemill Library, Thimblemill Road, Smethwick, B67 5RJ	No change	
ABD	1779	Bearwood Baptist Church, Bearwood Road, Smethwick, B66 4HA	No change	
ABE	1453	St Mary's Hall, St. Mary's Road, Smethwick, B66 4BX	No change	
ABF	1263	St Gregory's R.C. Primary School, Park Road & Wigorn Road Entrances, B67 5HX	No change	
ABG	1027	The Pavilion, Warley Woods Community Trust, 101 Lightwoods Hill, B67 5ED	No change	



Blackheath Ward (All of Blackheath ward except BLG – BLG falls in the Halesowen Borough Constituency which is administered by the Dudley A(RO))

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
BLA	2424	Blackheath Library, 145 High Street, Blackheath, B65 0EA	No change	
BLB	544	Rowley Regis Disability Centre, Rowley Village, B65 9AT	No change	
BLC, BLD	2104	The Parish of The English Martyrs, 297 Oldbury Road, B65 0PR	No change	
BLE	1883	Blackheath Primary School, Britannia Road, B65 9NA	No change	
BLF, BLG	1405	Highfields Primary School, Beeches Road, B65 0DA	See Appendix 2	
BLH	825	Temple Meadow Primary School, Wrights Lane, B64 6RH	See Appendix 2	

Bristnall Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
BRA, BRH	2034	Our Lady & St Hubert's R C Primary School, Moat Road, B68 8ED	Move BRA to the Pavilion, Barnford Park. BRH to remain at Our Lady & St Hubert's R C Primary.	The Pavilion at Barnford Park is in BRA polling district and much more convenient for voters in BRA polling district than the school. BRA and BRB would become one polling station at The Pavilion.
BRB, BRC	1871	Langley Swimming Centre, Vicarage Road, B68 8HS	Move BRB to The Pavilion, Barnford Park. Move BRC to Sandwell Aquatics Centre	Langley Swimming Centre has now closed down. The Pavilion is the most convenient polling place for voters in BRB district. Sandwell Aquatics centre would be the most convenient polling place for voters in BRC district. Sandwell



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
				Aquatics centre would then become a double station for BRC and SMA/SMB.
BRD	705	Hurst Road Community Centre, Hurst Road, Smethwick, B67 6ND	No change	
BRE	1868	Hurst Road Community Centre, Hurst Road, Smethwick, B67 6ND	No change	
BRF	1290	George Road Community Church, George Road, Oldbury, B68 9LN	No change	
BRG	1258	Barlow Homes Community Centre, Pound Road, Oldbury, B68 8NB	No change	

Langley Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
LAA	1993	Rounds Green Library, Martley Road, B69 1DZ	No change	
LAB, LAF	1658	Causeway Green Methodist Church, Penncricet Lane, Oldbury, B68 8LX	No change	
LAB, LAG	1694	Temporary Hut, York Road, B65 0RR	No change	
LAC	737	Langley Lodge Community Centre, Langley High Street, B69 4SN	No change	
LAD	2000	Zion United Reformed Church Hall, Langley Green Road, B69 4TP	No change	
LAE	1446	Temporary Hut on the Corner of, Heron Road and Brook Road, B68 8AE	No change	



Old Warley Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
OWA, OWH	2088	Oak Tree Centre, Kings Community Church, Tame Road, B68 0JP	No change	
OWB, OWC	2053	Lightwoods Primary Academy, Wolverhampton Road Site, entrance via Clent Road, B68 0LP	No change	
OWD	1618	Warley Baptist Church, Castle Road East, Oldbury, B68 9BJ	No change	
OWE, OWF	2343	Brandhall Library, Tame Road, Oldbury, B68 0JT	No change	
OWG	1091	Perryfields Primary School, Apsley Road, B68 0QY	No change	

Smethwick Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SMA, SMB	1403	Temporary Hut, Your Vets, 300 Londonderry Lane, B67 7EW	Sandwell Aquatics Centre, Londonderry Lane	The Sandwell Aquatics Centre have offered the use of their staff training room for use as a polling place. This room has its own separate entrance from the car park meaning that voters will not have to use the main reception which will then not disrupt the normal functioning of the Aquatics Centre. The Aquatics centre will become a double station for BRC and SMA/SMB
SMC	1438	Smethwick Fire Station, Stony Lane, Entrance via Green Street, B67 7QW	No change	
SMD	1107	Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street, B67 7AH	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SME, SMG	1771	Dance Studio at Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre, Broomfield, B67 7DH	No change	
SMF	2167	Dorothy Parkes Centre, Church Road, B67 6EH	No change	
SMH	1999	New Beginnings Community, St Marks Church, Thimblemill Road, B67 6LP	No change	

Soho & Victoria Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SVA	1074	Smethwick Baptist Church, Regent Street, B66 3BQ	No change	
SVB	980	Windmill Community Centre, Messenger Road, Smethwick, B66 3DX	No change	
SVC	1811	Community Action Project, Windmill Lane, B66 3LX	No change	
SVD, SVE	1825	Community Action Project, Windmill Lane, B66 3LX	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SVF	2463	Shireland Hall Primary Academy, Montague Road, B66 4PW	No change	
SVG	1409	Hadley Stadium, Entrance Waterloo Road, Smethwick, B66 4NL	Room in the main Hadley Stadium building rather than the current building used on Waterloo Road	Reports from polling station staff that the room we currently use is poor quality. There is also a significant step leading into the room which can mean accessibility is difficult. A suitable room in the main Hadley Stadium building (the multi-purpose room) has been identified. This room is just off the main reception and meets all accessibility needs. The pathway from Waterloo Road will also be open on polling day meaning that any voters accessing the site from that direction will only have an extra 1 minute walk to make. External lighting on this pathway will be on.
SVH	1407	Smethwick Heritage Centre, Victoria Park Lodge, High Street, B66 3NJ	No change	

St. Paul's Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SPA	1611	St Johns Community Centre, St Johns Church, St Johns Road, B68 9RP	No change	
SPB	1418	St Johns Community Centre, St Johns Church, St Johns Road, B68 9RP	No change	
SPC	602	New Hope Christian Centre, Woodland Drive, Smethwick, B66 1JF	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
SPD	1329	North Smethwick Resource Centre, Cambridge Road, B66 2HR	No change	
SPE	1507	Brasshouse Community Centre, Brasshouse Lane, B66 1BA	No change	
SPF	2001	West Smethwick Methodist Church Parlour, Holly Lane, B67 7JD	No change	
SPG	2104	The Sons of Rest Building, West Smethwick Park, West Park Road, B67 7JJ	No change	



Tipton and Wednesbury Constituency

Coseley East Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
B01	1388	Darkhouse Baptist Church, Darkhouse Lane, WV14 8XH	No change	
B02	856	Summerhill Community Centre, 28B Summerhill Road, WV14 8RD	No change	
B03, B04	966	Wallbrook Primary Academy, Bradleys Lane, WV14 8YP	No change	
B04, B06	1957	Roseville Methodist Church Hall, Bayer Street, WV14 9DS	No change	
B05	1061	Darkhouse Baptist Church, Darkhouse Lane, WV14 8XH	No change	
B07	937	Activity Centre, Silver Jubilee Park, Mason Street, WV14 9SZ	No change	
B08, B09	2097	Upper Ettingshall Methodist Church, Upper Ettingshall Road, WV14 9QU	No change	

Friar Park Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
FPA	1924	Woods Methodist Church, Coronation Road, Wednesbury, WS10 0TT	No change	
FPA	1298	Woods Methodist Church, Coronation Road, Wednesbury, WS10 0TT	No change	
FPB	1468	St Francis of Assisi Church, Freeman Road, Friar Park, WS10 0HJ	No change	
FPB	1425	St Francis of Assisi Church, Freeman Road, Friar Park, WS10 0HJ	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
FPC	1116	Tameside Primary Academy, Entrance From, Price Road, WS10 0EZ	Open Heaven Church, Price Road	No issues with using Tameside Primary but the change would mean one less school closure. The church is a 3 minute walk from the school and is a suitable building for use as a polling place.
FPD	1585	St Luke`s Church and Centre, Elwell Street, WS10 0QD	No change	

Great Bridge Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
GBA	2049	Jubilee Park Community Centre, Jubilee Park, Powis Avenue, DY4 0RJ	No change	
GBA	1334	Jubilee Park Community Centre, Jubilee Park, Powis Avenue, DY4 0RJ	No change	
GBB	2427	New Road Methodist Church, Mount Street, Great Bridge, DY4 7DE	No change	
GBC	1958	Great Bridge Library & Children's Centre, Sheepwash Lane, Tipton, DY4 7JF	No change	
GBD	2041	New Testament Church of God, Horseley Heath, DY4 7QT	No change	

Hateley Heath Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
HHA	1302	St John Bosco School, Monmouth Drive, West Bromwich, B71 2ST	No change	
HHB, HHD	1854	Hall Green Primary School, Westminster Road, B71 2JQ	No change	



HHC	701	Temporary Hut, Car Park, Holy Cross R.C., Hall Green Road, B71 3LA	No change	
HHE	848	Hope Church, Marsh Lane, B71 2DR	No change	
HHF	1767	West Bromwich Community Centre, Gayton Road, B71 1QS	No change	
HHG	2527	Little Gaters Building, Hargate Primary School, Tantany Lane/Law Street Entrance, B71 1PG	No change	
HHH	1248	Hateley Heath Primary School, Huntingdon Road, B71 2RP	No change	

Princes End Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
PEA	2168	William Perry Boxing Club, High Street, DY4 9JB	No change	
PEB	2174	Tipton Sports Academy Social Club, Wednesbury Oak Road, Tipton, DY4 0BS	No change	
PEC, PED	1698	St Mark's Church Hall, Ocker Hill Road, DY4 0UT	No change	
PEE	1727	Glebefields Library, St. Mark's Road, Tipton, DY4 0SZ	No change	
PEF, PEG	1647	St John the Evangelist Church Hall, Upper Church Lane, DY4 9ND	No change	



Tipton Green Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
TGA	1113	Grace Community Church, Newhall Street, Tipton, DY4 9HL	No change	
TGB	1068	The Nursery, St Paul's Academy, Robert Road, DY4 9BH	No change	
TGC	1728	The Nursery Room, St. Martin`s Church of England Primary School, Lower Church Lane, DY4 7PG	No change	
TGD	2453	Church of Sacred Heart & Holy Souls, (Church Hall), 31 Victoria Road, DY4 8SN	No change	Cllr Khatun suggested moving to the Carnegie Building which is also on Victoria Road and is council owned. However, the Carnegie Building is not yet open to the public and this is not planned until Spring 2024. There would be a significant risk to the May 2024 elections if the opening of the Carnegie Building was delayed in any way. Therefore, it has been agreed that this will be looked at again as part of the 2024/25 Local Government Boundary Review.
TGE	1992	Tipton Christian Church, Waterloo Street, Tipton, DY4 8NR	No change	
TGF	2326	Church Hall Rear of St. Matthew`s Church, Dudley Road, DY4 8DJ	No change	



Wednesbury North Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
WNA	1028	Temporary Hut , Cemetery, Beebee Road, WS10 9RY	No change	
WNB	1955	Albert Pritchard Infant School, Coleman Road & Crew Road Entrances, WS10 9QG	No change	
WNC	2210	St Bartholomew's Church Hall, Church Hill, WS10 9DJ	No change	
WND	1559	Wood Green Junior School, Hobs Road, WS10 9BW	No change	
WND	1291	Wood Green Junior School, Hobs Road, WS10 9BW	No change	
WNE	1201	Wednesbury Leisure Centre, High Bullen, WS10 7HP	No change	

Wednesbury South Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
WSA, WSB	1689	Leabrook Methodist Church Hall, (entrance Bannister Road), Leabrook Road, WS10 7LY	No change	
WSC	1667	Wesley Centre, Central Methodist Church, Springhead, WS10 9AD	No change	
WSD	1252	Little Learners Building, Moorlands Primary School, Winchester Road, B71 2NZ	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
WSE	1263	Hill Top Methodist Church, New Street, Hill Top, B70 0HW	No change	
WSE, WSF	1769	Hill Top Methodist Church, New Street, Hill Top, B70 0HW	No change	
WSG	2538	Harvills Hawthorn Primary School, Wolseley Road, West Bromwich, B70 0NG	No change	



West Bromwich Constituency

Charlemont with Grove Vale Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
CHA	1308	Charlemont Methodist Church, Charlemont Road, West Bromwich, B71 3DU	No change	
CHA, CHF	2338	Connor Education Centre, Connor Road, B71 3DJ	No change	
CHB, CHC	2595	Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Beaconview Road, B71 3PJ	No change	
CHD	1046	Great Barr Hotel, Festival Suite, Pear Tree Drive, B43 6HS	No change	
CHE	1045	Grove Vale Primary School, Monksfield Avenue, B43 6AL	No change	
CHG	1029	West Bromwich Community Centre, Gayton Road, B71 1QS	No change	

Great Barr with Yew Tree Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
GYA	1852	Yew Tree & Tame Bridge Community Centre, Redwood Road, WS5 4LB	No change	
GYA	1781	Yew Tree & Tame Bridge Community Centre, Redwood Road, WS5 4LB	No change	
GYB	883	Q3 Academy, Community Entrance, Wilderness Lane, B43 7SD	Merge with GYC – Great Barr War Memorial Hall	Q3 Academy remains open on polling day which means we employ security guards at this site. It is also not the most accessible polling station as it is down a long path. Great Barr War Memorial would be able to comfortably accommodate both polling districts as they



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
				both have a relatively low electorate. Cllr Allcock supports this proposal.
GYC	631	Great Barr War Memorial Hall, Corner of Chapel Lane &, Birmingham Road, B43 7BD	No change	
GYD, GYE	1829	Great Barr Library, (car park entrance Readers Walk), Birmingham Road, B43 6NW	No change	
GYF	878	Holy Name R.C. Parish Centre, Birmingham Road, Great Barr, B43 6LN	No change	
GYG	1935	Temporary Hut, Woodruff Way, Walsall, WS5 4RR	No change	

Greets Green and Lyng Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
GGA	2189	Ryders Green Primary School, Claypit Lane, B70 9UJ	No change	
GGB	1645	Wood Lane Community Centre, 157 Wood Lane, (Corner of Claypit Lane), B70 9PT	No change	
GGC	1656	Lodge Road Community Centre, Lodge Road, B70 8PJ	No change	
GGD, GGE	1976	Good Shepherd with St. John Church, Lyttleton Street, (Corner of Bromford Lane), B70 7SB	No change	
GGF	1202	Good Shepherd with St. John Church, Lyttleton Street, (Corner of Bromford Lane), B70 7SB	No change	
GGG	820	Farley Park Lodge Community Centre, Whitehall Road, B70 0HF	No change	



Newton Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
NEA	2099	St Bernard's Church, Broome Avenue, Great Barr, B43 5AL	No change	
NEB	1012	Temporary Hut, Meadowside Close, Great Barr, B43 6BP	No change	
NEC	1976	Ferndale Primary School, (Entrance via Eastwood Road), B43 5RR	No change	
NED	1109	Community Room Hamstead House, Coniston Crescent, B43 5NU	No change	
NEE	2462	Tanhouse Community Centre, Hamstead Road, B43 5EL	No change	

Oldbury Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
OLA	2255	Methodist Centre Dudley Port, Entrance From Tividale Street, DY4 7SB	No change	
OLB	2050	Balaji Temple, 101 Dudley Road East, Tividale, B69 3DU	No change	
OLC	1126	Balaji Temple, 101 Dudley Road East, Tividale, B69 3DU	No change	
OLD	1821	Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel, Birmingham Street, Oldbury, B69 4DY	No change	
OLE	1513	Balaji Temple, 101 Dudley Road East, Tividale, B69 3DU	No change	
OLF	1436	St Michael the Archangel, Tividale Road, Tividale, B69 2LQ	No change	



Rowley Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
ROA	943	Rowley Regis Sure Start Centre, Dudley Road, B65 8JY	No change	
ROB	1862	Rowley Regis Sure Start Centre, Dudley Road, B65 8JY	No change	
ROC	1671	Rowley Hall Primary School, Windsor Road, B65 9HU	No change	
ROD	1060	Temporary Hut, Blue Stone Walk/, Portway Hill, B65 9DE	No change	
ROE	1048	Rowley Regis Disability Centre, Rowley Village, B65 9AT	No change	
ROF	1817	Brickhouse Community Centre, Dudhill Road, B65 8HS	No change	
ROG	1417	St James' W.R. Church, Highgate Street, Old Hill, B64 5SA	No change	



Tividale Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
TIA	1296	Oakham Evangelical Church, City Road, Tividale, B69 1QZ	No change	
TIB	1547	Tividale FC Sports Bar, Packwood Road, Tividale, B69 1UL	No change	Cllr Crompton proposed moving back to Tividale Hall Primary School as she believes turnout has decreased since Tividale FC has been used. The school have now set their inset days for next year and so to use them for May 2024 would mean them having to close for an extra day. We will explore this move again as part of the Local Government Boundary Review in 2024/25.
TIB	1520	Tividale FC Sports Bar, Packwood Road, Tividale, B69 1UL	No change	As above.
TIC	1651	Oakham Library, Poplar Rise, B69 1RD	No change	
TID	1757	Oakham Evangelical Church, City Road, Tividale, B69 1QZ	No change	
TIE	1417	Portway Lifestyle Centre, Newbury Lane, Oldbury, B69 1HE	No change	



West Bromwich Central Ward

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
WBA	2547	Hallam Street Methodist Church, Community Room, Lewisham Street, B71 4HG	No change	
WBB	1615	The Mecure Birmingham West, Birmingham Road, (Access Europa Avenue), B70 6TU	Beeches Road Methodist Church, Beeches Road, West Bromwich	Numerous issues with the booking of The Mercure in May 2023. They changed the room to be used last minute without telling us, the room they gave us was too small. We explored using the National Metalforming Centre, however this would incur a significant cost and the NMC appeared reluctant to be used. Beeches Road Methodist Church welcome the use as a polling place and is only a 6 minute walk from The Mercure.
WBC	1394	Holy Trinity Church Hall, Mary Road, B70 6LF	No change	
WBD	749	Kenrick Park Community Centre, Rear Entrance, 70 Glover Street, B70 6DU	No change	
WBE	435	Kuumba Centre, Boulton Road, B70 6NW	Merge with WBD and both vote at Kenrick Park Community Centre	This polling district has a very small electorate and so Kenrick Park Community Centre could comfortably accommodate the electorate for both polling districts. Cllr Preece supports this proposal.
WBF	1000	St Philips Church, Beeches Road, West Bromwich, B70 6JA	No change	



District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
WBG	1751	West Bromwich Town Hall, High Street, Entrance From Lodge Rd, B70 8DT	No change	
WBH	787	Greets Green Access Centre, Tildasley Street, B70 9SJ	No change	



Proposals for changes to polling places for Parliamentary Elections only
– Smethwick Constituency

Blackheath Ward (BLG falls in the Halesowen Borough Constituency which is administered by the Dudley A(RO))

District(s)	Elector Count	Polling Place	Proposed Change	Comments
BLF, BLG	1405	Highfields Primary School, Beeches Road, B65 0DA	Move BLG to Good Shepherd Hall, Beeches Road. BLF to remain at Highfields Primary School	For Parliamentary elections only: BLG falls under Halesowen Borough Constituency. If both were to remain at Highfields Primary there is a risk of cross contamination of the two different ballot papers.
BLH	825	Temple Meadow Primary School, Wrights Lane, B64 6RH	BLH to go to Highfields Primary School along with BLF	For Parliamentary elections only: This is a double station with CRF which falls under Halesowen Borough Constituency. If both were to remain at Temple Meadow Primary, there would be a risk of cross contamination of the two different ballot papers.



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Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Written Questions
Director:	Brendan Arnold – Interim Director of Finance Mike Jones – Assistant Director Legal and Assurance

The following written questions have been received: -

7(a) From Councillor Jag Singh to the Leader of the Council

A recent article in the Express & Star newspaper highlighted that the Council's 'Welcoming Spaces' were open over the Christmas and new year holiday period to Sandwell's residents. Could I ask the Leader what the actual footfall of people was for each day?

7(b) From Councillor Keith Allcock to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

Despite the roll back on the ban on the sale of Petrol and Diesel motor vehicles by the current Government, it is clear that there is growing demand for electric vehicles and the infrastructure to support them. Newton Ward, that I am honoured to represent, contains a number of Low and High rise social housing properties with communal parking arrangements. Like many areas of Sandwell, there are streets where residential properties have no off road parking facility. Could the Cabinet Member please outline what are Sandwell's plans to provide and increase numbers of suitable charging points throughout the borough?



7(c) From Councillor Nagi D Singh to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism

Sandwell Valley is an amazing place to visit. Comments received about the events during the Christmas and new year holiday period have been very positive, and people are keen to complete the consultation of the masterplan. Can I ask the Cabinet Member what are the main proposed improvements for Sandwell Valley through the masterplan?

7(d) From Councillor Nicky Hinchliff to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

I am really pleased to see that it has been agreed to begin the process to make Sandwell a Child Friendly Borough. Can you explain the process and what is involved, and what we as members of the Council can do to support this given we are all corporate parents?

7(e) From Councillor Nicola Maycock to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA

The Richard Nugent Centre in Wednesbury had its official launch/opening in December 2023. The centre is a benefit to the town and wider community, with a new Doctors surgery and health centre based here. Can I ask the Cabinet Member advise on what other health facilities are available within the building that will benefit the local community?

7(f) From Councillor Ragih Muflihi to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities

Can I congratulate the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities following the Council's recent success in its bid for a £88,000 grant for our neighbourhoods. Can I ask the Cabinet Member what this money will be used for?



7(g) From Councillor Sukhbir Singh Gill to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA

As well as residents who live in rented homes, residents who own their own home in Sandwell may also require help or assistance due to the cost of living and extremely high energy costs with the price cap rising from £1834 to £1928 this year. Can the Cabinet Member advise if there is any kind of help or support available from the Council, our partners, the voluntary sector or energy providers offered to contribute towards energy efficiency improvements for home owners in Sandwell?

7(h) From Councillor Jill Tromans to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

This year sees us celebrate the 40th birthday of the Council's community alarms service, a great achievement for the service which provides lifeline to many residents in Sandwell and is a very well thought of service. Can I ask the Cabinet Member to advise whether an alarm for a vulnerable person can be fitted into privately owned or rented homes or in shared accommodation by the service? If not, does the Council signpost residents to other sources of support?

7(i) From Councillor Rizwan Jalil to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

Over recent years, illegal street racing or 'cruising' has been a significant issue for Sandwell and the wider Black Country area. An injunction and enforcement action has proven effective and I would like to thank the cabinet member for his continued involvement in ensuring that Sandwell is part of the Black Country is a 'No cruise Area'.

However, we still have negligent drivers who speed on our roads and I am particularly concerned about neighbourhoods that are built up and have schools in the area. Can I ask the Cabinet Member for Highways if action could be taken to designate all school zones in the borough and in my ward Oldbury as 20mph zones please?



7(j) From Councillor Kalebe-Nyamongo to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities

New figures from the UK Health Security Agency show that there is a rising case of measles across the UK with higher levels seen in the West Midlands. At least 57 suspected cases were reported in the last four weeks of December. There are 167 lab confirmed cases in West Midlands with a further 88 percent likely. Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It infects the respiratory tract and then spreads throughout the body. It can cause severe disease, complications, and even death. While measles can affect anyone, it is most common in children. Complications can include chest and ear infections, diarrhoea, encephalitis (infection of the brain) and in severe cases, potential brain damage. Complications are more likely to occur in certain groups including people with weakened immune systems, babies under one year old and pregnant women.

One of the challenges facing health professionals is also that of identifying signs (spots) in people from a minority ethnic background (especially Asians and Black people).

Can the Cabinet Member advise what measures have been put in place in Sandwell to ensure that people are aware of the symptoms/signs and what they can do to protect their children against the disease?

7(k) From Councillor William Gill to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

Across Great Bridge and Tipton, residents have raised their concerns to me about parking over grass verges. This is making areas like the Newtown estate, and Glebefields Road look unsightly and more importantly, it is proving to be a hazard for local people. I've logged numerous cases through the portal and regrettably, it seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

Can the Cabinet Member please explain what steps are the Council taking to tackle the borough-wide issue of damaged grass verges due to parked vehicles?



Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24
Director:	Brendan Arnold – Interim Director of Finance Brendan_Arnold@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Craig Pugh – Strategic Finance Manager Craig_Pugh@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

1.1. That Council approve the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24, as set out in Appendix A, including revisions to the following indicators:

- (i) Authorised Limit from £913.142m to £891.638m;
- (ii) Operational Boundary to from £544.113m to £573.252m; and
- (iii) Capital Financing Requirement from £896.581m to £876.638m

2. Reasons for Recommendations







2.1. The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management - revised 2021 (The Code) requires Council to receive reports on Treasury Management including the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and MRP Policy Statement before the start of each financial year as well as a Mid-Year Review and an Annual Outturn Report detailing activities during the previous year.



2.2. The mid-year review (Appendix A) was included within the Quarter 2 Monitoring Report which was considered by the Cabinet on 6th December 2023. This report complies with the requirement of The Code in ensuring that full Council receive and approve the mid-year review.

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

3.1. The Council’s Treasury Management activities help to underpin the Council’s Corporate Plan and the associated aspirations.

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

4. Context and Key Issues

4.1. Treasury Management is defined as “The management of local authority’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”



- 4.2. Prudential and Treasury indicators are set and approved before the start of each financial year using information included in the budget reports to inform members of the impact of capital investment decisions and to agree processes for managing risk within the debt and investment strategies.
- 4.3. As the financial year progresses capital investment decisions will change as new projects are brought into the programme and others will require re-profiling into future years. Therefore, the forecast borrowing need will also require revision and these matters are covered within section 5 of Appendix A.
- 4.4. The Council’s investment strategy and approved criteria for making and managing investments remains fit for purpose and no changes are proposed within this Mid-Year Review report.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1. The Council could request additional information before approving revisions to the prudential and treasury indicators.

6. Implications

Resources:	Financial implications are contained within Appendix A. No adjustments to the council’s treasury budgets for debt costs or investment income are proposed.
Legal and Governance:	The Council will not be compliant with the CIPFA Code of Practice if a Mid-Year Review report is not presented and approved. The Council is also required to have a prudent MRP Policy in place
Risk:	This information is contained within the Appendix
Equality:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations
Health and Wellbeing:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations
Social Value:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations



Climate Change:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations
Corporate Parenting:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24

8. Background Papers

Cabinet 6 December 2023, Q2 Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24
(Appendix 10f)



Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Prudential Indicators Mid-Year Monitoring Report 2023/24

1 Background

1.1 Treasury Management

The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer term cash flow surpluses and on occasion, any debt previously drawn, may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

“The management of local authority’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

2. Introduction

This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Prudential and Treasury Management (revised 2021).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

- Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
- Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the way the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
- Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement – including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum

Revenue Provision Policy – for the year ahead, a Mid-Year Review Report and an Annual Report (stewardship report) covering activities during the previous year.

- Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
- Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specified named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2023/24 financial year;
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2023/24;
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2023/24;
- A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2023/24;
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24.

3. Economics and Interest Rates

3.1 Full Economic Update

- The first half of 2023/24 saw:
 - Interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the tightening cycle.
 - Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised to the upside.
 - A 0.5% m/m decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes.
 - CPI inflation falling from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7.
 - Core CPI inflation declining to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April and May, a then 31 years high.
 - A cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth (as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose to 7.8% in August, excluding bonuses).

- The 0.5% m/m fall in GDP in July suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000). But with output falling in 10 out of the 17 sectors, there is an air of underlying weakness.
- The 0.4% m/m rebound in retail sales volumes in August is not as good as it looks as it partly reflected a pickup in sales after the unusually wet weather in July. Sales volumes in August were 0.2% below their level in May, suggesting much of the resilience in retail activity in the first half of the year has faded.
- As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lose momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and government handouts have all supported household incomes over the past year. And with CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of-living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probable peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.
- The tightness of the labour market continued to ease, with employment in the three months to July falling by 207,000. The further decline in the number of job vacancies from 1.017m in July to 0.989m in August suggests that the labour market has loosened a bit further since July. That is the first time it has fallen below 1m since July 2021. At 3.0% in July, and likely to have fallen to 2.9% in August, the job vacancy rate is getting closer to 2.5%, which would be consistent with slower wage growth. Meanwhile, the 48,000 decline in the supply of workers in the three months to July offset some of the loosening in the tightness of the labour market. That was due to a 63,000 increase in inactivity in the three months to July as more people left the labour market due to long term sickness or to enter education. The supply of labour is still 0.3% below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level.
- But the cooling in labour market conditions still has not fed through to an easing in wage growth. While the monthly rate of earnings growth eased sharply from an upwardly revised +2.2% in June to -0.9% in July, a lot of that was due to the one-off bonus payments for NHS staff in June not being repeated in July. The headline 3myy rate rose from 8.4% (revised up from 8.2%) to 8.5%, which meant UK wage growth remains much faster than in the US and in the Euro-zone. Moreover, while the Bank of England's closely watched measure of regular private sector wage growth eased a touch in

July, from 8.2% 3myy in June to 8.1% 3myy, it is still well above the Bank of England's prediction for it to fall to 6.9% in September.

- CPI inflation declined from 6.8% in July to 6.7% in August, the lowest rate since February 2022. The biggest positive surprise was the drop in core CPI inflation, which declined from 6.9% to 6.2%. That reverses all the rise since March and means the gap between the UK and elsewhere has shrunk (US core inflation is 4.4% and in the Euro-zone it is 5.3%). Core goods inflation fell from 5.9% to 5.2% and the further easing in core goods producer price inflation, from 2.2% in July to a 29-month low of 1.5% in August, suggests it will eventually fall close to zero. But the really positive development was the fall in services inflation from 7.4% to 6.8%. That also reverses most of the rise since March and takes it below the forecast of 7.2% the Bank of England published in early August.
- The Bank of England wants the markets to believe in the higher for longer narrative. Statements from the Bank of England have not said that rates have peaked and once again said if there was evidence of more persistent inflation pressures "further tightening in policy would be required". Governor Bailey stated, "we'll be watching closely to see if further increases are needed". The Bank also retained the hawkish guidance that rates will stay "sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently long".
- This narrative makes sense as the Bank of England does not want the markets to decide that a peak in rates will be soon followed by rate cuts, which would loosen financial conditions and undermine its attempts to quash inflation. The language also gives the Bank of England the flexibility to respond to new developments.

3.2 Interest Rate Movements and Expectations

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast on 25th September sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.

The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.09.23												
	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
6 month ave earnings	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90
12 month ave earnings	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.20	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
5 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50
25 yr PWLB	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80
50 yr PWLB	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60

4. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24 was approved by this Council on 21 February 2023.

The underlying TMSS approved previously requires revision in the light of economic and operational movements during the year. The proposed changes and supporting detail for the changes are set out below:

	2023/24	
	Original Estimate £'m	Revised Prudential Indicator £'m
Authorised Limit	913.142	891.638
Operational Boundary	544.113	573.252
Capital Financing Requirement	896.581	876.638

5. The Council's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity

5.1. Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the projected outturn for capital expenditure based on projections at period 6, along with the expected financing arrangements against the original indicators set at the time the capital programme was agreed in February 2023.

	2023/24	
	Original Estimate £'m	Projected Outturn £'m
Capital Expenditure		
General Fund	109.596	75.289
HRA	91.949	75.700
Total	201.545	150.989
Resourced by:		
Capital Receipts	22.993	21.212
Capital Grants & Contributions	81.934	50.783
Revenue	35.349	28.044
Capital Expenditure Financed from Borrowing	61.269	50.950

There has been a forecast decrease in the projected level of expenditure since the original estimate. This is mostly due to re-profiling of expenditure into 2024/25 (including £27m Towns Fund Regeneration schemes, £8m DFG, £7m transport and £17m HRA projects)

The borrowing need underlines the indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

5.2. Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed as the Operational Boundary.

	2023/24					
	Original Estimate			Projected Outturn		
	HRA £'m	General Fund £'m	Total £'m	HRA £'m	General Fund £'m	Total £'m
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	526.722	319.641	846.363	517.908	318.711	836.619
add: Capital Expenditure funded from Borrowing	57.653	3.616	61.269	46.063	4.887	50.950
less: MRP	0.000	-6.829	-6.829	0.000	-6.709	-6.709
add: Movement on Other Long Term Liabilities	-1.389	-2.833	-4.222	-1.389	-2.833	-4.222
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	582.986	313.595	896.581	562.582	314.056	876.638
External Debt						
Borrowing			530.653			512.310
Other Long Term Liabilities*			60.942			60.942
Total Debt at 31 March			591.595			573.252

* - Represents the estimated finance lease creditors liability as at 31 March 2024 in relation to 'on balance sheet' PFI schemes.

5.3. Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. Gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2023/24 and the next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

	2023/24	
	Original Estimate £'m	Projected Outturn £'m
Gross Borrowing	530.653	512.310
add: Other Long Term Liabilities*	60.942	60.942
Total Debt	591.595	573.252
CFR (Year end position)	896.581	876.638

* Includes on balance sheet PFI schemes and finance leases etc.

The Section 151 Officer can report that there are no difficulties envisaged for the current or future years in complying with this prudential indicator.

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

	2023/24	
	Original Estimate £'m	Projected Outturn £'m
Borrowing	475.588	512.310
add: Other Long Term Liabilities*	68.525	60.942
Total Operational Boundary	544.113	573.252
Total Authorised Limit	913.142	891.638

* Includes on balance sheet PFI schemes and finance leases etc.

6. Borrowing / Debt Activity during 2023/24

This table shows the Council's actual external debt and anticipated need against the underlying capital borrowing need (the CFR), highlighting any under or over borrowing.

	2023/24	
	Original Estimate £'m	Projected Outturn £'m
External Debt as at 1 April	471.016	464.310
Expected need to 31 March	59.637	48.000
Other Long Term Liabilities*	60.942	60.942
Estimated Debt as at 31 March	591.595	573.252
Capital Financing Requirement	896.581	876.638
(-)Under / (+)Borrowed	-304.986	-303.386
Investment as at 31 March	-25.000	-25.000
Net Debt Position as at 31 March	566.595	548.252

* Includes on balance sheet PFI schemes.

Due to the current economic situation and high interest rate environment, any new borrowing need will be taken for short periods pending a drop in borrowing rates when the debt can be refinanced for longer periods at more advantageous levels, thereby preventing long term high debt costs on the revenue accounts of the Council.

6.1. Debt Rescheduling

Debt rescheduling opportunities have been very limited in the current economic climate and following the various increases in the margins added to gilt yields which have impacted PWLB new borrowing rates since October 2010, no debt rescheduling has therefore been undertaken to date, in the current financial year. However, now that the whole of the yield curve has shifted higher there may be better opportunities in the future, although only prudent and affordable debt rescheduling will be considered.

7. Investment Strategy 2023/24

Key Objectives

The approved Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, includes the Council's Annual Investment Strategy. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, but also to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, using the Link suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

Current Investment Position

The Council held £115.750m of investments as at 30 September 2023 (£125.487m as at 30 September 2022) with the structure of the portfolio being detailed below.

	Portfolio as at		Average Portfolio Performance	
	30 September 2023		2023/24	
	Balance	Yield	Avg Balance	Avg Yield
	£'m	£'m	£'m	£'m
Money Market Funds	110.168	5.29%	74.337	4.91%
Bank Current Account	0.582	1.45%	0.667	1.27%
Fixed Term Deposits (short term)	5.000	4.97%	5.191	4.88%
Total Investments	115.750	5.26%	80.195	4.87%

The section 151 Officer confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the 6 months of 2023/24.

Risk Benchmarking

A regulatory development is the consideration and approval of security and liquidity benchmarks. Yield benchmarks are currently widely used to assess investment performance. Discrete security and liquidity benchmarks are new requirements to Member reporting, although the application of these is more subjective in nature.

The current position against the originally approved benchmarks is reported below;

% Benchmarks	SONIA (overnight)	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	12 Month
Benchmark Return (average year to date)	4.74%	4.83%	5.03%	5.26%	5.45%

Liquidity

In respect of this area, the Council set liquidity facilities / benchmarks to maintain:

- Bank overdraft - £2m
- Liquid short-term deposits of at least £20m available within a week's notice.

The Section 151 Officer can report that liquidity arrangements have been adequate during the year to date.

Yield

Local measures of yield benchmarks are:

- Investments – Internal returns to be above the Overnight SONIA rate

The Section 151 Officer can report that the return to date has averaged 4.87%, against an average overnight SONIA rate at 30 September 2022 of 4.74%. The original Treasury Management Strategy Statement indicated that average yields for 2023/24 would be approximately 4.40%. The current interest rate environment remains higher than those original expectations and this has generated a higher return in investment income for the Council, which is reflected within the Q2 monitoring report.

8. Other

8.1 Compliant with Treasury and Prudential Limits

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the half year ended 30 September 2023, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. The Section 151 Officer reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

8.2 Changes in Risk Appetite

There is no change to the Council Risk appetite.

8.3 Creditworthiness Policy

The current approved creditworthiness policy and counterparty limits for investment balances remain fit for purpose and no changes are proposed.

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Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Appointment of Independent Person for Standards Matters
Director:	Mike Jones Assistant Director Legal and Assurance Monitoring Officer Mike_jones1@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Stephnie Hancock Deputy Democratic Services Manager Stephnie_Hancock@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendation

- 1.1 That Council approve the extension of the appointment of Mr Richard Phillips as Independent Person for Standards Matters, for a further four-year period ending 11 March 2028
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to approve any further extensions to contracts for Independent Persons for Standards Matters.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, arrangements must be put in place for the appointment by the Council of at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought and taken into account by the Council before it makes its decision on an allegation against an elected member that it has decided to investigate.



- 2.2 The Independent Person’s views may be sought by a member or co-opted member of the Council if that person’s behaviour is the subject of an allegation and may also be sought by the Council in relation to an allegation it has not yet decided to investigate.
- 2.3 The Council has decided to have three Independent Persons. The recruitment process has commenced to appoint two further Independent Persons, any recommendations as to a further appointment will be submitted to Council at a future meeting.
- 2.4 The appointment of Mr Richard Phillips is due to expire on 10 March 2024. Mr Phillips has indicated that he is happy to continue in the role and Council is therefore asked to consider an extension of Mr Phillip’s appointment for a further four-year period. Any future extensions to existing Independent Person appointments will be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to approve.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The role of the Independent Person is advisory and is important in providing assurance to the Council and the public that standards matters are being dealt with effectively, fairly and proportionately.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, arrangements must be put in place for the appointment by the Council of at least one Independent Person. The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommended that there should be at least two Independent Persons for Standards Matters. Their views must be sought and taken into account by the Council before it makes a decision on an allegation against an elected member that it has decided to investigate. The Independent Person’s views may be sought by a member or co-opted member of the Council if that person’s behaviour is the subject of an allegation, and may also be sought by the Council in relation to an allegation it has not yet decided to investigate.



- 4.2 In order to be eligible to be an Independent Persons Under S28 Localism Act 2011 the person must not be an Elected Member, Co-opted Member or officer of Sandwell Council and they must not have been any of the above in the past five years prior to the Appointment.

5 Implications

Resources:	The role of Independent Person/Independent Member is a voluntary position and no annual allowance is paid in respect of this appointment. However, travelling and subsistence expenses are paid at the appropriate rate.
Legal and Governance:	Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by their members and co-opted members. The Act requires local authorities to have in place mechanisms to investigate allegations that a member has not complied with their Code of Conduct, and arrangements under which decisions on allegations may be made. Section 28(7) of the Act requires local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to advise the Council before it makes a decision on an allegation. The Independent Person also advises a member facing an allegation who has sought the views of that person. There are restrictions on who can be appointed as the Independent Person, mainly, that the Independent Person cannot be a councillor, officer or their relative or close friend. Public notice has to be given of recruitment for the role.
Risk:	Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to appoint at least one Independent Person to advise the Council before it makes a decision on an allegation.
Equality:	An equality impact assessment is not required.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value:	There are no direct social value implications arising from this report.
Climate Change:	There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.



Corporate Parenting:	There are no direct corporate parenting implications arising from this report.
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6 Appendices

None

7. Background Papers

None



Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Proposed departure from the Development Plan at Land West Of Bridge Street North, Smethwick, B66 2BJ
Director:	John Baker - Assistant Director - Development Planning and Building Consultancy.
Contact Officer:	Andrew Dean Senior Planner andrew_dean@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That approval be given to an exception to the local development plan in respect of planning application DC/23/67863 - Proposed change of use from general industrial to treatment, remediation and recovery facility for contaminated soils, construction, demolition and excavation of waste with 1 No. soil treatment shed and 4 No. office/meeting rooms, 1 No. mess drying room, toilet block, store, weighbridge unit, picking station, decontamination unit, clean material area and 2 No. holding tanks and covered post treatment areas, oversized processing area, parking and the creation of a new vehicular access - Temporary planning permission for 3 years at Land West Of Bridge Street North, Smethwick, B66 2BJ.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The proposal is on land allocated for housing within the Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document. It is necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to grant an exception to its policy to allow the application to proceed.
- 2.2 Although the site is allocated for housing land, it is part of a wider allocation and could not be developed in isolation for residential development, as in close proximity to the site are located existing employment uses. For housing to be acceptable on the site, the Council would be looking for a comprehensive development of the wider residential allocation. The proposal is acceptable in its scale, design and appearance, would cause no harm to the safety and convenience of users of the highway and would not cause significant harm to the amenity of the occupiers of adjacent properties. Furthermore, the granting of a temporary approval would not prevent the site coming forward for residential development in the future which is the long-term aspiration.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	A strong and inclusive economy
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 At the meeting of Planning Committee held on the 29 November 2023, consideration was given to planning application DC/23/67863 - Proposed change of use from general industrial to treatment, remediation and recovery facility for contaminated soils, construction, demolition and excavation of waste with 1 No. soil treatment shed and 4 No. office/meeting rooms, 1 No. mess drying room, toilet block, store, weighbridge unit, picking station, decontamination unit, clean material area and 2 No. holding tanks and covered post treatment areas, oversized processing area, parking and the creation of a new vehicular access - Temporary planning permission for 3 years.



- 4.2 At the meeting, the Committee approved the planning application with conditions subject to the application being referred to Full Council as a departure from the approved development plan.
- 4.3 The application was publicised by neighbour notification letter, site notice and press notice with 16 objections being received.
- 4.4 Council will need to approve the application as it is a departure from the Development Plan. The site is currently allocated for housing; therefore, it is necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to grant an exception to adopted policy to allow the application to proceed.
- 4.5 The purpose of this report is to discuss the 'departure' from the Development Plan only. It is not the role of Council to reconsider the wider planning merits of the application which have already been considered by the Planning Committee.
- 4.6 The Council's Highways, Planning Policy, Conservation Officer and Public Health (noise, contaminated land and air quality have all been consulted as well as West Midlands Police, Lead Local Flood Authority, Severn Trent, Health and Safety Executive and the Canal and River Trust. There were no objections subject to various conditions being imposed.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Refusing the departure is an option, in doing so clear planning justification would have to be provided as any refusal of planning permission could result in an appeal and costs being awarded against the Council.



6 Implications

Resources:	When a planning application is refused the applicant has a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, and they can make a claim for costs against the Council.
Legal and Governance:	This application is submitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
Risk:	No Risk Implications arising from this report.
Equality:	There are no equality issues arising from this proposal and therefore an equality impact assessment has not been carried out.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no Health and Wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value	There are no Social Value Implications arising from this report.
Climate Change	Sandwell Council supports the transition to a low carbon future, in a way that takes full account of the need to adapt to and mitigate climate change. Proposals that help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, will be welcomed.
Corporate Parenting:	None Relevant.



7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Planning application reference – DC/23/67863 - Proposed change of use from general industrial to treatment, remediation and recovery facility for contaminated soils, construction, demolition and excavation of waste with 1 No. soil treatment shed and 4 No. office/meeting rooms, 1 No. mess drying room, toilet block, store, weighbridge unit, picking station, decontamination unit, clean material area and 2 No. holding tanks and covered post treatment areas, oversized processing area, parking and the creation of a new vehicular access - Temporary planning permission for 3 years.

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18742/Planning%20Application%20-%20DC-23-67863.pdf>



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Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Political Balance of Committees and Boards
Director:	Assistant Chief Executive – James McLaughlin Mike Jones, Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer Mike1_Jones@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Stephnie Hancock Stephnie_Hancock@sandwell.gov.uk







1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Council approve the political balance of the committees, boards and other fora for the remainder of 2023-24, as set out in Appendix A.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Following a change in political balance, the Council is asked to approve the political balance of committees, boards and other fora.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Council's decision-making structures are designed to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan.
		
		



4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides, amongst other things, that where a local authority is divided into different political groups, it will have regard to the allocation to the different political groups on the Council, of all of those seats on any ordinary committee, sub-committee and Joint Authorities established pursuant to Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985.

4.2 The regulations provide for a political group to comprise two or more elected members of a local authority.

4.3 Notification has been received of 2 groups –

Labour	62
Conservative	8
Independent	2

The seats on committees have been allocated according to proportionality rules (as set out in Appendix A).

4.4 A political group represented on the Council may choose to allocate a proportion of its allocation of seats to an elected member who is not in a political group on the Council, without affecting proportionality.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option, the Council has a duty to allocate seats according to political party, in accordance with the Act and appointment of elected members to committees and other/outside bodies can only be made by full Council.



6 Implications

Resources:	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	There is a duty on the Council to allocate seats to political groups, as per the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Council can determine the making of non-executive appointments to committees and other fora. Council is under a legal and constitutional obligation to make appointments to its committees, boards and other fora to ensure the effective operation of the Council's functions and other obligations, duties and responsibilities.
Risk:	There are no direct implications arising from this report.
Equality:	
Health and Wellbeing:	
Social Value	
Climate Change	
Corporate Parenting	

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Political Balance of Committees and Boards

8. Background Papers

None



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**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Constitution of Boards, Committees and
Other Fora 2023/24**

	Labour	Conservative	Total
Scrutiny Boards			
Health and Adult Social Care	10	1	11
Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment	10	1	11
Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities	10	1	11
Children's Services and Education	10	1	11
	40	4	44
Constitutional and Quasi-Judicial Committees/Panels			
Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	6	1	7
Planning Committee	14	2	16
Licensing Committee	14	1	15
General Purposes and Arbitration Committee	6	1	7
Governance and Constitution Review Committee	7	1	8
Land and Asset Management Committee	6	1	7
Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee	7	1	8
Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee	6	1	7
Emergency Committee	6	1	7
	72	10	82
	112	14	126

*Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board removed from calculation as membership of that body is qualified in accordance with criteria agreed by Council i.e. Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Boards plus 2 members of the opposition where they do not hold the position of Chair/Vice Chair

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Report to Council

30 January 2024

Subject:	Revisions to Committees/Boards/Other Bodies
Director:	Mike Jones, Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer Mike1_Jones@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Stephnie Hancock Deputy Democratic Services Manager Stephnie_Hancock@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 To receive and approve revisions to appointments to committees, boards and other bodies established by the Council, as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 That subject to 1.1 above, the nominations received be approved and appointed to those bodies with immediate effect.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Appointments to positions on committee/boards/other bodies is a matter for Council to determine.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		The Council's decision-making structures are designed to support the delivery of Sandwell's Vision 2030.
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The Council's Constitution sets out the executive, scrutiny and constitutional functions and the rules and procedures for how the Council operates, it also prescribes the issues that the Council should address at its Annual Meeting in identifying the person(s) or bodies it wishes to carry out its functions as a local authority and the portfolios and terms of reference for those persons and bodies.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 There is no alternative option. Appointment of elected members to committees and other/outside bodies and revisions to constitution of a committee can only be made by full Council.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	Council can determine the making of non-executive appointments to committees and other fora. Council is under a legal and constitutional obligation to make appointments to its committees, boards and other fora to ensure the effective operation of the Council's functions and other obligations, duties and responsibilities.
Risk:	A risk assessment is not required.
Equality:	An equality impact assessment is not required.
Health and Wellbeing:	The proposals have no direct implications.



Social Value:	The proposals have no direct implications.
Climate Change:	The proposals have no direct implications.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no direct implications.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Revision to Appointments to Committees, Boards and Other Bodies

8. Background Papers

None.



Appendix A

Committee/Board/Other Body	Revision/nomination
Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee	Councillor Peter Hughes to replace Councillor Bob Piper
Planning Committee	Councillor John Giles to replace Councillor David Fisher
Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board	Councillor Jennifer Hemingway to replace Councillor William Gill



Motion Title: Support the introduction of Bus Franchising in the West Midlands

Proposer: Councillor Hackett

Seconder: Councillor Millard

Council notes that bus passengers in Sandwell are rightly frustrated with many bus services operated by various providers across Sandwell, with many services proving to be unreliable.

Council further notes that trust in local transport is at an all-time low with passenger numbers and satisfaction falling and prices rising.

Council welcomes the opportunity bus franchising in the West Midlands presents, which could see the West Midlands Combined Authority given powers to decide routes, fares, frequency, hours and days of operation providing greater control over our bus services for communities right across Sandwell and the wider West Midlands.

Council therefore calls on the Combined Authority Mayor or any successor to commit to exploring all options for bringing in bus franchising across the whole West Midlands region to ensure our bus services are run in the interests of passengers and not solely based on profit.

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Motion Title: Dependent Carers Allowance

Proposer: Councillor Smith

Seconder: Councillor Hemingway

Council notes the increasing challenge seen locally and nationally at increasing and maintaining the diversity of elected members in local government. This requires a consistent approach to resolving the challenges different groups of people face. The payment of allowances to elected members who are parents and carers helps to bring a wider range of people into public office and supports them in remaining there.

Council further notes that data from The Fawcett Society report Does Local Government Work for Women? and the Local Government Information unit (LGiU) makes clear that women councillors experience more barriers to holding office. These barriers include unpaid caring responsibilities, the timing of meetings and a lack of flexibility in how councils do business. Women councillors experience these barriers much more than their male counterparts. This has created an imbalance in local government throughout the country.

Council is justly proud of our record in supporting diversity and inclusion and encouraging people from all backgrounds to aspire to and assume public office and positions of leadership.

Council notes the recent report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel that Sandwell Council extend our existing member allowances scheme to include wider dependent carer responsibilities as well as removing the requirement to use the Council House Workplace Nursery.

Council therefore resolves to call on the Governance and Constitution Review Committee to bring forward proposals to amend and update our Dependent Carers Allowance Scheme, taking note of the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel and in line with the recommendation from the Fawcett Society as well as best practice from existing schemes around the country.

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Motion Title: Re-instating of a Justice Centre in Sandwell

Proposer: Councillor Webb

Secunder: Councillor Tipper

Council considers the justice system a fundamental pillar of democracy that works to protect and advance the principles of justice, and should work for everyone in Sandwell as well as for the wider Black Country.

Council notes the 2016 decision of Government to close the Justice Centre in Sandwell. Sandwell residents are disproportionately affected by this, not having direct public transport to each of the other Black Country authority's remaining justice centres. Other more direct forms of transport are made difficult through financial and social circumstances.

Council notes with concern that there are record number of cases being delayed in the West Midlands in the Criminal Courts but there are also cases are mounting up in the Family Courts. Wolverhampton Crown Court has 900 cases waiting to be heard including cases of murder and manslaughter.

Council further notes with concern that a range of other cases such as work-related death and causing death and injury through dangerous driving are not being scheduled to be heard until 2025. This means meaning that some families could have had to wait 8 years for their cases to be heard. This is too long, and families should have access to justice in a timely manner.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Chief Executive to write to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice setting out the terms of this Motion and calling on the Secretary of State to take steps to re-open a justice centre within Sandwell at the earliest opportunity.

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Motion Title: A borough of Six Equal Towns!

Proposer: Councillor Gill

Secunder: Councillor Fisher

Council recognises that Sandwell is made up of 6 towns and whilst each town is unique and distinct, we share far more that unites us than divides and are stronger together. In turn, residents across the Borough need to be assured that all towns of our Borough are always treated equally.

Council notes that the towns of West Bromwich and Smethwick have received far more investment than all other towns in our Borough. Tipton, in particular, has received particularly less investment funding compared to the other towns as evidenced on the Council's regenerating Sandwell website.

Council recognises that all of our High Streets and Town Centres require balanced funding and attention to prosper.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to level up our towns and support our high streets and town centres by considering introducing a policy that ensures all Council-owned car-parks near town centres, or High Streets like Great Bridge, have free parking for a period of 3 hours to support small businesses and make it even easier for people to shop in Sandwell.

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