

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Decisions made at a meeting of the Executive on Wednesday, 7 February 2024

Published:

The following decisions were made by the Executive at its meeting on **Wednesday, 7 February 2024**. These decisions will come into force on **Friday 16 February 2024 after call in period expires**. A decision by the Executive may be called-in (in accordance with Part 4 – Scrutiny Procedure Rules of the Council’s Constitution) by **call-in which expires on Thursday 15 February 2024**. Should you have any queries about any decision that has been made, contact should be made in the first instance to Democratic Services at democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk. Any declaration of interest made by any member of the Executive is shown below.

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:			
4	<p>Urgent Item of Business - Q3 Budget Monitoring 2023/24</p> <p>That Cabinet:</p> <p>(1) Note the financial monitoring position as at 31 December 2023 (Quarter 3) and refers the report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment.</p> <p>(2) Approves the following budget virements above £1m in line with the revised delegated limits for Cabinet Members and Directors:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="174 1318 1032 1390"> <tr> <td data-bbox="174 1318 768 1390">Virements above £1m for approval by Cabinet</td> <td data-bbox="768 1318 902 1390">£'000</td> <td data-bbox="902 1318 1032 1390">£'000</td> </tr> </table>	Virements above £1m for approval by Cabinet	£'000	£'000	<p>Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs.</p> <p>Budgetary control, which included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility.</p>	<p>There were no alternative options to the position presented.</p>
Virements above £1m for approval by Cabinet	£'000	£'000				

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:																
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="174 204 421 347">Directorate Budgets</td> <td data-bbox="421 204 768 347">Transfer of pay award allocation from Contingency</td> <td data-bbox="768 204 902 347">6,539</td> <td data-bbox="902 204 1032 347"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="174 347 421 451">Contingency</td> <td data-bbox="421 347 768 451">Transfer of pay award allocation to directorates</td> <td data-bbox="768 347 902 451"></td> <td data-bbox="902 347 1032 451">6,539</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="174 451 768 496"></td> <td data-bbox="768 451 902 496"></td> <td data-bbox="902 451 1032 496"></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="174 496 768 541">TOTAL</td> <td data-bbox="768 496 902 541">6,539</td> <td data-bbox="902 496 1032 541">6,539</td> </tr> </table>	Directorate Budgets	Transfer of pay award allocation from Contingency	6,539		Contingency	Transfer of pay award allocation to directorates		6,539					TOTAL		6,539	6,539		
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5	<p>Improvement Plan Progress - Grant Thornton Follow-up Report 2023</p> <p>(1) That Cabinet receive Grant Thornton’s Value for Money Governance Review Follow Up Review Report of December 2023.</p> <p>(2) That Cabinet note that the Council’s response to the recommendations in Grant Thornton’s report will be incorporated into the refresh of the Improvement Plan in 2024.</p>	<p>Grant Thornton conducted their Value for Money Review of the Council’s governance arrangements in Autumn 2021. Their report had been received by Cabinet on 15 December 2021 and Council on 18 January 2022. Their report made three statutory recommendations, of which the Council were legally required to respond to and address. These had been incorporated into the Council’s Improvement Plan approved in June 2022.</p> <p>As part of the Council’s assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, Grant Thornton reviewed progress in a follow-up review in Autumn 2022. At that point, Grant Thornton had retained the three statutory recommendations and made four new key recommendations and improvement recommendations against the Key Lines of Enquiry of the Value for</p>	<p>The Governance Review was undertaken as part of the external auditor’s role to provide assurance on the Council’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Council must also provide a management response that set out how it intended to act upon the recommendations made in the report. There were no alternative options to consider.</p>																

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
		<p>Money Governance Review. These recommendations had been built into the refreshed Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet in March 2023.</p> <p>Grant Thornton had conducted a further follow-up review in Autumn 2023 to determine the Council's progress in addressing the statutory recommendations made in 2021, as well as the key and improvement recommendations of their 2022 follow-up review. This external perspective was a key source of evidence of the Council's improvement journey under government intervention.</p> <p>Grant Thornton's findings and the lifting of the Statutory Recommendations represented a significant milestone in the Council's improvement journey towards ending government intervention, and was further evidence that the Council continued to improve over time.</p>	
6	<p>Recommendations from Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on the Budget 2024/25</p> <p>(1) That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board is assured that there is a clear plan, underpinned by data, for the Council's Budget 2024/25.</p> <p>(2) That the Cabinet and the Executive team review the proposals for Borough Economy again to ensure the assumptions upon which they are based are robust and</p>	<p>The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considered the draft Budget 2024/25 proposals at its meeting on 15 January 2024. Cabinet Members, Directors and Assistant Directors attended to present the proposals to the Board and to answer questions from members.</p> <p>The Board subsequently held a workshop to discuss potential recommendations to the Cabinet on the</p>	<p>In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Cabinet was requested to respond to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Management Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they would be implemented.</p>

Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
<p>take account of the missed income targets from 2023/24.</p> <p>(3) That the Cabinet and Executive team review:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Council, the Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme, Public Health and Sandwell Children’s Trust contracts and agreements to ensure they are fit for purpose, take a whole-council approach to meeting the Council’s strategic objectives and represent value for money; (b) contract monitoring management processes to ensure they are robust and ensure value for money. <p>(4) That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board consider reports within the next three months on detailed proposals to achieve savings in:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Children’s External Educational and Care Placements; and (b) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport. <p>(5) That the following topics be included on the work programme of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the customer journey; (b) the effect on performance and sickness levels of reduced budgets; 	<p>draft budget proposals.</p> <p>The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board’s involvement in the budget setting process strengthened decision making and increased transparency.</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	<p>(c) funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p> <p>(6) That, in connection with (2) and (3) above, a further report be submitted to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, within 2 months' time, on the decision of Cabinet.</p>		
7	<p>Draft Budget 2024/25</p> <p>It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Draft Budget 2024/25 including all appendices and it be forwarded to Full Council on 20 February 2024 for consideration and approval with the following specific recommendations:-</p> <p>(1) That it be noted that the Council Tax Base was agreed at Full Council on 12th December 2023;</p> <p>(2) That it be noted that the Council Tax Support Scheme was approved at Full Council on 12th December 2023;</p> <p>(3) That it be noted that Housing Rents and Service Charges were uplifted by Full Council on 12th December 2023;</p> <p>(4) That the report of the Section 151 Officer, included at paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.20, as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and adequacy of proposed financial reserves be noted;</p> <p>(5) That it be recommended that Council approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A which incorporates the following recommendations:</p> <p>a. Approve the MTFs and embedded MTFP as an estimate of the Council's current financial position at</p>	<p>The Council was legally required each year to set a balanced budget for the financial year which must be approved before 11 March.</p> <p>To ensure that the budget presented to Cabinet and Council was balanced and robust, the process started in the early Summer of the previous year with senior officers considering financial performance during the current year plus reflecting on likely pressures on expenditure and income, and potential mitigations, for the upcoming and future financial years. This ensured that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy reflected a reasonable assessment of the Council's finances over the period of the Strategy.</p> <p>Early engagement ensured that sufficient time was given to the importance of the budget setting process and also any planning for required change to ensure that the Council remained on a sound financial footing in the medium term.</p> <p>The Local Government Finance Act 1972 required the Council to set a balanced,</p>	<p>Cabinet could request that alternative savings options be proposed and agreed, although there was limited time to do this and still be able to carry out the appropriate consultation on alternative savings. Cabinet could also consider an alternative Council Tax increase, subject to adhering to the Referendum Principles, or alternative increases in Fees and Charges. The consequences of adopting a lower Council Tax increase would entail that additional savings would be required and saving targets made larger in future years.</p>

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	<p>January 2024;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Approve the Guiding Principles as framework for financial planning for the period of the MTFS; c. Approve the Capital Planning Principles to guide the preparation of the Capital Programme in the years ahead; d. Note the planned development of the Transformation Programme to date and through 2024/25 and endorse the extension of the transformational approach to other services of the Council; e. Note the Budget Timetable set out in this report; f. Approve the submission to DLUHC of a proposal to employ flexible use of capital receipts in financial year 2024/25 and to delegate the amendment and final approval of this proposal to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Interim Director of Finance together with the Assistant Chief Executive; g. Approve the onward submission of the Winter 2024 update of the MTFS to the next meeting of Full Council; h. Approve the adjustments to fees and charges as set out in Annex 12; i. Approve the savings proposals set out at Annex 5. <p>(6) It be recommended that an increase of 2.99% in the level of general council tax for 2024/25 be approved;</p> <p>(7) It be recommended that an increase of 2.00% in the level of Adult Social Care precept for 2024/25 be approved;</p> <p>(8) That it be recommended Council approve the General Fund Budget net budget of £333.008m at Appendix B, including the proposed total increase of Council Tax for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council of 4.99%, in accordance with the Council Tax Referendum Principles as set by Government for 2024/25.</p>	<p>risk assessed budget each year and approve a Council Tax precept by 11 March.</p>	

Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
<p>(9) That the Council Tax amounts by Band at Appendix C be noted pending final notifications of precept amounts by the Office of the Policy and Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority with formal ratification to be presented as part of the Council Tax Resolution on 20th February 2024.</p> <p>(10) That it be recommended that Council approve the report at Appendix D on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools funding which incorporates the following recommendations such that Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. adopt the minimum transition option for calculating schools funding in 2024/25; b. approve the Growth Funding at £1.60m in 2024/25; c. approve the introduction of a Falling Rolls Fund in 2024/25; d. approve the transfer of £0.512m funding from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) to fund the attendance service; e. approve the CSSB, De-delegated and Education Function proposals as set out in Annex A (with the exception of Schools in Financial Difficulty); f. adopt the allocation by block per paragraph 5 of that Appendix; and g. note the details of the Schools Funding Settlement. <p>(11) That it be recommended that Council approve the General Fund Capital Programme at Appendix E;</p> <p>(12) That it be recommended that Council approve the Housing Revenue Account and HRA Capital Programme at Appendix F including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Noting that Full Council on 12th December 2023 		

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<p>approved recommendations of the report entitled 'The review of council tenants rents and housing related property charges' as outlined in paragraph 8 of Appendix F and Annex 1;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Approve the HRA Revenue Budget for 2024/25 as set out in Table 2; c. Note the HRA estimated working balances in 2024/25 as set out in paragraph 15 of Appendix F; d. Approve the investment principles for the HRA Capital programme as set out in paragraph 19 of Appendix F; e. Approve the HRA Capital Programme control totals as set out in Table 3 of Appendix F; f. Approve the HRA Treasury Management Strategy as set out in paragraph 4 of Appendix F; g. Approve the 30 year HRA Business Plan as set out in Annex 2 of Appendix F. <p>(13) That it be recommended that Council approve the Capital Strategy and Capital Financing Strategy at Appendix G and H of this report.</p> <p>(14) That it be recommended that Council approve the Investment Strategy set out at Appendix I.</p> <p>(15) That it be recommended that Council approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement at Appendix J including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Borrowing and Investment Strategy for 2024/25; b. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2024/25; c. The Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 to 2026/27, summarised at Annex 6; d. Expected new net borrowing of £40.4m in 2024/25. <p>(16) That Cabinet endorse the Revenues and Benefits Policy</p>		

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<p>Framework at Appendix K and recommend to Council that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Approval be given for the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework for 2024/25 comprising the policies set out at Annexes 1 to 9 of the Appendix K; b. Approval be granted for the Council Tax Award of Discount Policy (Annex 2), Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy (Annex 3), Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Policy (Annex 8), Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Hardship Relief Policy (Annex 7) and War Pension Policy (Annex 9) as set out Appendix K; and; c. Authority be given to the Director of Finance – Section 151 Office in conjunction with Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, and in consultation with the monitoring officer to make necessary changes to the policies during 2024/25 due to the Cost of Living Crisis. <p>(17) Delegate to the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer any further financial adjustments, corrections or amendments to this suite of reports necessary in forming the final preparation of these papers for Full Council on 20 February.</p> <p>(18) Approve that the Section 151 Officer be given delegated authority to make transfers to or from reserves during the financial year to ensure that adequate reserves are maintained and adjusted when spend from earmarked reserves is required.</p> <p>(19) Approve that the Section 151 Officer be given delegated authority to adjust the funding sources applied to the Capital Programme during the year to maximise flexibility in use of capital resources and minimise borrowing costs where possible.</p>		

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
8	<p>Award of contract to Phoenix Software LTD for the provision of Microsoft E5 licenses</p> <p>(1) Give approval to award a contract to Phoenix Software Ltd for a period to end 31 March 2027 for a Microsoft Enterprise 5 (E5) licensing agreement using the KCS framework at a total value of spend attributable to E5, over 3 years is: £4,737,892.50;</p> <p>(2) Approve the purchase of Server and Cloud Enrolment (SCE) agreement at an annual cost of £152,890.80 - based upon a volume of up to 300 servers and at current pricing with a total value over 3 years of £458,672.40;</p> <p>(3) Approve the purchase of Microsoft 365 Copilot licenses at an annual cost of £88,740.00 - based upon a volume of up to 300 users and at current pricing at a total value over 3 years of £266,220.00;</p> <p>(4) That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in (1), (2) and (3) to proceed.</p>	<p>Microsoft technology was a core element of the council's ICT strategy and extending the use of the tooling via E5 supported the Councils ongoing direction of travel.</p> <p>The award of contract would enable the Council to improve its cyber security resilience posture, retain its current Microsoft productivity tools and to move to a Microsoft E5 licensing model. The threat of a cyber-attack on Sandwell Council was constant and ever adapting. The move to E5 would significantly fortify the Council against cyber-attacks, in line with the government's Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2030.</p> <p>Microsoft recognised that the step up from E3 to E5 was expensive and that the product suite was extensive meaning it would take time to implement all available modules. Therefore, Microsoft offer what was known as a RAMP (Rapid Modernisation Plan) deal which was a discounted annual cost used as an incentive for organisations to move to E5.</p> <p>E5 was recognised across the public sector as being the preferred level of licensing where cyber security resilience was seen as being important. Most councils across the Black Country and the West Midlands had already uplifted or are in the process of relicensing to E5.</p>	<p>There was no truly viable option to move away from a Microsoft enterprise licencing agreement as this provided the Council with its office productivity tools server suite software and was heavily integrated other software used by the Council for business-as-usual processes.</p> <p>One alternative option was to remain at enterprise licensing tier E3 and purchase individual products from other security vendors to satisfy the Councils desired outcomes. However, this would increase the amount of vendor account management required and there was no guarantee that all the various products would seamlessly integrate and interoperate with one another.</p> <p>A do-nothing approach to enhance the Council's cyber security posture was not a desirable strategy given the increased cyber security threat across the public sector. The Council wished to push forwards, proactively, with its cyber security resilience programme and fundamental to this was having</p>

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		<p>Moving to E5 licensing would bring additional benefits and opportunities to the Council. As well as improving the Council's cyber security requirements, it provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1128 443 1630 786">□ Corporate wide licenses for Power Bi - currently, the Council licenses individual users for Power Bi (which was a powerful data analytics tool) at additional cost. Use of the platform had been expanding across a multitude of service areas and continues to grow. <li data-bbox="1128 831 1630 1326">□ Teams Phone System - enabled external telephone calling through Microsoft Teams – known as PSTN. This would mean users can use Teams to call traditional telephone numbers and receive them all from the one interface. As the Council needed to update its telephone system, having access to these licenses would reduce the cost of this project as Teams Phone System was the preferred technical approach. 	<p>the right tools and products available to identify, defend and protect itself from suffering a successful cyber-attack. Successful attacks can stop a council from providing services for multiple months, cause excessive expenditure in clean-up costs and destroy its reputation. These were in addition to the stress and anxiety inflicted on its workforce and the severe, detrimental impact on its citizens.</p>
9	Schools Funding 2024-25	The Schools Revenue Funding 2024/25 Operational Guide required the Council to	The consultation with schools resulted in the option to move

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	<p>That having considered the outcome of the consultation proposals following review by the Schools Forum, as shown in Appendix A, approval be given to the 2024/2025 schools funding formula for Sandwell schools, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) adopting the minimum transition option for calculating schools funding in 2024/25; (b) setting the Growth Funding at £1.60m; (c) the introduction of a Falling Rolls Fund in 2024/25; (d) the transfer of £0.512m funding from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block to fund the attendance service; (e) the Central Schools Services Block, De-delegated and Education Function proposals as set out in Appendix A (with the exception of Schools in Financial Difficulty). 	<p>engage in open and transparent consultation with maintained schools and academies in their area, as well as with their school's forum about any changes to the local funding formula, including the principles adopted and any movement of funds between blocks.</p> <p>The Council was responsible for making the final decisions on the formula and for ensuring there was sufficient time to gain political approval before the funding was distributed to schools of which the deadline was the 28 February 2024.</p>	<p>their funding closer to the National Funding Formula (NFF) by 10% as a minimum. The primary sector predominantly chose to move to the NFF at this slower pace. The secondary sector preference however was to move directly to the NFF in 2024/25.</p> <p>There was an alternative option whereby Cabinet can overrule schools' overall preferences and approve the move where funding, in 2024/25, immediately mirrors the NFF.</p> <p>Moving to the NFF in 2024/25 would mean Sandwell schools would be funded consistently as part of the Governments plan for fair funding for all at a much faster pace. However, the majority of Sandwell's schools were not in favour of this option. In addition, it would result in more turbulence within the system.</p>
10	<p>Social Housing Decency Funding Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That approval be given to draw down the offer of £2.1m of Capital Grant Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC); 	<p>The Minister of State for Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DHLUC) had made capital grant funding available to support local authorities and / or social housing Registered Providers in the West Midlands Combined Authority</p>	<p>Sandwell does not have to draw down the grant funding offered. If the Council does not, it would be offered to other local authorities.</p>

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	<p>(2) Approval be given to enter into the following new contracts to deliver the works as part of the grant funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Internal environmental monitoring; <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist expert intervention to eradicate damp and mould; <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement soil stacks; <input type="checkbox"/> Installation of ventilation and heat recovery. <p>(3) That delegated authority be given to the Interim Head of Contract Procurement, in consultation with the Interim Director of Housing, Interim Section 151 Officer and Assistant Director for Legal and Assurance to make amendments and changes to the extensions and / or processes described in this report in order to give effect to the decisions at (2);</p> <p>(4) That the Interim Director of Housing, in consultation with the Interim Section 151 Officer, be authorised to prepare tendering documentation and to procure one or more contractors, in accordance with The Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, to work on behalf of the Council, to undertake work to resolve damp and mould related issues in our Housing stock;</p> <p>(5) That the Interim Director of Housing be authorised to award the contracts, as referred to in (4), to the successful contractor(s);</p> <p>(6) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Assurance be authorised to enter into or execute under seal any documentation in relation to the award of the contracts;</p> <p>(7) That any necessary exemption be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the</p>	<p>and Greater Manchester Combined Authority area towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them related to improvements in the physical decency of their properties, with a focus on serious hazards including damp and mould.</p> <p>There was no requirement for match funding and all work was intended to be fully funded from the grant. The use of grant funding was not prescriptive and organisations could choose how to utilise funding to address damp & mould related issues. DLUHC were seeking projects that deliver additionality to existing investment plans and innovation in the form of new work not previously identified.</p> <p>DLUHC had given WMCA a target date for delivery of 31 March 2024. Sandwell had confirmed that this was not achievable. This had resulted in DHLUC giving WMCA delegated powers to administer the grant and a local agreement had been made between WMCA and the Council. The delivery plan produced had been shared with WMCA to define how maximum grant spend would be achieved to give assurances that the Council would have a robust plan to deliver the £2.1m.</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	course of action referred to in (2) and (4) to proceed.		
11	<p>New Archives Centre for the Borough</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to work with appointed subject matter expert consultant for archives and senior council officers to develop a funding strategy for the development and capital scheme to establish a new Archives Centre for the Borough at the preferred site as approved by Cabinet on 16 November 2022;</p> <p>(2) That the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio holder for Archives be authorised to progress the proposed scheme through the Council’s consideration and approval process for capital schemes with an associated business model to outline the revenue impact of the proposed scheme and submit a further report in due course.</p>	<p>Currently archives storage was at capacity, and the material was housed in three separate sites, which resulted in managing the collection and providing access for residents difficult, it also restricted the provision of resources in relation to a public service for family and local history searches.</p> <p>The service was a Place of Deposit for Public Records as set out under Section 4 (1) of the Public Records Act 1958. To retain this status the Borough was required to hold The National Archives Accreditation standard, and in 2018 the Council had been unsuccessful in its application for the award. This was primarily due to the unsuitable storage environment, which continued to jeopardise the Councils ability to effectively care for and conserve Council collections.</p> <p>Sandwell Archives was in the minority of archives services in not being accredited. 90% of local authority Places of Deposits in England were Accredited. Of those not accredited, the majority had made unsuccessful applications and were following a programme of rectifying activity aiming to address the issues.</p> <p>An archives service that was not</p>	<p>Previous attempts to identify appropriate accommodation for archives over the last 20 years have not been developed, either because the sites were not suitable or because the proposals remained unfunded.</p>

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		<p>accredited may trigger a review of the Place of Deposit status. This would cause reputational damage to the Council so was identified as a red risk on the Corporate risk register.</p> <p>A new archives centre would provide several opportunities for Sandwell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1128 512 1630 970">□ Opportunity to develop a new and improved true heritage and Storytelling centre for Sandwell that incorporated both a new archives centre and a records management facility to preserve the corporate memory. Economies of scale would allow the authority to develop a more proactive strategy for the acquisition of historic corporate records in a timely manner. <li data-bbox="1128 979 1630 1129">□ Provide much needed high-quality storage for Sandwell's public art collection which was also in unsuitable storage conditions. <li data-bbox="1128 1139 1630 1401">□ The geographical area covered by the Archives was made up of several diverse communities and it was the Council's aim to ensure that collections represent these communities living in Sandwell. A new centre would allow us to fully 	

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		<p>address gaps in our collections by working closely with community groups and other local bodies to collect material.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ A new building would provide the opportunity to undertake a range of events and activities in a dedicated community space and allow touring exhibitions on the history of Sandwell to be more effectively displayed, and to begin to actively collect items and stories to tell the true 'story of Sandwell'. <p>Significant funding would be required to realise the ambition (current estimate is c. £20 million), so a funding strategy and subsequent external funding bids would need to be prepared. Additional funding streams could also be explored.</p>	
12	<p>Implementation of Boroughwide Public Spaces Protection Orders</p> <p>(1) That approval be given to the implementation of a Boroughwide Public Space Protection Order for alcohol to enable authorised officers / constables, where satisfied that nuisance or disorder associated with alcohol is occurring, to require people not to consume alcohol in the area and to surrender any alcohol in their possession.</p> <p>(2) That approval be given to the implementation of a Boroughwide Public Space Protection Order to tackle nuisance caused by dog fouling making it:-</p>	<p>Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) lasted for up to three years and then needed to be reviewed. The orders had been renewed in March 2021 and were up for consideration alongside a new proposal relating to fires / BBQs. Having undertaken a review and public consultation it was recommended that the two existing PSPOs included additional requirements in relation to dogs was renewed and a new PSPO put in place regarding fires / BBQs on public land.</p>	<p>Sandwell had had controls in place in relation to alcohol and dog fouling for many years. It was clear that both these issues remained public concerns and feedback indicated that they were both still needed and serve a purpose in dealing with issues and providing reassurance for residents. The recent rise in fires attributed to fires and BBQs in public land and the dangers and destruction posed by these was</p>

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<p>(a) an offence for a person in charge of a dog to fail to pick up the dog's faeces forthwith should it defecate whilst in their control;</p> <p>(b) an offence for a person in charge of a dog to fail to be able to produce a receptacle to pick up dog faeces such as a dog poo bag;</p> <p>(c) an offence for a person in charge of a dog to allow a dog into an enclosed children's play area / sports area.</p> <p>Registered disability assistance dogs and their owners to be exempt from the requirements of the order.</p> <p>(3) That approval be given to the implementation of a Boroughwide Public Space Protection Order to tackle the risks associated with BBQs and fires in public spaces by :-</p> <p>(a) making it an offence to have fires / BBQs in public spaces in Sandwell and not to stop these when requested to do so by authorised officers / constables;</p> <p>(b) requiring individuals to surrender anything in their possession which an authorised officer / constable or has reasonable suspicion to be an article that has been used OR is likely to be used in conjunction with these prohibited activities.</p> <p>(4) That approval be given for alcohol, dog fouling and BBQs and fires Boroughwide Public Space Protection Orders to be implemented for a period of three years commencing 1 March 2024;</p>	<p>The existing PSPOs had been relatively well used during the last three years, particularly in terms of engagement to improve behaviour and enable support to be offered where necessary. Enforcement had also been used where needed with eight and five fixed penalty notices being issued respectively in relation to the two existing orders. Both had run throughout the covid pandemic and lockdowns.</p> <p>All three issues were a concern in Sandwell with our public consultation showing 97% support for the Alcohol PSPO, 98% support for the Dog Fouling PSPO and 87% support for a PSPO in relation to Fires / BBQs .</p> <p>The PSPO proposals demonstrated the Council's commitment to listening to its residents, partners and communities and to take action to address issues that are important to them.</p>	<p>also a significant concern. The PSPO's were supported by partners and would ensure direct action was taken using the most suitable tools and powers as required by individual situations. The Council could opt to not renew / strengthen the powers and deal with any issues individually, but this would require significant resources and had already proved difficulty in relation to BBQs / Fires with no specific powers available. It would also weaken opportunities for engagement. This was not recommended.</p>

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:								
	<p>(5) That the Director Borough Economy, or any successor position, be authorised to implement, monitor and enforce the Public Spaces Protection Orders.</p>										
13	<p>City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Update and Local Transport Capital Program</p> <p>It is recommended that Cabinet:-</p> <p>(1) notes the update in relation to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for the period April 2022 to March 2027.</p> <p>(2) grant approval to the following programme of minor works, highways, bridges and street lighting maintenance for 2024/25 to be funded through the Local Network Improvement Plan and Maintenance Block allocations subject to ratification and approval at West Midlands Combined Authority Board on 9 February 2024:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="174 1169 898 1398"> <thead> <tr> <th>Minor Works Programme</th> <th>Funds 2024/25 £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Major Schemes Development</td> <td>140,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Road Safety</td> <td>620,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Decarbonising Transport</td> <td>300,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Minor Works Programme	Funds 2024/25 £	Major Schemes Development	140,000	Road Safety	620,000	Decarbonising Transport	300,000	<p>The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) was a five-year capital settlement to enable the city regions to achieve their ambitions in terms of transport investment. The fund was overseen by the Department for Transport (DfT) and in the West Midlands it aligns with emerging Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5). CRSTS commenced in 2022-23 with £8.9m previously allocated to the West Midlands in 2021-22 to assist with preparation and delivery of the settlement.</p> <p>The CRSTS was the main source of transport capital funding for local transport schemes with a scheme cost of £50m or less. CRSTS drew under one heading, a number of transport funding streams including the final year of the allocated Transforming Cities Fund (TCF), as well as the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) and Highways Maintenance Block (HMB). The Active Travel Fund (ATF), which covers walking and cycling investment, remained separate.</p> <p>The block allocations for Local Network Improvement and Maintenance included in the CRSTS programme comprised the majority of the Council's capital programme of minor works, highway and</p>	<p>With regards to the Local Network Improvement Plan, the proportion allocated to each of the individual block headings was the same as for 2023/24 and was broadly in line with ITB allocations in the preceding years. However, as in the previous two years, more of the 21% uplift on the 2021/22 figure had been allocated to the road safety and traffic calming categories, to reflect member priorities. The option existed to allocate more funding to some headings and less to others. It also remained possible to alter the allocations 'in year', should circumstances require it. However, the use of this funding was reported to, and monitored by, WMCA and therefore should reflect the priorities outlined by Government through the CRSTS guidance, and by WMCA through the Local Transport Plan.</p>
Minor Works Programme	Funds 2024/25 £										
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Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The extension of the SINC at Ridgeacre Branch Canal; <input type="checkbox"/> The SINC at Gower Branch Canal maintaining its current status and boundary; <input type="checkbox"/> The SLINC element at Galton Valley be upgraded to SINC status, so that the entire site will be a SINC. A small section in the centre of the site to be deleted; <input type="checkbox"/> The upgrading of part of the SLINC to a SINC at Thimblemill brook (West). This will extend the extent of the SINC and reduce the size of the SLINC element; <input type="checkbox"/> The upgrading of the SLINC to a SINC at Haden Hill Park so that the entire site is a SINC. No action to be taken regarding the PSI, as this did not meet the required standards; <input type="checkbox"/> The extension of the SLINC at Dudley to Priestfield Disused Railway, with an amendment to the boundary to exclude a building; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Bradley Locks; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Broadwell Park; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Market Place, Tame Valley; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Ocker Hill Balancing Pool; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Woden Road South; <input type="checkbox"/> To maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Thimblemill brook (East); <input type="checkbox"/> To delete the entire SLINC at Dixon's Branch Canal. 	<p>of the Borough's environmental infrastructure. Potential Sites of Interest (PSIs) were not identified in the Local plan as they have not been subject to survey but have been highlighted as sites that may be worthy of designation.</p> <p>SINC and SLINC were not subject to statutory protection. The Government envisaged that sites are protected from development through the Local Plan process. The identification and allocation of SINC and SLINC within the SAD DPD and emerging SLP was therefore crucial in maintaining and enhancing the Borough's environmental infrastructure.</p> <p>Of the 14 sites identified, two of the existing SINC had been extended, one SINC maintained its current status and boundary, three of the sites had part or all of the SLINC element upgraded to a SINC, one site with an existing SLINC had been extended, six existing SLINC maintain their current status and boundary and one existing SLINC had been deleted.</p> <p>The reports were based on recommendations made by The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. The recommendation had been endorsed by the Birmingham and Black Country Local Sites Partnership (LSP).</p> <p>Incorporating environmental infrastructure principles into Local Plan documents</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	<p>(2) That the Director Regeneration & Growth be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Sandwell Local Plan Proposals Map to reflect the designations identified in the report.</p>	<p>would help meet the current Black Country Core Strategy vision for environmental transformation as well as the vision identified in the emerging SLP.</p> <p>The provision of a network of green spaces and nature conservation sites improved the local environment, which in turn would make the borough more attractive as a place to live, work, enjoy recreation in and invest in.</p> <p>The environmental infrastructure of the borough had the potential to increase levels of physical activity, improve mental health benefits and contribute to environmental benefits, thus contributing to the aim of achieving a healthier population. An attractive environment would significantly improve the prospect of achieving significant numbers of high-quality new houses in locations that people wish to live in.</p>	
15	<p>A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor - Initial Scheme Approval</p> <p>(1) that approval in principle is given to the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvement proposals that make up the A4123 Bus, Cycle and Walking Corridor in the Sandwell area, as part of an overall corridor project from Wolverhampton through Dudley and Sandwell as shown on the plans contained at Appendix A and B;</p> <p>(2) that the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning carries out public consultation on the proposals;</p>	<p>The A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor project would provide a safe opportunity for the public to access and use active travel and improved bus services locally to travel to and from destinations along the A4123 in the Sandwell area and neighbouring linked destinations, which would include places of education, shops, jobs and businesses and other areas of interest and service. In addition, the project would provide improved wayfinding through new and improved signing and</p>	<p>One alternative option is to not continue with the scheme and reallocate the funding back to the WMCA for spending on a different scheme. This is not recommended, as it would limit the essential connections to nearby communities and amenities for all users for business, education, and other services. There is no guarantee that Sandwell Council would be</p>

Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
	<p>(3) that the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning, in conjunction with the Interim Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer, and the Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer, are authorised to accept City Region Sustainable Transport Fund grants from West Midlands Combined Authority under the Terms and Conditions contained in the Grant Agreements;</p> <p>(4) that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways considers any objections to the proposals, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA;</p> <p>(5) that the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning is authorised to approve the submission of an Outline Business Case to the West Midlands Combined Authority.</p>	<p>route information. The project would also link with completed sections further north, e.g., Burnt Tree to Tipton Road (cycle track and footways) and onwards further north to those sections of A4123 in Dudley and Wolverhampton under development as well with this project eventually providing a fully joined up corridor of active travel measures, which were also supported by the improved bus infrastructure elements under development. It was proposed the project work in Sandwell would be delivered by the Council.</p> <p>The A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor forms part of the West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Programme. It had received Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) approval through the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Single Assurance Framework Process on the 25 of November 2022 and approval for funding to deliver a further section of a cycling and walking (Active Travel) route in Sandwell from the Burnt Tree junction to Lower City Road subject to design approval. This continued the route recently delivered from the Tipton Road junction to the Burnt Tree junction as part of Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund.</p> <p>The project was at the stage where proposals were sufficiently developed where specific approvals were required to</p>
	<p>able to retain the funding for a different scheme, and therefore Sandwell residents may be disadvantaged against other areas in the region.</p> <p>Another alternative is to make significant changes to the scheme as it is drawn currently. This is not recommended as it would make it difficult to deliver by 2027 and would risk the funding being reclaimed.</p>	

	Item	Reason for Decision:	Alternative options:
		<p>enable the proposals to be consulted on with the public and other stakeholders, and then be taken to the next stages of the WMCA Single Assurance Framework Process and proposals submitted as part of an overall Outline Business Case (OBC) for the whole corridor.</p> <p>Approval was also required to enter into grant agreements with the WMCA and accept grants for CRSTS funding to enable the scheme to be further developed, including the submission of business cases, to enable detailed design to be carried out, and following full approval, for the schemes to be constructed.</p>	