

# Agenda Cabinet

**Wednesday, 13 March 2024 at 3.00 pm  
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**1 Apologies for Absence (Pages 7 - 8)**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest (Pages 9 - 10)**

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

**3 Minutes (Pages 11 - 46)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 as a correct record.

**4 Additional Items of Business**

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

**5 Improvement Plan Progress (Pages 47 - 118)**

**Leader**

To consider and note the Improvement Plan Progress.



6	<b>Performance Management Framework - 2023/24 Quarter 3 Monitoring</b> (Pages 119 - 222)	<b>Finance and Resources</b>
	To consider and note the Performance Management Framework – 2023/24 Quarter 3 Monitoring.	
7	<b>Highfields Primary School - Making Significant Changes (Prescribed Alternations) Consultation Outcome for Change of Age Range.</b> (Pages 223 - 232)	<b>Children, Young People and Education</b>
	To consider the Highfields Primary School Prescribed Alternations Consultation Outcome for Change of Age Range.	
8	<b>Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences - West Midlands Regional Working Agreement</b> (Pages 233 - 242)	<b>Environment and Highways</b>
	To consider the West Midlands Regional Working Agreement.	
9	<b>Sandwell Valley 10 Year Master Plan</b> (Pages 243 - 308)	<b>Housing and Built Environment</b>
	To consider the Sandwell Valley 10 Year Master Plan.	
10	<b>City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Grants</b> (Pages 309 - 314)	<b>Regeneration and WMCA</b>
	To consider the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Grants.	
11	<b>Ratification of Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding</b> (Pages 315 - 352)	<b>Regeneration and WMCA</b>
	To consider the Ratification of Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority and HM Government.	
12	<b>Sandwell Levelling Up Zone</b> (Pages 353 - 364)	<b>Regeneration and WMCA</b>
	To consider the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone.	

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| 13 | <b>Levelling Up Fund Round 3 Bid Submission</b><br>(Pages 365 - 376)  | <b>Regeneration<br/>and WMCA</b>             |
|    | To consider the Levelling Up Fund Round 3 Bid Submission.   |  |
| 14 | <b>Long Term Plan for Towns - Smethwick</b> (Pages 377 - 406)   | <b>Regeneration<br/>and WMCA</b>             |
|    | To consider the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick.   |  |
| 15 | <b>Levelling up Partnership</b> (Pages 407 - 474)   | <b>Regeneration<br/>and WMCA</b>             |
|    | To note the Levelling up Partnership.   |  |
| 16 | <b>Exclusion of the Public and Press</b>  |  |
|    | That the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting. This is to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information. |  |
| 17 | <b>Adult Social Care Market Sustainability</b> (Pages 475 - 508)  | <b>Health and<br/>Adult Social<br/>Care</b>  |
|    | To consider the Adult Social Care Market Sustainability.  |  |
| 18 | <b>Procurement of Accommodation Based Support Services and Floating Support Services for Vulnerable Homeless: Young People, Teenage parents, Families and Adults.</b> (Pages 509 - 526)   | <b>Housing and<br/>Built<br/>Environment</b> |
|    | To consider the Procurement of Accommodation Based Support Services and Floating Support Services for Vulnerable Homeless.  |  |

19 **Project Costs for the Relocation and  
Redevelopment of the Indoor Market in West  
Bromwich** (Pages 527 - 600)

**Regeneration  
and WMCA**

To consider the Project Costs for the Relocation and  
Redevelopment of the Indoor Market in West  
Bromwich.

**Shokat Lal  
Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

**Distribution**

Councillor Carmichael (Chair)  
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Khatun, Millard, Padda, Piper and  
Rollins

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## Cabinet

### Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Committee.



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## Cabinet

### Declarations of Interest

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



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## Minutes of Cabinet

**Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 3.30 pm  
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Carmichael (Chair);  
Councillors Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Khatun, Millard, Padda  
and Piper.

**In Attendance:** Councillors Fenton, E Giles, J Giles, Lewis, Rahman and  
Taylor.

**Officers:** Shokat Lal (Chief Executive); Brenden Arnold (Interim Section  
151 Officer); Mike Jones (Assistant Director - Legal and  
Assurance); Liann Brookes Smith (Interim Director – Public  
Health), Dean Epton (Interim Director Housing); Kate Ashely  
(Strategic Lead Service Improvement); Julie Andrews  
(Assistant Director – Education Services); Dave Guest  
(Assistant Director – ICT); Matthew More (Communications  
and Corporate Affairs Manager); Suky Suthi-Nagra  
(Democratic and Member Services Manager), Connor  
Robinson (Democratic Services Officer) and Guy Clifton  
(Director – Grant Thornton).

### 19/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moore and  
Rollins.



20/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

21/24 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

22/24 **Urgent Item of Business - Q3 Budget Monitoring 2023/24**

Consideration was given to the Q3 Budget Monitoring 2023/24. The overall projected outturn position for the General Fund was an underspend of £2.985m. This was an underspend of 0.9% when compared with the Council's net budget of £317.623m. The overall projected net directorate outturn variance, excluding the HRA, was an underspend of £0.163m following the use of reserves.

The forecast underspend of £2.985m at Quarter 3 represented an improved position of £4.207m when compared with the Quarter 2 forecast overspend of £1.222m. The cost of the 2023/24 NJC pay award was approximately £9.1m and £6.5m was available to part fund this budget pressure. As a result, there was a residual budget pressure of £2.6m across the service directorates. The residual budget pressure for each directorate was highlighted within the forecast outturn position.

**Reason for Decision**

Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act required the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

Budgetary control, which included the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets was an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility.

**Alternative Options Considered**

There were no alternative options to the position presented.





**Resolved** that Cabinet:-

- (1) receive details of 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;
- (2) that approval is given to the following budget virements above £1m in line with the revised delegated limits for Cabinet Members and Directors:

Virements above £1m for approval by Cabinet		£'000	£'000
Directorate Budgets	Transfer of pay award allocation from Contingency	6,539	
Contingency	Transfer of pay award allocation to directorates		6,539
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6,539</b>	<b>6,539</b>

23/24 **Improvement Plan Progress - Grant Thornton Follow-up Report 2023**

Consideration was given to the Improvement Plan Progress and the Grant Thornton Follow-up Report 2023.

The Cabinet received a summary from Guy Clifton of Grant Thornton. The initial Value for Money Review 2021 had resulted in the introduction of three statutory recommendations. Since the Autumn 2022 follow-up review, the Council had continued on its improvement trajectory and was recognised for establishing foundations in that respect.

Grant Thornton was satisfied that the Council had made appropriate progress against the three statutory recommendations and that these should now be lifted. There was continued evidence that the



leadership across the Council had got a corporate grip of the key service base and organisational issues and that the Council continued to make positive action towards the 18 key lines of enquiry, 13 of which had no areas of concern for Grant Thornton. There remained 5 areas of significant weakness and four key recommendations which had been introduced in response to these:

Key recommendation 1 – while Grant Thornton recognised that the Council had put in place the infrastructure for transforming services, it was necessary for the Council to continue to ensure changes were embedded and identify, improve and deliver savings that were needed to meet the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Key recommendation 2 – the customer experience remained an area of concern, while positive work had been introduced at the ‘front door’, there remained significant work to be done across the entire customer journey.

Key recommendation 3 – corporate grip needed to be maintained across the organisation including the operational issues relating to the introduction of Oracle Fusion, Sandwell Children’s Trust with a focus on place-based working, managing industrial action in relation to the waste management service, the management of Sandwell Leisure Trust, the financial statement production and reducing the reliance on interim appointments within the finance team.

Key recommendation 4 – the senior management restructure was recognised for its opportunities and the move away from silo working was positive, however, structural change introduced a number of risks and it was important to retain corporate memory, not inadvertently create change fatigue and ensure the executive directors were appropriate. The report was regarded as a positive milestone on the Council’s improvement journey.

In response to the statement, the Chief Executive thanked Grant Thornton for the partnership approach that had existed between the Council and themselves when undertaking the review since intervention. The report recognised all the good progress that had been made since intervention and the positive work that had been undertaken, while also understanding there was a way to go to



address the ongoing challenges. The four key recommendations highlighted would be a focus for the Council as it progressed on its improvement journey.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board, in the absence of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Leader of the Council advised that the Commissioners submitted their latest report to the Secretary of State in December and the Council were waiting to hear the response from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as to whether intervention would be lifted or extended. The Council were mindful that the current Statutory Directions setting out the terms of government intervention in Sandwell Council were in place until 22 March 2024.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Chief Executive highlighted that the key element of the success of the Council's improvement journey had been investing in the organisational culture. The Council's values and behaviours, developed with staff, had been instrumental to make significant improvements at pace and the Council would continue to embed both the strategic approaches and the everyday practices. Late last year, the Council had conducted an employee engagement survey to gain greater insight into the areas that had the lowest engagement and to understand the reasons for this. The Council would be bringing forward a People Strategy, which would highlight the whole Council approach to being an employer of choice, embedding the Council's culture and ensuring the Council had an engaged, supported workforce that was enabled to deliver the best for Sandwell.

The Leader of the Council was joined by the Cabinet in thanking Grant Thornton for their work and ongoing support which had enabled the Council to progress on its improvement journey.

The Deputy Leader and Director of Finance and Resources also was of the view that Grant Thornton should attend a future meeting of the Full Council in order to update all members on the Council's current position and the good work undertaken.



## Reason for Decision

Grant Thornton conducted their Value for Money Review of the Council's governance arrangements in Autumn 2021. The 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.

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 Money Governance Review. These recommendations had been built into the refreshed Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet in March 2023.

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.

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.

## Alternative Options Considered

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 have also provided 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.



## **Resolved:-**

- (1) that Cabinet receive Grant Thornton's Value for Money Governance Review Follow Up Review Report of December 2023;
- (2) that the Council's response to the recommendations in Grant Thornton's report are incorporated into the refresh of the Improvement Plan in 2024.

24/24

## **Recommendations from Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on the Budget 2024/25**

Approval was sought for the recommendations from the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on the Budget 2024/25. The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board had 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.

The Board had subsequently held a workshop to discuss potential recommendations to the Cabinet on the draft budget proposals which had been presented to Cabinet.

### **Reason for Decision**

The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board's involvement in the budget setting process had been regarded as a success which had strengthened decision making at the Council and increased transparency.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

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.





## Resolved:-

- (1) that Cabinet and the Executive team review the proposals for Borough Economy again to ensure the assumptions upon which they are based are robust and take account of the missed income targets from 2023/24;
- (2) that a review of the following be undertaken:-
  - (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.
- (3) that, in connection with (1) and (2) above, a further report be submitted to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, within 2 months' time, on the decision of Cabinet.

(Councillor Khatun leaves the meeting)

## 25/24 **Draft Budget 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the Draft Budget 2024/25 which, if approved, would be recommended to Council on 20 February 2024. The Council had completed successfully a Medium Term Financial Planning process for both the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme. In doing so, it had for the first time set down a Medium Term Financial Strategy over 5 years and had successfully forecast the estimated budget shortfall for 2024/25. In responding to this shortfall and delivering proposals for a balanced budget, the Council had consulted on a wide suite of potential budget savings and had



identified around £12m of savings which were largely recurring, together with a package of short term measures designed to suppress short term financial pressures. Overall, the package of benefits amounted to £18.988m which was sufficient to balance the 2024/25 Budget and which made a significant contribution to the goal of eliminating financial shortfalls in the medium term.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources explained that the existing Oracle Fusion programme budget included a contingency of £1.209m. A further contingent budget had been included in the draft Capital Programme budget for 2024/25.

### **Reason for Decision**

The Council was legally required each year to set a balanced budget for the financial year which must be approved before 11 March.

Early engagement had 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.

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.

The Local Government Finance Act 1972 required the Council to set a balanced, risk assessed budget each year and approve a Council Tax precept by 11 March.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

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.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to approve the Draft Budget 2024/25 including all appendices with the following specific recommendations:-

- (1) that it be noted that the Council Tax Base was agreed at Full Council on 12 December 2023;
- (2) that it be noted that the Council Tax Support Scheme was approved at Full Council on 12 December 2023;
- (3) that it be noted that Housing Rents and Service Charges were uplifted by Full Council on 12 December 2023;
- (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;
- (5) that it be recommended that Council approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A which incorporates the following recommendations:
  - a. approve the MTFs and embedded MTFP as an estimate of the





Council's current financial position at January 2024;

- 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;

- (6) that an increase of 2.99% in the level of general council tax for 2024/25 be approved;
- (7) that an increase of 2.00% in the level of Adult Social Care precept for 2024/25 be approved;
- (8) That approval is given to 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;
- (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 20 February 2024;
- (10) That approval is given to approve the report at Appendix D on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools funding which incorporates the following recommendations such that Council:
  - 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.

(11) That approval is given to the General Fund Capital Programme at Appendix E;

(12) That approval is given to the Housing Revenue Account and HRA Capital Programme at Appendix F including:

- a. noting that Full Council on 12th December 2023 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;



- 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;

(13) that approval is given to the Capital Strategy and Capital Financing Strategy at Appendix G and H of this report;

(14) That approval is given to the Investment Strategy set out at Appendix I;

(15) That approval is given to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement at Appendix J including:

- 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;

- (16) that the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework at Appendix K be endorsed and recommend to Council that:
- a. approve the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework for 2024/25 comprising the policies set out at Annexes 1 to 9 of the Appendix K;
  - b. approve 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. the Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the 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;
- (17) authorise the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to make 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;

- (18) authorise the Section 151 Officer 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;
- (19) authorise the Section 151 Officer 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.

26/24

### **Award of contract to Phoenix Software LTD for the provision of Microsoft E5 licenses**

Approval was sought for the award of contract to Phoenix Software LTD for the provision of Microsoft E5 licenses. 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 move to E5 would significantly fortify the Council against cyber-attacks, in line with the Government's Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2030.

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.

In a response to a number of questions from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources detailed that the current contract expired on 31 March 2024 and the new contract would be in place by 1 April 2024. The contract was a direct award





on the KCS Software and Services 2 Framework, which fully complied with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Phoenix had vast experience in delivering value to the UK public sector for organisations using Microsoft technology and had been the Council's Microsoft Enterprise Agreement reseller for the past two agreements. Oracle Fusion's main dependency on Microsoft technology was to ensure secure authentication of users accessing the platform. By using the KCS Framework, this allowed public sector organisations to benefit from discounts and beneficial terms for Microsoft 365. The agreement would be setup to ensure that it aligned to the Councils' growth and contraction of the workforce.

### **Reason for Decision**

Microsoft technology was a core element of the council's ICT strategy and extending the use of the tooling via E5 supported the Council's ongoing direction of travel.

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.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

There was no 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 with other software used by the Council for business-as-usual processes.

One alternative option was to remain at enterprise licensing tier E3 and purchase individual products from other security vendors to satisfy the Council's 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.

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



forward, proactively, with its cyber security resilience programme and fundamental to this was having the right tools and products available to identify, defend and protect itself from suffering a successful cyber-attack. Successful attacks could 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.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given 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;
- (2) that approval is given to 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;
- (3) that approval is given to 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;
- (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.





## Schools Funding 2024-25

Approval was sought for Schools Funding 2024-25. There had been a few changes announced by the Department for Education/ Education and Skills Funding Agency in the Summer 2023 on the way schools would be funded from 2024/25. In 2024/25, each local authority would continue to be required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools direct National Funding Formula (NFF). There was an expectation that the full move to the NFF would be completed by 2027/28.

### Reason for Decision

The Schools Revenue Funding 2024/25 Operational Guide required the Council to 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.

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 28 February 2024.

### Alternative Options Considered

The consultation with schools resulted in the option to move their funding closer to the 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.

There was an alternative option whereby Cabinet could have overridden schools' overall preferences and approve the move where funding, in 2024/25, immediately mirrors the NFF.

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.



**Resolved** 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:

- (1) adopting the minimum transition option for calculating schools funding in 2024/25;
- (2) setting the Growth Funding at £1.60m;
- (3) the introduction of a Falling Rolls Fund in 2024/25;
- (4) the transfer of £0.512m funding from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block to fund the attendance service;
- (5) 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).

28/24

## **Social Housing Decency Funding Grant**

Approval was sought for the Social Housing Decency Funding Grant. Sandwell had an aging stock and, as a result, there had been issues related to damp and mould for many years. There had also been a significant increase in customer demand around damp and mould in the last 12 months.

### **Reason for Decision**

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 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.



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 and mould related issues. DLUHC were seeking projects that delivered additionality to existing investment plans and innovation in the form of new work not previously identified.

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 DLUHC 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.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Sandwell did not have to draw down the grant funding offered. If the Council did not, it would be offered to other local authorities.

#### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given to draw down the offer of £2.1m of Capital Grant Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC);
- (2) that approval is given to enter into the following new contracts to deliver the works as part of the grant funding:
  - Internal environmental monitoring;
  - Specialist expert intervention to eradicate damp and mould;
  - Replacement soil stacks;
  - Installation of ventilation and heat recovery;



- (3) that 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, be authorised to make amendments and changes to the extensions and/or processes described in this report in order to give effect to the decisions at Resolution (2);
- (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;
- (5) that the Interim Director of Housing be authorised to award the contracts, as referred to in Resolution (4), to the successful contractor(s);
- (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;
- (7) that any necessary exemption be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (2) and (4) to proceed.

29/24

## **New Archives Centre for the Borough**

Approval was sought for the New Archives Centre for the Borough. Sandwell's Archives included the political, personal, domestic, industrial, religious, educational and social histories of Sandwell dating from 1369 through to the present day. These unique documents offered the people of Sandwell and beyond a journey through the development of the area.



This material was available in a wide variety of formats. Their preservation ensured that future generations would be able to learn from the experiences of the past to make decisions about the present and future.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board, in the absence of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism stated that it was not currently possible to set out timescales for a final funded solution for the new archives centre as funds had still to be identified. The next step was to draft a funding strategy and bid for external funds from a variety of sources. Timescales would be determined by funders' schedules.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism confirmed that the archives were currently stored in conditions that were maintained to guard against deterioration. The Council did not have a facility to display archives in the correct conditions at present and it was proposed that a new centre would offer this opportunity.

### **Reason for Decision**

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.

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 Council's ability to effectively care for and conserve Council collections.





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.

A new archives centre would provide several opportunities for Sandwell:

- 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;
- provide much needed high-quality storage for Sandwell's public art collection which was also in unsuitable storage conditions;
- 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 the Council to fully address gaps in our collections by working closely with community groups and other local bodies to collect material;
- 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'.

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.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

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.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is 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;
- (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.

30/24

**Implementation of Boroughwide Public Spaces Protection Orders**

Approval was sought for the Implementation of Boroughwide Public Spaces Protection Orders. In October 2017, existing Designated Public Place and Dog Control Orders were replaced as Boroughwide Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). These orders had to be reviewed every three years. In 2021, following a review and public consultation, the existing orders in relation to dogs and alcohol were renewed. These were now due for further review alongside consideration of an additional prohibition in relation to fires/BBQs in public places.



The public consultation had demonstrated support for all three proposals including the additional requirements.

### **Reason for Decision**

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.

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.

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 .

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.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

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 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.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is 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;
- (2) that approval is given to the implementation of a Boroughwide Public Space Protection Order to tackle nuisance caused by dog fouling making it:-
  - (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;
  - (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;
  - (c) an offence for a person in charge of a dog to allow a dog into an enclosed children's play area / sports area.

Registered disability assistance dogs and their owners to be exempt from the requirements of the order;



- (3) that approval is given to the implementation of a Boroughwide Public Space Protection Order to tackle the risks associated with BBQs and fires in public spaces by :-
  - (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;
  - (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.
- (4) that approval is 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;
- (5) that the Director Borough Economy, or any successor position, be authorised to implement, monitor and enforce the Public Spaces Protection Orders.

31/24

### **City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Update and Local Transport Capital Program**

Approval was sought for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Update and Local Transport Capital Programme 2024/25. The programme for the West Midlands was approved by WMCA Board on 14 January 2022. 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 bridge maintenance for financial year 2024/25 and the following two years of the settlement period. The allocations were subject to ratification and approval by WMCA Board on 9 February.



Subject to that WMCA Board ratification, approval was sought to the programme of works. Details of individual schemes would be reported back to the appropriate Cabinet Member for approval.

### **Reason for Decision**

The 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 aligned 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.

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 which included 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 covered walking and cycling investment, remained separate.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

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.



**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the update in relation to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for the period April 2022 to March 2027 be received;
- (2) Approval is given 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:

<b>Minor Works Programme</b>	<b>Funds 2024/25 £</b>
Major Schemes Development	140,000
Road Safety	620,000
Decarbonising Transport	300,000
Demand Management	120,000
Traffic Calming	200,000
Major Route Signing	70,000
Named Schemes Over £250k.	347,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,797,900</b>

<b>Maintenance Programme</b>	<b>Funds 2024/25 £</b>
Carriageway Maintenance	3,995,300
Footway Maintenance	£490,000
Bridges	603,000
Street Lighting	152,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,240,300</b>



## Designation of Nature Conservation Sites

Approval was sought for the Designation of Nature Conservation Sites. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs) were designations identified in the SAD DPD and also the emerging Sandwell Local Plan (SLP), and form part of the Borough's environmental infrastructure. Potential Sites of Interest (PSIs) were not identified in the Local plan as they had not been subject to survey but have been highlighted as sites that may be worthy of designation.

In a response to a question from the Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board, in the absence of the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA confirmed that the sites in Council ownership were maintained appropriately in a way which ensured the Nature Conservation value of the sites were safeguarded. The Council were not able to maintain privately owned sites using public funds but they can be protected through planning powers.

### Reason for Decision

Of the 14 sites identified, two of the existing SINCs 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 SLINCs maintain their current status and boundary and one existing SLINC had been deleted.

SINCs and SLINCs were not subject to statutory protection. The Government envisaged that sites were protected from development through the Local Plan process. The identification and allocation of SINCs and SLINCs within the SAD DPD and emerging SLP was therefore crucial in maintaining and enhancing the Borough's environmental infrastructure.

The reports had been 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).

### **Alternative Options Considered**

The alternative was to not commission survey work, which would result in an out of date evidence base and the potential for SINC and SLINC to be at greater risk of being lost.

#### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given to the Site Recommendations as detailed in Appendix A which include:
  - the extension of the SINC at Land at Beaconview Road;
  - the extension of the SINC at Ridgeacre Branch Canal;
  - the SINC at Gower Branch Canal maintaining its current status and boundary;
  - 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;
  - 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;
  - 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;
  - the extension of the SLINC at Dudley to Priestfield Disused Railway, with an amendment to the boundary to exclude a building;
  - to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Bradley Locks;
  - to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Broadwell Park;
  - to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Market Place, Tame Valley;





- to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Ocker Hill Balancing Pool;
  - to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Woden Road South;
  - to maintain the status and boundary of the SLINC at Thimblemill brook (East);
  - to delete the entire SLINC at Dixon’s Branch Canal;
- (2) that the Executive Director – People be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Sandwell Local Plan Proposals Map to reflect the designations identified in the report.

### 33/24 **A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor – Initial Scheme Approval**

Approval was sought for the A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor – Initial scheme approval. WMCA had an established Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), a 10-year plan to create a strategic network of cycling routes across the West Midlands and a number of enhanced walking zones.

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 route information. The project would also link with completed sections further north, and further north to those sections of A4123 in Dudley and Wolverhampton 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.



## Reason for Decision

The A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor formed 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.

The project was at the stage where proposals were sufficiently developed where specific approvals were required to 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.

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.

## Alternative Options Considered

One alternative option was to not continue with the scheme and reallocate the funding back to the WMCA for spending on a different scheme. This was not recommended, as it would limit the essential connections to nearby communities and amenities for all users for business, education, and other services. There was no guarantee that Sandwell Council would be able to retain the funding for a different scheme, and therefore Sandwell residents may be disadvantaged against other areas in the region.

Another alternative was to make significant changes to the scheme as it was drawn currently. This was not recommended as it would make it difficult to deliver by 2027 and would risk the funding being reclaimed.





## Resolved:-

- (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;
- (2) that the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning carries out public consultation on the proposals;
- (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;
- (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;
- (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.

Meeting ended at 4.41pm

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



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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Improvement Plan Progress
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Leader of the Council Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
<b>Director:</b>	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley <a href="mailto:Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk">Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Lead Officer – Service Improvement Dawn Webster <a href="mailto:Dawn_webster@sandwell.gov.uk">Dawn_webster@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 31 January 2024 be received.
- 1.2. That Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register.
- 1.3. That Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan.
- 1.4. That Cabinet receive any recommendations or comments made by Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan progress which was reviewed 22 February 2024.
- 1.5. That Cabinet note that Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board will consider the Improvement Plan Progress report on 20 March 2024, and that any recommendations or comments made in relation to the Improvement Plan progress will be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet.




## 2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. This report provides the seventh quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporates all recommendations from the original Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review (2021), the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (March 2022).
- 2.2. The Improvement Plan was refreshed to include the recommendations from the follow up visits from Grant Thornton, CIPFA and LGA in 2022. Cabinet approved this in March 2023.
- 2.3. The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes to the Improvement Plan are tracked through the established change control process to form a refresh of the Improvement Plan. These changes are formally reported through to Cabinet on a quarterly basis for transparency.
- 2.4. Risk management is embedded within the council's programme management of the Improvement Plan. A risk register is in place which underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). Cabinet is asked to receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively and to provide contextual information for future decision making
- 2.5. As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes.



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

	<p>Sandwell Council's Improvement Plan focuses on the governance arrangements of the council and areas of improvement across the organisation. The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure that the council is able to deliver on the aims and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. The deliverables set out in this Improvement Plan will achieve long-term sustainable improvements in how the council operates and is able to make effective decisions focused on improving outcomes for residents and experiences of service users. Therefore, this impacts on the council's ability to deliver all the objectives in the Corporate Plan.</p>
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### 4. Background

- 4.1. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.
- 4.2. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business-as-usual management mechanisms.
- 4.3. This report is the seventh update to Cabinet on progress of the Improvement Plan

### 5. Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress

- 5.1. Over the three months to 31 January, we have continued to deliver at pace and embed changes. With our progress being most notably recognised following the Grant Thornton review, that was carried out



October 2023, where the three Statutory Recommendations were lifted due to the significant progress that has been made by the council over the last two years.

- 5.2. A comprehensive monitoring tool has been developed which includes a progress status rating for all actions. The monitoring tool provides quick reference around which actions are on track for delivery, as well as highlighting areas that may require remedial action or additional levels of assurance. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1.
- 5.3. Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within Appendix 2. This includes a description of workstream progress including progress against milestones and achievements, and any progress issues. A summary by theme is provided below

#### 5.4. Organisational Culture Theme

##### 5.4.1. Achievements this quarter:

- Annual refresher of Corporate Governance Training delivered to members
- Mechanisms identified for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member relationships

##### 5.4.2. Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Workforce Strategy approved**
  - Decision to obtain Cabinet approval Scheduled 13 March 2024 pushing back due date.
  - On Forward plan and with Directors for Final consultation/ comments.
- **Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA (Local Government Association) around the Member-Officer Relationship.**
  - Member dynamics- all member survey and focus group (to understand case working and working relationships) this is intended to provide an evidence base for LGBCE boundary review but is also being used to provide a snapshot of members



interactions with the council and its officer base and to identify areas of focus for improvement.

- Pre-council workshops showcasing a range of service areas - will complement this work by raising awareness for both members and officers and supporting the development of positive relationships. Survey will take place end of January and beginning February.
  - Out turn report will go to full council and will support a wider range of work e.g.: customer. Will also look to align with member development programme and proposed member induction
- 
- **Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified-** Red rated due to time slippage- date to be changed at change control
    - Values & behaviours Task & Finish Group on employee recognition gave positive feedback on proposed formal recognition scheme, based on celebrating examples of the council's Values & Behaviours in action.
    - Next step is to take proposal to Leadership team for approval/adoption.
    - Anticipated launch date is March 2024.
- 
- **Governance Training and Development**
    - Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Assistant Chief Executive are working on a programme of training materials and supporting road show workshops for Officers on decision making requirements with a focus on improvement to report quality and content to support improvement to decision making. Materials have been prepped and scope for the exercise has been extended for the executive and scrutiny function.

## 5.5. Corporate Oversight Theme

### 5.5.1. Achievements this quarter

- Appraisal process agreed and ready for launch from April 2024





- Ward Co-ordinator roles have been instrumental in supporting Members to tackle local Ward based issues and initial anecdotal feedback is that these roles are making a real difference.

## 5.6. Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Develop a Continuous Improvement Framework**
  - Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed based on best practice and aligned with transformation approach.
  - Next step is to align with Leadership & Management development programme and develop proposal for 'good ideas' process for capturing staff ideas
- **Programme of end-to-end process reviews**
  - This exercise remains paused pending review of the report and update to leadership. Meeting required with ACE and Director of Finance.
- **Develop Business case for Transactional Finance Unit**
  - This exercise remains paused pending review of the report and update to leadership. This action can be close from IP and managed under Customer Journey Programme.

## 5.7. Strategic Direction Theme

### 5.7.1. Achievements this quarter

- Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy delivered as part of BAU

### 5.7.2. Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Complete Full Business Cases for identified Business Steams in line with Commercial Project Plan approved by Leadership Team**
  - Health and Safety – Skills gap analysis is complete. Next steps to be agreed at a workshop WC 5th Feb
  - Neutral Vendor Phase approach agreed, reflective of new timeline and capacity in HR.



- Educational Services – Resource pressures easing with a new SIA post agreed. Further discussion required regarding ‘status’ of project i.e. transformational or service improvement. Meeting to be arranged in Feb to be discussed.
  - Social Letting - Due to the announcement made by the Chancellor in the Autumn budget – an increase in LHA rate to the 2024 rates from April the project team must review the financial offer, margins and understand how this may influence landlords' decision making in respect of the proposed model.
  - Cashless – Activities agreed to inform next steps - recommendations provided by consultants were not sufficient so have not been implemented. New proposals have been requested and should be received in the next few weeks.
  - Educational Psychology – Finance partners updated and provided good insight. Next step to de-segregate statutory from opportunity but also consider the dependencies on the wider school's piece.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment**
    - Work is currently underway to develop the EFLG (Equality Framework for Local Government) Audit Action plan, which will be presented to Leadership Team during March 2024.
    - The team have also developed the 2nd PSED Service User Report for 2023-24 which will be published by March 2024 and ensure that the council is compliant and meeting its legal duties.
    - Further work is being undertaken to support the 4 interim EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Objectives and it proposed that updates will be presented to LT during Q1 (2024/25).
    - The development of the EDI Strategy has slipped due to resources within the team.

## 5.8. Decision Making Theme

### 5.8.1. Achievements this quarter

- All deliverables have been achieved in this theme and assurance actions continue to be monitored

### 5.8.2. Decision Making Progress Issues



- No issues in this theme

## 5.9. Procurement and Commercial Theme

### 5.9.1. Achievements this quarter

- New Fleet vehicles have arrived as part of Serco Fleet replacement and are into service

### 5.9.2. Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Performance Management System: Options Appraisal**
  - Engagement with service areas complete.
  - Following discussion with Director Finance and AD ICT, further work required to further explore Oracle Fusion as a potential solution.
  - Cross-council stakeholder group to be established for the project to ensure needs of the organisation are understood and explored.
  - Initial meeting with procurement has taken place and the project is in the procurement pipeline for commencement at a future date if required.

## 5.10. Partnerships and Relationships Theme

### 5.10.1. Achievements this quarter

- SCT KPIS approved by DfE, SMBC and SCT, and will be reported through PMF (Performance Management Framework) effective Q1 2024/25

### 5.10.2. Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Consultation on VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Draft Strategy- On hold**
  - Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement and funding.



## 6. Statutory Recommendations

- 6.1. The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review 2021 included three statutory recommendations that the council has a legal obligation to respond to. These recommendations are incorporated into the single Improvement Plan and are embedded across each of the six themes.
- 6.2. In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.
- 6.3. In their follow up review 2023, Grant Thornton determined that they are *“satisfied that the Council has made appropriate progress against the three statutory recommendations, and these can now be lifted”*.
- 6.4. To provide an overview of progress against these three specific recommendations, Appendix 3 extracts the key actions that respond to each of the recommendations, and they are summarised below.
- 6.5. **Statutory Recommendation 1** - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.
- Progress update:
    - Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
    - Sandwell Leisure Trust – agreement reached to extend SLT’s operation of leisure centres to March 2027.
    - Handover of Sandwell Aquatic Centre to SLT
    - Sandwell Children’s Trust – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract commenced April 2023
    - Waste Contract – Contract Monitoring framework progressing well and embedded in PMF reporting. Review of the Contract is complete.
    - ERP (Oracle Fusion) – support provider in place and implementation commenced. Project Management and Governance arrangements are in place.
    - Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. Monitoring provided to Cabinet in November 2022 and July 2023.



6.6. **Statutory Recommendation 2** - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.

- Progress Update
  - The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with the Constitution refresh.
  - Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being rolled out during 2023-2024.
  - Commercial Strategy approved in March 2023 within the MTFS.
  - Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.
  - SEND Transport lessons learnt completed and shared with Wider Leadership Team

6.7. **Statutory Recommendation 3** - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.

- Progress Update
  - Member Development – New Member induction arrangements are in place. Member Development Programme is being regularly reviewed by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. Member Handbook created for Municipal Year 2023-24.
  - Officer Development – A consolidated programme of fundamental training for managers on Corporate Governance matters has commenced. A broader Management Development Programme will be rolled out in 2023 following the approval of the Workforce Strategy.
  - Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held to inform the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours) which was approved in March 2023. Values and behaviours launched.



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

## 7. Reporting Framework, Governance and Assurance

- 7.1. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, Council approved the reporting mechanism for the Improvement Plan in June 2022. This set out that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual. The diagram included at Appendix 6 sets out the governance framework.
- 7.2. This report forms the seventh quarterly update to Cabinet on the Improvement Plan. Leadership Team have reviewed progress against the plan every month.
- 7.3. The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in December 2023. The Statutory Directions are in place until 22 March 2024, unless the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to amend or revoke them at an earlier date. Future reporting arrangements will be determined should the Statutory Directions be extended.
- 7.4. Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 7.5. The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council on this matter.
- 7.6. Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register. They received the last quarterly update in November 2023 and considered this quarterly progress update in February 2024.
- 7.7. Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as





regular reports on overall progress. This has included a ‘deep dive’ focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce, as well as Customer Journey. The Board will receive this quarterly update in March 2024, and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to a future Cabinet meeting.

## 8. External Reviews

- 8.1. External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations made through external reviews. As reported to Cabinet in February 2024, Grant Thornton conducted a follow-up review in 2023 to monitor the council’s continued progress in addressing the Statutory Recommendations made in 2021 and the additional key and improvement recommendations made in 2022. In their 2023 report, Grant Thornton were “*satisfied that the Council has made appropriate progress against the three statutory recommendations, and these can now be lifted*”.
- 8.2. The council’s response to the recommendations from Grant Thornton’s 2023 follow up review is being considered. Any further actions to address these recommendations will be incorporated into the Improvement Plan through the established change control process, or built into ‘business as usual’ processes as necessary. Changes to the Improvement Plan will be reported to members through the normal quarterly reporting schedule.
- 8.3. Reports from Sandwell’s Commissioners have been submitted to the Secretary of State on a six-monthly basis. In their third report (June 23), the Commissioners outlined that their focus over the following months would be in the following areas:
  - Developing the strategic capacity of the organisation
  - Implementation and embedding of the council’s values and behaviours (One Team Framework)
  - Establishing a comprehensive transformation programme linked to the delivery of the medium-term financial strategy
  - The 202/21 accounts approved by auditors and a clear timetable for the approval of the 2021/22 accounts.
- 8.4. As per reporting arrangements set out in the Statutory Directions, the Commissioners submitted a further report to the Secretary of State in December 2023. Their letter will be published with the Minister’s response





in due course, and future directions will inform the council's future improvement journey.

## 9. Risk Management

- 9.1. The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- 9.2. The current risk register is attached as Appendix 4. The main risks are associated with:
- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the corporate programme management office. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June. To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from September 2023.
  - **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
  - **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
  - **Constitutional Changes**- If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate Governance Review is underway, and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes
- 9.3. Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, two risk has reduced.
- **IP4 - Project and risk governance assurance arrangements** likelihood of risk happening due to mitigations in place reduced from 2 to 1. Reducing overall risk score from 6 to 3.
  - **IP12 Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias)** likelihood of risk happening due to mitigations in place reduced from 2 to 1. Reducing overall risk score from 6 to 3.



- 9.4. Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, one risk has been closed.
- **IP10- Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality-** closed as programme risk, moved to Service Improvement Risk Register to be managed within business-as-usual governance processes.

## 10. Changes to the Improvement Plan

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

10.2. The Improvement Plan report to Council in June 2022 set out that changes (which may include the addition of new workstreams or objectives, or the amendment of timescales for delivery of actions) will be tracked through programme management mechanisms and that Cabinet will retain oversight of changes through regular formal reporting.

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

10.4. The changes made are summarised below.

- 14 changes made to action delivery timescales (with 9 being more than three months)
- 1 assurance action has been added
- 2 sub-actions have been added (marked in red within IP).
- 2 main actions are to be closed
- 2 Assurance actions are to close
- 2 changes to delivery lead
- 2 changes to action description

## 11. Alternative Options

11.1. The Value for Money 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. As the report included statutory recommendations the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately.

11.2. The Directions issued by the Secretary of State are a statutory requirement and the council has a legal obligation to respond



appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures.

11.3. Reviewing progress against the Improvement Plan enables senior officers and members to have oversight of delivery, and take corrective action, as necessary. Alternative methods of monitoring progress could be adopted. The current monitoring method is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require.

## 12. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The monitoring of the Improvement Plan is being carried out within existing resources. Council's approval of the single Improvement Plan included allocation of resources to ensure delivery of the Improvement Plan. These resources are monitored regularly by the Programme Management Office and Leadership Team.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>On 22 March 2022, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act) in order to ensure that the council can comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act. Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p> <p>The delivery of actions within the Plan agreed by Council in June 2022, as well as any subsequently identified actions, will support the council to achieve sustainable improvement. This will support the end of government intervention.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of



	<p>State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register is in place and will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan which will underpin the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). This is reported monthly to Leadership Team, and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	The successful delivery of this Improvement Plan will require the development and review of many of the council's policies and procedures. These changes will build in consideration of the impact on equalities throughout the development and will include an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way. Therefore, improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.
<b>Social Value</b>	Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the council will be able to maximise its social value return.
<b>Climate Change</b>	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell



	principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities include being a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care and supporting young people once they leave care. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to be a good Corporate Parent.

### 13. Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool January 2024
2. Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary January 2024
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting January 2024
4. Improvement Plan Risk Register January 2024
5. Changes to the Improvement Plan January 2024
6. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram

### 15. Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Reports to the Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing and Communities:
  - June 2022 Reports
    - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, June 2022](#)
  - December 2022 Reports:
    - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022](#)
    - [Sandwell Council Commissioners: second report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022 \(published March 2023\)](#)
    - [Ministerial response to second letter \(March 2023\)](#)
- June 2023



- [Sandwell Council Commissioners: third report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, June 2023](#) (published July 2023)
- [Ministerial response to third letter](#) (July 2023)
- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
  - To Council:
    - [12 December 2023](#)
    - [13 June 2023](#)
    - [13 December 2022](#)
  - To Cabinet:
    - [February 2024](#)
    - [December 2023](#)
    - [September 2023](#)
    - [June 2023](#)
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
    - [September 2022](#)
  - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
    - [November 2023](#)
    - [September 2023](#)
    - [June 2023](#)
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
    - [November 2022](#)
    - [September 2022](#)
    - [June 2022](#)
  - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
    - [November 2023](#)
    - [September 2023](#)
    - [June 2023](#)
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [November 2022](#)
    - [September 2022](#)
- External Review Reports
  - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up-Report 2023](#)





- [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up Report 2022](#)
- [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review December 2021 – reissued October 2022](#)
- [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report 2022](#)
- [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022](#)
- [CIPFA Financial Management Report January 2022](#)





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# IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Progress against Plan Status Rating	Definition	Leadership Team Action as a result
On Track	Progress against the action is good and there is i) a low level of issues; and/or ii) progress is in line with the delivery date with no/ minor slippage (e.g. less than 1 months)	Leadership Team note progress and seek assurance that on track
Medium progress	Progress on the action is being made but there is i) a medium level of issues and/or ii) slippage (actual / projected) of 1-2 months	Leadership Team watching brief and review impact on dependencies
Significant issues / slippage	There is a significant level of issues and/or slippage (e.g. more than 2 months)	Leadership Team review and remedy
Not due to start	Work on the action is not due to start	N/a
Complete	Action is complete	N/a
Closed	Action is complete and there is evidence that the measures of success have been fulfilled	Evidence to be provided
N/A	Update not required at this time	N/a
On hold	Action placed on hold due to different approach being considered	

Theme 1 -Organisational Culture

Static data													Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)											
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.0	Create the right environment for that organisational culture to thrive	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader					Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A											
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Dec-22	Mar-24	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Discussions about whether the People Strategy should go to Cabinet. Entered onto Forward plan - possible March date TBC for strategy to become effective in April 2024. (Ds 18.12.23)	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Decision to obtain Cabinet approval.Scheduled 13 March 2024. On Forward plan and with Directors for Final consultation/comments. DS. 11.01.24											
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.3	Project Plan for launch of One Team Framework and alignment to people management practices - Launch and share events with people managers (June & July 2023) - Alignment of One Team framework values and behaviours in people practices and L&D offer .	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Mar-23	Jul-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Update to be provided to IPRM in February 2024.	Complete	Update to IPRM 1 Feb. DS 1.01.24											
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.4	Employee performance review and objective setting, linked to Corporate Plan and Directorate Plans (Appraisal) a) confirm approach for 2023 b) determine fully refreshed approach for 2024 onwards	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Mar-23	Mar-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Paper taken to JCP 18.12.23. TUs agreed to new approach. Supportive learning under development. (18.23.23 DS)	On Track- little or no slippage	Updates processes to be communication later in January/early Feb. DS 11.01.24											
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.0	Develop a clear programme of management development	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Focus 2	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a											
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.5	Senior Leadership Development Programme Scope, Content and Budget Agreed	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR HR Team Manager L&D/OD		TBC	N/A	N/A	Senior Leadership Development remains hold pending restructure of senior levels. The business as usual management development L&D offer continues for existing and new people managers. 18.12.23 D.5	N/A	No change - remains on hold pending restructure of senior levels.											
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.0	Assurance Activity to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23		Focus 2	N/A		N/A												
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.1	Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	Dec-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month- feedback from committees that we continue to review. Need to identify a focus group before the end of the year.	Complete	Member dynamics- all member survey and focus group to be carried out (to understand case working and working relationships) this is intended to provide an evidence base for LG BCE boundary review but is also being used to provide a snapshot of members interactions with the council and its officer base and to identify areas of focus for improvement. Brg council workshop											
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.2	Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA around the Member-Officer Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jul-23	Nov-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Looking at alternative engagement methods with members to improve response rate and widen breadth of data collection. To consider facilitated workshops for all members based on thematic areas of council activity to enhance member participation and feedback.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	see above. Will also look to align with member development programme and proposed member induction											
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.4	New action added: Mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member relationship: 1. Survey Complete 2. Areas of concerns identified 3. Action plan to address identified area of concern.	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council					N/A	New Action Added	N/A	New Action Added	new action added January 24											

January Update Due

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	January Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
											Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.0	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council					Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.2	Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings to ensure they are meeting needs	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Jun-23	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.0	Member development programme	Director - Law & Governance						Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.3	Review of Member Development Programme	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee			Nov-23	Feb-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month Discussions have been had with the Committee. New appointment made to lead on this work. MDP for the following year will be completed by feb- including all dates of training. (to allow members time to diarise appointments)	On Track- little or no slippage	Induction arrangement for may 24 currently in development and will be followed by refreshed mdp programme for 24-25. council has recently appointed a new lead officer for member development which will increase capacity and focus.
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.4	Agreement of revised MDP	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee			Jan-24	Feb-24	N/A	Not due to start	due Jan 24	Not due to start	date change required.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.0	Deliver the communications strategy to assist with more effective internal communications	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Feb-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internal Communications	OC.E2.4	Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead- Service improvement	Mar-23	Oct-23	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Staff recognition built into the in-person All Staff Briefings in December 2023. Approach developed for formal recognition scheme, to be further developed/tested with Task & Finish Group from January before bringing proposal to Leadership Team for approval. (Original date for Task & Finish Group rescheduled due to availability of T&F Group members)	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Values & behaviours Task & Finish Group on employee recognition gave positive feedback on proposed formal recognition scheme, based on celebrating examples of the council's Values & Behaviours in action. Next step is to take proposal to Leadership team for approval/adoption. Anticipated launch date is May 2024
Internal Communications	OC.E2.8	Protocol For working with MPs	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Comms		May-24	N/A	New Action Added	This action will be wrapped up in the new communications strategy	On Track- little or no slippage	Outline communications strategy has been drafted - work has progressed on component parts, such as the branding guidelines. The MP protocol will be one component part of the new strategy.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.0	Governance review training Phase 2	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	TBC	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.3	Governance Training and Development	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director-Finance		Jan-23	May-24	N/A	Medium Progress	Capacity for delivery of training has been limited by corporate priority work on oracle fusions allied with changes to statutory officer designations in recent months which provide opportunity for refresh of current training materials pending the MOs wider review of Decision Making Framework and the Constitution.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected	AD L&G and ACE are working on a programme of training materials and supporting road show workshops for officer on decision making requirements with a focus on improvement to report quality and content to support improvement to decision making.
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.4	Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			June 2023	Dec-23	N/A	On Track	as last month- Scheduled to the end of Dec with CIPFa to carry out the Code of corporate governance training.	Complete	The training session took place on 9 January 2024 and was delivered by CIPFA. This will need to be picked up each year as annual training as part of BAU.

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	January Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
										Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)		Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.5	Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training	Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jul-23	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete

Theme 2- Corporate Oversight

Theme 2- Corporate Oversight														
Static data				Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
ERP	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader	Director-Business Strategy & Change Director- Law		Apr-22	Apr-24	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
ERP	CO.A1.9	Completion of the modelling phase	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Feb-23	Sep-23	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete	
ERP	CO.A1.10	Go live	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO Lead	Jul-24	Jul-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Due to CoA changes required by Finance and approved by Programme Board, the Programme "Go-Live" for Finance, Procurement and EPM is moved to Jul -24 in line with HCM and Payroll. Hence, planned for a "Big Bang" Go-Live in Jul-24 for all modules	On Track- little or no slippage	On Plan to "Go-Live" July 24	
ERP	CO.A1.11	Programme benefits will be defined during the duration of the programme and agreed with the programme board -a process will be agreed for monitoring and reporting the benefits -benefit realisation will take place post go live.	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		PMO lead	Feb-23	quarterly May Aug Nov Feb	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live. Working group established with HoS to progress financial benefits.	On Track- little or no slippage	Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live. Working group established with HoS to progress financial benefits.	
ERP	CO.A1.12	<b>New action:</b> Completion of realisation phase/SIT Stage	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			Sep-23		N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Status for Dec. - Finance delivered CoA values and mapping on 15/12/23 as planned. CoA impact analysis in progress. Key User Trianing started for some modules, SIT for Finance/ Proc/ EPM complete, HCM SIT will Complete by end year, DM3 exit criteria agreed, DM4 entry criteria to start DM4 on 02/01/24	On Track- little or no slippage	Status for Jan'24. - System configuration due to new CoA extended through Jan. DM3 will complete on 26/01/24. DM4 Cycle started on 2 Jan, SIT for HCM will complete on 19/01/24. Gateway 4 Criteria to Exit Realisation Phase/ SIT Stage and Entry to Realisation Phase/ UAT Stage agreed at 18/01/24. Programme Board.Gateway 4 approval with Programme Board planned for 01/02/24	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.0	Single Improvement Plan Phase 1	Leadership Team	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.4	Ongoing Monitoring of Improvement Plan (Monthly Monitoring by Leadership Team, Quarterly Monitoring by Cabinet, ARAC regular review of IP and IP Risk Register, Scrutiny regular review of IP)	Leadership Team	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Ongoing	Monthly assurance	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Report taken to Scrutiny 22 Nov, ARAC 23 Nov and due to Cabinet 6 Dec, and Council 12 Dec.	On Track- little or no slippage	Monthly monitoring to IPRM, and Leaders, Quarterly reporting due March 2024 to Cabinet, Scrutiny and ARAC>	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.5	6 monthly report to Secretary of State	Leadership Team	Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Dec-22	June & December each year throughout intervention	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Report to SoS approved by Council 12 December 2023 and subsequently issued.	On Track- little or no slippage	December SoS letter sent, awaiting response.	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.6	Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan monitored and reviewed by Leadership Team	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Jan July each year	Focus 2	Complete	complete	Complete	complete	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.7	Conduct Employee Engagement Survey for 2023 and consider actions required in response to the findings	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		AD - HR Strategic Lead Service Improvement	Jul-23	early 2024	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	Wider Leadership Team have been presented with the results at Organisational level. Directorate level results are being presented to DMTs between late Nov and early January. This will include the call for ADs to include the issues identified via the survey into their Business	On Track- little or no slippage	Service level reports in production. Analysis of results by protected groups has been completed Directorate level results discussed at DMTs - meeting 22/01 to discuss progress and key themes arising from discussions	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.0	Continuous Improvement	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Oct-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement framework	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement	Autumn 2022	Oct-23	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage-more than 2 months	Business planning workshops held in November/December - received positive feedback from attendees, and intelligence is being used to inform business planning for 2024/25.  Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed for discussion with Transformation and Learning & Development to align approach across key agendas (meeting scheduled for January 2024)	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage-more than 2 months	Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed based on best practice and aligned with transformation approach. Next step is to align with Leadership & Management development programme and develop 'good ideas' process for capturing staff ideas.	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B3.2	Develop a lessons learnt framework	Chief executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement	23-Jan	Oct-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	complete	With Comms to be uploaded onto Intranet. Will be integrated as part of the Continuous Improvement framework	
Performance Management	CO.C1.0	Performance Management Framework (PMF)	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader			Sep-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Performance Management	CO.C1.3	Quarterly Performance Reports made to Cabinet	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Ongoing action	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	Q2 Report went to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny MB on 4th January, due to go to Cabinet on 17th January. Data for Q3 report is being collated.	
Performance Management	CO.C1.4	Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	January 2023	Mar-24	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete	
Performance Management	CO.C1.8	Corporate performance team in place	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	dec 22	Sep-23	N/A	Complete	Senior Lead Officer in place since February. 2 x G Grade officers in place. Additional F Grade post to be recruited to following decision on performance management system.	Complete	Complete	
Performance Management	CO.C1.9	Consider integrating revenue, Capital and Performance reporting	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement	Mar-24	Aug-24	N/a	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	
Performance Management	CO.C2.0	Budget Monitoring	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Mar-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Performance Management	CO.C2.4	Assurance action: Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports made to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action- March, June, Sep, Dec	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A	Assurance Action	due december 23	Assurance Action	reports are being made and are programmed in	
Performance Management	CO.C2.5	Assurance action: Where budget pressures identified, assurance provided that action has/is being taken (monthly summary comment from Finance \$151 Officer / raise issues)	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action	Monthly monitoring	N/A	Assurance Action		Assurance Action	VFM Panels have been implemented for all spend over £1000	
Performance Management	CO.C2.6	Embed financial benchmarking in budget planning	Director-Finance	Deputy Leader			Apr-23	Jan-24	N/A					
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.0	Restructuring	Leadership Team	Deputy Leader			Dec-20	on hold	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	



January Update Due														
Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.1	Directorate Level restructuring	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	Directorate restructuring – final assessment stage is underway. Final panel interviews scheduled w/c 29 January	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D1.2	Review of spans and layers across Council's managerial structures in line with LGA Guidance (likely to be incorporated within Target Operating Model Programme in due course)	Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	July 23	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	*Organisation layers and spans – contribution to outcomes tool completed by C.Co and ready for handover to HR Services. HRBPs will work with Directorates in utilising the tool to inform service redesign	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.0	Embedding Finance Business Partner role	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Jul-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.3	Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Finance Improvement Manager		Jul-23	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.5	Assurance Action: Performance against KPIs for financial services section	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Finance Improvement Manager	Quarterly	Jun Sep Dec Mar	N/A	Assurance Action		Assurance Action		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.0	Reduction of financial transactional activity	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.6	Implement recommended processes for a single view of debt	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jun-23	Mar-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	3 month review meeting taking place on 22.2.24	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	May-22	Nov-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Remains on pause	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Remains on pause- meeting to held with ACE and Director of Finance	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.5	Implementation of Recommendations from CIPFa in relation to internal charges	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Oct-22	Apr-24	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.7	Develop Business case for Transactional Finance Unit	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager		TBC	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Remains on pause	Complete	Close on IP to be monitored on Customer Journey Programme	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.0	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	AA- ongoing	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.5	Assurance Action: Preparation of Draft Accounts for 2021/2022 (assurance that approach to completion and sign-off of final accounts is becoming embedded)	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Monthly monitoring	Monthly monitoring	N/A	Assurance Action	The 2021/22 accounts are drafted. Grant Thornton have allocated resources for the 2021/22 audit which has commenced in November 2023.	Assurance Action	The 2021/22 accounts are drafted. Grant Thornton have allocated resources for the 2021/22 audit which commenced in November 2023.	

Static data							Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)				
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.0	Corporate Transformation programme	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21		Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.3	Corporate Transformation PMO established - Local Partnerships Review Concludes - Establishment of PMO	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		AD- Transformation		Nov-23	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete				
Corporate Transformation	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		AD- Transformation		TBC following 08/08/2023 meeting	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	CTO moving to live site mid Jan, R&G live in Feb. Work with comm's is currently underway re soft launch comm's	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	CTO will go live 01.02.24. work is underway with R&G for a live date late Feb				
Customer Journey	CO.F5.0	Customer Journey Programme	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager	22-Sep	TBC	Focus 1	N/A		N/A					
Customer Journey	CO.F5.4	Ward and Casework Management - Member Engagement held	Assistant Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Customer	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Attendance at Town Members Board Meetings are taking place throughout December & January to feedback the work that has been completed on resolving Member portal issues. A further Pre Full Council Member event is planned in January 2024 following the positive feedback received from October's event. Ward Co-ordinators are continuing to work closely with Ward Members to tackle issues at a local level.	Complete	Meetings are continuing to be attended to feedback on the Clr Portal. Further session will take place pre Full Council on the 30 January 2024, whereby Members can come along and discuss any cases/concerns with key service areas. Feedback from this session will be used to inform future sessions.				
Customer Journey	CO.F5.5	Ward and Casework Management - Action plan in place Plan for Responsiveness re: Ward & Casework Management 2023/24.	Assistant Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Customer	TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	See above update. LT are also continuing to receive weekly updates on Clr portal enquiries, the Customer Team are emailing Officers with long standing enquiries to ask them to address these as a matter of urgency. Ward Co-ordinators are working on developing good working relationships with Member's, in order to be able to tackle concerns at a local level.	Complete	The introduction of the Ward Co-ordinator roles have been instrumental in supporting Members to tackle local Ward based issues and initial anecdotal feedback is that these roles are making a real difference. Members of the Customer team are continuing to chase for feedback on over due Clr Portal cases.				

Static data				Owners			Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.0	Strategic Planning framework	Chief Executive					2024	Focus 2	N/A	new action	N/A	new action
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.1	Refresh of partnership wide vision 2030	Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		early 2024	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	Consultation and engagement intelligence being gathered into discussion paper for sharing with partners. Options paper on partnership arrangements also in progress again for discussing with partners
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.3	Refresh appraisal process	Chief Executive			AD - HR Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	Complete	Process agreed and ready for launch from April 2024
Strategic Planning framework	CO.G1.4	Pilot an approach to service planning	Chief Executive			Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	AD Business Plans in progress - deadline for draft business plans is 3 February 2024. Quality assurance assessment to be undertaken once drafts submitted.

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction

Static data							Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead - Communications	Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	Complete	Internal comms strategy in place and being delivered as part of Business as usual				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.0	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 2021	Jul-23	Focus 2		update required- new action required- when is procurement strategy to be signed off.						
		New action required	Director- Finance														
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.0	Develop and Implement the Commercial Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Autumn 2021	Ocr 23	Focus 2	N/a		N/a					

January Update Due

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.3	Complete Full Business Cases for identified Business Steams in line with Commercial Project Plan approved by Leadership Team	Director- Finance					Oct-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Education commercial services OBC- delay with development due to capacity within the team, workstreams have been refined. Planning workshop to be held New Year H&S – Data gathering underway, report to be produced Jan 2024, current H&S training contracts been reviewed. All of which will contribute to OBC Neutral vendor – working group established, analysis underway. Project Lead maternity cover successfully recruited. Timeline extended to 2025 due to Oracle fusion implementation. Pest control alternative not yet identified. The progress of these workstreams are monitored at CTB	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Health and Safety – Skills gap analysis is complete. Next steps to be agreed at a workshop WC 5th Feb Neutral Vendor Phase approach agreed, reflective of new timeline and capacity in HR. Educational Services – Resource pressures easing with a new SIA post agreed. Further discussion required regarding 'status' of project i.e. transformational or service improvement. Meeting to be arranged in Feb to be discussed. Social Letting - Due to the announcement made by the Chancellor in the Autumn budget – an increase in LHA rate to the 2024 rates from April the project team must review the financial offer, margins and understand how this may influence landlords decision making in respect of the proposed model. Cashless – Activities agreed to
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.0	HRA 30 year Business Plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Assistant Directors - Housing Management and Asset Management		Autumn 2021	Jun-23	Focus 2				
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.5	Stock Condition Surveys Undertaken to inform HRA business plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing			Sep-23	Sep-24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month- The work is underway and on track.	On Track- little or no slippage	As last month- The work is underway and on track.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.6	Refresh of HRA Business plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing			TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month There is a review currently being undertaken on the early years of the business plan as part of the MTFS process. The plan will be further reviewed in Q1 Apr 2024 as the regulatory requirements are confirmed and the initial results of the stock condition surveys are available.	On Track- little or no slippage	As last month There is a review currently being undertaken on the early years of the business plan as part of the MTFS process. The plan will be further reviewed in Q1 Apr 2024 as the regulatory requirements are confirmed and the initial results of the stock condition surveys are available.

January Update Due

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.7	Procurement of second tranche of Stock condition Surveys	Director- Housing	Director- Housing			TBC	TBC	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month The ongoing operational delivery of stock condition surveys have been built into the plans for next year so will commence April 2024 and be ongoing for two further years.	On Track- little or no slippage	As last month The ongoing operational delivery of stock condition surveys have been built into the plans for next year so will commence April 2024 and be ongoing for two further years.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.0	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan-22	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.3	Corporate Parenting Strategy - yearly assurances provided to the Corporate Parenting Board	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Annually	N/A	Assurance Action	due sept 2024	Assurance Action	due sept 2024
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.0	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	Business planning workshops held in November/December - received positive feedback from attendees, and intelligence is being used to inform business planning for	N/A	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.14	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment - appointment of consultant for data analysis - appointment of consultant for strategy development	Director- Law & Governance			Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Jul- 24	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month-Update report went to leadership. 4 equality objectives approved. New approach to staff networks and updated public sector equality duty compliance. Review being undertaken in regards to the additional resources needed in the EDI to implement the Equalities framework	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Work is currently underway to develop the EFLG Audit Action plan, which will be presented to LT during March 2024. The team have also developed the 2nd PSED Service User Report for 2023-24 which will be published by March 2024 and ensure that the council is compliant and meeting is legal duties. Further work is been undertaken to support the 4 interim EDI Objectives and it proposed that updates will be presented to LT during Q1. The development of the EDI Strategy has slipped due to resources within the team.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	SD.B1.15	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved and published	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Jun-24	Jul-24	N/A	Not due to start	due July 24	Not due to start	due July 24
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.0	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Ongoing	Focus 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.3	New Assurance Action (strategy implemented through budget plans): Budget Report to Cabinet (2023-2026) reflects funding gaps identified in MTFP	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Feb-23	and annually thereafter	N/A	Assurance Action	Due feb 2024	Assurance Action	Due feb 2024
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.4	New Assurance Action (embedding the approach): MTFP and Capital Strategy refreshed and approved in October each year	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			October 2023	and annually thereafter	N/A	Assurance Action	due October 2024	Assurance Action	due October 2024

January Update Due

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.0	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework	Chief Executive	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Customer Journey	SD.F1.0	Customer Journey Strategy	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strate	Strategic Lead - Customer	Oct-22	Mar-24	Focus 2	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Interim Strategy to be developed In-house for 2024-27, work has commenced on this. Discussions are on-going re: future direction of travel and the procurement of a Strategic Partner to review the Customer Journey.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Information is being pulled together to start to draft the CJ strategy including work on Customer Standards.

January Update Due



Theme 4 - Decision Making

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C3.0	Manage position on historic issues through work with ARAC chair	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21	Ongoing	Focus 2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C3.1	Assurance action: Watching brief to ensure that historic matters do not re-surface	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Quarterly	Sep Dec Mar June	N/A	Assurance Action	due january	Assurance Action	Continued monitoring of issues by new monitoring officer. No evidence of attempts to revisit historic matters and monitoring officer is sighted on all previous areas of concern.	

Theme 5- Procurement & Commercial

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Waste Contract	PC.A1.0	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Aug-22	Focus 2	Complete	assurance actions in place	Complete	assurance actions in place
Waste Contract	PC.A1.3	Assurance Action- Report provided to Officer Leadership on a quarterly basis. Regular reporting through PMF	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Feb-23	quarterly (from Feb) Feb May Aug Nov	N/A	Assurance Action	due Feb	Assurance Action	due Feb
Waste Contract	PC.A1.4	Assurance Action- Annual report on leisure and waste contracts going through to cabinet member	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Nov-22	annually	N/A	Assurance Action	due Nov 24	Assurance Action	due Nov 24
Waste Contract	PC.A1.5	The large contracts in BE for waste/street cleansing, and both leisure providers will be added to the Intend contract management module.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				monthly	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	January update - as previous- Waste contract now on Intend and go-live December '23. Subject to testing of waste contract, next step will be SLT Leisure Contract.
Waste Contract	PC.A2.0	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Jan-23	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
Waste Contract	PC.A4.0	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mar-23	Focus 2	N/A		N/A	
Waste Contract	PC.A4.3	Assurance Action- Senior management meeting - annual plans requested- service delivery plan from SERCO is contractually compliant and includes elements of street cleansing.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly (from Nov) Nov Feb May Aug	N/A	Assurance Action	due Feb	Assurance Action	due Feb
Waste Contract	PC.A5.0	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	End 2023	Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waste Contract	PC.A5.2	Fleet replacement complete	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				End 2023	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	On Track- little or no slippage	New vehicles arrived and into service.
Waste Contract	PC.A5.3	Assurance Action- Monthly fleet steering group taking place where the documentation considered by the group is contractually compliant.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly (from Nov) Nov Feb May Aug	N/A	Assurance Action	Due feb	Assurance Action	Due feb

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
SEND Transport	PC.B3.0	Procurement of 2024 SEND Transport Contract	Director - Children and Education				Nov-22	Apr-25	Focus 2	N/A	n/a	N/A	n/a
SEND Transport	PC.B3.2	Mobilise project team and establish project governance	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Aug 23	Sept 23	N/A	Complete	Business planning workshops held in November/December - received positive feedback from attendees, and intelligence is being used to inform business planning for 2024/25.  Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed for discussion with Transformation and Learning & Development to align approach across key agendas (meeting scheduled for January 2024)	Complete	Complete
SEND Transport	PC.B3.3	Commence Procurement	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Jan-24	Sep 23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month	Complete	On track- working with Legal on a flexible purchasing system. The framework will be in place July/August 24 to run all the new contract through. It will support and encourage SME operators to join the framework which will provide much needed competition and challenge.(SM 16/01/24-dw)
SEND Transport	PC.B3.4	Working with contract management consultant to introduce and embed robust contract management arrangements	Director-Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education		Jan-23	Ongoing	N/A			Complete	work was done on existing contracts, no changes could be made at the time. The lessons learnt from this will be used on the new contract management arrangements in the future. (SM 16/01/24-dw)
SEND Transport	PC.B3.5	NEW action- Assurance: SEND Procurement	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			February		N/A	New Action Added	assurance action added	New Action Added	assurance action added
New System Procurement	PC.C1.0	Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system	Assistant Chief Executive	Dept Leader			Jun-21		Focus 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)
New System Procurement	PC.C1.1	Options Appraisal	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		Oct-23	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	RAG rating changed from AMBER to RED as have missed the timescales we set ourselves, this is due to conducting further engagement with services to ensure requirements are captured from across the council prior to discussion of Options Appraisal and Business Case at ICT Approval Panel and Corporate Transformation Board in New Year.	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Engagement with service areas complete. Following discussion with Director Finance and AD ICT, further work required to further explore Oracle Fusion as a potential solution. Cross-council stakeholder group to be established for the project to ensure needs of the organisation are understood and explored. Initial meeting with procurement has taken place and the project is in the procurement pipeline for commencement at a future date if required.
New System Procurement	PC.C1.2	Business Case and Implementation Plan Considered	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead - Service Improvement		TBC based on selected option	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start

Theme 6-Partnerships & Relationships

														January Update Due	
Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)		Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.0	Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.7	New KPIs reported through PMF	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Aug-23	Sep-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	SCT KPIs have been agreed across SCT and the DFE following the review by the DFE appointed Improvement Board Chair. The review has not just looked at the KPIs but the operating tolerances too.		On Track- little or no slippage	The new approved contract KPIs will be reported through PMF effective Q1 2024/25	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.8	KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Dec-23	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	As above commentary		On Track- little or no slippage	As above commentary	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.0	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.3	Assurance action: Feedback provided on a 6 monthly basis on the continuation of regular cross - SMBC/SCT leadership team meetings.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan	6 monthly Jan July	N/A	Assurance Action	due January 24		Assurance Action	Scrutiny Meeting Date Feb 2024 (Jacquie Smith & Emma Taylor to attend)	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.0	Establish corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues, such as corporate parenting and delivery of Early Help service	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Focus 2		Updates provided and there is also the SCT governance structures inc OPB, SPB and Improvement Board supported by a range of senior meetings inc the Cabinet Member, DCS, Chair of the SCT Board, CEO of SCT. N/A			Updates provided and there is also the SCT governance structures inc OPB, SPB and Improvement Board supported by a range of senior meetings inc the Cabinet Member, DCS, Chair of the SCT Board, CEO of SCT. N/A	
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.4	Outcomes around early help and corporate parent reporting through PMF at Q1	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Sep-23	N/a	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month		On Track- little or no slippage	Scheduled throughout 2024	
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.0	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere'	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health				Focus 2		Action completed since the formation of the overarching 5 Boards.- assurance action to monitor			Action completed since the formation of the overarching 5 Boards.- assurance action to monitor	
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.1	Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services (preparing for adulthood project)	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health			May-23	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	December update- as last month		Complete	The PFA Project Board meeting scheduled for November 2023 was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 29th January 2024.  Project activity continues in the Stage one / Prepare phase. Following submission of the PFA preparatory findings report in 2023, further analysis has been completed to fulfil next steps/actions in relation to case file audits and post age 17 referral analysis. These reports have now been submitted for review and comment. We continue to bring together and liaise with internal and external partners to identify project dependencies and required future collaborative working.  Action is monitored through MTFs, adults and Transformation Board this action will be removed from IP.	

Static data													January Update Due	
Static data			Owners				Dates		Focus	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Status (December 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 2023)	Status (January 2024)	Update (Initial and Date) (January 2024)	
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.6	Assurance action- Receive a 6 monthly update from DPH and DAS to provide assurance that governance remains in place to test adequacy of partnerships through system-wide thematic deep dives and that any issues are being addressed by the partnership.	Director - Public Health		Director - Adult Social Care		6 monthly	April 24 October 24	Focus 2	Assurance Action	Interview for Project Manager post conducted on 4th October but candidate unsuccessful. 07/12/23 A new consultant in Public Health is due to start on 12/02/23 who will lead on this area. A Long term conditions needs assessment and infant mortality needs assessment has been commissioned by ICB to look at needs in Sandwell.	Assurance Action	Programmes of work are progressing jointly and funded by ICB. Winter booklet (december) Infant mortality needs assessment (Dec) Long term conditions deep dive (Dec) Work well bid (19th January) Ongoing Discussions around MMUH (new hospital) and Adult social care cost disparities	
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.0	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector.	Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities			Mar-22	Jul-23	Focus 2	N/A	Regular contact has been maintained with CM and CW to continue discussions regarding links between the PFA Project and the SEND Eco-System Programme. PFA board due to take place in Nov to discuss potential links/activities with a range of other projects currently underway.	N/A		
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.3	Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy	Assistant Chief Executive			Director - Housing	Jan-23	TBC	N/A	Action on Hold	Business planning workshops held in November/December - received positive feedback from attendees, and intelligence is being used to inform business planning for 2024/25.  Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed for discussion with Transformation and Learning & Development to align approach across key agendas (meeting scheduled for January 2024)	Action on Hold	Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement and funding.	
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.4	Approval of VCS Strategy	Leadership Team			Director - Housing	TBC	TBC		Not due to start	Project activity continues to be in Stage On / Prepare / Phase Two (follow on actions).	Not due to start	Project activity continues to be in Stage On / Prepare / Phase Two (follow on actions).	



## Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary January 2024

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
<b>Organisational Culture</b>	<p><b><u>Establishing Organisational Culture</u></b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One Team Framework was agreed and is being implemented across the Council. Launch and Share events with managers have now concluded. Framework was introduced at all staff briefing in July 2023.</li> <li>• Organisational Health indicators have been reported for 2022-23 and the trends were used to inform the People Strategy and roll out of the One Team Framework. The People Strategy was presented to Leadership Team in October 2023 and priorities were agreed.</li> <li>• Employee Engagement Survey conducted in September 2023 to provide a temperature check on culture, with results received in early November 2023 with a plan to disseminate to directorates in place.</li> <li>• The Member and Officer relationship continues to be positive and is enabling the Council to move forward with decisions. To support continuous improvement, further insight was collated in Autumn 2023 through the Employee Engagement Survey and semi-structured interviews with a sample of Members and Officers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual refresher of Corporate Governance Training delivered to members</li> <li>• Mechanisms identified for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directorships and Trusteeship training delivered.</li> </ul> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal of new approach to Employee performance review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture - March 2023. <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture - March 2023. <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Workforce Strategy approved- <b>Due March Cabinet</b></li> <li>• Management Development Programme Agreed- <b>Pilot held in April 23</b></li> <li>• Corporate Induction Revised. <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration around future workshops for all members based on thematic areas of council activity to enhance member participation and feedback.</li> <li>• Values and Behaviours Task and Finish Groups began w/c 21<sup>st</sup> November and is on track for update to Leadership team in February 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress this month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce strategy decision made to obtain Cabinet approval which is scheduled 13 March 2024. It is on the Forward Plan and currently with Directors for final consultation/comments.</li> <li>• Regular Values and Behaviours messaging shared through weekly communications with staff. Update on embedding Values &amp; Behaviours to be brought to IPRM 1 February.</li> <li>• Employee performance review (appraisal) updated processes to be communicated later in January and early February 2024. The new approach is based around coaching conversations so there will be classroom-based training available to book from 11th March – 3rd April. Ready for the full launch from April 1st - the annual review cycle. All associated documentation will be on the intranet ready to use.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next steps:</b></p>	<p>presented to Trade Unions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Strategy Presented to Leadership Team</li> </ul> <p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forward plan of all Member Briefings in place for next 3 sessions</li> <li>• Project plan for launch of One Team Framework- Update of programme containing all workstreams presented to Leadership team</li> </ul> <p><b>August</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Team review of All Member briefings - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Processes relating to employment of Chief Officers included in induction programme for committees at start of Municipal Year- <b>Included in MDP</b></li> <li>• Approval of refreshed Member Development Programme for start of Municipal Year. <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Employee Recognition Scheme launched- <b>Date tbc</b></li> <li>• Guidance in place for effective working with MPs- <b>May 2024</b></li> <li>• Social Media policy reviewed- August 2023 <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Strategy to go to Cabinet in March</li> <li>• One Team Framework update to be provided to IPRM in February 2024</li> <li>• Learning and Development offer soft launch will be shared in Directorate Live Events starting 25 January. Face to Face and Online sessions will be arranged to provide ongoing support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues raised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OC.A2.1- Workforce Strategy amber rated due to slippage on due date. Date to be amended at change control. Strategy on forward plan for March Cabinet with the aim for the Strategy to become effective April 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus 2 Exceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>OC.A2.1 Workforce Strategy approved- Amber rated due to slippage due decision to obtain Cabinet approval. date to be amended on Change control</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> Decision to obtain Cabinet approval Scheduled 13 March 2024. On Forward plan and with Directors for Final consultation/comments.</li> <li>• <b>OC.C4.2 Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA (Local Government Association) around the Member-Officer Relationship Due</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal for Employee Performance Review created with Values embedded</li> <li>• Feedback from launch and Share sessions fed back to leadership</li> <li>• Social Media Policy review complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Governance Development Programme Agreed – <b>in Progress</b></li> <li>• Delivery of Corporate Governance Programme commences- <b>Commenced</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p><b>November, Amber relating to slippage- date to be amended on Change control.</b></p> <p><b>Progress commentary:</b> Member dynamics- all member survey and focus group (to understand case working and working relationships) this is intended to provide an evidence base for LGBCE boundary review but is also being used to provide a snapshot of members interactions with the council and its officer base and to identify areas of focus for improvement. Pre-council workshops showcasing a range of service areas - will complement this work by raising awareness for both members and officers and supporting the development of positive relationships. Survey will take place end of January and beginning February. Out turn report will go to full council and will support a wider range of work e.g.: customer. Will also look to align with member development programme and proposed member induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>OC.E2.4 Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified- Red rated- date to be changed at change control</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> Values &amp; behaviours Task &amp; Finish Group on employee recognition gave positive feedback on proposed formal recognition scheme, based on celebrating examples of the council's Values &amp; Behaviours in action. Next step is to take proposal to Leadership team for approval/adoption. Anticipated launch date is May 2024.</li> <li>• <b>OC.G1.3 Governance Training and Development- Amber rated</b>  Due May 2024</li> </ul>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p><b>Progress commentary:</b> Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Assistant Chief Executive are working on a programme of training materials and supporting road show workshops for Officers on decision making requirements with a focus on improvement to report quality and content to support improvement to decision making.</p>		
<p><b>Corporate Oversight</b></p>	<p><b>Focus 1</b></p> <p><b><u>Customer Journey Programme</u></b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme governance remains in place. Housing Solutions have carried out a number of process mapping workshops covering the areas highlighted- Adult Social Care, Borough Economy, Housing Options and Revenues and Benefits. A sharing event was carried out 23 August 2023.</li> <li>• Internal meetings have taken place led by CTO to agree and address the `quick wins` identified. These were presented to Customer Journey Board in November 2023. The methodology, resource, and timescales for Phase 2 of the process mapping, following the learning from the Phase 1 work, is being drafted by the CTO and is scheduled for approval at CJ (Customer Journey) Board in January.</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appraisal process agreed and ready for launch from April 2024</li> <li>• Ward Co-ordinator roles have been instrumental in supporting Members to tackle local Ward based issues and initial anecdotal feedback is that these roles are making a real difference.</li> </ul> <p><b>November</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oracle- Discovery phase complete- Feb 23. <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Oracle- Modelling phase complete- June 23. <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Oracle Fusion implemented- July 24. <b>On track</b></li> <li>• Corporate debt recovery processes reviewed- <b>Complete April 23</b></li> <li>• Sign off of 2020/21 accounts <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Sign off of 2021/22 accounts <b>On track to submit to GT in January 24</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council has collectively (including Housing, Regeneration, Borough Economy) been working to improve the response to cases on the member portal.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress this month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings are continuing to be attended to feedback on the Cllr Portal.</li> <li>Further session will take place pre Full Council on the 30 January 2024, whereby Members can come along and discuss any cases/concerns with key service areas. Feedback from this session will be used to inform future sessions.</li> <li>Attendance at Town Members Board Meetings continued to take place throughout December &amp; January to feed back the work that has been completed on resolving Member portal issues.</li> <li>The introduction of the Ward Co-ordinator roles has been instrumental in supporting Members to tackle local Ward based issues and initial anecdotal feedback is that these roles are making a real difference.</li> <li>Members of the Customer team are continuing to chase for feedback on overdue Cllr Portal cases.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next steps:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Q2 reporting to leadership 28<sup>th</sup> November</li> </ul> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VERTO user acceptance testing complete</li> </ul> <p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills gap analysis complete for financial services and a training programme is now complete and in place- delivery will take place over the next 6 months</li> </ul> <p><b>August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft State of Borough report received from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformation PMO in place – <b>Complete November 2023</b></li> <li>Corporate PMO in place – <b>Complete November 2023</b></li> <li>Verto system implemented – <b>Commenced</b></li> <li>Corporate Transformation Board operational- ToR and Membership to be re-set following Local Partnerships Review - <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback in January 2024 Pre-Full Council Member event</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues raised: SD.F1.0</b> - Customer Strategy development showing as Amber due to Risk relating to the action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussions are ongoing around the wider piece of work that will run concurrently to procure a Strategic Partner/Provider to undertake a more in-depth Strategy across Customer taking into account co dependencies with ICT/Digital Strategies.</li> <li>The approach was taken to Customer Journey Board on the 30th of November and a deadline given of April 2024 for the 3-year strategy to be launch was agreed.</li> <li>Information is being pulled together to start to draft the Customer Journey strategy including work on Customer Standards.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Resolve Issues relating to the completion and sign-off of final accounts</u></b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2020/21 accounts have been signed off by the auditor with no qualifications.</li> <li>21/22 accounts – agreed with Grant Thornton that audit dates will be moved to early 2024 to allow more internal quality assurance process before external audit takes place</li> </ul>	<p>Economic Intelligence Unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Planning Framework drafted</li> </ul>	



Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government is looking at the approach for 2022/2023 accounts due to the national context of delays in local government audit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress this month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2021/22 accounts are drafted. Grant Thornton have allocated resources for the 2021/22 audit to be submitted January 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Next steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Await audit completion</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues raised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No issues raised</li> </ul> <p><b><u>MTFP</u></b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MTFP projects are being managed within the Corporate Transformation Programme and project management methodology and transformation design principles are being applied.</li> <li>Work to develop and review MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) and MTFP for 2024/25 with members conducted</li> </ul>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>over Summer and Autumn 2023, to develop achievable/deliverable savings and a balanced Budget for 2024/25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of benchmarking information to inform services to include in future transformation activities.</li> <li>• MTFS Autumn Update approved by Cabinet on 15 November 2023 consultation carried out on savings options in train to feed into development of draft budget for 2024/25. Focus groups conducted with residents, VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) organisations and SHAPE Forum, and online survey was open until 2 January 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress this month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Budget taken to the Scrutiny session on 15 January 2024.</li> <li>• The Draft Budget will go for consideration at Cabinet in February 2024 before decision by Full Council on the 20 February 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Budget taken to Cabinet and Council in February 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues raised:</b></p>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Issues raised</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Corporate Transformation</u></b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformation Design Principles agreed.</li> <li>Review was held with Local Partnerships and the report has informed the establishment of Corporate PMO (Project Management Office).</li> <li>The Corporate Transformation Board's terms of reference have been revised and regular meetings scheduled.</li> <li>User acceptance of VERTO has been completed and the launch started.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress this month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soft launch of VERTO in Corporate Transformation Office in December. Corporate Transformation Office will be moving to live site mid-January, R&amp;G live in Feb. Work with Communications is currently underway regarding the soft launch communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out of VERTO across other directorates</li> </ul>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p><b>Issues raised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No issues raised</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus 2 Exceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CO.B3.1 Develop a Continuous Improvement Framework –Red rated- revise delivery date at change control</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed based on best practice and aligned with transformation approach.  Next step is to align with Leadership &amp; Management development programme and develop proposal for 'good ideas' process for capturing staff ideas</li> <li>• <b>CO.D3.4 Programme of end-to-end process reviews- Amber rated</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> This exercise remains paused pending review of the report and update to leadership</li> <li>• <b>CO.D3.7 Develop Business case for Transactional Finance Unit - Amber rated-</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> This exercise remains paused pending review of the report and update to leadership</li> </ul>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
Strategic Direction	<p><b>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme</b></p> <p><b>Focus 2 Exceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SD.A5.3 Complete Full Business Cases for identified Business Steams in line with Commercial Project Plan approved by Leadership Team- Amber Rated Due October 23</b>  <b>Progress Commentary: Health and Safety</b> – Skills gap analysis is complete. Next steps to be agreed at a workshop WC 5th Feb  <b>Neutral Vendor</b> Phase approach agreed, reflective of new timeline and capacity in HR.  <b>Educational Services</b> – Resource pressures easing with a new SIA post agreed. Further discussion required regarding ‘status’ of project i.e. transformational or service improvement. Meeting to be arranged in Feb to be discussed.  <b>Social Letting</b> - Due to the announcement made by the Chancellor in the Autumn budget – an increase in LHA rate to the 2024 rates from April the project team must review the financial offer, margins and understand how this may influence landlords decision making in respect of the proposed model.</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy delivered as part of BAU</li> </ul> <p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) update report went to leadership- 4 equality objectives approved</li> </ul> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative workshops to conclude this month</li> <li>• Commercial Project Officer recruited</li> </ul>	<p>Commercial Strategy Approved-<b>Commercial Workstream included in 2023/24 Budget March 23</b></p> <p>Regeneration Pipeline: Strategic delivery partner in place- <b>Cabinet report approved July 23</b></p> <p>Approval of Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy- <b>Complete</b></p> <p>ED&amp;I Strategy Approved- September 2024. <b>On track</b></p> <p>Regular Residents' Survey &amp; Budget Consultation in Place – <b>Complete.</b></p>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p><b>Cashless</b> – Activities agreed to inform next steps</p> <p><b>Educational Psychology</b> – Finance partners updated and provided good insight. Next step to de-segregate statutory from opportunity but also consider the dependencies on the wider schools piece.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SB.B1.14 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment- Amber Rated</b>  <b>Due July 2024</b>  <b>Progress Commentary:</b> Work is currently underway to develop the EFLG (Equality Framework for Local Government) Audit Action plan, which will be presented to Leadership Team during March 2024. The team have also developed the 2nd PSED Service User Report for 2023-24 which will be published by March 2024 and ensure that the council is compliant and meeting its legal duties. Further work is being undertaken to support the 4 interim EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Objectives and it proposed that updates will be presented to LT during Q1 (2024/25). The development of the EDI Strategy has slipped due to resources within the team.</li> </ul>	<p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative workshops held with LGA to inform communications approach</li> <li>• Corporate Procurement Strategy Action plan finalised</li> </ul> <p><b>August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative workshops held with LGA to inform communications approach</li> <li>• Corporate Procurement Strategy Action plan finalised</li> </ul>	<p>Customer Journey Strategy Approved- <b>On track for draft by March 2024</b></p> <p>Approval of Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy- <b>2023/24 MTFP Approved February 2023; 2024/25 MTFP on track for approval February 2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRA 30-year Business Plan approved- <b>Approved February 2023. Stock condition surveys being undertaken.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p><b>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme</b></p> <p><b>Focus 2- no exceptions to report</b></p>	<p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny committee produced annual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader to confirm Executive's position on any further review</li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
		report- due at October council	relating to the Wragge and Cox reports – <b>Complete-</b>
<b>Procurement &amp; Commercial</b>	<p><b>Focus 1- no focus 1 in this theme</b></p> <p><b>Focus 2 Exceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PC.C1.1- Performance Management System- Options appraisal- Red rated Due Oct 23 – Date change at change control</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> Engagement with service areas complete. Following discussion with Director Finance and AD ICT, further work required to further explore Oracle Fusion as a potential solution. Cross-council stakeholder group to be established for the project to ensure needs of the organisation are understood and explored. Initial meeting with procurement has taken place and the project is in the procurement pipeline for commencement at a future date if required.</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Fleet vehicles have arrived as part of Serco Fleet replacement and are into service</li> </ul> <p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste contract now on Intend- Go Live December</li> </ul> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEND3- Project team identified, launch meeting diarised and ToR agreed.</li> </ul> <p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Phase 2 Tech forge complete</li> </ul> <p><b>August</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste and Leisure Contracts added to In-tend contract management module- <b>Steady progress. Waste contract on Intend.</b></li> <li>• Street Cleansing Recovery Plan implemented- Ongoing delivery Fleet replacement complete- <b>Expected end 2023</b></li> <li>• SEND Transport Contract Monitoring arrangements in place- <b>On track</b></li> <li>• SEND3 procurement commences – <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Corporate Performance Management System in place-</li> </ul>



Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of recommendations for Waste contract complete- lessons learnt booked in following industrial action in June/July 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Options appraisal due October</b></li> <li>• Lion Farm - Report to Cabinet on determination of position of developer- <b>Transferred to 'business as usual' management</b></li> <li>• Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure services- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Phase 2 Tech Forge implemented- <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships &amp; Relationships</b>	<p><b>Focus 1- no Focus 1 in this theme</b></p> <p><b>Focus 2 Exceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PR.C1.1- Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services (preparing for adulthood project) Amber Rated.</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> The PfA (Preparing for Adulthood) Project Board meeting scheduled for November 2023 was cancelled due to</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCT KPIS approved by DfE, SMBC and SCT, and will be reported through PMF (Performance Management Framework) effective Q1 2024/25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of SCT (Sandwell Children's Trust) Contract concludes- - <b>complete.</b></li> <li>• Transitions Project Commences- <b>Project commenced</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>unforeseen circumstances. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 29th January 2024.</p> <p>Project activity continues in the Stage one / Prepare phase. Following submission of the PfA preparatory findings report in 2023, further analysis has been completed to fulfil next steps/actions in relation to case file audits and post age 17 referral analysis. These reports have now been submitted for review and comment. We continue to bring together and liaise with internal and external partners to identify project dependencies and required future collaborative working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>PR.D1.3- Consultation on VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Draft Strategy- On hold</b>  <b>Progress commentary:</b> Further work in progress to develop approach for wider VCS engagement and funding. </li> </ul>	<p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions Projects: Benchmarking findings report complete for the project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adult's.</li> </ul> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmarking findings report complete for the project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adult's</li> </ul> <p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing for Adulthood Project- Benchmarking meetings completed with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions Project incorporated within Corporate Transformation Programme- <b>date tbc</b></li> <li>VCS Strategy approved- <b>On hold</b></li> </ul>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
		<p>Dudley MBC and Birmingham City Council</p> <p><b>August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Initial findings report for Preparing for Adulthood Project shared with the Preparing For Adulthood Project Board in July</li></ul>	

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## Appendix 3 – Statutory Recommendation Status Summary January 2024

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Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<p>S1 - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council</p>	<p><b><u>Organisational Culture</u></b>  <b>Assurance Activity to ensure effective contributions of Scrutiny and Audit and to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from committees is collected and reviewed regularly.</li> <li>• All member survey and focus group to be carried out, to understand case working and working relationships. This is intended to provide an evidence base for LGBCE boundary review but is also being used to provide a snapshot of members interactions with the council and its officer base. Identifying areas of focus for improvement.</li> <li>• Pre council workshops showcasing a range of service areas - will complement this work by raising awareness for both members and officers and supporting the development of positive relationships. Survey will take place end of January and beginning February. Outturn report will go to full council and will support a wider range of work e.g.: customer.</li> <li>• LGA (Local Government Association) sessions planned post elections</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Corporate Oversight</u></b>  <b>ERP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance and Procurement, HR &amp; Payroll will all go-live in July 2024.</li> <li>• Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oracle Fusion Implemented- Modelling phase complete. Next phase to focus on realisation phase/development stage. Go live date July 2024.</li> <li>• Regeneration pipeline: strategic delivery partner in place – Cabinet approval to procure July 2023</li> </ul> <p>Completed milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of SCT Contract concludes- Complete</li> <li>• Review of scrutiny arrangements- Complete</li> <li>• Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)- Complete</li> <li>• Termination notice for SLT contract approved by Cabinet- complete</li> <li>• Revised contract governance arrangements in place for Serco contract- complete</li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit rationalisation taking place across the Programme workstreams following completion of Design Phase. Benefit profiles will be developed and baselined ahead of Go-Live.</li> <li>• Working group established with Heads of Services to progress financial benefits.</li> <li>• System configuration due to new CoA (Chart of Accounts) extended through Jan.</li> <li>• Data Migration 3 will complete on 26/01/24.</li> <li>• Data Migration 4 Cycle started on 2 Jan,</li> <li>• Systems Integration Testing (SIT) for HCM (Human Capital Management) will complete on 19/01/24.</li> <li>• Gateway 4 Criteria to Exit Realisation Phase/ SIT Stage and Entry to Realisation Phase/ UAT Stage agreed at 18/01/24 Programme Board.</li> <li>• Gateway 4 approval with Programme Board planned for 01/02/24</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Strategic Direction</u></b>  <b>Strategy Development and Refresh</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regen Strategy and Pipeline:</b> Pipeline 6 monthly update presented to Cabinet July 23.</li> <li>• Regeneration pipeline- approval to procure a strategic delivery partner was agreed at Cabinet in July 23. Report will return to Cabinet once procurement has been successful.</li> <li>• VERTO- Soft launch of VERTO in Corporate Transformation Office in December. Corporate Transformation Office will be moving to live</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan Implementation - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Street Cleansing Recovery Plan approval – Resubmission to Waste Management Board in - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• SERCO contract performance reporting embedded in Performance Management Framework - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Option appraisal for future leisure management options – <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Scrutiny work Planning event - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion-<b>complete</b></li> <li>• Approval of Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Early Help Strategy approved and launched- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh Approved- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• SEND Transport procurement published- <b>complete</b></li> <li>• SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings - <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<p>site mid-January, R&amp;G live in Feb. Work with Comm's is currently underway regarding the soft launch communication.</p> <p><b><u>Decision Making</u></b> No actions in this theme</p> <p><b><u>Procurement &amp; Commercial</u></b> <b>Waste Contract:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of quarterly corporate monitoring through PMF.</li> <li>• Report provided to Officer Leadership Will slip to December / January to allow the settlement of the industrial action to be included in the report (key contract action in quarter).</li> <li>• Annual reports prepared; will be presented to Cabinet Member for Leisure &amp; Tourism 13/12/23 and Cabinet Member for Environment 13/12/23</li> <li>• Waste contract now on Intend and go-live December '23</li> <li>• Senior Management Meetings and Partnership Board meetings proceeding as scheduled. Service Delivery Plans approved by Partnership Board.</li> <li>• Monthly Fleet steering groups taking place</li> <li>• Fleet vehicles received and in service.</li> </ul> <p><b>SEND Transport:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Team agreement, directorate reps have been confirmed, the terms of reference are being finalised and the first meeting will take place at the end of Q3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF-Complete</li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme board reps confirmed across council directorates. AD Education Support Services coordinating the board meeting and Terms of Reference.</li> <li>• SEND 3 to be a strand of the overall transformation plan. Task &amp; Finish Group to drive delivery.</li> <li>• Working with Legal on a flexible purchasing system. The framework will be in place July/August 24 to run all the new contract through. It will support and encourage SME operators to join the framework which will provide much needed competition and challenge</li> </ul> <p><b>New System Procurement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Performance Management System-</b> Systems demos have taken place. Options appraisal and business case being finalised, further engagement with service areas being conducted to refine requirements.</li> <li>• <b>Asset Management</b> - The phase two for Techforge implementation has now been completed. The team have undertaken a project closedown exercise detailing everything that has been completed across both phases along with any workstreams/actions that will now become business as usual.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lion Farm:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert Determination process has been completed and removed from the Improvement plan to be managed as Business as Usual.</li> </ul> <p><b>Leisure Contract:</b></p>	



Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplementary agreement with SLT agreed 13.07.23 to extend SLT's operation of leisure centres (including SAC) to 31.03.27.</li> <li>• Enhanced contract management regime and framework in place.</li> <li>• Aquatic Centre Handover to operator (Sandwell Leisure Trust) took place as scheduled on 13 July, open to the public 24 July</li> <li>• Continuation of quarterly corporate reporting through PMF.</li> <li>• Contract to be put on to Intend</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Partnerships &amp; Relationships</u></b></p> <p><b>Sandwell Children's Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCT KPIs have been agreed across SCT and the DfE (Department for Education) following the review by the DfE appointed Improvement Board Chair.</li> <li>• The review has not just looked at the KPIs but the operating tolerances too.</li> <li>• Outcomes around early help and corporate parent reporting through PMF</li> <li>• The new approved contract KPIs will be reported through PMF effective Q1 2024/25</li> </ul>	
S2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract	<p><b><u>Organisational Culture</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Officer Learning and Development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Leadership Development on hold pending restructure of senior levels.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Embedding Constitutional Changes</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Governance Training Delivery –Commenced and approach to next phase agreed</li> </ul> <p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Resident Survey in place – 2023 surveys in place</li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<p>management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broader scenario-based learning, Officers involved in pulling training across finance, procurement and governance have undergone significant changes of personnel.</li> <li>• Next step is bringing a new project team together to agree training detail and to diarise. Assistant Director of Legal and Assurance and ACE are working on a programme of training materials and supporting road show workshops for officer on decision making requirements with a focus on improvement to report quality and content to support improvement to decision making.</li> <li>• Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training –Carried out with the offer extended to Officers with council appointments to boards etc and will be carried out on an annual basis</li> <li>• CIPfA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) carried out the Annual refresher of Corporate Governance Training scheduled to the end of December.</li> </ul> <p><b>Member Learning and Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from committees that we continue to review.</li> <li>• Induction arrangement for May 24 currently in development and will be followed by refreshed MDP (Member Development Programme) programme for 24-25.</li> <li>• Council has recently appointed a new lead officer for member development which will increase capacity and focus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Corporate Oversight</b> <b>Performance Management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Strategy approved – <b>approved</b></li> <li>• HRA 30 Year Business Plan approved</li> <li>• Revised Financial Regs - approved</li> <li>• Implementation of Asset Management System -phase 1 complete</li> <li>• Revised Scheme of Delegation – <b>approved</b></li> <li>• Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved- <b>Approved</b></li> <li>• Budget Holder Role Profile agreed - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Establish Performance Management Framework – <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• First Performance Management Report - - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Revised PCR, and Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol – <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• New Member Induction- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>• Member Development Programme - <b>Complete and BAU</b></li> <li>• Asset Management System Procured- <b>complete</b></li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly reporting of corporate performance management framework in place to senior officers and members via Cabinet and Budget &amp; Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.</li> <li>• Q2 Performance Report went to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny MB on 4th January, due to go to Cabinet on 17th January. Data for Q3 report is being collated. Corporate Performance Management resources in place from February 2023.</li> <li>• Budget pressures and mitigations are discussed at LT each month</li> <li>• Benchmarking used in budget planning up to date and used as part of refresh of MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) and planning for 2024/25 budget onwards.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Strategic Direction</u></b></p> <p><b>Strategy Development and Refresh</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health and Safety</b> – Skills gap analysis is complete. Next steps to be agreed at a workshop WC 5th Feb</li> <li>• <b>Neutral Vendor-</b> Phase approach agreed, reflective of new timeline and capacity in HR.</li> <li>• <b>Educational Services</b> – Resource pressures easing with a new SIA post agreed. Further discussion required regarding ‘status’ of project i.e. transformational or service improvement. Meeting to be arranged in Feb to be discussed.</li> <li>• <b>Social Letting</b> - Due to the announcement made by the Chancellor in the Autumn budget – an increase in LHA rate to the 2024 rates from April the project team must review the financial offer, margins and understand how this may influence landlords' decision making in respect of the proposed model.</li> </ul>	

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cashless</b> – Activities agreed to inform next steps</li> <li>• <b>Educational Psychology</b> – Finance partners updated and provided good insight. Next step to de-segregate statutory from opportunity but also consider the dependencies on the wider school's piece.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Procurement &amp; Commercial</u></b>  <b>Corporate Asset Management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 implemented.</li> <li>• Phase 2 commenced. The integration of data into the system complete</li> <li>• Phase 2 Configuration and organisation of data completed September</li> <li>• Project closedown exercise complete detailing everything that has been completed across both phases along with any workstreams/actions that will now become BAU (business as usual).</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Partnerships &amp; Relationships</u></b>  No actions in this theme</p>	
S3 - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they	<p><b><u>Organisational Culture</u></b>  <b>Establishing Organisational Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Strategy to go to Cabinet for approval 13 March 2024. On Forward plan and with Directors for Final consultation/ comments</li> <li>• Comms strategy is being delivered regularly.</li> <li>• Task and finish groups commenced week beginning 21st November with update to Leadership team in February 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Strategy – Due to be agreed at Cabinet March 2024</li> </ul> <p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational Culture – Part 2 Engagement – determining the desired culture – complete</li> </ul>

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
<p>operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies, and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal for appraisals drafted and consultation commenced on 10th October with recognised TU's - accepted in principle.</li> <li>Paper taken to JCP (Joint Consultative Panel) on the 18th of December. Updated processes to be communicated later in January and early February.</li> </ul> <p><b>Officer Learning and Development -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Leadership Development on hold pending restructure of senior levels.</li> </ul> <p><b>Officer and Member Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ongoing mechanisms for insight and assurance around the Officer Member Relationship includes views from external reviews, standards cases, feedback from Directors, Group Leaders, and Chief Whips.</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews with Members early October are being conducted to capture insight into relationship.</li> <li>All member survey and focus group to be carried out, to understand case working and working relationships. This is intended to provide an evidence base for LGBCE boundary review but is also being used to provide a snapshot of members interactions with the council and its officer base. Identifying areas of focus for improvement.</li> <li>Pre council workshops showcasing a range of service areas - will complement this work by raising awareness for both members and officers and supporting the development of positive relationships. Survey will take place end of January and beginning February. Outturn report will go to full council and will support a wider range of work e.g.: customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of document / statement setting out desired organisational culture – ‘Our Values: Our Behaviours’- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>Organisational Culture - Part 1 Engagement – Starting the Conversation- <b>Complete</b></li> <li>New Member Induction - <b>Complete</b></li> <li>Meeting structures to support Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) – <b>Complete</b></li> <li>Member Development Programme approved- <b>Complete</b></li> </ul>

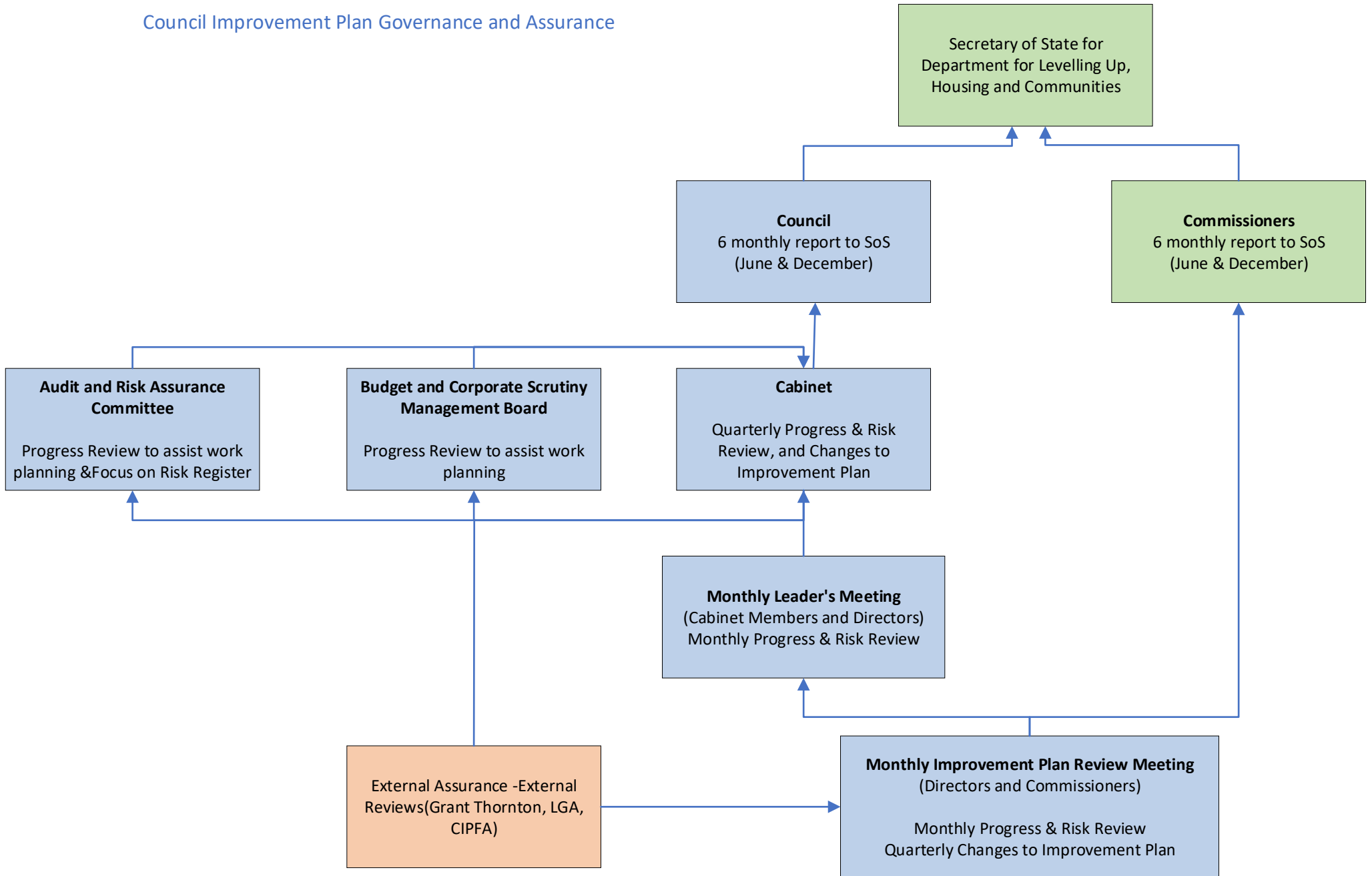
Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGA sessions planned post elections</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Member Learning and Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from committees that we continue to review.</li> <li>• Induction arrangement for May 24 currently in development and will be followed by refreshed MDP (Member Development Programme) programme for 24-25.</li> <li>• Council has recently appointed a new lead officer for member development which will increase capacity and focus.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Corporate Oversight</u></b> No Actions in Theme</p> <p><b><u>Strategic Direction</u></b> No actions in Theme</p> <p><b><u>Decision Making</u></b> No actions in Theme</p> <p><b><u>Procurement &amp; Commercial</u></b> No actions in Theme</p> <p><b><u>Partnerships &amp; Relationships</u></b> No actions in Theme</p>	

Jul-23										Change Control
To be completed by action owner										
Change Number	Theme	Action reference	Action Title	Owner	Date Raised	Type of Change	If date change is required		Change/ Impact of change (incl. any dependencies)/ Reason for change	
							Change date from	Change date to		
336	Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved	Chief executive	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Nov-23	Mar-24	Change of date to allow approval to be obtained at Cabinet.	
337	Organisational Culture	OC.C4.2	Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA around the Member-Officer Relationship	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Change to action description	n/a	nh/a	Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Spring sessions with LGA around the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for post-election change in political composition	
338	Organisational Culture	OC.C4.2	Compile insight into the Member-Officer Relationship in preparation for Autumn sessions with LGA around the Member-Officer Relationship	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Nov-23	Jun-24	Change of date for completion to include new members following elections.	
339	Organisational Culture	OC.C.4.4	New action added: Mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member relationship: 1. Survey Complete 2. Areas of concerns identified 3. Action plan to address identified area of concern.	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Add - New Sub Actions	n/a	n/a	new action added to follow on from identification of mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance.	
340	Organisational Culture	OC.D5.3	Review of Member Development Programme	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Feb-24	Mar-24		
341	Organisational Culture	OC.D5.4	Agreement of revised MDP	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Feb-24	Mar-24		
342	Organisational Culture	OC.E2.4	Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified	Chief executive	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Oct-23	May-24	Change of due date so that Task and Finish groups could be included in the discussions and development of the approach	
343	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.12	New action: Completion of realisation phase/SIT Stage	Director-Finance	22/01/2024	Add - New Sub Actions	n/a	n/a	new action added	
344	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement Framework	Chief executive	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Oct-23	TBC	new date to be determined following meeting with Transformation and L&D	
345	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.9	Consider integrating revenue, Capital and Performance reporting	Director-Finance	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-24	Jul-24	start date will need to flex to July 2024 as this was linked to launch of Oracle Fusion (launch date changed from April 2024 to July 2024)	
346	Corporate Oversight	CO.F5.0	Customer Journey Programme	Director-Regeneration & Growth	22/01/2024	Closure of Main action resulting in closure of workstream	n/a	n/a	Closure of main action resulting in closure of workstream- all actions complete at this time	
347	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.4	Pilot an approach to service planning	Chief executive	22/01/2024	Change to action description	n/a	Start date: Sept 23, End Date: June 2024	Action to be revised to 'Implement service planning framework'	
348	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.14	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment - appointment of consultant for data analysis - appointment of consultant for strategy development	Director-Law & Governance	22/01/2024	Change of Delivery Lead(s)	n/a	n/a	Change from L&G to ACE	
349	Procurement & Commercial	PC.A2.0	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco	Director- Borough Economy	22/01/2024	Closure of Main Action	n/a	n/a	The ongoing management of the Serco contract is now effectively BAu remove January	
350	Procurement & Commercial	PC.D3.5	NEW action- Assurance: SEND Procurement	Director-Children & Education	22/01/2024	Add- New Assurance Action	n/a	n/a	New assurance action added to monitor the SEND 24 procurement	
351	Procurement & Commercial	PCC1.1	Options Appraisal (Performance Management system)	ACE	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Oct-23	Mar-24		
352	Partnership & Relationships	PR.A1.7	New KPIs reported through PMF	Director-Children & Education	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Sep-23	July 24	change to include Q1 reporting complete	
353	Partnership & Relationships	PR.A1.8	KPI's (along with accompanying tolerances) implemented in Q2	Director-Children & Education	22/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-23	Jul-24	change to include Q1 reporting complete	
354	Corporate Oversight	CO.C2.4	Assurance action: Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports made to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Closure of Assurance Action	n/a	n/a	Closure of assurance action- regular reports are made and are programmed in for future delivery	

355	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.0	Corporate Transformation programme	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	TBC	Jun-24	Due date set
356	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	TBC	Apr-24	Due date set
357	Strategic Decision	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery	Chief executive	26/01/2024	Closure of Main Action	n/a	n/a	Internal comms strategy in place and being delivered as part of Business as usual
358	Strategic Decision	SD.A5.0	Develop and implement the Commercial Strategy	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Oct-23	Oct-24	change to due date
359	Strategic Decision	SD.A5.3	Complete Full Business Cases for identified Business Steams in line with Commercial Project Plan approved by Leadership Team	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Oct-23	Jun-24	Change to due date
360	Corporate Oversight	CO.C2.5	Assurance action: Where budget pressures identified, assurance provided that action has/is being taken (monthly summary comment from S151 Officer / raise issues)	Director-Finance	26/01/2024	Closure of Assurance Action	n/a	n/a	Closure of assurance action as VFM panels have now been implemented for all spends over £1000



Council Improvement Plan Governance and Assurance



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## Report to Cabinet

13 March 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	Performance Management Framework – 2023/24 Quarter 3 Monitoring
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Deputy Leader, Cllr Bob Piper
<b>Director:</b>	Chief Executive – Shokat Lal
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead: Service Improvement Kayleigh Walker – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead: Service Improvement

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the 2023/24 Quarter 3 monitoring reports.
- 1.2 That Cabinet approve changes to PIs as set out in Appendix 4.

### 2. Reasons for Recommendations


- 2.1 Council approved a Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 Since then, the corporate PMF has been further refined and built into business processes. In June 2023, Cabinet approved a revised Corporate Plan with a revised set of Corporate Performance Indicators. This report sets out the Council's performance against the Corporate



Performance Indicators for Q3 of 2023/24. **Appendix 1** lists the measures and performance, including a RAG rating against target where applicable. The appendix also includes the direction of travel of performance since last quarter (Q2) and compared to the same period last year. Progress against Business Plan actions that contribute towards delivering the Corporate Plan have also been included as part of this report (attached as **Appendix 2**).

2.4 Performance of key contracts is included in the quarterly performance reports to provide oversight of the performance of these services and assurance that contract management mechanisms continue to be in place and effective.

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

	<p>The corporate PMF includes measures under all strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan to monitor progress in these key areas. The PMF also includes elements that measure the council's use of its resources to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives.</p>
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3.1 An effective performance management framework facilitates increased accountability, learning and improvement. It also provides early warning signals and facilitates decision-making.

3.2 On a quarterly basis, the council gathers and analyses a wide range of data and information to understand how effectively its plans are being implemented and whether the strategic outcomes contained in the Corporate Plan are being achieved.

3.3 The information collected is used to enable the authority to better understand the impact of its work on local people, and where necessary, target actions and resources.



## 4. Quarter 3 Performance – key messages

### Corporate Performance Report

4.1 In Q3, the number of Quarterly PIs given a RAG status has increased from 71 to 76 (out of a total of 121). In total, the percentage of 'red' and 'amber' PIs has decreased, and the number of 'green' PIs has increased, as can be seen below.

- 4.2 Of the 76 indicators given a RAG status this quarter,
- 21 (27.6%) are RAG rated 'red' (compared to 25 (35%) in Q2)
  - 12 (15.8%) are rated 'amber' (compared to 15 (21%) in Q2)
  - 43 (56.6%) are rated 'green' (compared to 31 (44%) in Q2)

40 do not have a RAG rating as a target is not applicable and the PI is for information only. For 5 PIs no data is available this quarter.

Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available	Annual
Best Start	39	6 (3)	4 (7)	6 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	22 (2 reported in Q3: 1 'green', 1 No RAG)
Live well Age Well	33	0 (1)	1(1)	10 (3)	3 (4)	2 (11)	17
Strong Resilient Communities	24	2 (2)	0 (2)	7 (5)	3 (3)	0 (1)	12
Quality Homes	21	4 (8)	2 (1)	7 (4)	1 (1)	0 (0)	7 (3 reported in Q3: 2 'amber' and 1 'green')
Strong Inclusive Economy	15	1 (2)	0 (0)	2 (1)	5 (3)	1 (3)	6
Connected and Accessible	11	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10
One Team One Council	57	8 (9)	5 (4)	10 (10)	27 (20)	2 (10)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>79</b>



## Corporate Plan

4.3 In total in Q3, 243 Business Plan actions were given an update, compared to 211 in Q2. In total, the number of 'red' actions has slightly decreased, the number of 'amber' actions has stayed the same and the number of 'green' actions has increased.

4.4 Of the 243 Business Plan actions given a RAG Status this quarter:

- 4 (1.6%) are rated as 'red' (significant issues) (compared to 8 (3.8%) in Q2)
- 42 (17.3%) are rated as 'amber' (medium issues) (compared to 42 (19.9%) in Q2)
- 197 (81.1%) are rated as 'green' (on track) (compared to 161 (76.3%) in Q2)

There were 12 actions with no update available.

Q3 Headlines								
	Best Start	Live Well & Age Well	Strong Resilient Communities	Quality Homes	Strong Inclusive Economy	Connected & Accessible	One Council One Team	Total
No of Corporate Plan 'we wils'	12	21	20	17	11	8	18	107
No of Directorate Business Plan Actions	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255
On Track	14 (9)	67 (59)	32 (21)	16 (15)	15 (15)	16 (13)	37 (29)	197(161)
Medium Issues	7 (2)	10 (12)	5 (6)	6 (7)	1(2)	1 (2)	12 (11)	42 (42)
Significant Issues	1(0)	2 (5)	0 (2)	0 (0)	-	-	1 (1)	4 (8)
No Update available	1 (12)	6 (9)	1 (9)	1 (1)	2 (1)	0 (2)	1 (10)	12 (44)
Totals	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255



## Key themes in Q3

- 4.5 Inflation continues to be a theme across a number of areas in Q3 and is referenced in regard to delivering the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich and the delivery of HRA/residential schemes.
- 4.6 Staff capacity is also a theme referenced in the commentary for 6 performance indicators. However, there are plans in place to address this issue across all areas, with performance expected to improve as a result in Q4, with the exception of the Adults Contact Centre where a transformation partner is being sought to address the issue holistically, looking at the number of customers using the service and the processes that are being followed.

## 5. Our achievements in Q3

- 5.1 Performance for 'FOI Compliance in timescales' was 92% in Q3 against a target of 95%, just below target but the best performance recorded to date over a quarter. Taking December alone, performance was 96%. A great deal of work has taken place to improve performance over recent months – this time last year performance was 78%, so we have seen a big increase. The focus will now be to retain performance at current levels to achieve the target in Q4.
- 5.2 Performance for 'Corporate Contact Centre average call wait time' was 3 minutes 11 seconds in Q3, better than the target of 3 minutes 30 seconds. This is a real improvement in performance compared to this time last year when the average call wait time was 8 minutes 29 seconds.
- 5.3 Forge Mill Farm has improved performance across all income strands and is now performing above target, with the new Education Barn capital project in development.



- 5.4 Grant Thornton’s findings from their second follow-up review in Autumn 2023 concluded that we have made sufficient progress for them to lift the three statutory recommendations. This represents a hugely significant milestone in our improvement journey towards coming out of government intervention.
- 5.5 A successful scrutiny budget session was held in January where cabinet members were held to account on their budget proposals for 2024-25, demonstrating openness and transparency.
- 5.6 We have been allocated £18m for the Grove Lane Masterplan and have secured £20m under the Long-Term Plan for Towns (Smethwick).
- 5.7 Housing provide the most work experience (22 of 129) and apprenticeship (11 of 50) opportunities for young people. This good practice forms part of their workforce strategy
- 5.8 Secondary School attendance in Sandwell is now in line with the national average (91.50% Sandwell and NA), the targeted support model has worked well. The School Attendance Service is working with Sandwell Residential Education Service to pilot focused support for vulnerable cohorts.
- 5.9 Sandwell was successful in it’s launch of the Priority Education Investment Area programme to run across both phases and all schools. This DfE investment is hoped to further drive up the attainment rates across the borough.
- 5.10 Over the last 5 years, Sandwell schools have consistently had a higher percentage of pupils achieving any passes at GCSE equivalent than nationally or regionally. In the 2022/23 academic year Sandwell 97.2% (96.8% in England and 96.9% in the West Midlands).
- 5.11 The development of intermediate care and reablement services for Harvest View, Sandwell’s flagship social care and health facility, has been implemented on the top floor which opened January 2024. Here,





therapists will speak to a patient who needs rehabilitation after they are discharged from hospital about how best to continue their treatment, giving them tailored short-term care to re-learn the skills required to keep them safe and independent at home, or to adapt to be as independent as possible.

- 5.12 The 'Percentage of properties with a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition report (DEICR) under 5-years old (or in legal resolution)', whilst below the target of 100% has improved considerably (95.35%) since last quarter (93.31%) and latest data in Q4 shows that performance has improved further (98%). Historic no-access cases are seeing a positive impact following new processes we have introduced (all of these either now have an appointment or are going through a legal process). Further work is being done on re allocating internal resource to deal with the backlog.
- 5.13 The proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out is 99.39% in Q3 against a target of 100%. Latest figures (February 2024) show that this has improved (99.55%) due to additional resources and management focus and Q4 figures should again illustrate an improvement.

## 6. Areas for improvement - The Best Start in life for Children and Young People

### Performance Monitoring

- 6.1 At the end of Q3 Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) are projecting a year end deficit of £3,628k against the Contract Sum, in real terms this is an overspend of £4,370k as there is an expectation for SCT to achieve a surplus of £740k by the end of the year (rated 'red'). These projections are based on nine months of activity and subject to change. Costs are being driven up by the increase of children placed in residential care (49 in March 2023 which has increased to 62 at the end of December 2023). There has also been an increase in the average unit cost of each placement; from £5,225 in 2022/23 to £6,035 2023/24 year to date, an increase of 16.2%. SCT has advertised a block contract for the provision of up to nine residential care beds, across three homes, for Sandwell



children. The tender invitation was issued at the end of September however only one provider submitted a bid, and this was non-compliant. Discussions are taking place with SCT on what other transformation activity could be undertaken in respect of placements.

- 6.2 The '% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating - Special and alternative provision' is below target (71% against a target of 86%, rated 'red'). Performance for Primary and Secondary Schools is also just below target ('amber'). However, this data includes academies as well as Local Authority maintained schools.
- 6.3 'Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months' is above target at 84% (rated 'red'). Some of this may be risk aversion by partners making referrals due to the Christmas period. Taking into consideration those referrals that had an assessment completed and were either stepped down to early help or were "no further action", this decreases to 67%, placing the indicator well within tolerance. The Early Help Partnership will discuss at the next strategic group the definition of this indicator, and this may result in a change as to how this indicator is presented from the new financial year.
- 6.4 The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has increased in December 2023 to 501, now at a rate of 59 per 10,000. This is above Statistical Neighbour Average (48.6 per 10,000) (rated 'red'). The number of children subject to CP plans are being monitored closely by both the operational teams and Safeguarding Unit. Given the increase in numbers, the Director of Partnerships and Practice led a review of the children who had been made subject to a child protection plan. The analysis focused on threshold application and decision making. The review concluded overall that threshold application was appropriate with evidence of timely decision making and it also found that a higher number of large sibling groups were entering onto a Child Protection Plan; 10 families and 48 Children who have started on a Child Protection plan were part of a sibling group of 4+ Children. However, given the increase in child protection numbers, the Director of Operations has arranged a meeting between Operations and the Safeguarding Unit to



consider some of the wider issues which may be impacting on child protection numbers, namely timely step down from CP following intervention, effectiveness of Children in Need (CIN) planning and the impact of the intervention hub.

6.5 Performance for ‘% Care leavers that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (aged 19-21)’ is above target at 58% (rated 'red'). A Corporate Parenting Board has been set up and has an action plan, which includes how to improve performance for this indicator. The delivery of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan is also rated as ‘amber’ in the Corporate Plan updates. The development of a Corporate Parenting Strategy is an item on the action plan and is being co-produced with young people and partners in readiness for March. In addition, an Emotional well-being pilot started in January. Further actions include the Employment and Skills Team continuing to attend sessions at METSEC where there is a young persons space, to develop relationships with care leavers and to update on support available. Links have also been made with staff at Coventry Council, who have developed bespoke approaches to help young people, including residential trips to develop confidence, and effective use of their Post 16 Advisor in their Virtual School.

6.6 The ‘% of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET)’ is above the target of 1.75% (2.3%, rated ‘red’). The increase in % of NEET is a reflection of the national and regional trend as part of a Covid legacy. However, Sandwell’s performance compares well with West Midlands (2.7%) and England (3.1%). European Social Fund provision ended in October last year which provided keyworker posts and provision to remove barriers for young people further from the labour market. We will be using UK Shared Prosperity Funding from April 2024 to commission appropriate provision and fund a key worker post, but there has been a funding gap between November 2023 and March 2024. The team remains proactive and has been successful in working with one training provider to take additional trainees, whilst exploring options with other training providers and looking at how we can work closer together and increase access for Sandwell young people. It is worth



noting that more than half our NEET young people are reporting emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.

## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 6.7 There are issues with delivery of the School Nursing contract due to staffing levels being below the acceptable threshold. A report has been requested with procurement and the Director of Public Health (DPH) advised. An internal action plan is currently being implemented to address under-performance and identify next steps (rated 'red').
- 6.8 With regards to the implementation of the Early Help Strategy, the pace of change not been as swift as the partnership hoped in relation to partners offering early help. During November – December 2023, the Early Help Partnership reconfigured to form two arms; one strategic and the second operational. The Strategic group will represent all key partners and will be accountable for their services' response to early help and act as champions to ensure change within their service. The Operational group will offer assurance around quality assurance and will help bring about grass roots change within their service (rated 'amber').

## 7. Areas for improvement - People Live Well and Age Well

### Performance Monitoring

- 7.1 'The proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified, and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed' has improved since Q2. Whilst we are still below target (94% against a target of 95% -rated 'amber'), the figure for October - December is 98% so performance at the end of Q4 overall should improve further (PI measured cumulatively). The actions taken following Q2 to support staff through surgeries, provide feedback from learning from performance validation meetings and also address practitioner knowledge have had a positive impact.



## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 7.2 The joint Equipment Stores site development and relocation of Community Alarms remains rated 'red'; there are still legal issues with the site barriers of A1 Clutches (A1 clutches share land on site at Dolton Way alongside several other businesses and installed a barrier that they padlock closed each evening and at weekends. Community Alarms require 24/7 access when they relocate and ideally barrier needs to be removed. Staff safety will be a concern if they have to get in and out of vehicles to unlock a padlock barrier each time they want to access/exit the site). The Councils Legal team have repeatedly tried to contact A1 clutches over last few months but are still awaiting a response. The relocation of Community Alarms will be end of February/March 2024. A meeting was held with BT in January and live tests will be agreed with Jontek in February 2024.
- 7.3 There is currently no feasibility study completed against planned design for the communal areas at Walker Grange (site survey and drawings were completed 2022). Plans to take this forward will be formalised once HRA forecasts are remodelled (which will be February onwards, when stock condition data has been collected and some assumptions can be made) (rated 'red').
- 7.4 Implementing a new Day opportunities model across the market is rated as 'amber' and the update from Q2 remains. Until blockages in the system around Direct Payments are resolved we cannot move forward in terms of diversifying the market. A workshop is being arranged to try and resolve some of the issues both from the administration of Direct Payments and the perception in the use and application of Direct Payments by Social Work staff and people who draw upon social care and support. Discussions with the Hospital Brokerage team are taking place to pilot rollout opportunities.

## 8. Areas for improvement - Strong Resilient Communities

### Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 The number of library visits in person is below target (153,150 visits against a target of 163,125, rated 'red'). This can be attributed to a number of factors:





- Issues of library books were down 19% against target (largely due to budget and increases to the cost of books which mean we are unable to buy as many copies as in previous years.)
- A charge to reserve books was introduced in 2023-24.
- Since Covid, we have lost many experienced staff which has also impacted capacity for outreach work to promote libraries and develop partnerships.
- Some libraries were above target and there is a general correlation with the number of activities being held in those libraries.

The service is developing plans to impact visitor numbers moving forwards, particularly individual libraries where visitor numbers have dropped. These plans will be ready by mid-February.

- 8.2 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Flyposting) is measured 3 times per year through SERCO. For August – November, the % of litter and detritus has increased by 2% since last quarter, although graffiti has reduced by 0.5%, rated 'red').

## 9. Areas for improvement - Quality homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

### Performance Monitoring

- 9.1 The 'Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)' is below target (51.5% - rated 'red'). This is because of the challenging housing market and the volume of cases that are presenting very late in the process. The housing market is at its most challenging for securing longer term alternative accommodation for our clients. The turnover of council properties has seen a 30% reduction over the last 12 months (meaning there are less properties becoming available) and the accessibility and affordability of private rented properties is at its lowest point in years. This is in part due to affordability issues and also due to the very buoyant market. The service works very hard in securing properties for our clients and has one of the best offers in the country as recognised by the National Resident Landlord Association (NRLA). The increase to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in April 2024 will help bridge this gap but the market will remain very challenging for a number of years to come. Our Q3 performance on homelessness prevention is below target but we did



see improvements in November and December months which suggests we should see performance improve in Q4.

- 9.2 The 'Number of long-term empty homes brought into use' remains below target (3 against a target of 10 – rated 'red'). This is due to the delay in attracting and recruiting the right person for the Empty Homes Officer role earlier in the year. The new officer has been in post since September 2023 and is making good progress but has required a lead in time to understand Sandwell and the challenges around the agenda. Performance has improved with 2 new properties brought back into use in Q3 compared to 1 in Q2 and none in previous quarters. Whilst this is slower pace than intended when the target was set at the start of the year (again due to recruitment delays), we expect performance to improve exponentially and to recover to projected levels by the end of Q2 of 2024/25.
- 9.3 The percentage of current tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years) is below target (21.9% against a target of 30% - rated 'red') but has improved since last quarter (17.60% in Q2). Temporary resources (an additional Coordinator and six Housing Advisors) should come online in Q4 and will be in place for six months, which will enable Housing Services Officers to focus more of their time on Home Checks.
- 9.4 The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights is below target (RAG rated 'Red'), although the number of residents assisted is higher in Q3 (2,570) compared with Q2 (2,476). This is due to the increase in complex cases which is resulting in officers having to spend more time on each case. The team are still working overtime which has been introduced within the service to support the increasing number of residents and the service has recruited two new members of staff into temporary posts which will increase the support to residents. This did not hinder performance on the monetary gains for the quarter as the service were successful in gaining £5,386,275 for residents, which was above target. Welfare Rights also are the lead agency for preparing and providing representation for Tribunal appeals, of which there are significantly more which take additional time to prepare and represent.



## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 9.5 With regards to delivering new affordable homes, construction cost inflation and ground conditions continue to impact on HRA/residential schemes. Specific schemes are being reviewed and value engineered, prior to re-tendering (rated 'amber').
- 9.6 Work continues on the refurbishment programmes to High Rise blocks, with all blocks in progress however, due to rebalancing of HRA, the schemes that are yet to be on site (Allen House and Moorlands and St.Giles scheme) have been reprofiled to start in future years – Cabinet paper to be submitted (rated 'amber').

## 10. Areas for improvement - A Strong Inclusive Economy

### Performance Monitoring

- 10.1 'The number of 'Businesses receiving Financial Assistance or Grants' is below target at 17 against a target of 60 (rated 'red'). There was a temporary delay in grant administration due to policy refinement. Despite this, we successfully awarded 15 grants this quarter. There is a robust pipeline of businesses eagerly expressing their interest in applying for grants and now the process is established we anticipate administering the remaining 52 grants and financial assistance in Quarter 4.

### Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 10.2 The development of a Safer Green Spaces strategy has been delayed due to the priority focus being on income generation in the service to meet targets set in the 2023/24 budget (rated 'amber'). This is now scheduled to go to Scrutiny in May and Cabinet in June 2024.

## 11. Areas for improvement - A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

### Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 11.1 The action 'Develop and deliver projects that reduce barriers to the use of public transport and sustainable travel choices including working with





Transport for West Midlands in relation to bus and metro provision and the Rail Alliance' is rated as 'amber' as bus service reductions are still an issue. The WMCA lead on the delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan which sets out a roadmap to better services for passengers and communities, urban and rural, fully informed by local needs. This plan is supported by individual local authorities and has targets set for 2024/25 and 2029/30 and is available at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/1xebdeu4/wmca-bsip-05-november-2021.pdf>. The Wednesbury to Dudley metro extension is progressing and is broadly on track.

## 12. Areas for improvement - One Team One Council

### Performance Monitoring

- 12.1 In Q3 an average of 8.8 working days were lost per employee due to sickness compared to 8.28 working days during the same period last year. Stress, depression, mental health related sickness remain as the leading cause of sickness. Working days lost for short term sickness reduced by 16%, whilst long term sickness increased by 20% compared to Q3 last year. 4 of the 9 Directorates achieved a reduction in sickness compared to last year (ASC, Children and Education, Housing, Law and Governance), but performance for all Directorates was above the 6.21 day target.
- 12.2 The number of new formal grievance cases was 7 in Q3 against a target of 4 (rated 'red'). So far this year there have been 20 new formal grievance cases. The year-end total for 2022/23 was 32.
- 12.3 Performance across all customer service 'front door' measures has improved in Q3 compared to Q2, although some continue to perform worse than the target.
- 12.4 The average waiting time in the Adults Contact Centre is 1 minute 14 seconds in Q3, against a target of 30 seconds (rated 'red'). However,



performance has improved since Q2 (1 minute 27 seconds). The service is unable to manage the demand within the current structure/resources available. The Abandonment rate in the Adults Contact Centre was better than target (4% against a target of 6%).

12.5 The Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre Average Wait was 4 minutes 40 seconds in Q3 (rated 'red') against a target of 3 minutes 30 seconds. The abandonment rate was better than target at 5.60%. Both the abandonment rate and average wait time have significantly improved on the last quarter and compared to the same time last year. We have taken on some additional staff who have come out of their 6-week training and this has helped to improve the current performance. Whilst waiting to speak to an advisor, residents are being sent links to the website to encourage self-service and we are also promoting the live chat facility to reduce the number of calls.

12.6 Performance for 'SARs compliance with timescales' is below target at 62.07% (rated 'red'). The compliance rate is being significantly impacted by the volume of requests for Housing Disrepair claims whereby the documents required to make a HDR claim are being requested through the SAR process. Excluding SARs made for HDR claims the compliance rate would be 77%. SARs for HDR claims make up 23% of all SARs received in Q3 (16 out of 70). Processes have been implemented to prevent the need for the documents required for a HDR claim being requested under a SAR. Improvements should be seen in our future quarterly performance.

12.7 With regards to '% of stage 1 complaints responded to in 10 working days (excl. ASC)', Q3 Performance is below target at 73%, although there has been an improvement since Q2 (68%) and Q1 (52.29%). The areas of concern are Children and Education (30%), the Children's Trust (37%) and Housing (63%). The Customer Feedback Team (CFT) continue to assist all directorates to respond promptly to corporate complaints within a 10-day timeframe and there is an increased focus on this across the organisation that is driving improvement. This improvement also focuses on the quality of the response, including



resolving queries at the first point of contact. For Q3 the average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints (excl. ASC) was 10 days, a reduction from 14 days in Q2.

- 12.8 The average satisfaction rating from members using the Councillor portal is below target at 3.93/5 (rated 'red'- the target is 4.5/5). In Q3 there were 27 Cllr ratings. Of these, 6 were given a 1 or 2 star rating. Of these 6, 2 were given a low rating because of officer management of the case and 4 were given a low rating because of the quality of the final response.
- 12.9 There is an overspend of £1.120m against the gross expenditure budget of £141.160m for the HRA. There is an ongoing review to find ways to mitigate this overspend (rated 'red').

### **Corporate Plan Monitoring**

- 12.10 Collective income targets were not met for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services) due to weather and lack of wet weather provisions, and lack of current offer at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. This will be addressed through the adoption of the Masterplan for Sandwell Valley which goes to Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> March and setting of targets for 2024/25 (rated 'red').
- 12.11 During Q3 work has commenced on the development of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Audit Action plan which will support the development of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. There is some slippage in regards to the EDI Strategy, due to staffing resource (rated 'amber').

### **13. Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan**

- 13.1 A series of additional directorate and service level performance dashboards and monitoring plans are being developed as part of a wider Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan. This will also take into account existing internal and external improvement plans to ensure



better governance, service delivery and improve the management of resources across the Housing Directorate. An Officer has now been recruited to lead this work and a team is being put together. Weekly meetings are being held to review performance and progress made. The Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan will form part of the wider Corporate Transformation programme. The Housing Directorate will work with the Corporate Team to identify what information needs to be included in the Corporate Performance Report moving forwards to ensure corporate oversight. An update will be provided in the Q4/annual report.

## 14. Contract Governance

14.1 Reports on contract governance have been provided for Sandwell Children's Trust, Serco, Places Leisure and Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) and assurance of governance arrangements has been provided through these reports. A summary for each one is detailed below.

### **Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT)**

14.2 Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust on behalf of the Council. The Trust delivers the following range of services:

- Children's Social Care
- Fostering
- Targeted Early Help

14.3 SCT annual review report was presented to Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> October in line with their contractual obligations. Approval was gained from Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October to extend the appointment of the independent non-executive director Stephen Rimmer for up to 3 years and the process of agreeing the contract sum for 2024/25 has commenced in line with the process laid down in the Service Delivery Contract.

14.4 As set out in para 5.1, at the end of Q3 SCT are projecting a year end deficit of £3,628k against the Contract Sum, in real terms this is an overspend of £4,370k as there is an expectation for SCT to achieve a surplus of £740k by the end of the year. These projections are based on 9 months of activity and subject to change.



- 14.5 The total number of children in care, as of December 2023, is 829. This is a slight decrease since last month but still an overall increase of 26 children since the beginning of the financial year, some of this increase is due to an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in Sandwell.
- 14.6 The rate per 10,000 of children in care in December is 97.7. This is a worse position than December 2022, when the rate per 10,000 was 96.2. However, this is in line with increases regionally and nationally. The number of children on a child protection plan has increased as set out in para 5.4.
- 14.7 Sandwell is outperforming statistical neighbours in respect of the number of children coming into care, with fewer children coming in to care however this is balanced by the fact that fewer children are leaving care compared to statistical neighbours. SCT need to ensure that children are leaving care appropriately and that there is not drift and delay in this occurring.
- 14.8 In July 2023 Cabinet agreed a package of financial incentives to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, this is collectively known as the Sandwell Deal. The initial impact of the Sandwell Deal is currently being reviewed; those findings will be included in the Q4 report.
- 14.9 Since December 2022 there has been an improvement in the balance of agency to permanent social workers, with agency workers now accounting for under 20% of the total social worker cohort. In addition to there being a better balance, there are also fewer vacancies. Over the last quarter the number of vacancies has fallen by just over 5% to an all-time low.

## Serco

- 14.10 The council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value in the region of £34m per annum. The contract covers services including waste and recycling collection, household recycling centre management, street cleansing and fleet management and renewal.





- 14.11 The contract has a set of regular meetings in place with standard agendas relating to the contractual requirements from key outcome targets (KOTs) to operational issues. These meetings are supported by regular cross channel communications between the SMB and Serco teams. Leadership Team also receive regular contract reports that provide oversight and issues are raised as appropriate.
- 14.12 The contract contains the requirement for the provision of regular data from the contractor to be provided, there is also an associated requirement for SMBC to provide information to Serco, relating to Council priorities annually and fleet maintenance through a set of KPIs. In addition, there is an integration with the Council's My Sandwell reporting tool.
- 14.13 Serco's performance reporting was significantly delayed at the end of Q2 and Q3. This matter was raised with Serco at senior level and the reporting has subsequently been caught-up. Serco have identified a number of measures that should prevent this circumstance recurring. Work is almost concluded to upload the Serco contract onto the Council's Intend Contract Management platform. It is intended to commence contract management through the Intend platform as soon as practicable. This system will further expedite the submission and approval of performance data.
- 14.14 Overall service performance in Q3 was good. Serco and Council officers jointly updated the annual leaf clearance plan leading to a significant reduction in resident complaints. The rescheduling of Christmas collections worked effectively and the first year of the subscribed garden waste service came to a successful conclusion. Q3 also saw the arrival of the next tranche of new refuse collection vehicles (RCVs). This will allow the replacement of the older vehicles improving service reliability.
- 14.15 The financial settlement for the missed service during the summer's industrial action resolved and will be formally agreed and settled in Q4.

## Places Leisure

- 14.16 The Council has a 25-year contract with Places Leisure to operate West Bromwich Leisure centre. The contract is a Design, Build, Operate and



Maintain contract which ensured value for money by reducing design and build costs as well as ongoing maintenance liabilities

- 14.17 Monthly operational reports are provided to update on performance, – operational and technical. Quarterly contract management meetings are held to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the contract and performance. These cover Operational Performance, Health and Wellbeing outputs and Customer Feedback.
- 14.18 A highlight this quarter is that Places Leisure were finalists for the UK Active Award for Healthy Communities for our Drug and Alcohol Recovery project running in Sandwell in partnership with Sandwell Council and Cranstoun. Although they didn't win, they did however play an overall part in Places Leisure winning both the Organisation of the Year award and the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion award.
- 14.19 In terms of Q3 participation, Places Leisure's performance is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Participation levels are continuing to rise, and memberships are significantly above 2019/20. Only learn-to-swim numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels.
- 14.20 Based upon projected operational, and therefore financial performance, a business plan was agreed for the duration of the contract. The business plan results in an annual management fee payment to the Council of circa £20,000.
- 14.21 There is also a utility benchmarking arrangement included in the contract, whereby PL own the risk on consumption and the Council are liable for the risk on tariff. Pre-pandemic operations resulted in a net gain for the Council – Management Fee minus Utility Benchmarking Payment. This is calculated and paid at the end of each financial year. In 2022/23 the utility benchmark resulted in a payment from the Council to PL of £239k. Modelling for 2023/24 indicates that the utility benchmarking will require a payment from the Council to PL of £202k.

### **Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT)**

- 14.22 With regards to governance and contract management, work continues between Council Officers, Bevan Brittan solicitors and SLT's solicitor to finalise the Deed of Variation (DoV) to the Management and Funding Agreement (MFA). This DoV will extend the termination and subsequent



period of operation to 31 March 2027 and refine the partnership as agreed and signed on 13 July 2023. This position was confirmed by Cabinet on 18 October 2023.

14.23 In Q3, Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) managed the following leisure centres in Sandwell:

- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- Hadley Stadium
- Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre
- Portway Lifestyle Centre
- Sandwell Aquatics Centre
- Tipton Leisure Centre
- Tipton Sports Academy
- Wednesbury Leisure Centre

14.24 With regards to operational performance, the headline figures are below. However, these are not directly comparable because of the swimming pools at Haden Hill Leisure Centre being closed for Q3 and the Langley and Smethwick swimming centres closing and Sandwell Aquatics centre opening over the summer (the offer was different for Q3 in 2022/23). Also, as with effect from Q3, concessionary memberships are no longer included due to their subsidy.

- 525,820 attendances October – December 2023. **15.6%** up on Q3 FY23 (454,691)
- From October 2022 to October 2023, memberships increased by **13%**
- 4,880 enrolled on Learn to Swim – **2.6%** up from Q3 FY23

14.25 In terms of finance, the same as in Q2; the current forecast outturn is £167k over budget; SLT have identified management action to bring this back to budget by the end of the year.

## 15. Strategic Risk Register

15.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its corporate plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that





resources are used efficiently and effectively, and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.

15.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council’s Strategic Risk Register (SRR) on a regular basis for review and comment. The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making.

15.3 The SRR does not include all of the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council’s risk management framework. The latest SRR was presented to ARAC in January 2024 and is attached as **Appendix 3**.

## 16. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	There are no direct financial implications to this report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	A corporate performance management framework was identified as a key gap in the council’s governance arrangements by Grant Thornton in 2021. The establishment of the corporate performance management framework was a key action in the council’s Improvement Plan agreed by Council in January 2022 and updated in June 2022. The PMF will enable officer and political leadership to improve oversight and corporate grip of the council’s performance.
<b>Risk:</b>	Should the council not implement a robust performance management framework, then it will not have the corporate oversight and intelligence to inform decision making and effectively manage risks to achieving service delivery and the strategic objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. These risks and the associated mitigations are noted in the SRR. The corporate performance management framework is a key mechanism to report progress and performance to the Government appointed Commissioners.



<b>Equality:</b>	Equality measures are included in the PMF, including the Organisational Health workforce indicators and the progress of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The measures to track progress of the Corporate Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.
<b>Social Value</b>	Measures in the PMF include looking at percentage of spend in the local area.
<b>Climate Change</b>	There are measures in the PMF that look at air quality and passenger journeys on public transport and 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan on renewable energy measures in the build of new homes.
<b>Corporate Parenting</b>	There are measures in the PMF that look at children in care related to education, placements moves, health assessments and NEET figures.

## 17. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – CPR Q3
- Appendix 2 – Corporate Plan Updates
- Appendix 3 – Strategic Risk Register (December 2023)
- Appendix 4 – PIs to be removed or amended

## 18. Background papers

- Performance Management Framework – Q2 Monitoring - The report is available here:  
<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s19395/Performance%20Management%20Framework%20Q2%20Monitoring.pdf>

The appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=6658&Ver=4>

Report to Council 21 April 2022:

- Performance Management Framework for the Council



Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 - Quarter 3

Rag Rating

Green	On or better than target	DOT	Direction of travel - comparator to previous quarter and the same quarter in the previous year
Amber	Worse than target but within target tolerance		
Red	Worse than target and outside the target tolerance		

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People									
B3e	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Special and alternative provision	Bigger is better	86%	5%	71% (31st Dec 2023)	71% (30th Sep 2023)	86% (31st Dec 2022)	Data for published Ofsted reports as at 31st December 2023. England 89%, West Midlands 80%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education
B6a	Rate of Children on a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 CYP population	Smaller is better	45	45.1 to 55	59	54.4	45.5	<p>The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has increased in December 2023 to 501, now at a rate of 59 per 10,000, this is above Statistical Neighbour Average (48.6). The number of children subject to CP plans are being monitored closely by both the operational teams and Safeguarding Unit.</p> <p>Given the increase in numbers, the Director of Partnerships and Practice led a review of the children who had been made subject to a child protection plan. The analysis focused on threshold application and decision making. The review concluded that overall that threshold application was appropriate with evidence of timely decision making and also found that a higher number of large sibling groups entering onto a Child Protection Plan, 10 families and 48 Children who have started on a Child Protection plan were part of a sibling group of 4+ Children.</p> <p>However given the increase in child protection numbers, the director of operations has arranged a meeting between operations and the safeguarding unit to consider some of the wider issues which may be impacting on CP numbers, namely timely step down from CP following intervention, effectiveness of CIN planning and the impact of the intervention hub.</p>	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B6c	% Care leavers that are NEET (aged 19-21)	Smaller is better	46.5%	46.6%-55%	58%	54%	61%	The number of Care Leavers not engaged in employment education and training has increased over the last quarter to 58% this is above West Midlands, England and SN averages for 2023. A Corporate Parenting Board has been set up and has an action plan, which includes how to improve performance for this indicator. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is being co-produced with young people and partners in readiness for March and an Emotional well-being pilot started in January. The Employment and Skills Team continue to attend sessions at METSEC where there is a young persons space, to develop relationships with care leavers and to update on support available. Links have been made with staff at Coventry Council, who have developed bespoke approaches to help young people, including residential trips to develop confidence, and effective use of their Post 16 Advisor in their Virtual School.	Children and Education
B8c	SCT Financial performance against budget	Bigger is better	£740k Annual Surplus	5%	£3,628K deficit	£207k Annual Deficit	£0k - breakeven	At the end of Q3 SCT are projecting a year end deficit of £3,628k against the Contract Sum, in real terms this is an overspend of £4,370k as there is an expectation for SCT to achieve a surplus of £740k by the end of the year. These projections are based on 9 months of activity and subject to change. Costs are being driven up by the increase of children placed in residential care (49 in March 2023 which has increased to 62 at the end of December 2024). There has also been an increase in the average unit cost of each placement; from £5,225 in 2022/23 to £6,035 2023/24 year to date, an increase of 16.2%. SCT has advertised a block contract for the provision of up to 9 residential care beds, across three homes, for Sandwell children. The tender invitation was issued at the end of September however only one provider submitted a bid and this was non-compliant. Discussions are taking place with SCT on what other transformation activity could be undertaken in respect of placements.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B12b	Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months	Smaller is better	<70%	70.1%-75%	84%	77%	78%	This indicator has seen a decline in performance this quarter. Some of this may be risk aversion by partners making referrals due to the Christmas period. Taking into consideration those referrals that had an assessment completed and were either stepped down to early help or were "no further action", this decreases to 67% placing the indicator well within tolerance. EH Partnership will discuss at the next strategic group the definition of this indicator and this may result in a change as to how this indicator is presented from the new financial year.	Children and Education
B6d	% of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Smaller is better	1.75%	5%	2.10%	1.70%	1.70%	The increase in % NEET is a reflection of the national and regional trend as part of a Covid legacy. However, Sandwell's performance compares well with West Midlands (2.5%) England (2.7%) Statistical Neighbours (2.9%) and Black Country (2.0%).  European Social Fund provision ended in October last year which provided keyworker posts and provision to remove barriers for young people further from the labour market. We will be using UK Shared Prosperity Funding from April to commission appropriate provision and fund a key worker post, but there has been a funding gap between November 2023 and March 2024. The team remains proactive and has been successful in working with one training provider to take additional trainees, whilst exploring options with other training providers and looking at how we can work closer together and increase access for Sandwell young people. It is worth noting that more than half our NEET young people are reporting emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.	Children and Education
B3c	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Primary	Bigger is better	89%	5%	87% (31st Dec 2023)	87% (30th Sep 2023)	87% (31st Dec 2022)	Data for published Ofsted reports as at 31st December 2023. England 91%, West Midlands 89%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B3d	% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating Secondary	Bigger is better	80%	5%	79% (31st Dec 2023)	79% (30th Sep 2023)	79% (31st Dec 2022)	Data for published Ofsted reports as at 31st December 2023. England 83%, West Midlands 83%. Please note that this data includes academies.	Children and Education
B9e	Children in Care - Same Placement for 2+ years	Bigger is better	68%	60-68%	62%	64%	68.5%	339/547 Children in Care for over 2.5 years have been in same placement for 2+ years this has decreased slightly on the previous quarter. Fostering, commissioning and the Children in Care service are working with intervention hub to support Children with placement disruptions to ensure Children in Care have improved placement stability. We are working on long term matching within the Trust to ensure longer term stability of our Children in Care. We would therefore expect this PI to continue to remain in 'amber' for a number of months due to the size of the cohort of Children in Care.	Children and Education
B9f	Children in Care with 3+ moves (placement moves)	Smaller is better	9%	9-12%	9.2%	8.7%	8.9%	76 out of 829 Children in Care have had 3+ placement moves in last 12 months (see commentary above). 9.2% is in line with our comparators and below England Average of 10%. Again, we are working on long term matching within the Trust to ensure longer term stability of our Children in Care. We would therefore expect this PI to continue to remain in 'amber' for a number of months due to the size of the cohort of Children in Care.	Children and Education
B12c	Early Help - Number of Step Downs to Multi-Agency Early Help that do not return to Social Care within 12 months	Bigger is better	>80%	75%-79.9%	89%	79%	89%	This indicator is currently at its strongest position since Q2 2021-2022 with nearly 90% of step downs not returning to social care within 12 months	Children and Education
B6b	% children becoming subject of a CP Plan for the second or subsequent time (within two years)	Smaller is better	15%	15% to 22%	9.80%	22.00%	21.00%	The number of Children on a plan for 2nd and subsequent time within two years has decreased to 9.8% and better than target (15/152) this coincides with the reduction in re-referral rates over the quarter.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B8a	Permanent vacancy rate of social workers	Smaller is better	<37%	37.1%-43%	24.60%	27.40%	41%	The number of permanent social work vacancies continue to reduce, with turnover of staff also reducing, there are currently 49.4 vacancies across the social work establishment, if including agency the real vacancy rate is 11.96 workers (6.4%)	Children and Education
B9h	Children missing from placement and return interviews in time (based on accepting and completed within 72 hours)	Bigger is better	75%	65-75%	76.70%	80.90%	78.40%	Missing return interviews remains above target at 76.7%, the main reasons for missing return interviews going out of timescale are due to the following: difficulty in contacting family/placement, family refused return home interview, multiple attempts to contact family and young person.	Children and Education
B12a	Early Help - Number of Allocated Lead Professionals by Organization	Smaller is better and Bigger is better	Strengthening Families <60% Other Partners >40%	Strengthening Families 60.1%-65% Other Partners 35-39.9%	55% Strengthening Families 45% Other Partners	52% Strengthening Families Other Partners 48%	63% Strengthening Families 37% Other Partners	Slight increase in the number of Lead Professionals within Strengthening Families service but remains well below (better) than the same position a year ago at 8% lower.	Children and Education
B12d	Early Help - Number of Children/Young People receiving intervention	NA - dependent	900-1200	<>10% of the range	1061	1023	934	Indicator is comfortably within target. 580 young people open to Strengthening Families with 481 young people open to Multi-Agency Early Help. The highest position for a quarter 3 recorded.	Children and Education

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
B11c	The number of Children who receive travel assistance (that is not transport to school)	Bigger is better	201 (year-end 2023/24)	5%	172 (Q3)	168 (1 Nov 23)	NA - New PI	<p>There is a year-end target for this PI and it is also being monitored quarterly.</p> <p>As of 31/12/2023, there were 971 on Transport and 172 receiving travel assistance (made up of 75 claiming parent mileage, 92 claiming a PTB and 5 with a travel pass). This compares to 848 on transport and 175 (made up of 63 claiming parent mileage, 108 claiming a personal transport budget and 4 with a travel pass) receiving travel assistance at the end of Q1. The number of pupils on Transport has increased since Q1. We continue to encourage parents wherever possible to not use transport but to claim mileage, a personal travel budget or travel pass to reduce overall costs. Increases in pupils using transport will inevitably impact on the budget, however, the service is working on a range of mitigations that have been shared with Cabinet and the Leadership Team.</p>	Children and Education
<b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People - Annual PIs reported this quarter</b>									
B5b	Percentage point gap between LA disadvantaged and not disadvantaged pupils nationally at KS2, achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths	Smaller is better	-21 (2023)	5%	-21 (2023 Revised) (annual data)	NA	-22.1 (2022 Revised)	Sandwell 2023 data indicates a 1.1 ppt reduction in the disadvantaged gap compared to 2022. Nationally the gap reduced by 0.5 to -22.4, in the West Midlands the gap reduced by 0.8 to -20.8.	Children and Education
B1	Percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage	Bigger is better	NA	5%	61% (2022/2023 AY Final)	NA	59% (2022)	Based on published data for summer 2023 Sandwell improved by 2 ppt when compared to 2022. National and Regional data also improved by 2 ppts between 2022 and 2023 to 67% and 66% respectively. A target of 62% has been set for 2023/24.	Children and Education



CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L17b/ASCOF 4B	The proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed	Bigger is better	95%	92% (tolerance score)	94%	90%	NA - New PI	This PI is measured cumulatively. Performance has improved since Q2. Whilst we are still below target, the figure for October - December is 98% so performance at the end of Q4 overall should improve further. The actions taken following Q2 to support staff through surgeries, provide feedback from learning from performance validation meetings and also address practitioner knowledge have had a positive impact.	ASC
L18a/2D (formerly 2B)	The proportion of older people (65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into rehabilitation services	Bigger is better	68%	66% (tolerance score)	68.3% (Q2)	66% (Q1)	NA	Figure reported is for Q2 as the Q3 figure is not yet available. Performance in Q2 is slightly better than Q1, and is within target tolerance.	ASC
L14b/2E (formerly 1G)	The proportion of people who receive long-term support who are enabled to live in their home or with family	Bigger is better	70%	66% (tolerance score)	70%	70%	NA	This figure is an estimate based on October and November - awaiting full Quarters data.	ASC
L21b/6B	The percentage of adult social care providers rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission	Bigger is better	70%	66% (tolerance score)	70%	70%	NA - New PI	Performance is on target. Performance has improved from 57% in Q4 2022/23.	ASC

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L1d	The number of learners engaged in the use of the Sandwell Language Network to support learning English and Health literacy.	Bigger is better	325	5%	325	586	NA	This PI is reported on a contract that runs Sept 2023-Aug 24. In Q2 it was reported that the annual target was achieved for the preceding contract year. For the period September 23 - Aug 24, the target is to reach 325 individual learners by delivering 20 employability booster sessions, 21 ESOL courses and 1x IELTS course. SLN is on track to meet annual targets with 325 learners enrolled for the year, 18 employability sessions and 26 ESOL courses started delivery with 2 additional planned to start in Qtr 2, 1x IELTS course started and 20 new volunteers engaged for the year. This PI will be reported on each quarter. Whilst some will inevitably not complete the course, other courses may be added if demand dictates. The performance figure may therefore decrease and increase throughout the year.	Public Health
L1b	Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work	NA	Set up faith sector boards and recruit Faith Sector and Inclusion Health Development Officer	NA	Complete	NA	NA	The Faith Sector and Inclusion Health Development Officer recruited has been recruited and the Faith Sector Board meetings have been set up and are held bi-monthly. Each of the larger faiths in Sandwell now represented at the Faith Sector Board. New metrics to capture ongoing engagement for this indicator will be established for 24/25.	Public Health
L1f	The release of the Healthy Aging App - directed at providing information in multiple languages	NA	To develop and release the Healthy Aging App	NA	Complete	NA	NA	The app has successfully been developed and released. The service is monitoring usage figures.	Public Health
L4b	LGBTQ+ needs assessment and Challenge fund to support outcomes.	NA	Set up the Challenge Fund and complete the Needs Assessment	TBC	Complete	NA	NA	The Needs Assessment has been completed. The Health Challenge Fund has allocated 5 small grants to CVS organisations. The service is looking at monitoring information for 2024/25.	Public Health

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L4c	Inclusive cycling programme	Bigger is better	Successful delivery of the programme	TBC	Complete	NA	NA	The programme was successfully delivered and now has ceased. A provider is being appointed for the summer of 2024 to deliver learn to ride sessions as part of the Cycle More Sandwell Programme and the service is looking at how this can be monitored through performance indicators.	Public Health
L6a	Towns based awareness of Public Health offer/ Stronger Sandwell - meetings held	Bigger is better	6 meetings are held each quarter for the 6 Towns in the borough	5%	6	NA	NA	6 town meeting in Q3 (aim for a PHDO Network Meeting in each town each Q) average attendance each meeting stands at 20.	Public Health
L8	Greenspace utilisation (physical activity in parks and open spaces)	Bigger is better	1 session per week for each of the 6 towns	5%	10 weekly sessions on offer across the 6 towns	NA	NA	In Q3 there were 10 weekly physical activity sessions on offer in parks and open spaces, with 597 participants attending.	Public Health
L1e	The targeting of the health checks at those most in need (% of checks delivered)	Bigger is better	100% (12,000 checks) (over 2 years - no quarterly target)	5%	17.6% (2,115) Cumulative	1,753 (revised)	NA	The NHS Health Check contract is over two years (Feb 2023 - Feb 2025 + possible 1 year) with a 6,000 Health Checks per year. Health Check performance is being managed by a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the 1st year whereby underachieved PBR target for contract Year 1 can be accessed in contract Year 2. This is caveated that all block target for year 1 and year 2 must be completed prior to any PBR being claimed. Overall target for the 2 years is 12,000 Health Checks. The underachieved target is partially due to the delays in the installation of the Software system within GP clinical systems.	Public Health
L3	We will continue to push for improved vaccine take up, childhood vaccines, flu season and COVID boosters	Bigger is better	90%	5%	NA	NA	NA	Information not available	Public Health

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
L2	Number of grants provided concerning Vision 2030, Better Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles	Bigger is better	NA	NA	Mental Health - 10 Vision 2030 and Healthy Lifestyles - 25	7	NA	No targets are set for this indicator. As of Q3, there are 10 active Better Mental Health grants operating across the Borough. Under Vision 2030 and Healthy Lifestyles there are 25 operational awards (June: 9 awards, Sept: 10 awards, Dec: 6 awards).	Public Health
L5b	Grants to the SCVO around child wellbeing, Grants for child wellbeing for special school mental health and wellbeing	Bigger is better	NA	NA	Q3 - NA	Over £100K	NA	A target is not applicable for this PI. In Q3 pre-procurement is being undertaken for grant to support headteachers and senior leaders wellbeing for additional 70k investment towards this indicator in Q4.	Public Health
L7	Sandwell Stride programme (volunteer-led walking scheme) and digital App based walking offer	Bigger is better	NA	5%	1,465	NA	NA	A target is not applicable for this indicator. Walk attendances for Oct – Dec 2023 were 1,465 with an average weekly attendance of 112.  One new weekly walk started at Brandhall Community Hub.	Public Health
<b>Strong Resilient Communities</b>									
C14/ NI195a,b,c,d	Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting).	Smaller is better	litter - 2.50% detritus - 6.50% graffiti - 1.50% fly-posting - 0%	5%	Litter - 6% Detritus - 9% Graffiti - 1% Flyposting - 0% (Aug - November 2023/24)	litter - 4% detritus - 7% graffiti - 1.50% fly-posting - 0% (Apr -July 2023/24)	NA	This PI is measured 3 times a year and is provided by SERCO: April-July, August-November, December-March. The % of litter and detritus has increased by 2% since last quarter, although graffiti has reduced by 0.5%.	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C7a	The number of library visits in person	Bigger is better	163,125 (491,250 cumulative)	5%	153,150 (474,159 cumulative)	163,278 (321,009 cumulative)	NA - New PI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues of library books were down 19% against target – cuts to stock budget and increases to the cost of books (UK inflation, global rise in the cost of paper, distribution) mean we are unable to buy as many copies as in previous years. 46% of library custom is to borrow a book (Adult PLUS, 2019).</li> <li>• A charge to reserve books was introduced in 2023-24. This has seen a reduction in the number of reservations being placed (and therefore, collection and return visits). 62% drop in the number of reservations placed in Q3 compared to 2022-23.</li> <li>• Since Covid, we have lost many experienced staff. Existing staff are required to relocate at short notice to other libraries. Whilst the number of activities being held is up against target, compared to pre-Covid levels it is running at around 70%.</li> <li>• The lack of staff capacity has impacted on the levels of outreach work to promote the service and the development of new partnerships to provide activity in libraries.</li> <li>• Some libraries were above target (Blackheath, Bleakhouse, Brandhall, Smethwick, Stone Cross, Tipton), and there is a general correlation with the number of activities being held in those libraries.</li> </ul> <p>The service is developing plans to impact visitor numbers moving forwards, particularly individuals libraries where visitor numbers have dropped.</p>	Borough Economy
C5a	The number of Friends Groups working in Partnership with The Council	Bigger is better	Q3 - 10	5%	10	9	NA - New PI	All of the groups across the borough have signed a partnership agreement with the Council and work to support Friends Groups is in development.	Borough Economy
C7c/L2	Under 16 issue figures (physical & electronic to include books, audiobooks, magazines & comics) (c)	Bigger is better	51000 (139,000 cumulative)	5%	73,731 (159,733 cumulative)	44,169 (86,002 cumulative)	44,462 (144,015 cumulative)	The under 16s issue figures are on track. Book borrowing is promoted at all children's activities which may have impacted the increase in issues since Q2.	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C7b/L3	The % of Meaningful gifting of Booktrust packs	Bigger is better	95%	5%	95%	95%	NA - was Annual	Meaningful gifting of Bookstart packs – this is an annual indicator which is monitored throughout the year and will be reported at year end.	Borough Economy
C7d/L4	The number of community activities & events held in libraries or online (c)	Bigger is better	1,750 (5,250 cumulative)	5%	2,456 (7,426 cumulative)	2,528 (4,970 cumulative)	1843 (4,549 cumulative)	Number of community activities and events held in libraries or online per quarter – on track, partly supported by external funding to pay for activities.	Borough Economy
C7e/L6	The number of PC sessions held in libraries (c)	Bigger is better	22,000 (63,000 cumulative)	5%	30,154 (108,530 cumulative)	35,193 (78,376 cumulative)	39,491 (68,779 cumulative)	Number of PC sessions held in libraries – on track. Anecdotal evidence suggests users carrying out job searches and accessing MySandwell.	Borough Economy
C10a	Forge Mill Farm Education Visits (students)	Bigger is better	2,100 (6,300 cumulative)	5%	2,206 (5,737 cumulative)	2,535 (3,531 cumulative)	NA - New PI	Education visits to Forge Mill Farm had a slow start this year but it now performing at an improved level due to the significant work undertaken to attract Education providers to the facility.	Borough Economy
C10b	Forge Mill Farm Income (admissions, events, other & education)	Bigger is better	£373,310	5%	£428,681.00	£294,709	NA - New PI	Forge Mill Farm has developed performance across all income strands and is now performing above target, with the new Education Barn capital project in development.	Borough Economy
C16a	Total recorded crime in Sandwell	Smaller is better	No target	5%	8,960	9,111	NA - New PI	Total recorded crime in Sandwell has dropped slightly in Q3 compared with Q2.	Borough Economy
C16b	Domestic Abuse incidents in Sandwell reported to police	Smaller is better	No target	5%	1,649 Crime / 967 Non-crime	2,812 Crime / 1,068 Non-crime	NA - New PI	The number of domestic abuse incidents has reduced in Q3 compared to Q2 (both crime and non-crime). However the number of cases referred to the MARAC has increased.	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
C16c	The number of cases referred to MARAC	Smaller is better	No target	5%	294	238	NA - New PI	<p>MARAC cases saw a 28.4% increase in 2022/23, in comparison to the previous year. This includes a repeat rate of 49%, which is above the Safelives recommendation of 28-40%.</p> <p>MARACs are regionally coordinated through the Office of Police and Crime Commission. Sandwell have responded to the high demand as a local partnership with a contingency plan that is enabling additional MARACs to be held. These challenges are reflected across the West Midlands region, with partnering Local Authorities experiencing similar demands. The Office of Police and Crime Commission (OPCC) are working with partner local authorities on a shared case management system and triage. The OPCC also provide LAs with a budget for Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). With the scope of these reviews being increased, Sandwell has seen an increase in the number of DHRs requested and the current funding allocated by the OPCC is no longer covering these costs. This is being reviewed currently with the OPCC regionally and is subject to a national government consultation.</p>	Borough Economy

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
CP74 / HM02	Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)	Bigger is better	65%	5%	51.5%	57.6%	67.1%	This figure is below target due to the challenging housing market and the volume of cases that are presenting very late in the process. The housing market is at its most challenging for securing longer term alternative accommodation for our clients. The turnover of council properties has seen a 30% reduction over the last 12 months (meaning there are less properties becoming available) and the accessibility and affordability of private rented properties it at its lowest point in years. This is in part due to affordability issues and also due to the very buoyant market. The service works very hard in securing properties for our clients and has one of the best offers in the country as recognised by the National Resident Landlord Association (NRLA). The increase to LHA rates in April 2024 will help bridge this gap but the market will remain very challenging for a number of years to come. Our Q3 performance on homelessness prevention is below target but we did see improvements in November and December months which suggests we should see performance recover in Q4.	Housing
CP79 / PRS07	Number of long term empty homes brought into use (c)	Bigger is better	Q3-10	5%	3	NA - C	2	As per previous updates, there was a delay in attracting and recruiting the right person for this role. The new officer has been in post since September 2023 and is making good progress but has required a lead in time to understand Sandwell and the challenges around the agenda. Performance has improved with 2 new properties brought back into use in Q3 compared to 1 in Q2 and none in previous quarters. Whilst this is slower pace than intended when the target was set at the start of the year (again due to recruitment delays), we expect performance to improve exponentially and to recover to projected levels by the end of Q2 of 2024/25.	Housing



CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
H12 / HC2	The % of current tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years) (c)	Bigger is better	Q3-30%	5%	21.90%	17.60%	8.60%	The rate at which Home Checks are completed has increased from Q1 to Q2 ( up by 460) but not to the level to meet target. Additionally temporary resources (an additional Coordinator and six Housing Advisors) should come online in Q4 and will be in place for six months, which will enable Housing Services Officers to focus more of their time on Home Checks.	Housing
CP78b/SLM054	The total number of people assisted by Welfare Rights Service to claim additional benefits (c)	Bigger is better	Q3-8250	5%	7521	NA - C	9609	The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights in Qtr 3 is below target by 178 (RAG rated 'RED') based on a target of 2750 per quarter. This is due to the increase in complex cases which is resulting in officers having to spend more time on each case. The team are still working overtime which has been introduced within the service to support the increasing number of residents and the service has recruited two new members of staff into temporary posts which will increase the support to residents. This did not hinder performance on the monetary gains for the quarter as the service were successful in gaining £5,386,275 for residents, which was above target. Welfare Rights also are the lead agency for preparing and providing representation for Tribunal appeals, of which there are significantly more which take additional time to prepare and represent.	Housing
H14 / RM3	The percentage of properties with a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition report (DEICR) under 5-years old (or in legal resolution)	Bigger is better	100%	5%	95.35%	93.31%	82.71%	Historic no-access cases are seeing a positive impact following new processes we have introduced. Further work is being done on re allocating internal resource to deal with the backlog.	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
H14 / BS01	Gas Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	99.39%	99.45%	99.40%	<p>There are 152 properties without a valid Landlords Gas Safety Certificate.</p> <p>There are still ongoing issues with the contractor in getting the correct amount of resources to fulfil the number of Landlords Safety checks needed. We are working with them to resolve this without compromising the quality of works carried out and ensuring that appliances are serviced correctly &amp; safely.</p> <p>Resources are being brought into Sandwell but need an induction period to ensure they are up to the standard we require. An improvement has already started since work recommenced on Sandwell as we are now at 110 addresses non-compliant which is an compliance rate of 99.55%.</p>	Housing
H8 / RS04	Rough sleepers bi-monthly count outturn	Smaller is better	Q3 -3	5%	0	5	3	The service continues to perform well in supporting rough sleepers	Housing
H14 / BS02	Fire Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100.00%	81.43%	NA - New PI	All relevant sites that fall under the Fire Safety Order currently have a Fire Risk Assessment in place. The intention is to undertake periodic reviews ( high risk - 12 months, other risk - 3 years) to ensure the FRA remain suitable and sufficient. Due to the completion of the BSR data collation and verification for the Building Safety Regulator that was due in on the 1 October 2023, we are 11 FRA reviews down on our internal review target for October but we have programmed to catch up in Q4. Low rise blocks FRA reviews have been paused for a short period to allow capacity to develop Building Safety Cases.	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
H14 / BS03	Asbestos Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100%	92.35%	NA - New PI	Regulation 4 re-inspections surveys completed August 2023.	Housing
CP77a / HIA2	Home Improvement Agency - Number of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) approved (c)	Bigger is better	Q3 - 207	5%	210	NA - C	440	Target met. However, the overall performance for the approval of Disabled Facilities Grants continues to be impacted by a lower than anticipated referral level from the Council's Occupational Therapy Service. A new supplier for lifts and hoists has been appointed and the backlog of cases that resulted from a previous supplier entering administration is being addressed.	Housing
CP77b / HIA3	Number of DFG's certified as complete (c)	Bigger is better	Q3 - 165	5%	262	NA - C	272	Target exceeded. The Home Improvement Agency has put significant resources into agreeing final accounts with suppliers. The result of this work means that the number of Disabled Facilities Grants that have been certified as complete is higher than anticipated. This work will continue in QTR4 as final accounts are agreed and grants can be certified as complete.	Housing
H14 / BS04	Water Safety Checks - Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100.00%	100.00%	NA - New PI	The figures come from the Compass system (procured corporate water safety database) which is managed and reviewed by the SMBC Corporate Water Safety Group (includes contractor representation) Housing currently have 71 sites on the portfolio. All 71 have a current water hygiene risk assessment in place.	Housing
H14 / BS05	Lift Safety Checks - proportion of homes for which all required communal passengers lift safety checks have been carried out	Bigger is better	100%	5%	100.00%	100.00%	NA - New PI	Each communal passenger lift receives a regular thorough examination at 6-monthly intervals by a third party insurance company to ensure compliance, no current issues with this process.	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
CP76 / PRS04	No. of private sector properties reported to be in state of disrepair with a positive resolution (c)	Bigger is better	NA	NA	246	NA - C	571	Cases are being kept open in duty longer due to increased demand and complexity of cases coming through. The service has also seen an increase in landlords reporting difficulty in accessing their properties to carry out repair works which delays our response times. The service has been working very hard since the redesign (Q1 of the year) to ensure we increase resources in line with the proposed model and have just reached full establishment across the board. The time taken to secure the new staff and the mobilisation of a new operating model led to fewer cases being closed in a timely manner, however, we expect this to improve exponentially during Q4. We are currently addressing this with robust training and embedding of the new operating principles and practice.	Housing
<b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods - Annual PIs reported this quarter</b>									
H1/H17/TP05	Satisfaction that home is safe (Tenant satisfaction survey)	Bigger is better	78%	5%	77%	NA	76% Yr. 22/23	Over three-quarters of tenants (77%) are satisfied that their home is safe, this being up marginally from 2002 (76%). 16% are dissatisfied with their homes safety. Tenants who do not feel safe were asked to explain why and what could be improved, and 433 tenants made comments. Dealing with outstanding or forgotten repairs attracted the most comments (19%) followed closely by damp and Mould issues. (Annual - results are from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey)	Housing
H17 / TP04	Satisfaction that home is well maintained (Tenant satisfaction survey)	Bigger is better	75%	5%	71%	NA	73% Yr. 22/23	71% of tenants feel their home is well maintained with a fifth being dissatisfied. Satisfaction in this area has fallen 2% since 2022. (Annual - results are from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey)	Housing

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
H17 / TP01	Satisfaction with the overall service provided (Tenant satisfaction survey)	Bigger is better	70%	5%	74%	NA	68% Yr. 22/23	Around three-quarters of tenants (74%) are satisfied, although fewer are very satisfied (35%) than fairly satisfied (39%). Just 16% of tenants are dissatisfied with the overall services provided and a further 11% are neither satisfied or dissatisfied. When looking at the results from previous surveys, satisfaction was around 80% from 2011 through to 2017. However, in 2022 this took a dip to 68% but in the current survey it has recovered somewhat to 74%. Sandwell Council operates over six towns within its district but shown here are only those areas where 20 or more responses were received, and the Sandwell PFI properties are excluded, but reported separately.	Housing
<b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b>									
E7b	Business receiving Financial Assistance or Grants	Bigger is better	60	5%	17 (Q3 - 15)	2	37	Despite a temporary delay in grant administration due to policy refinement, we successfully awarded 15 grants this quarter. It's encouraging to note that we have a robust pipeline of businesses eagerly expressing their interest in applying for grants and now the process is established we anticipate administering the remaining 52 grants and financial assistance in Quarter 4.	Regeneration
E7a	The number of Businesses supported (c)	Bigger is better	260	5%	276 (Q3 - 178)	98	187	The Q3 target has been achieved. Forecast to meet or exceed target by end of financial year. 276 achieved, 44 required next quarter to achieve end of year target.	Regeneration
E11a	The number of work experience placements (c)	Bigger is better	100	5%	129	NA - C	NA	This indicator is measured by calendar year. In 2023 129 young people have been supported into work experience placements against a target of 100. Whilst only 4 of these were in Q3 (Q4 of the calendar year) a high number were delivered in Q1 (38) and Q2 (78). The team will set a new target for 2024.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
E10	Employment rate (nomis)	Bigger is better	NA	5%	70.2% (Oct 22 - Sep 23)	64.7% (Apr 22 - Mar 23)	64% (Oct 21 - Sep 22)	Data provided is the latest available. In Sandwell, of the 74.5% of people economically active, 70.2% are employed. For the West Midlands, 78.4% are economically active with 74.8% in employment and for Great Britain, 78.8% are economically active, with 75.8% in employment. The employment rate in Sandwell had been on a downward trajectory since March 2021 when it peaked at 74%; however the last two quarters have shown an increase.	Regeneration
E11b	The number of supported internships	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	NA	NA	NA	This PI is under development.	Assistant Chief Executive
E11c	Number of apprentices	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	50	51	NA - was annual	Marginal reduction of 1 apprentice compared to Q2	Assistant Chief Executive
E11d	The number of graduates on the Sandwell Management Graduate Programme	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	7	1	NA - was annual	5 out of the 7 Graduates have been recruited on the Sandwell Graduate Programme from Oct-23.	Assistant Chief Executive
E1	% of council spend spent locally (Finance PI)	bigger is better	TBC	NA	38%	38%	NA	Council spend spent locally has remained the same as in Q2	Finance
E2	Money spent directly with suppliers in Sandwell	bigger is better	TBC	NA	£45,033,525	£38,851,914	NA	The money spent directly with suppliers in Sandwell has increased compared to Q2.	Finance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
A2d/DSS5	The number of road safety improvement schemes (c)	Bigger is better	10	5%	12 (3 in Q3)	9 (6 in Q2)	N/A - New PI	We are above target for this indicator. Schemes completed in quarter 3 were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Road Safety Scheme – Oakham Road, Tividale - Updated electronic signage, new central refuges and associated road markings to help tackle concerns raised regarding speed vehicles as number of loss of control accidents.</li> <li>o Hallens Drive, Wednesbury – Installation of permanent Speed Cushions to deter Road racing where road casualties had been recorded. Installed in partnership with WM Police. Replaced temporary bolt down cushions.</li> <li>o Melbourne Road, Smethwick - Installation of drop kerbs and tactile paving to assist visually impaired road users.</li> </ul>	Borough Economy
<b>One Team One Council</b>									
O1b	Average working days lost per employee due to sickness absence (FTE)	smaller is better	6.21 days	5%	8.8 days	NA - C	8.28 days	In Q3 an average of 8.8 working days were lost per employee due to sickness compared to 8.28 days during the same period last year. Stress, depression, mental health related sickness remain as the leading cause of sickness. Working days lost for short term sickness reduced by 16%, whilst long term sickness increased by 20% compared to Q3 last year. 4 of the 9 Directorates achieved a reduction in sickness compared to last year (ASC, Children and Education, Housing, Law and Governance), but performance for all Directorates was above the 6.21 day target.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1n	Number of new formal grievance cases	smaller is better	4 per quarter	5%	7	5	NA - was annual	Q2 was 5. Cumulative for year to-date (Q1-Q3) is 20 compared to 32 at the end of Q4 last year.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8e	Adults Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	30 seconds	5%	1 Min 14 Sec	1 min 27 secs	49 Seconds	<p>The average wait time has reduced from the last quarter by 13 seconds.</p> <p>The service is unable to manage the demand within the current structure/resources available. Additional resources have been allocated on a temporary basis, which expires March 2024 and due to the temporary nature have proved difficult to recruit to. This is compounded by absences and vacancies at present. Adults are currently looking for a transformation partner. The holistic programme will take a look at the numbers using the service and the processes that are being followed.</p>	ASC
O8g	Revs and Bens Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	3 minutes 30 seconds	5%	4mins 40 seconds	6 mins 38 secs	9 mins 42 secs	<p>Both the abandonment rate and average wait time have significantly improved on the last quarter and compared to the same time last year and the abandonment rate is better than target. We have took on some additional staff who have come out of their 6 week training and this has helped to improve the current performance. Whilst waiting to speak to an advisor residents are being sent links to the website to encourage self-service and also we are also promoting the live chat facility in an effort to reduce the number of calls.</p>	Finance



CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8p	% of stage 1 complaints responded to in 10 working days (excl. ASC) (also service standard)	Bigger is better	90%	5%	73% (65% cumulative)	68% (60% cumulative)	NA	Q3 Performance is below target at 73%, although there has been an improvement since Q2 (68%) and Q1 (52.29%). The areas of concern are Children and Education (30%), the Children's Trust (37%) and Housing (63%). The Customer Feedback Team (CFT) continue to assist all directorates to respond promptly to corporate complaints within a 10-day timeframe and there is an increased focus on this across the organisation that is driving improvement. This improvement also focuses on the quality of the response, including resolving queries at the first point of contact. For Q3 the average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints (excl. ASC) was 10 days, a reduction from 14 days in Q2.	Assistant Chief Executive
O4c	Average satisfaction rating from members using the Councillor portal	Bigger is better	4.5 / 5	5%	3.93/5	4.54/5	3.98	In Q3 there were 27 Cllr ratings. Of these, 6 were given a 1 or 2 star rating. Of these 6, 2 were given a low rating because of officer management of the case and 4 were given a low rating because of the quality of the final response.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8l	SARs compliance with timescales	Bigger is better	95%	5%	62.07%	50.00%	71%	The compliance rate for SARs is being significantly impacted by the volume of requests for Housing Disrepair claims whereby the documents required to make a HDR claim are being requested through the SAR process. Excluding SARs made for HDR claims the compliance rate would be 77%. SARs for HDR claims make up 23% of all SARs received in Q3 (16 out of 70).  Processes have been implemented to prevent the need for the documents required for a HDR claim being requested under a SAR. Improvements should be seen in our future quarterly performance.	Finance
O11b	Variance from budget - Housing Revenue Account	smaller in better	0%	0.5%	£1.120m overspend	£0.596m overspend	(£0.719m) underspend	The gross budget for the HRA is £141,159,600. The current forecast is a £1.120m overspend. There is an ongoing review to find ways to mitigate this overspend.	Finance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8h	Corporate Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	8%	5%	8.07% (11% cumulative)	9.09%	17.44%	A breakdown of Q3 figures is as follows: 7.30% (Contact Centre), 18.35% (Rents), 6.67% (Call out). The cumulative figures are: 11% (Overall), 10.23% (Contact Centre), 20.29% (Rents), 6.56% (Call out). For Q3 the Contact Centre and Call Out have achieved the target but the Rents Team are above the target. The Contact Centre are not responsible for the calls received by Rents and Call Out as these are managed differently.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8n	FOI compliance with timescales	Bigger is better	95%	5%	92%	83%	78%	<p>Performance figures for December 2023 have achieved a 96% compliance rate which is the first time the Council has met or exceeded our performance target of 95% .</p> <p>Similarly, our Q3 performance is the Councils best ever performing Quarter.</p> <p>Directorate breakdown as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Adult Social Care - 7 Met, 6 Missed, 0 Open - 13 in Total = 54%</li> <li>* Children &amp; Education - 25 Met, 7 Missed, 0 Open, 32 in Total = 78%</li> <li>* Housing - 41 Met, 4 Missed, 0 Open, 45 in Total = 91%</li> <li>* Finance - 27 Met, 2 Missed, 0 Open, 29 in Total = 93%</li> <li>* Borough Economy - 68 Met, 1 Missed, 0 open, 69 in Total = 99%</li> <li>* Regen and Growth - 27 Met, 0 Missed, 0 Open, 27 in Total = 100%</li> <li>* Business Strategy and Change - 23 Met, 0 Missed, 23 in Total = 100%</li> <li>* Law and Governance - 11 Met, 0 Missed, 11 in Total = 100%</li> <li>* Public Health - 5 Met, 0 Missed, 5 in Total = 100%</li> <li>* Corporate Enquiries - 4 Met, 0 Missed, 0 Open, 4 in Total = 100%</li> </ul>	Finance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O11c	Council Tax Collection (c)	bigger is better	78.62%	5%	78.14%	NA	78.62%	Collection is slightly down on last year but the difference is reducing each month. Recovery has been affected by the cost of living crisis and we have an extra 2000 residents since April now paying over 12 months so more Council tax will be received in Feb/March 24. Recovery document numbers being issued have been increased and in January we have just awarded over £300k in Council tax support (out of the funding for 23/24) so this should help to reduce the difference to the target between now and the end of March.	Finance
O11d	Business Rates Collection rates (c)	bigger is better	81.67%	5%	80.81%	NA	81.67%	Collection is slightly down on last year but the difference is reducing each month and 22/23 collection rate was significantly affected/improved by £6m in Covid payments put onto business rates accounts at the end of 21/22. The difference was over 3.5% in April 24, and it is now at its lowest less than 1%. Recovery documents issued are up to date, and we expect the difference to continue to reduce until the end of the financial year.	Finance
O11a	Variance from budget - General Fund	smaller is better	0%	0.5%	(£2.985m) underspend	£1.222m overspend	(£1.824m) underspend	The gross budget for the General fund is £733.967m. The current forecast is a (£2.985m) underspend.	Finance
O3	Completion of the Audit and Assessment against the Equality Framework for Local Government (completed by June/July).	NA	July completion	NA	Completed	NA	NA	Audit and Assessment to be considered by LT on 8 Aug. Following this audit further performance measures will be consider and developed as part of the LGA Equalities Framework.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1m	Number of new formal disciplinary investigations	smaller is better	8 per quarter	5%	4	3	NA - was annual	Q2 was 3. Cumulative for year to-date (Q1-Q3) is 11 compared to 21 at the end of Q4 last year.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8d	Adults Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	6%	5%	4%	5.84%	3.00%	<p>Performance is better than target. However, long term absences remain an issue with an average of 7 agents off sick each month throughout the whole quarter. Vacancies remain to 3 and adverts have been placed with agency's however we are struggling to attract the calibre we require for a Contact Centre coupled with knowledge of Adult Social Care. Requests have also been submitted to HR for agency staff as our current temp agent finishes on 31/03/2024. There has been a new starter in the team, who underwent training throughout Nov/Dec.</p> <p>Agents at home and a few within the office are reporting Internet issues affecting LAS and the Blue Badge system, in regards to the speed and when trying to key from tab to tab. This affects the agents overall time when trying to wrap up a call as they often have to restart either the application or on occasion the laptop.</p>	ASC
O8f	Revs and Bens Contact Centre Abandonment Rate	Smaller is better	8%	5%	5.60%	8.57%	12.98%	<p>Both the abandonment rate and average wait time have significantly improved on the last quarter and compared to the same time last year and the abandonment rate is better than target. We have took on some additional staff who have come out of their 6 week training and this has helped to improve the current performance. Whilst waiting to speak to an advisor residents are being sent links to the website to encourage self-service and also we are also promoting the live chat facility in an effort to reduce the number of calls.</p>	Finance

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8i	Corporate Contact Centre Average Wait Measure	Smaller is better	3 minutes 30 seconds	5%	3 mins 11 secs	3 mins, 39 secs	8 minutes 29 seconds	Performance is better than target and significantly better than the same point last year. A breakdown of Q3 figures is as follows: 3 mins 11 secs (Contact Centre), 3mins, 8 secs (Rents), 2 mins 41 secs (Call out) The cumulative figures are: 4 mins 11 secs (Overall), 4 mins 17 secs (Contact Centre), 3 mins 3 secs (Rents), 2:mins 32 secs (Call out)	Assistant Chief Executive
O11e	Sundry Debt Collection (c)	bigger is better	79.87%	5%	88.84%	NA	79.87%	Collection is up compared to last year. Performance for 23/24 is measured allowing 14 days for payment which wasn't the case for 22/23	Finance
O11f	Prior year Council Tax collection (c)	bigger is better	93%	5%	94%	NA	94.00%	Collection has improved and is on target	Finance
O11g	Prior year Business Rates Collection (c)	bigger is better	96%	5%	98%	NA	98.00%	Collection has improved and is on target	Finance
O11h/SI66a	Rent collected as a % of rent due (including arrears brought forward)	bigger is better	Q3 - 94.35%	5%	94.69%	95.34%	94.51%	The quarter three outturn of 94.69% has exceeded the profile target of 94% and is an improvement on the same period last year at 94.51%, however it is slightly down on the quarter two this year. To maintain performance the service will continue to focus on early intervention and work with partner agencies to identify customers most in need of additional financial support.	Finance
O11i	% of invoices paid on time	bigger is better	95%	5%	98%	98%	NA	Performance is better than target	Finance
O4b	Members to undertake a minimum of 10 hours of development annually	Bigger is better	NA	5%	40.2% (Municipal Year)	NA	NA- new	A data quality issue has been identified with regards to this PI and historical data is inaccurate. A target of 65% is proposed for Q4.	Assistant Chief Executive
O4e	No. of Standards Complaints	Smaller is better	NA	NA	1	4	NA	The nature of the complaints are low level. No specific trends emerging.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1c	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	52.60%	52.90%	NA - was annual	Marginal reduction compared to the previous quarter of 52.9%.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O1d	The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic Communities	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	23.60%	24.00%	NA - was annual	Marginal reduction compared to the previous quarter of 24.0%.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1e	The percentage of top 5% of earners who have a disability	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	2.20%	1.80%	NA - was annual	Marginal increase compared to the previous quarter of 1.80%.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1g	The percentage Disabled employees	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	4.60%	4.50%	NA - was annual	Marginal increase compared to the previous quarter of 4.50%.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1h	The percentage Ethnic Minority employees	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	25.90%	25.60%	NA - was annual	Marginal increase compared to the previous quarter of 25.60%.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1i	The percentage leavers from Sandwell Council (aligned to WME definition from 2021/22 onwards).	smaller is better	TBC	5%	6.90%	5.00%	NA - was annual	Q2 outturn was 5.0%. The 2022/23 year-end outturn was 10.1%. The year-end outturn for 2023/24 will be compared with the available benchmark for WM Authorities.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1j	The percentage new starters to Sandwell Council (include apprentices)	Bigger is better	TBC	5%	9.70%	6.70%	NA - was annual	The Q2 outturn was 6.70%. The 2022/23 year-end outturn will be compared with outturn for 2022-23 (10.9%)	Assistant Chief Executive
O1o	Employee Engagement Score (overall)	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	60%	NA	63%	Minus 3% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey. The overall response rate for the 2023 employee survey was 50% compared to 61% in 2022.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1p	I am proud to work for the council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	67%	NA	68%	Minus 1% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1q	I would recommend this council as a good place to work	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	62%	NA	65%	Minus 3% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1r	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	53%	NA	59%	Minus 6% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1s	Considering everything, I am satisfied to be working for this council	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	71%	NA	72%	Minus 1% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey.	Assistant Chief Executive
O1t	This council motivates me to do more than is normally required in my work	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	46%	NA	52%	Minus 6% compared to the 2022 Employee Survey.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O4d	Member PDPs completed	Bigger is better	80%	5%	NA	27% (Q4 22/23)	NA	No Member PDPs have been completed to date this year. The approach to Member PDPs will be reviewed and these will be completed following the election in May. As part of the redesign of the Member Development Plan and induction process, further work will continue to complement these plans and ensure that a process for members to identify their learning needs are created, including capturing their current skills and aligning this to suitable roles.	Assistant Chief Executive
O5d	Number of surveys conducted through the Sandwell Consultation Hub	Bigger is better	TBC	TBC	67 surveys (Q3 23/24)	47 surveys (Q1 23/24)	NA	This PI is reported in Q1 and Q3. In Q3 the breakdown is as follows: ACE: 16, Children & Education: 14, Housing: 9, Regeneration & Growth: 13, Public Health: 5, Borough Economy: 4, Finance: 4, ASC: 1, L&G: 1. The Consultation Hub, Citizenspace, is becoming more embedded across the organisation and training is being delivered across all Directorates.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8a	Contact by Channel (c)	NA - awaiting strategy	NA	NA	T: 430,204 (134,185) MS: 625,206 (204,135) F2F: 41,753 (13,051) Email: 35,356 (11,804)	T: 296,019 (143,869) MS: 421,071 (186,825) F2F: 28,702 (14,199) Email: 23,542 (11,971)	T: 460,460 (154,097) MS: 583,660 (176,258) F2F: 42,951 (12,836) E: 33,680 (11,245)	Figures are provided for information only. The general trend is a decrease in contact by telephone and an increase in My Sandwell. Email and face to face contact remain consistent.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8b	% Contact by channel (c)	NA - awaiting strategy	NA	NA	T: 38% MS: 55% F2F: 4% Email: 3%	T: 38% MS: 55% F2F: 4% Email: 3%	T: 44% MS: 50% F2F: 4% E: 3%		Assistant Chief Executive
O8c	Satisfaction from process submissions (out of 5)	Bigger is better	NA - Establishing baseline	NA	4.57 out of 5 (86,838 ratings)	4.58 out of 5 (67,834 ratings) (cumulative)	NA	No major changes to any process ratings which suggest processes remain stable and meeting residents needs and expectations as far as ratings on submission.	Assistant Chief Executive

CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8j	The number of Ombudsman Cases Upheld	Smaller is better	NA	NA	Housing Ombudsman:1, Local Government Ombudsman 2	Housing Ombudsman: 4 , Local Government Ombudsman: 6	NA	There are fewer cases in Q3 compared to Q2. The figures provided are for information only.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8k	SARs volumes	Smaller is better	NA	NA	76	75	38	There is no target for the number of SARs received as this can't be controlled. Figures are provided as information only.	Finance
O8m	FOI volumes	Smaller is better	NA	NA	258	274	239	There is no target for the number of FOIs received as this can't be controlled. Figures are provided as information only.	Finance
O8o	Numbers of complaints received	Smaller is better	NA	NA	908 (2,786 cumulative)	861 (1,883 cumulative)	NA	Figures are provided as information only. Figures are not comparable to this time last year because of changes in methodology.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8q	Numbers of stage 1 and stage 2 Complaints upheld	Smaller is better	NA	NA	27% (26% cumulative)	22% (25% cumulative)	NA	Figures are provided as information only. Figures are not comparable to this time last year because of changes in methodology.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8r	Number of MP Enquiries received	Smaller is better	NA	NA	567 (1,869 cumulative)	584 (1,247 cumulative)	495 (1,669 cumulative)	Figures are provided as information only	Assistant Chief Executive
O8s	Numbers of compliments received	Bigger is better	NA	NA	105 (323 cumulative)	106 (218 cumulative)	92 (272 cumulative)	Figures are provided as information only	Assistant Chief Executive



CP & D reference	CP Indicator	Value (Bigger is better or smaller is better)	Target	Target Tolerance	Performance	DOT (Short term - last quarter)	DOT (long term - same point last year)	Commentary	Directorate
O8t	Satisfaction with Member Enquiries - the average satisfaction rating of a response	Bigger is better	NA - Establishing baseline	NA	4.22 (87 ratings)	4.35	New KPI	Satisfaction rates are good. 85% of cases were rated 4 or 5 stars, with Borough Economy and Housing amassing the vast majority of ratings (71 of the 87). Where 3 stars or below were left, the "quality of the final response" was most cited, as the reason for the lesser rating, followed by "officer management of the case". The proportion of cases councillors are rating is still very low, over 6,000 enquiries have been received year-to-date. Despite the system being improved to contain the link to rate a case within the confirmation email (no need to login to the portal to rate) only 87 have been rated. Attendance is taking place by corporate customer to all Town Members Board Meetings, where members are being prompted to rate their cases so we can base improvement on evidence – help us to help them.	Assistant Chief Executive
O8u	Lessons learnt from Complaints	NA	NA	NA	265 complaints looked in to in Q3	170 complaints looked into in Q2	NA	Out of the 265 complaints that were looked at in quarter 3 only 20 (7.5%) had any lessons learnt evidence attached to the investigation.	Assistant Chief Executive

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

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
Page 175	B1	We will promote the importance of communication and language to parents, and we will provide earlier support to children who need it.	CH11	Deliver the Family Hubs Programme, creating a network of Family Hubs and spokes which provide services for children 0 - 18 (25 if SEND)	On Track	Family Hub model has been signed off and includes 7 main family hubs, spokes, specialist spokes and mobile spokes. Mapping is complete and spoke locations identified. The number of partners working from family hubs and or delivering services from family hubs has increased: 4 additional stakeholders and additional health clinics across Sandwell. Close working with SCT to ensure families receive support as soon as possible. Families known to SCT are made aware of Family Hubs for ongoing support when statutory support is no longer required. Strategic Lead for Early Help and Family Hubs work closely together and meet fortnightly. Lead for Family Hubs joined Strategic Lead for Early Help in a monthly meeting with all Head of Service's from SCT and an action was set for all statutory teams to visit or hold a Team mtg in the Family Hubs during January 2024. Strengthening Families locality teams and Family Hub teams are closely aligned and meet regularly.
			PH8	Public Health support to babies and parents	On Track	Sandwell achieves 97.9 of their new birth visiting, against a national average of 97.6. Percentage of 6-8 week reviews completed: Sandwell achieves a remarkable completion rate of 94.1% for our 6-8 week checks, surpassing the national average of 80.2%. This showcases our commitment to promptly engaging with families and conducting essential assessments within the recommended timeframe.
			BE5	Deliver Play, Talk, Read in all libraries	On Track	126 sessions delivered
			BE6	Increase library membership of under 5's through Sandy Bear project	On Track	969 active members
	B2	We will seek additional support for social mobility projects that address early language, with an intention to increase aspiration and ability.	CH9	To ensure that all children have a good start to their education by attending good quality early years provision	Medium Issue/Slippage	Participation campaign shows signs of impact. Two year old uptake increased to 75% and 140 more 3&4 year olds are being funded in PVI nurseries. 96% of PVI and Child Minders are rated Good or better by Ofsted.
Ready for School	B3	We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes.	CH6	Ensure that every child in Sandwell has access to a place in a good or outstanding school	On Track	Work to align specialist place planning is supported by the needs assessment which is being undertaken as part of the SEND Transformation Plan
			ACE 27	Our school admission appeals service will grow their offer for the delivery of an impartial and independent admission appeals function	Medium Issue/Slippage	Annual school appeals have now concluded and the manager role has been appointed to. Further work is ongoing to ascertain charging rates and review processes to ensure that efficiencies can be made and vacant roles are filled to be able to grow our offer.
	B4	We will work with our partners, and the wider community, to support schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence	CH5	Attendance is Everybody's Business : Supporting schools to Improving school attendance and reduce persistent absence	On Track	DfE Advisor to step down support offered to Sandwell as sufficiently reassured of progress made Sandwell's "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" model as envisaged by DfE. Attendance is now in line with national averages Targeted support meeting approach working well School Attendance Service working with Sandwell Residential Education Service to pilot focused support for vulnerable cohorts
	B5	We will work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.	CH8	To challenge and support schools to raise standards in all key stages to close the gaps with national. Increase the proportion of schools and academies rated good or better by Ofsted.	On Track	Positive picture seen in most of the recent Ofsted inspections, with 2 schools gaining an Outstanding status. No further data update at this point. PEIA project support was launched for remaining strands in January 2024.

B6	We will work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives.	CH12	Lead on the implementation of the Early Help Strategy in partnership with Sandwell Children's Trust, SCVO and Krunch	Medium Issue/Slippage	The pace of change has not been as swift as the partnership would have hoped in relation to partners offering early help. In response, during November – December 23, the Early Help Partnership have reconfigured to form two arms of the partnership, one strategic and the second operational. The strategic group will represent all key partners and will be accountable for their services' response to early help and act as champions to ensure change within their service. The operational group will offer assurance around quality assurance and will help bring about grass roots change within their service. Meetings of both groups took place in January 2024.
		PH17	Relationship and Sex Education	On Track	Brook has now completed the first quarter of a renewed contract. The contract offers a holistic approach to RSHE and supports: young people directly, the school system, parents/carers and professionals who work with young people. The means of providing support, education and information is through traditional one-to-one, themed youth participating events, online training events, public health events, e-learning modules, information bulletins. This contract has been instrumental in reducing teenage pregnancies in Sandwell with the rate (for the most recent data) indicating an >18 rate per 1,000 in Sandwell of 14.1 compared to 15.2 in the West Midlands Region and just below the England rate (13.1).
B7	We will be a council that understands the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, with a workforce that provides services with compassion and understanding.	PH9	School Nursing	Significant Issues/risks/slippage	Quarter 3 contract reporting has identified issues with delivery of the contract due to staffing levels being below the acceptable threshold. A report has been requested with procurement and DPH advised. Internal action plan currently being implemented to address the under performance and identify next steps.
B8	We will work with Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care.	CH15	Continue to support Sandwell Children's Trust to improve the quality of children's social care through robust contract monitoring and management	On Track	SCT continues to maintain performance with no KPIs in the red zone in November and only one in October. Regular OPB meeting have taken place and the Strategic Partnership Board meeting took place in November. Contract Sum negotiations commenced in September and a provisional sum has been agreed, it is subject to approval by Cabinet and Full Council.
		LG6	Legal and Assurance will provide high quality advice, support and training to Sandwell Children's Trust and assist in improving performance and providing better outcome for children in care	On Track	Regular meetings taking place between MO/AD Legal & Assurance and senior officers of SCT. Direct engagement and support provided on a range of high level legal and governance activities relating to the operation of SCT. Comprehensive review undertaken of existing service standards frameworks governing provision of legal services and support to SCT. Detailed report prepared for submission to OPB and SPB. Shared understanding and approach agreed to prioritisation and commissioning activities, improvements made by the MO/AD to operational practices within Safeguarding Team of Legal Services
B9	We will be a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our 'family', and promoting fostering and adoption.	CH4	Ensuring the Council maintains a safeguarding oversight of all Children and Young People	On Track	MASH continuing to work with schools through the DSL Forum to improve support, share best practice and a better awareness of thresholds to reduce unnecessary referrals MASH Education Manager working with SIA's to complete safeguarding reviews Encouraging schools to engage in the early help operational board Working with partners to review the MASH offer with the aim of moving towards an Integrated Front Door
		CH10	Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) so that funding is appropriately targeted to meet the needs of all Sandwell Children in Care; particularly in closing the attainment gap to peers (LACE Virtual School).	On Track	KS1 - Reading 60% only 4% below All Sandwell Children. KS4 4+Eng&Maths 32% up by 11% 2021; Progress 8 -069 Sandwell CiC performing 1/2 grade better than All CiC National.
		CH14	Deliver the Corporate Parenting Action Plan, continuing to review and strengthen the corporate parenting function and governance arrangements	Medium Issue/Slippage	The CiC/CL emotional well-being pilot was due to start on 1st December 23, this has been pushed back and will now start on 8th January 2024 for 15months. 19-21 care leavers who are NEET continues to increase further from 47.1% to 56.3%. CP strategy is currently being coproduced with young people and partners in readiness for March 24.
B10	We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need.	CH2	Work collaboratively with partner agencies across Health, Children's Trust and Adults Social Care to prepare children/young people with SEND for adulthood from an early age.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Under our comprehensive transformation programme, we are steadfast in our commitment to co-producing actions with all stakeholders involved. This involves regular, weekly engagements with health partners to foster a truly collaborative approach. Our objective is to fortify the synergy between education, health, and social care, ensuring that every strategy and initiative is co-produced with the full spectrum of expertise and insights. This integrated approach not only aligns with best practices but also ensures that our children and young people with SEND receive a cohesive, well-rounded preparation for adulthood from the earliest stages. Furthermore, our (ECP) recovery plan is in place, and our team is diligently working with health and social care counterparts to craft a forward-looking SEN development plan. This proactive approach is not just about managing new plans effectively; it's also about strategically addressing tribunal cases, ensuring a more seamless and integrated service delivery.

B11	We will ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families	CH1	To deliver the requirements of the special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice and innovate our services across local area to meet needs of C/YP with SEND in Sandwell. Sandwell has seen a 48% increase in C/YP with EHC Plans since 2019, staff capacity to support C/YP and deliver timely EHC Plan within statutory timelines is now a red risk.	Medium Issue/Slippage	In response to the escalating demand for EHC Plans, we have embarked on an active recruitment strategy. This proactive approach is aimed at bolstering our staff capacity, ensuring the timely production of EHC Plans within, or as close as possible to, the 20-week statutory timeframe. It's important to note that the current completion percentage is adversely affected by a historical backlog, which inaccurately reflects our recent improvements. We've made significant strides by appointing a dedicated Tribunal and Mediations Officer. This strategic hire is instrumental, focusing not only on new tribunal cases but also diligently addressing the backlog of prior cases. This role is critical in mitigating risks and ensuring we meet our statutory obligations more efficiently. Additionally, we are actively collaborating with legal teams to reinstate any lapsed processes or protocols. This partnership is vital in ensuring our compliance with legal standards and fortifying our commitment to providing timely and effective support to C/YP with SEND in Sandwell. These concerted efforts demonstrate our unwavering commitment to not only meeting the current needs but also continuously improving our service delivery in alignment with the SEND Code of Practice. Currently, our team is not only focusing on improving performance through our existing SEN recovery plan but is also in the process of refining and updating this plan. The aim is to develop a forward-thinking, co-produced strategy, integrating contributions from educational, health, and social care sectors, to effectively manage timelines and workloads.
		CH3	To work across agencies to deliver improvements specified in the SEND Operations Board Development Plan and meet aims of the SEND Strategy. Priority areas are: Quality Assurance of Statutory Responsibilities, Workforce development, Improving provision within local area and Improving attainment and progress of C/YP with SEN	Medium Issue/Slippage	Collaborative efforts across agencies are pivotal in actualising the enhancements proposed in the SEND Operations Board Development Plan and in achieving the overarching goals of the SEND Strategy. Our concerted actions are concentrated on four critical areas. Firstly, we are dedicated to the Quality Assurance of Statutory Responsibilities, ensuring that all statutory mandates are met with the utmost diligence and efficiency. This involves rigorous monitoring and evaluation to maintain the highest standards of compliance and service delivery.
		CH7	Maintain the continued and sustained improvement of SEND Transport	On Track	Work already undertaken to address increasing cost of Travel Assistance include All families currently on transport contact to discuss alternative assistance Review of all existing transport arrangements to identify efficiencies around routing/vehicle occupancy Further work planned to review transport arrangements i.e. Travel Alone/Multiply Addresses/Part-Time timetables Seven key areas have been identified to drive SEND Travel Assistance Transformation Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Adult Social Care Fleet:</li> <li>• Review of the Travel Assistance Policy:</li> <li>• SEND 3 Procurement</li> <li>• Budget Management &amp; Forecasting</li> <li>• EHCP &amp; Travel Assistance Eligibility</li> <li>• Data Analysis &amp; Pupil Forecasting</li> <li>• Communication Strategy &amp; Plan</li> </ul> Robust governance and monitoring in place with monthly reporting to Leadership Team/Leaders Briefing/Transformation Board & Sandwell Inclusion Board
B12	We will ensure that emotional health and wellbeing support is in place for children and young people.	PH6	Investment and support of community mental health programmes		No update available
		CH13	Deliver Phase 2 of Emotional Wellbeing Grant Programme for children and young people	On Track	Phase 2 is on track to complete in December 2024. Final data is currently being collated. Planning for Phase 3 is underway, awaiting Value for Money panel sign off. Programmes will be delivered until June 2025.

# People Live Well and Age Well

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
Page 178	L1	We will identify and tackle health inequalities (especially those which have been widened by the Covid pandemic), including inequalities emerging across vulnerable groups	PH5	Healthy Sandwell advice and referral service	Medium Issue/Slippage	Installation of Health Diagnostic Software continued during Q3 with only 2 GP practice out of 47 still to sign the DPA. Cumulative Uptake of Health Checks also continued to improve to 1796 high CVD risk Health Checks completed which is 30% of target for the Year (6000 HC). 1486 of these Health Checks have been referred to their GPs for further assessment and follow up. Of those people completing the Health Checks 615 referred to Healthy Sandwell for weight management, 571 physical activities, 361 CVD risk above 10%, smokers 57, 16 to alcohol services and 118 to wellbeing services. Healthy Sandwell continued to reach large number of people through various referral pathways and follow up to various Public Health programmes. 5421 contacts made over Q3 with an average of 1807 contacts per month which is above the target of 1600 contact per month. Main areas for referrals were general follow ups, pre-diabetes, health Checks referrals and follow up, Health Fabric, physical activities, general health and wellbeing, stop smoking, sexual health and other Public Health referrals.
			PH10	Stop Smoking Support	On Track	Our quit rate per 100,000 population shows that we continue to engage and support a far higher number of smokers to quit than regional or national levels, however Sandwell's smoking prevalence rate at 21% remains above regional and national levels (13% and 12% respectively). We are working to ensure continued targeted engagement of priority groups known to have higher prevalence of smoking, whilst also delivering a universal digital offer and vapes as a harm reduction method. Work to ensure Sandwell secures further vape supplies is currently being developed through a local bid to the national 'Swap to Stop' scheme. Further work to bolster the reach and capacity of the local smoking cessation service is also underway given the recent announcement of additional grant funding for local smoking cessation services. Whilst we await further guidance from central government, planning discussions and work to prepare for a contract variation and secure approvals is underway. We are also currently recruiting additional enforcement capacity to bolster our response to illegal vapes which remain prevalent in Sandwell. Our young person's service continues to deliver education and prevention sessions across local schools on this issue.
			PH20	Air Quality		No update available
	L2	We will invest in the community, voluntary and faith sector through grants, upskilling and co-development.	PH15	Engagement of faith sector in Public Health work	On Track	The Faith Sector and Inclusion Health Development Officer recruited has been recruited and the Faith Sector Board meetings have been set up and are held bi-monthly. Each of the larger faiths in Sandwell now represented at the Faith Sector Board. New metrics to capture ongoing engagement for this indicator will be established for 24/25.
	L3	We will continue to prepare for emerging Health Protection risks and support uptake of all vaccination programmes to protect our population.	PH4	Going support with vaccination programmes (COVID and flu)		No update available
			PH7	Outbreak Management		No update available
	L4	We will work with our partners, including the community and voluntary sector, to reduce social isolation and ensure people are connected within their local communities and beyond.	PH18	Falls Prevention	On Track	Procurement activity continues to progress with ITT advertisement due to go out early Q4. Public health have committed to fund the programme as it is the only preventative programme in Sandwell that helps to improve strength and balance to reduce falls in the home. Current contract is performing well having received 273 referrals (annual target 300).
	L5	We recognise our responsibility to continue to invest in	PH3	Healthy eating and weight management		No update available
			PH12	Inclusive cycling programme	On Track	The programme was successfully delivered and now has ceased. A provider is being appointed for the summer of 2024 to deliver learn to ride sessions as part of the Cycle More Sandwell Programme and the service is looking at how this can be monitored through performance indicators.
			PH14	Greenspaces utilisation	On Track	In Q3 there were 10 weekly physical activity sessions on offer in parks and open spaces, with 597 participants attending.

		PH16	Expand the Charter Mark framework into the Voluntary and Community Sector	On Track	3 year SLA is now signed and delivery is on track.
L6	We will develop a strength-based approach to further develop a Stronger Sandwell, by working with our public sector partners and voluntary and community organisations.	ASC10	Embedding Strengths Based Practice Project.	Complete	Project Plan with milestones in place.
		ASC17a	Refresh existing market position statement.	On Track	Draft MPS now complete and to go to Commissioning Board for ratification
L6	We will develop a strength-based approach to further develop a Stronger Sandwell, by working with our public sector partners and voluntary and community organisations.	ASC17b	Dynamic market position statement.	Medium Issue/Slippage	No further update to that provided in Qtr. 1 and 2 - Place holder for a link to the Market Position Statement has been included in the refreshed Commissioning Page on the Council Website <a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/commissioning">https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/commissioning</a> but we need to commission or build internally a portal or pages for the Market Position Statement to sit .
		ASC33	Dynamic market position statement.		Duplicate - see ASC17a
		ASC52	Embedding Strengths Based Practice Project.	On Track	Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) will be presenting their findings report to the Director of Adult Social Care, Assistant Directors and Operational Heads in February 2024 and we will then look at the recommendations/next steps to action.
		H2	Develop an alternative operating model for Shop Mobility	Complete	Complete
L7	We will support people to get accessible information and advice about their health, care and support and how they can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally.	ASC8	To ensure all Adult Social Care web pages have been updated to provide easily accessible information, advice and guidance.	Complete	All pages live on new site. Accessibility rating improved from 350th to 22nd UK councils from old to new pages.
		ASC31	To continue updating the Adult Social Care web pages as and when required throughout the year. Adding accessibility elements to the website to support residents access information on the website.	Complete	Website live, continuing to update. We have added elements to support residents to access information. All pages are WCAG compliant.
		BE2	Contract management for leisure services inc. establishment of new LATC	Complete	Complete
		BE8	CWG legacy (cycling, walking, accessibility) delivery of long-term infrastructure (council also go in stronger communities)	Complete	Community sport plan in delivery phase.
		BE9	Develop sustainable business model for Living Well Leisure	Complete	Complete

		BE11	Plan and launch Aquatics Centre	Complete	Complete
		BE12	Programme of cultural events and activities across all libraries and museums	On Track	204 events with 4407 attending
L8	We will continue to support access to food through food banks and opportunities for children in school holidays.	ASC23	To continue to monitor demand on Enquiry Service in light of current economic situation. Especially in relation to cost of living crisis and fuel crisis.	On Track	Demand continues to be monitored and does not match capacity. A number of transformation approaches are being considered for the Adult Social Care front door, alongside the implementation of the new corporate contact centre solution due in April 2024. A report will be presented to DMT in February 2024 to consider the resources currently allocated to this service.
L9	We will ensure that we have sufficient mental health provision and we will promote good mental health through a range of initiatives, ensuring equitable access to mental health support.	PH6	Investment and support of community mental health programmes	On Track	The programme of activities/projects focusing on older adults, carers, people with disabilities/long-term conditions, people who are blind or visually impaired, and people who are deaf or hearing impaired continue to be delivered during Q3. Expression of interests have been received and evaluated for projects focusing on Black communities and Eastern European communities with successful projects expected to start delivery in Q4. Total funding allocated to this work to date is £290,550.
L10	We will contribute to better air quality and climate change through raising public awareness, increasing active travel and supporting sustainable transport.	R1	Develop and implement council-wide programme of carbon literacy	On Track	Additional sessions for Assistant Directors booked in for Feb 24. Sessions for Member Steering Group also being arranged.
		R2	We will deliver the Active Travel projects funded by both Towns Fund Programme and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	On Track	Programme on track, some amendments due to public feedback following consultation.
L11	We will ensure continued investment into health and wellbeing services including drugs and alcohol, adult obesity and smoking cessation.	PH1	Drug Misuse Services	On Track	The latest drug related deaths data released 19th Dec 2023 shows Sandwell's drug rate deaths has further improved to now just 2.1 per 100,000 population for the latest period 2020-22 (was 2.2 for previous period). This decrease is in contrast to regional and national trends which have both got worse and remain worse than Sandwell levels (5.7 regionally and 5.2 nationally). We know this is due to the enhanced harm reduction and outreach approach which Sandwell has developed in conjunction with system-wide partners. Our developing Recovery offer will also further continue to have an impact on this and we are delighted to have representation from a number of individuals with lived and living experience at our Strategic Drug & Alcohol Partnership (SDAP) meetings. Full info: <a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales2022registrations">https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales2022registrations</a>
		PH2	Alcohol Misuse Services	On Track	Sandwell's hospital based Alcohol Care Team have worked closely with community alcohol treatment services to ensure seamless pathways and joined up care. Work to explore more community based engagement events including fibro scanning activity is currently being explored. Identification of alcohol support needs via health check delivery has been recognised as good practice from the national OHID Addictions team who are looking to develop Sandwell as a best practice case study nationally. The vacant Public Health Alcohol Project Manager -new starter to commence Feb 4th 2024.
L12	We will support more people to achieve healthier life choices and be informed around their health through; delivering Making Every Contact Count, Health Checks, the Healthy aging app and access to health interventions through Healthy Sandwell and social prescribing support.	PH11	Public Health marketing campaigns		No update available
L13	We will encourage more people to be healthy through being physically active and eating good nutrition. Through #movemoresandwell, School meal review and weight management support.	PH13	Sandwell Stride programme and digital app-based walking offer	On Track	Walk attendances for Oct – Dec 2023 were 1,465 with an average weekly attendance of 112. One new weekly walk started at Brandhall Community Hub.



L14	We will actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We will tailor the care, support and treatment in response.	ASC2	Prioritisation and delivery of Discharge 2 Assess Action Plan.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Pathway 2 recovery plan projects continue. Two are complete. Progress has been hindered by capacity of Operational HUB leads to progress due to increasing discharge pressures and complexity of discharge needs. A meeting is being held week commencing 29th January 2024 to review progress and map support options to pull back on track. Place leads are reviewing the current program requirements to identify the top 3 key priority areas for 2024/2025.
		ASC35	Implementation of Charging Reform/Care Cap.	On Track	The government announced there will be a 2 year delay in the introduction of the Charging Reform for Adult Social Care from October 2023 - 2025. Milestones and project plan have been aligned to the revised timeframes and regular workstream meetings are in place.
		ASC56	The Local Authority will need to implement the Charging Reform. As part of the charging reform a Care Cap is being introduced on the amount a person with eligible care and support needs, will spend on their care in their lifetime.	On Track	The government announced there will be a 2 year delay in the introduction of the Charging Reform for Adult Social Care from October 2023 - 2025. Milestones and project plan have been aligned to the revised timeframes and regular workstream meetings are in place.
		ASC57	The Local Authority will need to implement the Charging Reform. As part of the charging reform a Care Cap is being introduced on the amount a person with eligible care and support needs, will spend on their care in their lifetime.	On Track	The government announced there will be a 2 year delay in the introduction of the Charging Reform for Adult Social Care from October 2023 - 2025. Milestones and project plan have been aligned to the revised timeframes and regular workstream meetings are in place.
		ASC59	Go live with supported living framework.	Medium Issue/Slippage	No further progress since last report but this has no financial implications to the Directorate as financially the supported living market has been stabilised as reported in Qtr. 1. There may be financial benefits by reviewing all supported living placements with a strength based approach and looking to replace support hours with assistive technology. Conscious of capacity in procurement and contract functions to go through approval process for supported living providers wanting to join the framework. Conscious also of demands on Care Management to transfer people who's providers choose not to apply or who are unsuccessful in applying to join the new framework. Day Services framework right now is more of a priority
L15	We will promote access to employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and those with mental ill health.	PH.6	Investment and support of community mental health programmes		No update available
L16	We will review access to day care provisions to ensure that people have access to community resources to improve independence and choice.	ASC6	Review and option appraisal for in-house day service offer.	Complete	12 week pathway staff team established. Launch presentation being completed.
		ASC20	Implement new Day opportunities model across the market.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Update provided at Q2 remains. We are working on developing improved pathways around Direct Payments before we move forward in terms of diversifying the market. Workshop being arranged to try and resolve some of the issues both from the administration of Direct Payments and the perception in the use and application of Direct Payments by Social Work staff and people who draw upon social care and support
		ASC30	Implement outcome of the options appraisal for both community and building based day service offer.	Complete	Postural care plans being identified per individual in co-production with Health, physio & Occupational Therapists.

L17	We work with people to understand what being safe means to them and work with our partners to develop the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We will make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.	ASC9	A review of Safeguarding Improvement Plans.	Complete	The Safeguarding Improvement Plan continues to be reviewed on a monthly basis.
		ASC18	A new Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan to be in place in 2024 and action plan to be reviewed and revised from an Adult Social Care perspective in response to the new strategic plan.	On Track	The current Strategic Plan is until March 2024. Adult Social Care Board members attended the Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Development Session on the 15th November 2023 to be part of developing the new Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan.
		ASC19	Adult Social Care response to Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan.	Complete	The Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan has been reviewed and actions are monitored via the workstreams that are in place.
		ASC11	Adult safeguarding improvements in practice and performance. Monitor progress and review need for new actions.	On Track	There is a further reduction in contact and duty backlogs. Staffing levels have increased and were a full establishment of social workers (agency staff) including extra staffing resource to clear the backlog by the end of the financial year. The permanent recruit of staff is taking place as wider ASC recruitment campaign.
		ASC34	Implementation and review of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).	On Track	Adult Social Care is undertaking work in readiness and preparedness for implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards - this remains on hold pending government guidance.
		ASC36	Implementation of the operational model in relation to Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).	On Track	Adult Social Care is undertaking work in readiness and preparedness for implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards - this remains on hold pending government guidance.
		ASC37	Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) will replace Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). LPS will provide a framework for people aged 16 and above to determine whether a deprivation of liberty is necessary and proportionate to enable care or treatment for the individual.	On Track	Adult Social Care is undertaking work in readiness and preparedness for implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards - this remains on hold pending government guidance.
		ASC51	Embedding learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Serious Case Reviews. Establish a clear procedure for learning in Sandwell for all levels of Adult Social Care to disseminate information and raise awareness. Frontline practitioners to be clear of the organisations approach to learning and developing a culture of learning.	On Track	We have continued to review the Quality Assurance Framework and continued to deliver bespoke sessions for staff. Recent adult safeguarding audits have identified training for staff and managers across teams. Currently working with Learning and Development to plan safeguarding training for managers and staff.
		ASC1	Operating model for intermediate care services.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Officers from Health and Adult Social Care have been meeting regularly to discuss Intermediate Care. Operating model for STAR and Harvest View in place. Review undertaken with Harvest View admission criteria, with work now moving to the service descriptions on LAS, to ensure they both capture and mirror the services being delivered i.e. crisis, reablement or enhanced assessment. There is currently a draft Intermediate Care Operating Model which requires some amendments following consultation with the Assistant Directors and will need to obtain input from the SWBH Clinical Lead - this has been delayed due to capacity.

ASC3	Joint Equipment Stores site development and relocation of Community Alarms.	Significant issues/risks/slippage	<p>Legal issue with barriers of A1 Clutches still remains - chased on 22/09/23, 29/09/2023, November 2023 and on 22.01.2024 and still awaiting a response.</p> <p>Relocation of Community Alarms will be end of February/March 2024. Meeting with BT on 23.01.2024 and then plan to agree live tests with Jontek in February 2024.</p>
ASC4	Established intermediate care service in relation to an integrated offer across all partners.	On Track	<p>Redesign of STAR in relation to the wider intermediate care offer consultation has commenced and on track to be completed by May 2024.</p> <p>The development of intermediate care and reablement services for Harvest View has been implemented on the top floor which opened January 2024.</p>
ASC5	Established intermediate care service in relation to social care operating models.	On Track	<p>Redesign of STAR in relation to the wider intermediate care offer consultation has commenced and on track to be completed by May 2024.</p> <p>The development of intermediate care and reablement services for Harvest View has been implemented on the top floor which opened January 2024.</p>
ASC7	Options appraisal on STAR service due to impact of Discharge 2 Assess.	Complete	<p>An options appraisal has been completed and agreed at the Directorate Management Team and Joint Partnership Board Meetings as the agreed way forward for STAR, the actual project to deliver the appraisal will be in April/May2024.</p>
ASC15	<p>Establish a programme of complete actions required for the transformation of social work and therapy including the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Integrated Town Teams</li> <li>• Reviews</li> <li>• Liberty Protection Safeguards</li> <li>• Community DoLS</li> <li>• Workforce Strategy</li> <li>• Staff Survey</li> <li>• Charging Reform</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Process and Procedures</li> <li>• Direct Payments</li> <li>• Appointeeship</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Restructure</li> <li>• Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team</li> <li>• Continuing Health Care</li> </ul>	On Track	<p>All programme of actions are monitored via the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Action Plan and relevant lead for each of the four themes in the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Town Teams - These have been established in the 6 towns and meet with partners on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Reviews - A dedicated Strength based project for reviews is in place.</li> <li>• Liberty Protection Safeguards - The implementation is currently on hold by the government.</li> <li>• Community DoLS - Processes and procedures are being updated and will be linked to the Tri.x implementation.</li> <li>• Workforce Strategy - has been completed and approved.</li> <li>• Staff Survey - A presentation of the results was presented to DMT and the Op's Managers in order for each Op's Head to discuss with their teams and assist in developing actions on key issues in their areas.</li> <li>• Charging Reform - The implementation is currently on hold by the government.</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Process and Procedures - Tri.x Implementation Project now in place and monitored by the CQC Project Board.</li> <li>• Direct Payments - Adult Social Care has a project team in place and the policies and procedures will be reviewed via the Tri.x Project.</li> <li>• Appointeeship - The policies and procedures will be reviewed via the Tri.x Project.</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Restructure - The Adult Social Care Restructure has been completed.</li> <li>• Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team - The specialist Younger Adults, Learning Disability and Autism team has been created. Project Group will look at the operating model.</li> <li>• Continuing Health Care (CHC) - We are working with partners to develop a robust and consistent CHC pathway for Sandwell residents. We have an identified CHC lead who will lead on the CHC pathway. Project Group will look at the operating model.</li> </ul>

ASC16	<p>Implement the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Town Teams</li> <li>• Reviews</li> <li>• Liberty Protection Safeguards</li> <li>• Community DoLS</li> <li>• Workforce Strategy</li> <li>• Staff Survey</li> <li>• Charging Reform</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Process and Procedures</li> <li>• Direct Payments</li> <li>• Appointeeship</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Restructure</li> <li>• Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team</li> <li>• Continuing Health Care</li> </ul>	On Track	<p>All programme of actions are monitored via the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Action Plan and relevant lead for each of the four themes in the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Town Teams - These have been established in the 6 towns and meet with partners on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Reviews - A dedicated Strength based project for reviews is in place.</li> <li>• Liberty Protection Safeguards - The implementation is currently on hold by the government.</li> <li>• Community DoLS - Processes and procedures are being updated and will be linked to the Tri.x implementation.</li> <li>• Workforce Strategy - has been completed and approved.</li> <li>• Staff Survey - A presentation of the results was presented to DMT and the Op's Managers in order for each Op's Head to discuss with their teams and assist in developing actions on key issues in their areas.</li> <li>• Charging Reform - The implementation is currently on hold by the government.</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Process and Procedures - Tri.x Implementation Project now in place and monitored by the CQC Project Board.</li> <li>• Direct Payments - Adult Social Care has a project team in place and the policies and procedures will be reviewed via the Tri.x Project.</li> <li>• Appointeeship - The policies and procedures will be reviewed via the Tri.x Project.</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Restructure - The Adult Social Care Restructure has been completed.</li> <li>• Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team - The specialist Younger Adults, Learning Disability and Autism team has been created. Project Group will look at the operating model.</li> <li>• Continuing Health Care (CHC) - We are working with partners to develop a robust and consistent CHC pathway for Sandwell residents. We have an identified CHC lead who will lead on the CHC pathway. Project Group will look at the operating model.</li> </ul>
ASC21	<p>Commissioning Place Based Model - map current commissioning model and activity across place to identify any duplication or gaps.</p> <p>Establish a Place Based Commissioning Board.</p>	Complete	We have reviewed the Joint Partnership Board and incorporated the Commissioning Board Terms of Reference.
ASC22	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.	Complete	There are many separate elements to this including dealing with issues within the existing day services markets.
ASC24	Monitor progress against key performance indicator's through performance management dashboard.	Medium Issue/Slippage	KPI data is live and reported monthly through the Intermediate Care and Care Navigation Program Delivery Group. There is a need to ensure all areas are reporting data in the same format to enable accurate comparison which will be implemented by February's report. Publication of partnership data is now significantly delayed. Craig Watkins, Business Partner – Place Information Team – Performance & Insight is leading this work. This is being chased weekly at the Senior Leads meetings and monthly by the Intermediate Care and Care Navigation Program Delivery Group. Work continues to ensure the Community National weekly Sitrep includes all pathway 2 beds (currently only health beds are reported). A meeting has been requested with Binda Rana to discuss how the required delayed data fields can be built into current SMBC systems. An operational implementation plan for delay reason recording will then be required once data fields are complete.
ASC25	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.	Complete	A three year financial plan agreed by Cabinet in August 2022. Also received the Market Sustainability and Improvement Funding to support uplifts to the market which has now been confirmed for a further 2 years.
ASC26	Agree a position in response to market requests for uplifts and agreed annual increases.	Complete	A three year financial plan agreed by Cabinet in August 2022. Also received the Market Sustainability and Improvement Funding to support uplifts to the market which has now been confirmed for a further 2 years.

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We will support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control, live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.

ASC28	Develop a Co-production Strategy with place based partners, citizens and carers.	On Track	Again as reported in previous Quarters Co-production remains on track. The Directorates Our Plan has been approved by the Directorate and by Health and Wellbeing Board. This now needs to be implemented. Recruitment for the 2 Commissioning Support Officers is in progress and should subject to approval by VFM panel be going out to the market very soon. Work is also underway in finalising the corporate commitments to Co-production involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders. This will inform the Council Corporate Commitment to Co-production. Attention will then turn to a commitment across Place, but much of the work will already be done with the excellent partnership and stakeholder work already undertaken.
ASC29	To upgrade the Walker Grange accommodation and communal areas in order to provide a modern service at the Grange.	On Track	Accommodation - Contractors due on site week commencing 5th February 2024 - delayed due to electrical panel upgrade required. Once works commence on the 5th February, anticipated time scale is 3-4 months for completion of the remaining 5 Flats.
ASC32	As technology develops continued review of new opportunities available for deployment.	On Track	We continue to review opportunities as progress develops for Adult Social Care across Place and the Integrated Care Systems. The Ethal remote monitoring system has now been procured for use by the Integrated Care Board across the Black Country. Place meeting arranged to agree rollout in Sandwell. Further rollout of digital kit will be linked to Adult Social Care transformation programme as it develops.
ASC38	Realignment of intermediate Social Work Team with Community Social Work Teams.	Complete	The realignment of intermediate Social Work Team with Community Social Work Teams is complete.
ASC39	Fair Cost of Care Exercise. Implement outcomes of mandated cost of care. Undertake cost of care exercise for supported living market.	Complete	Fair cost of Care exercise completed for mandated services and supported living market.
ASC40	Fair Cost of Care Exercise. Implement outcomes of supported living cost of care. Undertake cost of care exercise for day services and complex residential care.	Complete	There are no plans to continue with day services and residential care at the moment whilst we explore the framework opportunities.
ASC41	Identify resources to scope, develop and rollout digital offer and integrated communications. Initial implementation focussed on in-house services	On Track	We continue to review opportunities as progress develops for Adult Social Care across Place and the Integrated Care Systems. The Ethal remote monitoring system has now been procured for use by the Integrated Care Board across the Black Country. Place meeting arranged to agree rollout in Sandwell. Further rollout of digital kit will be linked to Adult Social Care transformation programme as it develops.
ASC42	Commissioning Place Based Model - Agree a Market Development Strategy which defines current gaps in provision and how these will be addressed across place together with agreed commissioning priorities for development.	Complete	We now have a Market Development Strategy in place which has been published.

ASC43	Identify resources to scope, develop and rollout digital offer and integrated communications. Testing market and digital rollout.	On Track	We continue to review opportunities as progress develops for Adult Social Care across Place and the Integrated Care Systems. The Ethal remote monitoring system has now been procured for use by the Integrated Care Board across the Black Country. Place meeting arranged to agree rollout in Sandwell. Further rollout of digital kit will be linked to Adult Social Care transformation programme as it develops.
ASC44	Walker Grange fully developed and modernised.	Significant issues/risks/slippage	Currently no feasibility study completed against planned design or developments. This will put the development of the service at risk, should the project be deemed not-viable. A site survey and drawings were completed 2022. These have not progressed to costing stage
ASC45	Implement agreed STAR operating model integrated with I Cares and Harvest View to deliver intermediate care at home.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Initially we were advised that we would require Cabinet approval to progress with this action, however in December 2023 we were informed by legal and the Section 151 Officer to amend the paperwork to request Cabinet Member approval instead. The above and the closedown period caused a slight delay the process. New deadline for implementation is May 2024.
ASC47	Walker Grange - work undertaken to implement upgrade and develop dementia offer.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Work on remaining flats for phase 1 is scheduled to commence on 5th Feb. Show flats completed, agreed spec for development 5 flats now being brought up to spec. Work to be completed in Q4. Contractor starts on site next week (5 Feb).
ASC49	Implement agreed STAR operating model integrated with I Cares to deliver intermediate care at home.	On Track	The Cabinet Member report was approved in January 2024 and consultation with Unions has commenced.

<p>ASC50</p>	<p>Review progress and refresh the transformation programme identified for social work and therapy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Town Teams</li> <li>• Reviews</li> <li>• Liberty Protection Safeguards</li> <li>• Community DoLS</li> <li>• Workforce Strategy</li> <li>• Staff Survey</li> <li>• Charging Reform</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Process and Procedures</li> <li>• Direct Payments</li> <li>• Appointeeship</li> <li>• Adult Social Care Restructure</li> <li>• Creation of Learning Disabilities/Autism Team</li> <li>• Continuing Health Care</li> </ul>	<p>On Track</p>	
<p>ASC53</p>	<p>Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adults services. Map out the current transitional model.</p>	<p>On Track</p>	<p>New deadline for implementation is May 2024.</p>
<p>ASC54</p>	<p>Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adults services. Robust pathway for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who may be eligible for adult social care services.</p>	<p>On Track</p>	<p>Development of Operating model with identified roles, responsibilities, timeframes-co produced with partners.</p> <p>There will be a Preparing for Adulthood Monitoring Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 times a year</li> <li>• Service representatives from adult and children's social care, health and education.</li> </ul> <p>High level data analysis has also been completed through Power BI, to establish contact created, associated outcome information and service costings for the specified period. High level analysis has also been completed on the Demographic Panel spreadsheet information.</p>
<p>ASC55</p>	<p>Seamless Transition from Children's services to Adults services. The intention is to create a seamless and robust pathway from a child-centred care system to adult strength based orientated services.</p>	<p>On Track</p>	<p>The Preparing for Adulthood protocol will be signed off by the Leadership team and this will continue to be updated and reviewed annually. We are also ensuring whole system approach and seamless pathway joint approach and training is in place.</p>

		ASC58	Re-commission PIP Pathway, Domiciliary care provision to deliver outcomes focussed reablement support alongside intermediate care at home service.	On Track	Cabinet Member report approved in January 2024 and consultation with Unions has commenced. Meetings to consult staff are scheduled during January 2024. New deadline for implementation is May 2024.
		ASC60	Commissioning Place Based Model is in place.	Complete	Commissioning Place Based Model now in place. All commissioning activity for Place to be managed through the Joint Partnership Board.
		ASC61	To rollout the Implementation of the E-brokerage system to support the wider social care provision.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Discussions with the Hospital Brokerage team are taking place to pilot rollout opportunities.
L19	We will understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We will share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement.	ASC27	Implement agreed Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan. Review current commissioned services to ensure fit for purpose and agree revised commissioning plan.	On Track	A story board showing the actions to be undertaken, that also meet the strategy has been developed. Communication was developed by the Council's team that was shared in December to promote the strategy to key stakeholders. Websites have been refreshed to support people to find carers services and a community resource pack has been developed with a new carers section to ensure people can have more options to meet their care and support needs. this has been shared with the social work teams and Voluntary Sector Community. A new series of meetings are being issued to keep strategy implementation on track. All carers grants have been reviewed and intentions are being agreed Week commencing 29 January 2024. Support from health has been requested. December's meeting was cancelled due to Winter pressures.
L20	We will ensure that all carers in Sandwell are offered support in a timely way and that they have access to the information, guidance and advice that they need.	ASC46	Review and refresh Carers Strategy.	On Track	Carers grants have been reviewed and a joint meeting to agree intentions with Voluntary Sector Support Team is planned for week commencing 29 January 2024.
		ASC12	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is implemented.	Complete	The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy has been completed and signed off for the directorate. Currently developing an action plan to improve recruitment, retention and workforce development.
L21	We will develop a comprehensive Workforce Strategy - one that incorporates recruitment and retention, whilst also assessing joint health and social care roles.	ASC13	An approved and resourced workforce strategy for social work and therapy is in place.	Complete	The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy has been completed and signed off for the directorate. Currently developing an action plan to improve recruitment, retention and workforce development.



ASC14	Develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for social work and therapy to improve recruitment and retention.	Complete	The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy has been completed and signed off for the directorate. Currently developing an action plan to improve recruitment, retention and workforce development.
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## Strong Resilient Communities

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
Page 190	C1	We will ensure our grant funding of community/voluntary sector activity supports the priorities we're outlining in this plan.	PH19	Community champions programme		No update available
			ACE5	Bring together governance arrangements and budgets to ensure VCS grants are aligned to corporate objectives	Medium Issue/Slippage	Work still ongoing with Finance to identify budgets to be built into centralised budget. Annual report of 2022/23 grants and impact produced and discussed with members. Scope of the project to be reviewed with new Assistant Chief Executive
			ACE6	Voluntary Sector Support - ensure grants given to the voluntary and community sector by the council conform to the Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Funding Guidance and Procedures and wider Financial Regulations, and deliver value for money in achieving the council's strategic priorities	Complete	Grant Procedure rules completed and aligned with Contract procedures. Revised Grant Agreement approved by Legal in January 2024. Both documents communicated to commissioners and Intranet page updated.
	C2	We will deliver the Towns Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis, secured through £67.5m of Town Deal Funding.	R3	We will deliver the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners (NHS, Sandwell College, Canal & River Trust) across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich	Medium Issue/Slippage	Broadly on track, achieved planning consent for NHS Learning Hub on MM site. Refurb/Regen of WB Town Hall has commenced with Morgan Sindall. Construction cost inflation remains an issue.
	C3	Through working with the SHAPE Forum, we will make sure that our towns become welcoming places for young people and that they have jobs, activities and facilities to give them a part in the local community.	BE12	Programme of events and activities across all libraries and museums	On Track	204 events with 4407 attending
	C4	We will put the needs of our residents at the heart of what we do, establishing processes to engage with them to ensure that our residents guide and influence our services.	BE27	Development of Heritage Strategy for the Borough	On Track	To be incorporated into Cultural Strategy
			BE36	Playing Pitch Strategy	Complete	
			ACE 28	Undertake a review of Neighbourhood Working arrangements and governance	On Track	Identified all existing resources and activities in relation to locality working. Completed SWOT analyses of locality working from different service provider/ user. perspectives, to identify strengths and weaknesses of current neighbourhood working (obtaining views of members, officers and public and looking at best practice elsewhere). Next steps: work with the project team on the development of a new model. Identify the optimum building blocks for a neighbourhood working model. Identify efficiencies and new ways of working where appropriate.

		BE37	Customer Access and Management	Complete	Waste and Street Cleansing workflow now BaU for Business Management Team
C5	We will strive to maintain Green Flag status in 14 parks, whilst also working to enhance our existing green and open spaces, create new places to play and committing to plant 10,000 trees by 2030.	BE30	Implementation of PSS Ultimate for green services, green spaces, and service assets and stock tracking	Complete	Currently in use
		BE31	Delivery of trees strategy and planting programme for 23/24 planting season	On Track	c. 2,000 trees to be planted in 2024 spring, ahead of target
		BE32	Delivery of 23/24 Green Spaces Strategy Objectives.	On Track	Green space programme of works 23/24 as published on track to be delivered.
		BE46	Develop 10 year green spaces master plan and funding plan (based on improvement plan and assets review).	Complete	
		LG8	Through our bereavement teams, we will strive to maintain and approve Green Flag status in our cemeteries and crematoria, whilst also working to enhance our existing and new cemeteries and crematoria	On Track	2024 Green Flag submissions to be sent by 31 January 2024.
C6	We will support our residents to cope with the current cost of living crisis and address the long term underlying causes of poverty.	BE12	Programme of events and activities across all libraries and museums	On Track	204 events with 4407 attending
C7	We will develop and deliver a libraries strategy that works together with the community. We will start to roll out the Open+ model which represents a different way of working for public libraries.	BE7	Delivery of Libraries and Archives Strategy including rollout of Library+ (a new model of delivery)	On Track	7 libraries live with Library Plus
		BE10	Deliver feasibility and funding strategy for new Archives Centre	On Track	Feasibility complete. Cabinet paper taken on the 7th February to agree funding strategy

C8	We will work the community and local stakeholders to develop a legacy plan that maximises the benefits of the Commonwealth Games Sandwell Aquatic Centre.	BE35	Leisure Built Facilities Strategy	Medium Issue/Slippage	With the launch of SAC and the LUF 2 Project to rebuild Haden Hill Leisure Centre work to develop the built facility/strategy has been paused until 2024.
		R4	We will develop and commit to delivering a Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan which ensures sustainable economic, wellbeing and cultural benefits of the Games for our communities.	Complete	Complete
		R5	We will deliver the Legacy Build phase for the Sandwell Aquatics Centre and make facility available for public use from Summer 2023.	Complete	Complete
C9	We will showcase local, regional, national and international talent in an engaging and inspiring programme of events.		Programme of cultural events and activities across all libraries and museums	On Track	204 events with 4407 attending
C10	We will explore and develop a Sandwell Valley phased investment programme over the next five years—towards the Valley becoming a key Visitor and Destination Gateway into Sandwell.	BE28	Approved Master Plan for Sandwell Valley (10 year plan)	On Track	Currently public consultation and approved by Capital Board, and pre-decision scrutiny. Going to Cabinet for decision in March 24
		BE29	Delivery of Forge Mill Farm Education and Outreach Barn Project	On Track	Due for completion in March / April 2024
C11	We will work with partners to deliver initiatives that will help up to achieve our climate change strategy and the target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2041.	R6	Produce Corporate Climate Change Action Plan to ensure we can meet our 2030 and 2041 targets for carbon neutrality	Complete	
C12	We will embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.	H15	Plan for replacement of diesel fleet with sustainable fuel vehicles	Significant issues/risks/slippage	Estate Services - no lease or vehicle renewals due within the short term. When vehicles are due for replacement we will consult to ensure the most appropriate type of vehicles are ordered. The Corporate Fleet Review will make recommendation on the transition to Electric Vehicles (EVs). SMBC has now funded the installation of EV charging points at Serco's Shidas Lane Depot which will allow the replacement of their light-commercial fleet with EVs later this year. This will be 44 Internal Combustion Engine vehicles replaced with EVs.
C13	We will review our corporate fleet, so that they are low carbon and compatible with our climate change strategy for 2030. Working with our partners, we will make refuse collection and street cleansing greener with the rollout of electric street cleansing vehicles and participation in pilot projects to test other green vehicles.	BE18	Support the delivery of SMBC Carbon reduction action plan	On Track	Included in commission to EVP Solutions as part of Corporate Fleet review.

Green

C14	We will improve and transform our street cleansing programmes post Covid.	BE43	Deliver hot spot solutions group to deal with long standing sites for embedded fly tips, ASB and other issues relating to the urban environment	On Track	Team currently in delivery mode until March 2023
C15	We will increase recycling rates and encourage cultural change.	BE1	Contract Management for wate services including introduction of charging for garden waste	On Track	Garden waste year 2 now active. Alternative collection methodology work continues.
C16	Sandwell's Community Safety Strategy will be reviewed and priorities will include ongoing work around prevention of violence and exploitation, reducing offending, reoffending and serious organised crime and supporting victims. We will implement our Domestic Abuse strategy in line with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.	BE13	Delivery of Domestic Abuse Strategy to continue to improve community safety	On Track	Numbers of Domestic Abuse crimes/non-crimes reported to the police: 1,649 Crime / 967 Non-crime , Nos accessing multi agency training: 296; MARAC cases 294
		BE15	Delivery of the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy	On Track	Quarter 3 report provided to Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board at the end of January 2024
C17	We will continue to work with partners and agencies to ensure that there is a joined up and effective approach to hate crime.	BE15	Delivery of the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy	On Track	Quarter 3 report will be provided to Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board at the end of January 2025
C18	We will strengthen our approach and raise awareness across partner agencies, businesses and communities, to address modern slavery and work collaboratively to target perpetrators and support victims.	BE15	Delivery of the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy	On Track	Quarter 3 report will be provided to Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board at the end of January 2026
C19	We will strengthen our multi-agency tasking processes for community safety and take steps to foster resilience, shared understanding, support networks and cross-community working	BE15	Delivery of the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy	On Track	Quarter 3 report will be provided to Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board at the end of January 2027
	We will deliver more responsive, robust and co-ordinated and integrated enforcement service across the council.	BE14	Implement a zero tolerance approach to perpetrators of fly tipping and landowners who fail to clear fly-tipped waste from their land.	On Track	There were 3150 fly tips attended in quarter 3. The cost of removal was £167,681
		BE16	Deliver more effective integrated enforcement	Medium Issue/Slippage	Report on progress taken to Leadership 24 October 2023. Pilot case management approach in progress. Discussion with Leaders scheduled for February 2024 . some slippage due to recruitment issues but some capacity now identified and data system work started. Report back to Leadership due April 2024.

BE42	Report to Cabinet for Enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions Approval	On Track	Now received letter of support from West Midlands Police. Now sat with DFT to consider approval by March 2024.
BE43	Deliver Hot Spot Solutions Group to deal with long standing sites for embedded fly tips, ASB and other issues relating the urban environment	On Track	Hot spot team currently in delivery made until March 2024
LG9	We will work with colleagues across the council and be a key player on the board providing strategic advice and strategy to make our communities a safer place	On Track	The new Monitoring Officer/AD Legal & Assurance continues to engage pro-actively with all Directorates and Service Areas. Advice and support offered from Legal Services is being offered in accordance with client instruction and with additional content to assist and provide client services with additional opportunities to innovate and deliver best practice to ensure both compliance with governance frameworks and increased agility and quality of decision-making.

# Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
H1	We will deliver much needed new homes across the borough, especially affordable homes, on our own land and other viable sites in order to help meet the demand for affordable housing in our communities	R7	We will introduce town centre living in appropriate locations ensuring council developments maintain excellent standards in urban design.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Construction cost inflation and ground conditions have impacted on HRA/residential schemes. Specific schemes are being reviewed and value engineered, prior to retendering.
		R8	We will work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough.	On Track	In Q3 there has been a start on site on the Old Gas Works at Swan Lane, West Bromwich. The Council are supporting Green Sq Accord to deliver 147 affordable homes. £3.2m Council has secured to support the scheme, BCLEP legacy funding.
H2	We will help keyworkers to access affordable housing in order that Sandwell can attract and retain a strong local health and social care workforce for the benefit of our communities.	R8	We will work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough.	On Track	In Q3 there has been a start on site on the Old Gas Works at Swan Lane, West Bromwich. The Council are supporting Green Sq Accord to deliver 147 affordable homes. £3.2m Council has secured to support the scheme, BCLEP legacy funding.
H3	We will help to keep people independent in their own homes for as long as possible through use of the Disabled Facilities Grants and adapting council homes for tenants with disabilities.	H3	Implement revised policy statements to maximise the use of Disabled Facilities Grant funding	On Track	
		H4	In Partnership with Adult Social Care, access the Housing Transformation Fund to support Independent Living	Medium Issue/Slippage	Work to transform 5 flats at Walker Grange to support older persons with dementia programmed for completion in Q4. Other innovation projects between housing and adult social care being explored and funded through use of the Disabled Facility Grant reserves.
H4	We will ensure there are housing options available to children and young people who have complex needs and those who have been in care so that they have a sustainable roof over their head.	H1	Review of the Housing Offer for Young People, including Care Leavers	On Track	The St Basils Scheme is nearing completion, nominations agreement and allocation processes in place in preparation for when the scheme is available for occupation. Work commenced with Children's Trust to support fostering by reviewing housing options available to those who wish to foster.
H5	We will focus more of our council house building and adaptations on the needs of people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs.	R8	We will work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough.	On Track	In Q3 there has been a start on site on the Old Gas Works at Swan Lane, West Bromwich. The Council are supporting Green Sq Accord to deliver 147 affordable homes. £3.2m Council has secured to support the scheme, BCLEP legacy funding.
H6	We will incorporate renewable energy measures into the design of new-build Council homes.	R7	We will introduce town centre living in appropriate locations ensuring council developments maintain excellent standards in urban design.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Construction cost inflation and ground conditions have impacted on HRA/residential schemes. Specific schemes are being reviewed and value engineered, prior to retendering.

	H7	We will work to identify the needs of the most vulnerable people in Sandwell and work upstream to prevent homelessness where ever possible.	H14	Delivery of Homeless & Rough Sleepers Implementation Plan	On Track	The strategy delivery plan is progressing well with 14 of the 35 actions complete and a further 15 on track to be completed by target date (29 of the 35 in total). There is only one action that is significantly off track which relates to further partnership work around intervention points and potential wider system redesign.
	H8	We will work to prevent and end rough sleeping.	H14	Delivery of Homeless & Rough Sleepers Implementation Plan	On Track	The strategy delivery plan is progressing well with 14 of the 35 actions complete and a further 15 on track to be completed by target date (29 of the 35 in total). There is only one action that is significantly off track which relates to further partnership work around intervention points and potential wider system redesign.
	H9	We will explore all options for housing delivery, including new partnerships and new funding opportunities.	R8	We will work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough.	On Track	In Q3 there has been a start on site on the Old Gas Works at Swan Lane, West Bromwich. The Council are supporting Green Sq Accord to deliver 147 affordable homes. £3.2m Council has secured to support the scheme, BCLEP legacy funding.
	H10	We will raise the standard and safety of homes in the private rented sector and bring more empty homes back into use.	H9	Pro-active enforcement of Standards across Private Rented Accommodation	On Track	The service is now up to full establishment after 9 months of intensive recruitment. The service is midst a comprehensive training programme for the new trainee enforcement officers and CPD for the experienced staff in recent legislative changes. Demand is increasing but the team is coping well with increased support and enforcement capacity and activity already having a positive impact on the lives of tenants in private rented properties
			H10	Implementation of Empty Homes Strategy	Medium Issue/Slippage	The new Empty Property Officer is in post and is making significant progress in addressing the empty properties in Sandwell and in implementing the strategy. The delays in recruitment have meant that we have slower than planned progress at the start of the year but making up ground quickly as a lot of prep work was done to enable the officer to move quickly when in post.
Regeneration & Resources	H11	We will take a proactive approach to accessing national funding for Sandwell that benefits our tenants and people who are homeless or in housing need.	H15	Bid for funding and delivery of projects to retro fit properties to support climate change objectives	On Track	SHDF Wave 1 has been successfully delivered and preparation for delivery of wave 2.1 is underway
	H12	We will modernise our tenancy and estate management offer, delivering a more proactive service, early identification and intervention to mitigate risks to tenancy sustainment and a new neighbourhood management working in partnership with communities to address their priorities.	H7	Refresh the Asset Management Strategy for HRA stock	Medium Issue/Slippage	Cabinet paper withdrawn. Decision made by leadership team to re-submit once some stock condition data available. In Q4 new consumer standards will come into force from 1/4/24, we are expecting the final version to be published in February 2024. Stock condition work has commenced, once 1200 (5%) properties have been assessed we will be able to conduct analysis to projected outcomes. We will be able to draw business plan level conclusions on the condition of the stock.
			H6	Respond to findings from the tenant satisfaction survey to improve the customer journey for access to housing services	On Track	Satisfaction Survey completed on time, overall satisfaction at 74% which is an improvement on previous year. Work to address areas of low satisfaction underway including the recruitment of a new Housing Resolution Team to transform our response to housing complaints.



H13	We will work to ensure our tenants live in safe and thriving neighbourhoods and that social housing is a tenure to be proud of.	H8	Continuation of major refurbishment programmes to High Rise blocks including the installation of sprinklers and CCTV	Medium Issue/Slippage	Work continues with all block in progress, however due to the rebancing of the HRA, the schemes that are yet to be on site (Allen House and Moorlands and St.Giles scheme) have been re-profiled to be started in 24/25. A cabinet paper will be submitted for major projects with business cases.
H14	We will ensure that council homes are safe places to live by fully complying with fire and building safety requirements and tackling damp and mould.	H5	Preparation and compliance with new regulatory requirements as set out by the Housing Regulator & Building Safety Regulator		No update available
H15	We will improve the energy efficiency of council housing through retrofit programmes and stock improvements.	H11	Bid for funding and delivery of projects to retro fit properties to support climate change objectives	On Track	SHDF Wave 1 has been successfully delivered and preparation for delivery of wave 2.1 is underway
H16	We will aim to be a Borough of Sanctuary, offering a safe place for asylum-seekers and refugees to live, while recognising our leadership role in promoting integration and community cohesion.	H12	Resettlement of new arrivals to Sandwell via the asylum dispersal and other resettlement programmes	On Track	9 properties in legal process to complete purchase for the LAHF funded properties. Response sent to Government consultation on number of asylum seekers the LA will support arriving through Safe & Legal Routes. No commitment given to numbers but opportunity used to canvass for changes to operating model of resettlement and fairer funding arrangements.
		H13	Become an awarded Council of Sanctuary, as part of being recognised as a Borough of Sanctuary	On Track	Work on embedding the actions in the BOS plan ongoing
H17	We will increase our engagement with tenants, including tenants in high rise blocks.	H6	Respond to findings from the tenant satisfaction survey to improve the customer journey for access to housing services	On Track	Satisfaction Survey completed on time, overall satisfaction at 74% which is an improvement on previous year. Work to address areas of low satisfaction underway including the recruitment of a new Housing Resolution Team to transform our response to housing complaints.
		ACE 32	Democratic Services will support the introduction of the new tenant scrutiny panel and development of links into corporate scrutiny functions	Complete	

## A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
A Connected & Accessible Sandwell	A1	We will ensure improvements to the highway network are facilitated to support the local economy and the movement of goods and people across the borough.	BE38	Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2023 – 2030 Development	Complete	New road safety strategy approved at cabinet on 6th December 2023
			BE39	Analyse Accident Statistics 2018 to 2022	Complete	New road safety strategy approved at cabinet on 6th December 2023
			BE40	Update Strategic Road Safety Plan	Complete	New road safety strategy approved at cabinet on 6th December 2023
			BE41	New Strategic Road Safety Plan 2023 to 2030b Scrutiny Review	Complete	New road safety strategy approved at cabinet on 6th December 2023
Clean & Green	A5	We will enable people to get around in a healthy and sustainable way, supporting our health and wellbeing and our climate change strategies.	R16	We will continue to develop and deliver projects that reduce barriers to the use of public transport and sustainable travel choices including working with Transport for West Midlands in relation to bus and metro provision and the Rail Alliance.	Medium Issue/Slippage	Bus service reductions still an issue. BSIP - bus service imp plan. WMCA lead on this supported by individual LA's. (Andy M) Wednesbury to Dudley metro extension is progressing and broadly on track.
Partnerships	A6	We will work with the Environment Agency in our role as Lead Local Flood Authority to adopt a Flood Risk Management Plan for 2021 to 2027.	BE38	Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2023 – 2030 Development	Complete	

## A Strong and Inclusive Economy

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
Page 199	E1	We will work with our partners to spend local wherever possible and make long term investment decisions that benefit our borough	BE1	Contract management for waste services, inc. introduction of charging for garden waste	On Track	Garden waste year 2 now active. Alternative collection methodology work continues.
			BE4	Review of major assets (within Corporate Fleet area) and provision for replacement, maintenance & efficiency	On Track	Folded into Corporate Fleet review (above action)
			R9	We will work with local partners as part of the Sandwell Anchor Network to maximise the amount of public funding spent within the (1) Borough, (2) the Black Country and (3) West Midlands		No update available.
	E2	We will spend more money directly with suppliers in Sandwell. We will do this by developing better intelligence and improving our knowledge of local supply chains, as well as working with major contractors to encourage spending and sub-contracting with local suppliers.	BE3	Development of Corporate Fleet Strategy	On Track	Progress reported to LT 21/11/23. Further update (final strategy) scheduled to LT 27/02/24.
			BE17	Development of safer green spaces strategy	Medium Issue/Slippage	Development now scheduled for Cabinet report in June 2024, delay due to priority focus on income generation in the service.
			R10	We will work more closely with the Council's contractors to ensure that local businesses and supply chain benefit from the capital investments in the Regeneration Pipeline.	On Track	New policy being put forward to Cabinet in Q4. SV targets are being built into the forthcoming Pagabo procurement for a strategic partner.
	E3	We will develop the levelling up partnership with Government to provide place based regeneration in Sandwell.	R21	We will work with central Government Departments as part of the Sandwell Levelling Up Partnership to secure investment and support for our deprived communities (£400m available nationally for 20 places)	On Track	Programme established with WLUP Board in place and first meeting held, internal reporting and risk management mechanisms established and programme manager in place. Grant agreement received. Capital appraisals completed for 3/6 projects. Procurement activity commenced and operational delivery underway. Over next quarter, CCTV and greenspaces delivery will commence.
	E4	We will work proactively with our partners at the West Midlands Combined Authority and with central government to secure appropriate funding opportunities to deliver Sandwell regeneration projects.	R11	We will work in partnership with Chance Heritage Trust to submit a funding bid to the West Midlands Combined Authority for circa £21m for a mixed use scheme regeneration of Chance Glassworks, Smethwick	On Track	WMCA requested further info on bid, technical info, pulling this together. Continue to participate in the project board to move bid and proposals forward.

	E5	We will develop a new local plan for the borough to ensure development takes place in appropriate locations, including housing, employment opportunities, amenities and community facilities.	R12	We will consult with all interested stakeholders, residents and businesses in developing the Local Plan for Sandwell.	On Track	REG 18 public consultation completed. Results now being analysed.
			R13	We will aim to increase the number of new homes in Sandwell in order to address a housing supply shortage.	On Track	Focus at the moment is about agreeing a funding strategy for the replacement primary school. Homes element paused whilst this is resolved.
	E6	We will develop and deliver the projects within the approved Regeneration Pipeline.	R14	We will support the delivery of the 66 strategically important Regeneration Pipeline Projects to maximise the level of investment in the Borough's infrastructure e.g. homes, schools, businesses, apprenticeships, local spend etc.	On Track	We have secured further funding to support delivery of the Regeneration pipeline in Q3 we have been allocated £18m for the Grove Lane Masterplan and have secured £20m under the longer term plan for towns (Smethwick).
Working with Businesses	E7	We will deliver the Economic Plan for Sandwell to support businesses and grow the local economy.	R15	We will deliver the Sandwell Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Business 2022 to 2027, to support businesses and grow the local economy. Start in Sandwell, Grow in Sandwell etc (7) follow up with Gareth	On Track	High level of use of new facilities at Jack Judge. Nicy to confirm numbers.
Jobs and Training	E8	We will ensure that local people have the skills and knowledge to fill any vacancies by reducing the number of residents with no/low qualifications and offering local training and skills development opportunities via the Adult Education Budget and other funding streams.	B11	To challenge and support schools to raise standards in all key stages to close the gaps with national. Increase the proportion of schools and academies rated good or better by Ofsted	On Track	To challenge and support schools to raise standards in all key stages to close the gaps with national. Increase the proportion of schools and academies rated good or better by Ofsted
	E9	We will work to ensure our young people have access to good jobs and we will work with all education institutions to guide young people to the pathways that enable them to meet their aspirations. We will do this through the provision of independent advice and guidance.	BE34	Deliver the new education and outreach, and volunteer programme.	On Track	On Track except for apprenticeships because of budget / vacancy holds.
	E10	We will support people into employment through the delivery of the Skills Strategy with our strategic partners in the Employment and Skills Partnership.	H16	Generate work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within Housing Services and through strategic partnerships	On Track	This is part of our workforce strategy and included in the BAU approach
			ACE15	Develop approach to promote our successful work experience, apprenticeship, intern and graduate programmes, targeting local people to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities available.		No update available.

E11

We will offer a range of opportunities within the Council including work experience, supported internships, apprenticeships and graduate opportunities.

<p>LG5</p>	<p>We will support schools providing work experience places, continue to do exam preparation with our legal professional experience and provide careers advice to students from local schools. Stand at careers fayres for Sandwell schools</p>	<p>On Track</p>	<p>MO continuing to explore options to engage FE colleges and providers to maximise work experience opportunities for Sandwell residents. Use of apprenticeship levy being explored as alternative vehicle to create opportunities.</p>
<p>LG7</p>	<p>Apprenticeships, learning and development opportunities in Law and Governance will help people make everyday choices around not just how they are supported, but also how they choose to live their lives.</p>	<p>On Track</p>	<p>Three of the four apprentice opportunities within Registration Services continue to be successfully appointed to. One remaining vacancy to be progressed through the normal HR recruitment process.</p>

## One Council One Team

	CP Ref	Deliverable	BP Ref.	Key deliverables (Directorate Action)	Q3 Rating - RAG	Q3 October - December
Page 202	O1	We will embed the One Team Framework	ACE1	Development, delivery and embedding the <b>Corporate Plan</b> and service planning framework – coordinating the corporate approach and embedding the Fairer Sandwell Principles		3 workshops were held in Q3 for Assistant Directors to attend to drive quality and consistency across all business plans. Teams channel to manage all activity live. On track for all BP's to be signed off in Q4.
			ACE2	Lead the refresh of <b>Vision 2030</b> and development of a performance framework to track progress across the borough	On Track	Vision 2023 refresh event took place in November 2023 with partners. Further conversations to take place in Q4.
Page 202	O2	We will develop and embed excellent people management practices, by effectively leading, supporting and improving our workforce, fostering a workforce that is engaged and productive (combine previous O11, O12 and O13).	ACE11	We will invest in a range of opportunities, qualifications and experiences for our workforce. We will do this through workforce development plans to ensure our workforce is an enabler for current and future service delivery.		As for Q1. Report on learning interventions provided to Leadership team in October 2023 demonstrating the range of provision of learning interventions provided to the workforce. The development of the AD business plans will inform the forward planning of learning interventions based on service and organisational needs.
			ACE12	We will enable all our staff to fulfil their full potential and have opportunities to progress within the organisation regardless of their protected characteristics by understanding the barriers faced by employees, establishing stakeholder staff groups and implementing the approved workforce action plan	Medium Issue/Slippage	Re-termed 'People Strategy' , Leadership approved in principle the themes and priorities. The People Strategy is in the Cabinet forward plan for March. This links to the development of the EDI Strategy.
			ACE13	Develop new workforce planning framework and methodology for deployment across the organisation - Review current position of workforce plans across the Council. Gain sign off from Senior Leadership Team to new approach and agree how this will be rolled out.	Complete	Workforce planning was discussed with ADs as part of the business planning workshops in December 2023. The workforce action plans should be considered alongside the development of business plans. HR attended as core service to discuss key elements of workforce planning.
			ACE14	Review the existing wellbeing provision and look for opportunities to develop further. Create the new OH suite and accessible wellbeing areas. Support and deliver the wellbeing offering by establishing a Health & Wellbeing Specialist role.	Complete	

03	We will progress and drive our equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government and utilise Council resources to support our equalities agenda.	ACE 34	Design & Deliver a new EDI Strategy	Medium Issue/Slippage	During this quarter work has commenced on the development of the EFLG Audit Action plan which will support the development of the EDI Strategy. It should be noted that there is now some slippage in regard to the EDI Strategy, due to staffing resources.
04	We will continue to improve Officer-Member Relationships	ACE 23	Implement a Member Development Programme that accords with the needs and ambitions of Councillors	On Track	Relationships as well as other mandatory training sessions have been conducted. Officers are current redesigning the current member induction and member development offer, looking at best practice elsewhere, and factoring in comments and suggestions received from members at the Ethical Standards Workshop. Training will be offered both internally and externally and will be tailored towards recreating scenario based learning, peppered throughout the year to ensure members continue to develop and are supported in carrying out their roles effectively through the year.
		ACE 24	Embed a personal development planning process for elected members	Medium Issue/Slippage	Feedback to date from members has been that PDPs have not been effective in identifying what their learning needs are. As part of the redesign of the Member Development Plan and induction process, further work will continue to complement these plans and ensure that a process for members to identify their learning needs are created, including capturing their current skills and aligning this to suitable roles.
		ACE 25	Delivery of a programme of all Member briefings focused on priority topics	Complete	A work programme and dates for the next 6 months have been agreed.
		ACE 26	Identifying Continuous Improvement activity through conducting Member-Officer survey and using insight to develop the relationship	Complete	Work has continued to both obtain views of members and officers on working relationships and to also build upon suggestions received. CIPFA and LGA have also delivered training on effective relationships for senior officers and members which continues to strengthen member/officer relationship, work has been done to support openness and transparency of decision making and more timely responses to queries and the service will continue to obtain feedback from members following training sessions to improve experience and address any concerns raised.
		ACE 29	We will work with elected members to strengthen our Civic and Democratic Engagement	On Track	Members have identified key areas where they would like further information to promote democracy and civic engagement. We are developing a dedicated web page for members to access key information to support them as elected members. A comprehensive refresh of the Council's Constitution will enable more engagement to strengthen civic and democratic engagement with residents and promote decision making and democracy.
		ACE9	Ensure changes to services/service improvements are based on customer feedback as well as organisational drivers by engaging with our customers/residents to understand current and future needs of customers, customer groups and identify ways of meeting them.	On Track	Work continues in this area to look at all ways of capturing Customer Feedback. OSS tablets are now operational so feedback can be gained from residents accessing the OSS. Customer data continues to be collected at the Community Hubs and across the My Sandwell platform. The introduction of the new telephony system will allow further feedback capabilities for residents using this channel, although we are capturing customer feedback manually in the interim. We also have a graduate working alongside the Corporate Customer Feedback Team looking at lessons learnt from complaints.
		ACE19	Co-production Network – facilitate and grow network across the council as resource to develop co-production in Sandwell	On Track	Partnership event took place in November 2023 to further refine standards. Activity to finalise the work will take place in Q4.

05	We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents, internal workforce and external stakeholders	ACE20	Use Internal communications channels to inform and engage with employees about the council's corporate priorities and how this relates to our focus on delivering outstanding outcomes for residents through our Corporate Plan and Performance Management Framework	On Track	Staff briefings held in December at locations across the borough to provide an update on our improvement journey and intervention; share key updates on the next phase of our journey, and celebrate awards and other successes.
		ACE21	We will ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging with our residents and external stakeholders	On Track	Work progressed to build on our 'We are Sandwell' branding for external purposes, including development of a recruitment website. Restructure of the communications team commenced in order to set the team up to be able to deliver the refreshed communications strategy.
		ACE22	Manage the corporate approach to consultation and engagement with residents, ensuring that this activity feeds into the council's policy development and performance management framework	On Track	Resident Survey report and analysis presented to Leadership Team and Cabinet, wider circulation to Assistant Directors as part of the Business Planning process. Two follow up focus groups took place as part of the Budget Consultation and a wider public consultation on savings proposals also took place. A six month report on consultation and engagement activity was presented to Leadership Team.
06	We will embed a performance culture across the council to ensure transparency and accountability in delivering our priorities.	ACE16	Development and delivery of a Corporate Performance Management Framework to improve transparency, identify strategic priorities for the council and delivery of the key outcomes and embed a performance culture across the organisation.	On Track	Q2 Report went to Cabinet on the 17th January. Engagement with service areas about a Performance Management System complete. Following discussion with Director Finance and AD ICT, further work required to further explore Oracle Fusion as a potential solution. Cross-council stakeholder group to be established for the project to ensure needs of the organisation are understood and explored. Initial meeting with procurement has taken place and the project is in the procurement pipeline for commencement at a future date if required.
07	We will hold ourselves to account for the delivery of the improvement plan and will continuously improve	ACE3	Programme management of the <b>Improvement Plan</b> to address the requirements in the three external reviews and government's Directions, and manage the updates to ensure effective delivery of the <b>Improvement Plan</b> .	On Track	Governance of Improvement Plan remains on track. Grant Thornton 23 follow up review complete – statutory recommendations to close. Plans in place to review Improvement Plan and develop plans for post-intervention governance arrangements.
		ACE4	Develop and embed a <b>Continuous Improvement Framework</b> to enable continuous improvement across the council	Medium Issue/Slippage	Business planning workshops held in November/December - received positive feedback from attendees, and intelligence is being used to inform business planning for 2024/25. Draft Continuous Improvement Framework developed for discussion with Transformation and Learning & Development to align approach across key agendas (meeting scheduled for January 2024)



08

We will deliver the customer journey programme and improve customer experience across all of our channels

ACE 33	Identify continuous improvement activity to ensure that scrutiny and audit continue to add value	On Track	A scrutiny budget session was held on 15 January 2024 where cabinet members were held to account on their budget proposals for 2024-25. This both demonstrated openness and transparency and members adding value. Work will continue with audit and scrutiny members, ensuring they have the requisite skills to question and challenge and hold to account.
BE26	Libraries support to delivery of Community Hubs	On Track	Pilot extended to March 2024
ACE7	Develop a Customer Access Strategy that offers a range of high-quality ways to contact the council that meets the needs of all Sandwell residents. Suggested reword:	Medium Issue/Slippage	It has now been agreed that an interim 24-27 CJ strategy will be developed in-house. Discussions are on-going re: the future direction of travel and the potential procurement of a Strategic Partner to review the Customer Journey.
ACE8	Invest in our customer Contact Centre telephony systems to ensure an efficient and effective system is in place. Possibly change to: We will invest in digital platforms to enable better access for our residents and other service users and to build on the benefits of increased digitalisation of our services	Medium Issue/Slippage	A number of meetings have been held with BT/MITEL to discuss the HLD, this has taken longer than anticipated but is key to ensuring successful Implementation. HLD is currently with ICT for comment and assurance from a Governance point of view, as soon as this has been approved then work on the Low Level Design will commence. We are working towards an April implementation but due to delays with the HLD sign off this may cause some delays.
ACE10	Customer Feedback Review – implement recommendations to improve customer experience	Medium Issue/Slippage	Work is on-going to look at process mapping within the ASC Complaints Team, significant work has been undertaken in relation to backlogs. There has still been no further feedback on whether a new system can be purchased - it is felt that current systems are not fit for purpose and mean a lot of data has to be collected manually. Work with SOCITM is not being progressed and therefore SIU have been notified of this so that this can be factored in to the SIU appraisal.
LG10	New business applications for our bereavement services teams to enable better access for our residents and other service users. Building on the benefits of increased digitalisation of services.	On Track	Contract initiated 1 November 2023 - Project team working with the supplier for delivery of new case management system by July 2024.
LG11	Upgraded business applications for our Legal and Assurance team and management of SARs and FOIs.	On Track	The Governance team within Legal Services has been tasked to review existing software provision used for FOIA/DBS processing and file management to maximise potential. It is anticipated that this will require additional configuration by the system provider but any costs will reflect existing support frameworks and deliver operational benefits for Legal Services which corporately administers information governance processes and compliance frameworks.

			F1	Customer Journey Programme: Review approach to customer journey to include: Monitor data monthly on customer contact points to understand current demand and adapt services to meet this demand • Roll-out self-service kiosks in more customer facilities • Continue to promote My Sandwell to increase online transactions Supporting customer journey by providing additional staffing at OSS	On Track	For Q3 the average number of calls per month is 3273 compared to 4060 for same Q3 last year. The number of calls handled by Inform has also reduced from 10,664 per month to 9,293 and the number of emails/electronic work increased per month from an average of 507 to 1072 per month. Revenues and Benefits continue to provide a face to face presence in OCH for residents whose enquiry cannot be dealt with by the reception staff and provide remote support for the Community hubs via teams answering enquiries reception staff cannot answer. The number of enquiries from residents via Chatbot has continued to increase to 1992 and there has been a general upturn since the introduction of the navigational bot on the SMBC landing page. Live chat has also been introduced since Q3 late year and 240 chats have been answered by agents conversing directly with customers. New staff joined the team following training in December, and with December being a shorter working month and increased leave requests performance will not actively reflect the benefit of their addition to the team. We continue to promote the benefits of My Sandwell and we are seeing an increase in take up across all of Revenues and Benefits
	O9	We will refresh the organisation's digital strategy	ACE18	Develop Digital Strategy, maximising the opportunities for Sandwell from the WMCA digital roadmap.	On Track	Digital inclusion Co-ordinator is now in post and continues to work closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Roadmap provides the baseline for digital inclusion work in the Borough supporting the development of existing and new projects. Negotiations are currently on-going with the Combine Authority to access new resources to develop the local digital learning journey.
Governance and Decision Making	O10	We will ensure that our refreshed governance arrangements are embedded	ACE 30	The holistic review of democratic governance will be completed	Complete	
			ACE 31	The Committee Management System (modern.gov) will be fully implemented and utilised effectively across the organisation and accessed by services users.	On Track	Report workflows for each committee have been built and a sample of report authors have been identified to pilot the new system. A more structured process to writing reports will be promoted through comms with officers in readiness of launching the report workflow function.
			F17	Embed a comprehensive Corporate Governance Training programme for officers and members		No update available
O11	We will set a sustainable and balanced budget each year and ensure the Medium Term Financial Strategy is underpinned by realistic savings plans	F8	Develop and maintain a 12 month rolling cash flow	On Track	Cash-flow for 2024/25 currently under development and on target for completion before financial year end.	
		F9	Review investment strategy and counterparty options	Complete	Treasury Management Strategy including investment strategy presented to Cabinet 7th Feb and due to be approved by Council on 20th Feb 2024	
		F14	Delivery of the Transformation Savings Programme	On Track	Work continues with the identification of transformational activity. This is being enabled by the introduction of the CAF and the ongoing governance arrangements provided at the CTB	
	O12	We will update the Medium Term Financial Strategy at least annually	F4	Medium Term Financial Strategy - Review as part of 2024/25 budget process	Complete	MTFS for 2024/25 complete and forms part of the Budget Report to be approved by Council on 20/02/24
O13	We will embed a strong financial management approach.	F10	Reduction of financial transactional activity through a series of end to end process reviews (bank reconciliations, recharges, debtors and creditors)	On Track	Recharges review complete. Bank reconciliation and debtors and creditors processes to be reviewed as part of transition to Oracle Fusion.	
		F11	Implement Workforce Development Plan for financial services section	Medium Issue/Slippage	C. Co review complete and findings to be taken account of following redesign of Finance structure	
		F12	Develop core finance competencies to support Budget Holder Role Profiles	Medium Issue/Slippage	Will complement Oracle Fusion work currently going on creating future budget monitoring process	
		F13	Repeat Budget Holder Survey	Medium Issue/Slippage	Suggested time for carrying this out again is after the Oracle Fusion budget monitoring process has been implemented	

		F19	Procurement Pipeline	On Track	As part of the AD Business Plans a pipeline spreadsheet has to be completed by all services by the end of February 24.
O14	We will embed our approach to social value to get maximum benefits for Sandwell	F3	Undertake analysis on the Councils spend to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline the amount the Council spends locally</li> <li>• Define local and regional spend</li> <li>• % of council spend spent locally - include InTend information leaflet with Business Rates bills</li> </ul>	On Track	38% Local spend. £45,033,525 money spent directly with suppliers in Sandwell.
		F15	Carry out regular engagement and training events for local suppliers	On Track	Internet and Intranet pages have been updated. The new Procurement Act 2024 is due to come in to force in Oct 24. Training and development for staff will commence Mar/Apr 24
		F16	Introduce and embed a Social Value Policy as part of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules	On Track	New SV policy to be actioned. SV is currently a part of the evaluation criteria within contracts.
		O15	We will deliver the Oracle transformation programme by July 2024	F2	Implement Oracle Fusion and achieve transformational benefits and cashable savings
O16	We will embed an evidence-based continuous improvement approach to ensure we are directing our resources to meet our priorities	ACE17	Development of a corporate-wide Data Strategy for the council to improve all of the ways we acquire, store, manage, share and use data to help us make more informed business decisions	Medium Issue/Slippage	Meeting with Microsoft has taken place and there have been further discussions with ICT about future data infrastructure. Acknowledgement that this is a large piece of work that the team is trying to deliver at the same time as a Performance Management System. Exploring options for a consultancy to help us deliver this strategy.
		F20	Agree a procurement strategy, policy and set of standard contracts	Medium Issue/Slippage	The draft Procurement Strategy is currently being reviewed and will go through governance in Q4

		F21	Develop and embed a contract assurance approach	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract management training has been rolled out across the Council. Contract Management training (this refers to the training provided by GBS Procure for good practice contract management) was delivered between March to August 2023. The training was targeted at contract managers and officers across the business. Over 185 people attended the training sessions. Staff needing further training need to contact the Procurement Team.</li> <li>Establishment of consistent contract management for both significant capital and service contracts across the Council. The contract management resources online provide templates for consistent contract management, and also the introduction of the contract management module on Oracle will also contribute towards effective contract and performance management (given that it captures information around KPI's, Risks etc).</li> </ul>
O17	We will establish a Corporate Transformation Programme and governance structures.	F18	Establish Corporate Transformation Programme and PMO with corporate methodologies to realise savings and service benefits	On Track	Corporate Transformation Programme currently in development. PMO framework and associated tools agreed at LT in Aug 2023.
O18	We will develop our commercial approach including our approach to contract management and monitoring and deliver our first commercial business streams.	BE44	Achieve full cost recovery for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services).	Significant issues/risks/slippage	Income targets not met due to weather and lack of current offer at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. To be addressed through Masterplan and setting of targets for 24/25.
		BE45	Scope additional commercial opportunities for green services.	On Track	Report completed; currently being considered by officers and Cabinet.
		F22	Implement the Commercial Strategy		No update available
O19	We will implement a new Corporate Asset Management system to ensure the Council has sufficient, comprehensive information to make best use of its assets and assist with timely and accurate completion of annual accounts.	BE33	Undertake assets and efficiency review of built facilities and land within green spaces, visitor services, and events.	Complete	Presented to Leadership and Cabinet on 10th Jan.
		R20	We will identify Council assets that are surplus and can re-purposed or disposed of to Council expenditure on maintenance of buildings and sites	Medium Issue/Slippage	Report was not taken forward to Cabinet in Q3. Cabinet member reviewing the report, will hopefully take forward in Q4.

# Strategic Risk Register @ December 2023



1. Best start in life for children and young people



2. People live well and age well



3. Strong resilient communities



4. Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods




5. A strong and inclusive economy



6. A connected and accessible Sandwell

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous score (Sept 2023)	Movement in risk score	Current risk score (Dec 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)	Key Sources of Assurance (3 lines of defence)
1	<p><b>Children's Social Care</b></p> <p>If the council does not put in place robust arrangements and receive appropriate assurances to ensure that the Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) addresses the areas of poor or inconsistent performance, as outlined by Ofsted (and as required by the Statutory Direction served on the council on 6 October 2016), with rigour and pace, then the council will fail in its responsibilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguard vulnerable children</li> <li>Promote and improve the outcomes of children in its care</li> <li>Manage any adverse financial consequences arising from the failure to create favourable outcomes for children within the resources available to it</li> <li>Continue on its progress to date and direction of travel to further improve the council's reputation for children's social care as currently demonstrated by the ILACS inspection.</li> </ul> <p>Risk Area – Children's Services Risk Owner – Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education <b>Objectives impacted: 1</b></p>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	4 (green) Good Outcome of ILACS inspection by May 2025	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance and contract management against KPIs and the improvement plan. The KPIs have been reviewed (to take effect from spring 2024) as part of the contract review process and have taken into account the Ofsted findings, as well as any findings from the recent national Care Review commissioned by the DfE around early help, children's social care and partner collaboration ahead of the issue of new statutory guidance contained in Working Together 2023.</li> <li>The Ofsted inspection of adoption services commissioned through the RAA and delivered by the Trust rated all areas as 'Good'</li> <li>The most recent Ofsted inspection of the Fostering service rated all areas as 'Good'.</li> <li>Completion of case file audits and learning from the audit is used to ensure practice improvement.</li> <li>Ongoing measures to improve staffing levels and recruitment via the development of a workforce strategy and market supplements.</li> <li>The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) took place in <a href="#">May 2022</a> and reported a judgement of 'Requires Improvement to be Good' and continues to inform the risk score.</li> <li><a href="#">Contract review</a> commenced in April 2022 resulting in a recommendation being made to the Secretary of State not to invoke the break clause within the Service Delivery Contract.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedment of the multi agency early help strategy which was launched in March 2022 (ongoing).</li> <li>Consideration of the impact of the government's full response to the <a href="#">Josh McAllister Care Review</a> Stable Homes Built on Love.</li> </ul> <p>The ongoing shortage of social care workers (which is the position locally and nationally) continues to impact this risk alongside care challenges in relation to sufficiency of placements against a demise in foster carers locally despite actions being taken.</p>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b></p> <p>Key Performance Indicators (including social worker vacancy rates and placements) Operational Partnership and Strategic Partnership Boards</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Sandwell Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report Reports to Scrutiny Rolling programme of audits of case files as part of the quality assurance framework Performance Management framework and Service Delivery Contract SCT business plan Corporate Parenting Board Early Help Strategy.</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Ofsted monitoring and focussed visits DfE improvement Board (independently chaired by a DfE consultant) <a href="#">Grant Thornton – Value for Money Governance Review 2021</a> ILACS Ofsted inspection July 2022 Independent Reviewing Officer function SCT external audit report LG Futures benchmarking exercise Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - <a href="#">Follow Up- December 2022 and September 2023</a> (report to follow)</p>
2	<p><b>Business Continuity Management</b></p> <p>If the council does not develop, review, monitor and test plans and capabilities that seek to maintain the continuity of key functions in the event of an unplanned disruptive incident, then it will be unable to perform critical business functions which will impact the provision of council services and result in potential financial loss and loss of public confidence in the council.</p> <p>Risk Area – All Council services Risk owner – Alice Davey, Director of Borough Economy <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	8 (amber) Achieved	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business continuity plans are in place to mitigate the denial of staff (e.g. illness, industrial action), ICT (e.g. software failure, cyber-attack), facilities (e.g. building closure), stakeholders (e.g. suppliers, partners). These plans identify the criticality of each council service and the arrangements in place to restore services in the event of an unplanned incident.</li> <li>The pandemic has provided some assurance around the robustness and effectiveness of the continuity of key functions over the last few years, through a shift to working remotely.</li> <li>Following the incident in the ICT suite in May 2022 the council continues to revisit its resilience arrangements- in particular in relation to its Oracle business system, to ensure robust measures are in place to reduce both the likelihood and impact of a similar risk materialising in the future. Details in respect of the actions taken were presented to the Committee in November 2022.</li> <li>All directorates have now reviewed the BCP to incorporate any learning from the ICT incident noted above.</li> <li>Further workshops are scheduled in early 2024 with the emergency Planning Team being supported by ICT in delivering these.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from the cyber team to work with the resilience team to further improve all service area business continuity plans (ongoing). This is in progress and a workshop was held with Housing in July 2023 which focussed on resilience planning in relation to cyber security.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b></p> <p><a href="#">Emergency Committee</a> Post incident reports Test exercises including cyber exercise</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Resilience team reports to Leadership Team</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Computer room incident report to <a href="#">ARAC Nov 2022</a></p>
3	<p><b>Compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)</b></p> <p>If the council does not ensure it has a robust framework in place to comply with the DPA 2018 (which includes GDPR) or FOIA then it faces significant external action from the Information Commissioner's Office for failing to undertake its statutory duty. Further, failing to comply could result in negative public reaction and reputational damage, significant monetary penalties, loss of confidential data and potentially legal action.</p> <p>Risk Area – Legal &amp; Governance</p>	12 (red)		12 (red)	8 (amber) March 2024 (officers)  March 2024 (members)	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Information Governance Board which is chaired by the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) or Data Protection Officer (DPO) meets monthly to monitor progress of the information governance (IG) workplan.</li> <li>IG framework sets out the council's policies, requirements, standards and best practice that apply to the handling of information.</li> <li>Information Asset Registers capture the information held by the council service areas.</li> <li>Information champions disseminate, feedback, facilitate and co-ordinate IG activity.</li> <li>Monthly review of ICO updates, guidance and sector practice.</li> <li>Annual completion of and compliance with the NHS self- assessment toolkit -NHS Digital which demonstrates the council processes in place to meet the requirements of the NHS's data protection standards and sharing arrangements.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b></p> <p>Information Champions Data Protection Officer Information asset registers Information incident log</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Information Governance Board Performance data on compliance with FOI and SAR responses to Leadership Team and directors FOIA disclosure log</p>



Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous score (Sept 2023)	Movement in risk score	Current risk score (Dec 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date  (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)	Key Sources of Assurance  (3 lines of defence)
Page 271	<p>Risk Owner- Mike Jones, Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance</p> <p><b>Objectives impacted: 3</b></p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual mandatory data protection and cyber security training is entrained for all staff.</li> <li>Compliance with the Council's data retention policy, which is reviewed regularly.</li> <li>Improved performance and monitoring arrangements for compliance with FOI and SAR responses.</li> <li>Improved performance and monitoring arrangements for compliance with FOI and SAR responses. The Governance team report on performance to the IG Board and to Leadership Team on a quarterly basis. The latest statistics show that compliance continues to improve. The measures put in place in by the Council's Information Governance Team are working and need to continue and be built upon.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A further programme of work to ensure compliance by elected members commenced during Autumn/Winter 2023. This will be completed by April 2024.</li> <li>The procurement and embedment of a new case management system for FOIs and SARs. Proposals assessed and agreed in principle by the Capital and Asset Management Board in May 2023. However, a review as to whether a joint procurement of both a new corporate Customer Relationship Management System in support of the customer journey and new FOI/SAR case management system is now to be considered. Strategic Finance to then assess the business case and funding options.</li> <li>New Council Monitoring Officer appointed who has initiated a review of all practices, procedures and policies to ensure best practice is embedded to underpin assurance of compliance frameworks for IG.</li> <li>Further improvement is still necessary in response times of FOI requests, with a target of 95% compliance which continues to impact on the current risk rating.</li> <li>Further improvement required in corporate compliance with disclosure requests and SARs. Refresh of existing training and guidance materials in progress, updates cascaded through IGB.</li> <li>Review of existing internal and public facing policy suite and IG framework. Report submitted to LT December 2023, new policies to go forward to Cabinet early 2024 for approval.</li> <li>Updates to Council website and guidance on routes to access information and personal data.</li> <li>Development of pro-active publication website to expand beyond disclosure log for FOIA to pre-emptively publish information of public interest prior to request, to improve transparency and reduce volumes of FOIA requests.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b></p> <p>Information Commissioner's Office Internal Audit reviews First Tier Tribunal decisions</p>
	4	<p><b>Cyber Security</b></p> <p>The public sector continues to be the target of significant, sophisticated and increasingly frequent cyber-attack with these intent on causing service disruption or disclosure of sensitive data. If the council does not invest additional and sufficient financial resources into a cyber security resilience programme, then it will remain at significant exposure of receiving a successful cyber-attack. The consequences will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The inability of the council and SCT to deliver some or all services, particularly critical services for a significant period of time, ranging from days to months</li> <li>The loss of corporate and sensitive personal data (including bank details)</li> <li>Enforcement action</li> <li>Significant financial loss</li> <li>Employee stress; and</li> <li>Reputational damage</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, the council will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to meet sector defined standards and compliance for cyber resilience e.g. PSN</li> <li>Unable to share and collaborate with partner organisations in a joined-up manner as the council will not be viewed as a trusted partner</li> </ul> <p>Risk Area – Information Governance and ICT Risk Owner – Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance</p> <p><b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	12 (red)		12 (red)	8 (amber) Sept 2024	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in national cyber resilience programmes run by organisations such as DLUHC, LGA and the NCSC</li> <li>Close collaboration between the ICT Service and the council's Information Governance Team to develop a holistic approach to information protection</li> <li>Appropriate technical controls to protect the council's network perimeter and information assets</li> <li>Updates and progress reports as requested to the Leadership Team and Corporate Scrutiny Board.</li> <li>Training for all staff through the implementation of the annual online training.</li> <li>Regular communications continue to be sent to employees pertaining to protecting themselves and the council from emerging and new cyber security threats.</li> <li>Attendance at national C-TAG forum, DLUHC cyber clinics and West Midlands Warning, Advice and Reporting Point (WARP) where members can receive and share up-to-date advice on information security threats, incidents and solutions.</li> <li>Subscription to relevant cyber intelligence threat reports providing early warning of emerging threats, vulnerabilities and trends.</li> <li>Use of the Active Cyber Defence and Early Warning tools provided by the National Cyber Security Centre.</li> <li>An ongoing programme addressing the retirement and upgrade of obsolete and unsupported technology platforms</li> <li>Annual ICT Health Check and Network Penetration Test</li> <li>Implementation of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party managed Security Operations Centre to detect potential threats within the council's ICT environment providing timely alerts 24 hours a day</li> <li>Establishment of a Cyber Resilience Governance Board as part of revised ICT governance arrangements</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reprofile remaining cyber budget following one-off saving due to identified budget pressure</li> <li>Adopt the NCSC Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) as a methodology across the public sector for demonstrating adequate and consistent cyber hygiene (April 2024 – timeline determined externally by DLUHC)</li> <li>Develop a PCI-DSS improvement programme to identify the gaps in compliance across all council credit and debit card payment channels April 2024</li> <li>Redefined governance structure to provide oversight of ongoing improvement programme following allocation of additional cyber funding (May 2023)</li> <li>Development and maintenance of incident playbooks to activate in response to adverse cyber activity (March 2024)</li> <li>LGA Cyber 360 review to be scheduled and reprofile Cyber Resilience Improvement Programme (Dec 2023)</li> <li>Undertake a Business Continuity Reaction Exercise in conjunction with LGA service offer (January 2024)</li> <li>Technology Modernisation Programme to ensure all ICT assets are up to date, in support and patchable – includes storage, server and end points i.e. laptops (April 2025)</li> <li>Council endorsement of a corporate cyber resilience strategy (April 2024)</li> <li>Appointment of a cyber lead to assist with the development of the cyber resilience strategy and overall improvement plan (April 2024)</li> <li>Uplift of Microsoft Enterprise Agreement Licensing to Enterprise 5 (E5) at anniversary date which includes a full suite of security and compliance tools (April 2024)</li> </ul>



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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of new E5 security tools (September 2024)</li> <li>Evaluation of vulnerability monitoring options and subsequent implementation (March 2023)</li> </ul>	
5	<p><b>Regeneration Fund Programmes</b></p> <p>If the council does not manage the programmes to ensure that all projects are delivered to scope, time and budget, then this could result in financial implications, the inability to regenerate our town centres, create sustainable economic growth and create long term economic prosperity, and also reputational harm to the council.</p> <p>Risk area- Regeneration and Growth Risk owner – Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth <b>Objectives impacted – 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6</b></p>	6 (green)		6 (green)	4 (green)  Programme completion of all projects and delivery of intended outcomes	<p>This risk sets out the next phase of the Regeneration Fund Programmes.</p> <p>Towns Fund (approval received by the council for all 16 business cases that were submitted as part of the approved TIPs).</p> <p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust governance in place to oversee the programme throughout the delivery phase including three Town Deal Boards (one per Town Deal Area), that have inherited Superboard roles and responsibilities. Revised governance arrangements for Delivery Phase were reviewed and approved by Cabinet in May 2022.</li> <li>The council is the Accountable Body for the Town Deal funding. The Director of Regeneration and Growth chairs a Towns Fund Programme Board (which is also attended by the Director of Finance/ representative and officers from procurement and legal as well as all project leads) to review risks and provide a forum for resolution of issues, as well as seeking assurances on the management of risk.</li> <li>Fortnightly engagement with advisors from DLUHC</li> <li>Programme management arrangements in place including appointment of a permanent programme manager, programme support officer, dedicated monitoring officer resource, programme risk register and project risk registers for agreed business cases, which are updated quarterly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement delivery phase of projects and programme plan.</li> <li>Ongoing reviews of financial profiles to manage supply chain issues and implications of cost inflation.</li> </ul> <p>Levelling Up Partnership</p> <p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust governance in place to oversee the LUP programme via the Wednesbury LUP Board. Governance arrangements agreed by Cabinet in September 2023.</li> <li>The council is the Accountable Body for the LUP funding. The Director of Regeneration and Growth chairs a LUP Programme Board (which is also attended by representatives from Finance, procurement, and legal as well as all project leads) to review risks and provide a forum for resolution of issues, as well as seeking assurances on the management of risk.</li> <li>Monthly engagement with advisors from DLUHC with regional representatives attending the LUP Board.</li> <li>Programme management arrangements in place including appointment of a temporary programme manager to oversee the delivery phase and a programme support officer. Programme and project risk registers are in place.</li> <li>Reporting to Leadership Team Quarterly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement delivery phase of projects and programme plan.</li> <li>Agree approach to mitigation of programme overrun risks with DLUHC.</li> <li>Ongoing reviews of financial profiles to manage supply chain issues and implications of cost inflation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Town Deal Boards</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Scrutiny Reviews Monitoring and reporting of outcome indicators, with processes in place to manage changes and risks during delivery stage.</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> Department Of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Deep Dive Jan 2022</p>
6	<p><b>Customer Journey</b></p> <p>The delivery of Council Services, including through the One Stop Shop, must meet the demand and needs of Customers, in order to avoid reputational damage to the Council.</p> <p>Risk area- Corporate Customer Risk owner – James McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Executive <b>Objectives impacted - All</b></p>	12 (red)		12 (red)	8 (amber) Oct 2024	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New operating model for council employees is well embedded across all service areas.</li> <li>Customer journey is one of the key priorities of the corporate transformation programme.</li> <li>Regular discussions and focus sessions have taken place at Leadership Team to address concerns and issues.</li> <li>Customer Journey Priority Focus Sessions are also being delivered to Cabinet.</li> <li>A new telephony system will be implemented in spring 2024</li> <li>The MySandwell offer is continuously being developed.</li> <li>Collection of Customer Satisfaction data is continuously being looked at and new methods trialled.</li> <li>Customer Journey (CJ) is one of the key priorities of the corporate transformation programme.</li> <li>The four main CJ Workstreams are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a Customer Experience Strategy</li> <li>Review of Contact centres</li> <li>Review of the One Stop Shop and exploration of a Community Hubs offer for face to face services in each Town.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Technology – review of all Customer related technology &amp; identification of any gaps: procure delivery partner to replace the Council's telephony system (achieved).</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued stakeholder engagement, in particular within the One Stop Shop (Ongoing).</li> <li>Additional capacity and resources to be identified to meet current demand for face to face services.</li> <li>Pilot local hub concept in two areas of the Borough (March 2024) - in progress   West Brom and Blackheath</li> <li>Ensure consistency of customer experience across the council and not just in some areas, as is currently the case (October 24).</li> <li>Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board is looking at the customer journey as part of its current work programme (23/24).</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Incorporate recent recommendations from Budget and Corporate Scrutiny into the Customer Journey Action Plan</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Customer satisfaction survey Customer compliments and complaints system Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board Review Monitoring, reporting &amp; governance through the Customer Journey Programme Board which will report in to the Corporate Transformation Office and to the Cabinet Member Weekly reports to Leadership team on Member Portal performance.</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> <a href="#">Local Government Ombudsman report</a></p>



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7	<p><b>Equalities</b></p> <p>If the council fails to meet its legal obligations in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty ensuring fairness is adhered to and is unable to demonstrate and evidence compliance with its obligations, then this will result in potential legal consequences for non compliance, reputational harm to the council as well as potential impact on recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Risk area- Legal</p> <p>Risk owner – James McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p><b>Objectives impacted - 5</b></p>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	6 (green) July 2024 When EDI strategy complete	<p><b>Current, Ongoing Controls and Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Equality Diversity and Inclusion Commission has been set up with agreed Terms of Reference and is chaired by the Leader of the council.</li> <li>Six staff networks (Age Smart, Disability, Ethnic Minority, Frontline Workers, LGBTQ+ and Women) have been established and LT has agreed to protected time for Co-Chairs to develop the networks</li> <li>Funding has been secured and posts recruited to.</li> <li>Additional EDI consultant support has been secured to help drive the EDI agenda further.</li> <li>A review of the Equality policy has been completed and was launched in December 2022, following Cabinet approval.</li> <li>New equality impact assessment toolkit and guidance has been issued and launched in December 2022 and drop-in clinics taking place to ensure the council's consultations and decision making will withstand scrutiny.</li> <li>An action plan has been developed based on feedback provided by employees across the council along with gaps identified in the workforce diversity data as well as best practice put forward by other public-sector organisations.</li> <li>A robust governance framework to help monitor and review the objectives and actions in the plan is also in place.</li> <li>An Equalities Calendar has been developed and implemented that details many EDI events to raise awareness of the agenda.</li> <li>Various events such as Black History Month, LGBTQ+ History Month have been successfully delivered leading to improved awareness and understanding.</li> <li>The council continues to engage with WMCA in relation to its Race Equalities taskforce.</li> <li>The LGA Equality Framework has been approved for use by Cabinet will be used to develop the council's first EDI Single Framework Strategy. (July 24)</li> <li>Refresh of the council's Equality Objective was published in March 2023</li> <li>An EDI Audit based on the LGA Equality Framework has been undertaken. An EDI action plan is being developed to enable the Council to respond to the findings of the audit.</li> <li>We have prepared a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) service user report</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Employee Engagement Survey 2022</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> <a href="#">Sandwell Equalities Commission</a></p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> LGA Peer Review</p>
8	<p><b>Council's Improvement Plan</b></p> <p>If the council does not put in place and successfully implement an improvement plan to address the concerns raised by the Secretary of State in respect of the council's best value duty and the recommendations made by the recent external reviews carried out by the council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, CIPFA and the LGA Peer Review then this may result in a loss of confidence in the council's corporate governance arrangements, government intervention, future audits providing a qualified opinion, a lack of trust in the council's ability to deliver its corporate priorities and reputational harm to the council.</p> <p>Risk area- All services</p> <p>Risk owner – James McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p><b>Objectives impacted – All</b></p>	8 (amber)		4 (green)	4 (green) in line with report to SoS	<p><b>Current Controls</b></p> <p>This risk reflects and consolidates the government intervention as well as the findings and recommendations arising from previous reviews including the Grant Thornton – Audit Findings Report 2019/20, Grant Thornton - Value for Money Governance Review 2021, CIPFA Financial Management review and the LGA Peer review along with their follow up reviews conducted in 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Commissioners have been appointed to oversee the improvement journey</li> <li>A performance management framework was approved by the council in April 2022 to help monitor performance and track progress on the delivery of the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan.</li> <li>Constitutional review completed in December 2022</li> <li>The appointment of a permanent Chief Executive has been completed.</li> <li>An improvement action plan and governance arrangements are in place. Funding to implement the actions and deliver the improvement plan has been set aside.</li> <li>Activity from the Improvement Plan embedded within the Council's Corporate Plan and Business Plans from June 2023</li> <li>Improvement Plan is regularly updated to incorporate recommendations from follow up reviews by external organisations</li> <li>6 monthly reporting from the Commissioners and from the Council to the Secretary of State is in place. The third Commissioners report was made in June 2023 and published in July 2023. In their report, Commissioners noted the significant hard work and considerable progress made, with next steps to further embed improvement and to demonstrate that this is sustainable, They commented that they consider that the Council continues to make progress on the right path. Council's letter to Secretary of State in December 2023 included evidence of the sustained and embedded improvements made.</li> <li>Grant Thornton VfM Governance Review follow up review in December 2023 highlighted the continued progress of the council on its improvement journey and lifted the three statutory recommendations from their 2021 review.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing implementation and monitoring of the progress made against the plans.</li> <li>Demonstrating evidence of sustainable and continuous improvement</li> <li>Review of Improvement Plan to address key and improvement recommendations from Grant Thornton's 2023 follow up review.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Improvement Plan</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Improvement Plan monitoring</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> Grant Thornton- Audit Findings Report 2019/20 Grant Thornton – Value for Money <a href="#">Governance Review 2021</a> CIPFA Financial Management and Governance Review 2021 and follow up review 2022 LGA Peer Review 2022 and follow up review 2022 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Government appointed Commissioners Six monthly reports by the Commissioners to the Secretary of State Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- <a href="#">December 2022</a></p>
9	<p><b>Climate Change</b></p> <p>Failure to achieve the council's commitments in relation to Climate Change, including the pledge to make council activities, buildings, housing, fleet, schools and street lighting net-zero carbon by 2030 may result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reputational damage</li> <li>financial impact</li> <li>increased demand for council resources (in the event of extreme weather) and</li> <li>a loss in public confidence.</li> </ul>	12 (red)		12 (red)	8 (amber) 2030	<p><b>Current Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate Change strategy 2020- 2041 in place which sets out the 2030 target for the council.</li> <li>Member steering group to oversee implementation of the climate change action plan.</li> <li>Climate change champions in place (officer level) and a Cabinet Member and member advisor champions in place.</li> <li>An action plan for implementing the strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2022.</li> <li>Establishment of programme governance arrangements, including the Cabinet approval to the appointment of cross party membership to the Climate Change Committee to monitor the implementation of the action plan, A Climate Change Programme Board (represented by service managers from across the council) is leading on measures within the action plan.</li> <li>Draft action plan monitoring tool has now been established following an internal audit report. This document is owned by the Climate Change Team and is currently being populated in conjunction with the relevant owners of each action across the various Council service areas. The monitoring tool will form the basis of future Climate Change Programme Boards and Member Steering Groups to appropriately track delivery of the Climate Change Strategy Actions and to</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Climate Change Strategy 2020-2042 Climate Change Improvement Plan</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Climate Change Programme Board Member Steering Group</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> 2023 Internal Audit Report – Limited Assurance</p>

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Page 204	In addition, managing the effects of climate change will also have significant financial impact which the council will need to address.  Risk Area – All Services Risk Owner – Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>					allow costs (where applicable) to be provided for their implementation. This will also be presented annually to Cabinet for information <b>Further Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gap analysis to be conducted to assess the councils' ability to implement the action plan, followed by a report on available options which will be addressed in 2024/25.</li> <li>To undertake stock condition surveys to enhance our understanding of investment needs and costs to achieve net-zero targets in our social housing stock and to inform future revisions of the HRA business plan and opportunities to draw in external investment</li> <li>Consideration of adapting works and activities to ensure that contractor selection, works methods and materials used are aligned and contribute to the climate change strategy.</li> <li>Explore funding models for retrofit of Council and other homes in the Borough e.g. attend MIPIM investors conference / WMCA Devolution Deal with Government in negotiation.</li> <li>To implement the Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2022 which seeks to significantly rationalise the Councils buildings and assets</li> <li>To establish EV charging infrastructure via ULEV programme (on street) and Council operational locations so that relevant Council fleet can transition to EV over the next 3 years– in progress.</li> <li>To develop a policy on Single Use Plastics that is consistent with the national emerging policy. This has been presented to Leadership Team and Cabinet Member and is due to be presented at Cabinet in January 2024.</li> <li>Roll out Carbon Literacy Training to all elected Members, relevant officers and Climate Change Champions. A number of sessions have been undertaken in 2023 with final sessions to be conducted for all outstanding persons in early 2024</li> <li>The delivery of the action plan is the key measure that determines the current risk assessment. The deliverability of the Plan is heavily dependent upon future government initiatives and the availability of financial resources which will be the key driver in achieving the Council's 2030 target.</li> </ul>	
	10	<b>Workforce Recruitment and Retention</b> The council is required to recruit and retain a skilled, qualified and experienced workforce in order to provide and deliver services to Sandwell residents. If the council is unable to recruit and retain its workforce and deliver its statutory obligations to meet the needs of the community this could result in loss of reputation, penalties, litigation and in some cases imprisonment.  Risk area – All council services Risk owner – James McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Executive <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>	9 (amber)		9 (amber)	6 (green) March 2024	The risk concerns issues are largely a reflection of the regional and national position also and not unique to the council, as supported by the LGA workforce survey completed in 2022. The target risk score was initially to be reached by March 2023. However, this has been put back in order to allow the recruitment strategy to be agreed and fully embedded, and until results over the mid-term are known. <b>Current and ongoing controls:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directorates to continue to undertake comprehensive workforce planning at least annually, as part of business planning processes, with a focus on creating and nurturing talent pipelines.</li> <li>Cabinet workshop planned for development of a workforce strategy.</li> <li>Recruitment and selection refresher training for hiring managers in order to share best practice in recruiting qualified and skilled employees.</li> <li>Pre-employment checks are carried out in line with requirements for the job role including any statutory requirements.</li> <li>Regular 121 meetings (supervision) and annual appraisal process is in place to ensure employees are engaged and can raise any concerns.</li> <li>Regular employment engagement (full) and pulse surveys are undertaken, and plans are developed and implemented to address any areas requiring further action.</li> <li>Pay benchmarking to ensure the council is competitive relative to the relevant job market in sectors where there are specific and critical challenges to recruitment and retention.</li> <li>Future Talent Strategy to be developed as part of the Organisational Development strategy – to build on current Apprenticeships and Graduates strategy and incorporate succession planning and talent development framework for all employees. We have recruited 6 graduates via the National Graduate Development Programme to start October 2023.</li> <li>The Resourcing Team alongside other teams across the council have attended a number of local job fairs either hosted by Sandwell Council or local colleges/universities to promote job opportunities. The Resourcing Team will continue to identify and attend local and regional job fairs to raise our profile and job opportunities.</li> </ul> <b>Further actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce and extend talent pools and open-ended recruitment campaigns to high turnover areas - this will form part of the recruitment strategy which is underway.</li> <li>Review our recruitment branding and content to maximise the impact on candidate attraction - this will also form part of the recruitment strategy.</li> <li>Review and extend advertising, to include focus on attraction of diverse applicants – again this will form part of the recruitment strategy.</li> <li>Review of our long-term use of a neutral vendor agency provision where we are unable to fill roles to deliver a service to our residents</li> </ul>
11	<b>Borough Archives</b> Failure to achieve the National Archives Accreditation could lead to withdrawal of 'Place of Deposit Status'. This will cause reputational damage and incur costs as public records will be stored in another location, which accrues a cost to the council and creates difficulties around access to the records. Accreditation cannot be achieved without alternative accommodation that meets the required British Standard.  Risk area – All council services	12 (red)		9 (amber)	8 (amber)	<b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public records are stored at Dudley archives which meets the required standard (BS EN 16893). However, this can only be a temporary measure, as Dudley's own archives increase, and they will require the space currently occupied by Sandwell.</li> <li>A feasibility study has been completed and a replacement archive solution for Sandwell's archives has been identified and was approved by <a href="#">Cabinet</a> in November 2022.</li> <li>A New Qualified Archivist is now appointed and in place. The Business Manager – Museums and Archives is also a qualified archivist.</li> <li>Previous discussions with The National Archives (TNA) around delaying an application for accreditation as it would fail have moved on and we have now been encouraged to apply. We could only expect to achieve partial accreditation though, due to the accommodation.</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Feasibility Study  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Cabinet approval of replacement archive solution  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> The National Archives Archive Service accreditation

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Page 215	Risk owner – Alice Davey, Director of Borough Economy <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second stage of feasibility that includes design, specification, and costs now complete. Due for cabinet agreement January 2024. The development of a funding strategy supported by an archives funding specialist will follow. This will enable submissions to be made to external funders.</li> </ul> <b>Further Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding sources for cost of capital to build the archives needs to be identified and agreed.</li> <li>Some corporate capital will also need to be identified as part of the funding strategy.</li> <li>A bid to Arts Council England and others to be considered for contribution to the cost of capital, once the funding strategy has been agreed.</li> <li></li> </ul>	
	<b>Elections Act</b> The initial roll-out of voter identification was successful, following policy and secondary legislation confirmation and the implementation of the controls identified to mitigate risk, however it has not yet been stress-tested. It is anticipated that the 2024 elections which are expected to include a general election will provide a broader assessment of the mechanisms in place.  Implementation of the next phase of the elections act is due shortly, to include the ability for voters to apply for absent votes on-line. There remain a series of technical and operational issues that are being explored nationally, with there being a concern over the readiness of new systems in line with the projected timeframe. Whilst the application portal will be nationally hosted, the Returning Officer will remain locally responsible for the processing and issuing of postal votes. Compounded by the multiple elections in 2024 and the potential for a snap general election, there are risks around the successful implementation of all of the Election Act requirements. Should the Returning Officer be unable to implement the Elections Act 2022, this could result in low voter confidence and some voters may be dis-enfranchised leading to a lack of confidence in election results.  Risk area – All council services Risk owner – Mike Jones, Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	4 (green) May 2024	<b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be extra money from the Government for implementation, but this will not be ring fenced and will only cover costs associated with Voter ID not additional election costs.</li> <li>A One Council approach is being taken in order that the wider council can provide necessary support.</li> <li>The Electoral Commission will undertake much of the communication, but the Returning Officer needs to consider the demographics and harder to reach parts of the electorate and the support that they will require.</li> <li>There is a review of polling stations to see which ones are suitable and unsuitable.</li> <li>Robust and updated training programme will be in place for all polling inspectors and presiding officers.</li> <li>Job roles for election staff are being updated to provide clarification on what is required and to assist in arriving at the correct fee.</li> <li>The Electoral Services Manager is part of the Business Change Network facilitated by the Cabinet Office and consequently is very well informed.</li> <li>Privacy ID booths will be provided to every station to reduce the need for a specific place. This will be private but still in the "voting room"</li> <li>Awareness Campaign and media campaigns to promote Voter ID have begun to compliment the national campaign by the Electoral Commission (which includes use of the Herald, website, etc)</li> <li>Regular briefings with members have commenced.</li> <li>Regular networking meetings taking place by Director and Manager.</li> <li>Capacity and resourcing options are being explored.</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Elections Returning Officer Elections Service Manager  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Polling station inspectors  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> Electoral Commission
13	<b>Sandwell Local Plan</b> Failure to prepare and adopt a Local Plan within the timescales required could result in Government intervention in the operation of the planning service and in the decision-making process for planning applications resulting in a loss of local democratic oversight.  Risk area - Regeneration Risk Owner – Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	4 (green) 2025	Having an up-to-date Local Plan is a statutory requirement. Following the halting of the Black Country Plan, Cabinet approved the preparation of the Sandwell local Plan on 16 November 2022. The timetable envisages adoption in late 2025. The process to adoption involves several rounds of public consultation and political approvals as well as an independent Examination in Public.  Conformity with an up-to-date Local Plan is often a prerequisite for Government regeneration funding.  <b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members regularly briefed on key and up to date issues. Informing of facts and evidence based.</li> <li>Project Manager recruited to lead on the delivery of the Sandwell Plan (fixed term post to Dec 2026).</li> <li>Additional revenue budget secured to deliver the Sandwell Plan (Cabinet Report Dec 2022).</li> <li>Activities monitored against agreed programme and reported to Leadership Team quarterly - consultation on draft Sandwell Local Plan completed in line with programme.</li> </ul> <b>Further actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of salaries allocated to technical disciplines within the organisation – Use of consultants if necessary.</li> <li>Quarterly update reports to Leadership Team</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Appointment of dedicated project manager  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Regular updates to Leadership Team, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Cabinet as appropriate.
14	<b>Adult Social Care Market Sustainability</b> The Fair Cost of Care requirement for domiciliary care and older peoples residential and nursing home care & further requirement to produce a market sustainability plan will result in a significant financial pressure for the council in the region of 15 million pounds, although government funding is available for a 3-year period, it is not expected to cover these increased costs. There is then a further risk that the remaining elements of the care and support market currently excluded from the Fair Cost of Care exercise will not be sustainable without further significant investment, so a further internal cost of care exercise will need to be completed.	9 (amber)		9 (amber)	9 (amber) Update MSP May 2024	<b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with ARCC Ltd to complete the Fair Cost of Care exercise and Market Sustainability Plan. Draft document completed and submitted in October 2022.</li> <li>Report presented to the Leader of the in October 2022 outlining the impact of the cost of care exercise and the options of how to support the market with the government allocations that have been made to date.</li> <li>Ongoing dialogue with legal to ensure compliance with statutory Care Act duties and consideration of affordability.</li> <li>Working with neighbouring authorities in the Black Country and the Integrated Care Board to agree a system response to provider demands.</li> <li>Negotiating with individual providers regarding fee uplifts.</li> <li>Commissioned independent provider to undertake reviews of individuals.</li> <li>Final Market Sustainability Plan submitted (March 23)</li> <li>Report to Cabinet for Fair Cost of Care approved for plans on how to sustain the market (February 23).</li> <li>ARCC scrutinised the data presented by the care homes regarding the validity of the data provided.</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Fair Cost of Care exercise  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Integrated Care Board  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> ARCC Ltd



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Page 226 15	A number of providers are approaching the council with requests for significant uplifts in their fees and notice to withdraw care and support to individuals. Should this not be addressed the capacity in the market will be unable to meet the demand and the recommissioned costs will be significantly higher adding to the budget pressures.  Risk Area – Social Care Risk Owner – Rashpal Bishop, Director of Adult Social Care <b>Objectives impacted: 2</b>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ARCC supported additional market engagement to scrutinise the data presented.</li> <li>Plan towards meeting cost of care once government allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25 have been confirmed.</li> <li>Annex B published 1st February 2023 and the final Market Sustainability Plan published 31 March 2023.</li> <li>Updated the Market Sustainability Plan and complete Annexe A in May 2023.</li> <li>Complete Market Capacity Submission in June 2023</li> </ul> <b>Further Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Market Sustainability Plan and complete Annexe A in May 2024.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Organisational culture</b> If the council does not have an effective organisational culture, then this could result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor officer and member relationships</li> <li>Negative impact on employee engagement</li> <li>Inability to demonstrate effective people management,</li> <li>Weak diversity and inclusion practices</li> <li>Recruitment and retention issues</li> <li>Negative impact on the delivery of the improvement plan and</li> <li>Potential for extended government intervention</li> <li>Failure to deliver the corporate plan</li> <li>Reputational damage</li> <li>Missed opportunities for continuous improvement</li> </ul> Risk area – All council services Risk owner – James McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Executive <b>Objectives impacted: All</b>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	4 (green)  March 2024	<b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meetings in place between senior members and officers to develop positive working relationships and information sharing.</li> <li>LGA training on officer/member relationships delivered in September 2022</li> <li>Launch of One Team Framework (values and behaviours) including Staff Conference and Managers workshops</li> <li>Employee Engagement Survey 2022 results disseminated and discussed at Directorate Management Teams and team meetings - action plans developed and monitored at Leadership Team.</li> <li>Employee Engagement Survey 2023 results disseminated and discussed at Directorate Management Teams – actions to address themes incorporated into People Strategy and service business plans</li> </ul> <b>Further Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedding One Team Framework Approval of Workforce Strategy.</li> <li>Mechanisms to be identified for ongoing insight and assurance around health of Officer and Member Relationship (December 2023).</li> <li>Management Development Programme Agreed (2023).</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> One Team Framework  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Employee Engagement Survey  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> External Reviews (Grant Thornton and LGA) providing assurance that organisational culture change has started to occur.
	<b>Strategic Workforce Development for Adult Social Care Recruitment, Retention and Sickness Absence</b>  A workforce strategy is in place and links directly with workforce planning and training. This offers existing staff training opportunities to ensure that they are qualified and competent to face service needs. If recruitment and retention are not prioritised within the service and amongst service providers, then there will not be the skilled staff to deliver appropriate social care.  Risk Area – Social Care Risk Owner – Rashpal Bishop, Director of Adult Social Care <b>Objectives impacted: 2</b>	12 (red)		12 (red)	8 (amber)  April 2024	<b>Current and ongoing controls</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented Adult Social Care restructure for social work and therapy to deliver a career development pathway which will support retention, career development and succession planning within social work.</li> <li>A student programme and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for Social Workers is in place.</li> <li>An Occupational Therapist student programme with Worcestershire University is in place and works to secure university placements including access to Practice Educator training for SMBC Occupational Therapist 's to retain their skills and expertise.</li> <li>Apprenticeships within the Directorate utilising the Apprenticeship Levy to access accredited qualifications.</li> <li>An apprenticeship programme for social work is in place with Warwickshire University, a similar programme for Occupational Therapy is being developed with Wolverhampton University.</li> <li>Qualification Sponsorship scheme to support employees to obtain recognised qualifications to enhance their work performance and skills.</li> <li>Work around maintaining recruitment and retention: Phase 1 - A) Pay benchmarking B) Golden Hello C) Market Supplement completed.</li> <li>Recruitment Events (exploring opportunity for joint partnership recruitment with health colleagues).</li> <li>Regular 121 meetings (supervision) and annual appraisal process is in place to ensure employees are engaged and can raise any concerns.</li> <li>Plans are developed and implemented to address any areas requiring further action from the employee engagement survey.</li> <li>Sickness Absence Monitoring.</li> </ul> <b>Further Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Draft Workforce Strategy to be finalised and approved.</li> <li>Draft Workforce Strategy action plans to be finalised and approved.</li> <li>Work around maintaining recruitment and retention: Phase 2 - A) Review of Job Descriptions and Person Specifications B) Further benchmarking C) Work with Children's Trust around these areas D) International recruitment.</li> </ul>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> HR related KPIs and data Appraisal process  <b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Employee Engagement Survey National Minimum Data Set for social care Benchmarking analysis

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17	<p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Central Government Funding and Resource Allocation</b></p> <p>Local Government continues to operate in an uncertain financial environment arising from reducing central government funding, increasing demand for services, and more recently the impact of the high levels of inflation being experienced. The most eminent expenditure issue for the Council at present is SEND transport, where demand for home to school transport provision is growing exponentially, forcing the cost of the services to increase beyond all previous reasonable expectation.</p> <p>If the government does not provide local authorities with clarity over the future plans for health and social care reforms, the Public Health grant, the Better Care Fund, the package of one-off social care grants, business rates reset and retention, and future years funding, and it continues with one year funding settlements then this inhibits local authorities' ability to effectively manage medium term/ three year plans and put in place the necessary processes and actions to manage funding pressures.</p> <p>If the council is unable to plan effectively as a result of funding uncertainty, and is unable to identify sufficient savings and put in place the necessary policies, processes and actions to manage budget pressures, pay and price inflation and manage its spending plans, then this will impact on the council's financial resilience and its ability to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities including the setting of a balanced budget for future years. This will impact on the council's ability to deliver sustainable services to the people of Sandwell.</p> <p>Risk Area – All Council Services Risk owner – Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	*	*	*	*	<p>* There are a number of factors that underpin the wider risk score for this risk, and the score will continue to remain fluid throughout each 12-month cycle as the council develops its MTFS, generally in-line with the below pattern. However, overall the council is confident that it has processes in place in order to be able to adequately mitigate these risks, and that it will remain able to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities, including the setting of a balanced budget for future years.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2023/24</th> <th>2024/25</th> <th>2025/26 Onwards</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review by CIPFA on the council's financial management and governance arrangements, noted that the council was initially a progressive two-star (out of five) authority. The follow up review subsequently undertaken by CIPFA progressed this to a three-star. The review also looked at financial resilience and concluded that the council is financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend. An underspend was delivered in 2022/23.</li> <li>A fundamental review of the MTFS (in line with the CIPFA recommendations) has been completed, to ensure that the council understands the challenges ahead and to ensure that the MTFP matches the ambitions of the corporate plan and regeneration plans for Sandwell.</li> <li>A balanced budget for 2023/24 was approved by Council on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 and includes savings totalling £21.4m.</li> <li>Monthly monitoring of savings is carried out by Finance Business Partners in year. Savings are RAG rated and reported to Directors monthly through DMT meetings and to LT budget meetings. Budget surgery meetings are held mid-year to review savings rated 'red', with a view to understanding any issues hampering delivery and to unblocking those issues. Budget surgery meetings are attended by the Director of Finance, appropriate Directors and a range of officers from across the organisation. Monitoring of savings includes any savings carried forward from previous years that were not delivered in those years.</li> <li>Star Chambers continue to be used to support budget setting. During August and September 2023, a Star Chamber meeting was held in relation to each Council directorate, focusing on the directorate's financial position, savings delivery within 2023/24, ongoing budget pressures and savings to be delivered in 2024/25. Star Chamber meetings include the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holders as well as the appropriate Director and Finance Business Partners.</li> <li>Star Chamber meetings are used as the initiation process to generate further savings proposals for the following financial year and to test those proposals with elected members. This is the first step in the process towards balancing the budget for the following year.</li> <li>Directorate budget pressures and growth are calculated annually by Finance Business Partners, and for Adult Social Care includes a growth model that extrapolates client numbers and average placement costs forward, building in assumed increases in market rates.</li> <li>A Strategic Finance Manager post has been created, with a view to having a dedicated resource to creating and updating the MTFS model and to ensuring assumptions, eg, pay inflation assumptions, are calculated with consideration and in accordance with wider local authority group assumptions.</li> <li>LG Futures have been commissioned to provide financial benchmarking data, including assumptions on grant income in future years,</li> <li>Regular discussions take place with WMCA over the likelihood of when the business rates reset might transpire, and Sandwell's assumptions in this regard are aligned to the rest of the WMCA group of local authorities.</li> <li>The MTFS position has been reported to Leadership Team on several occasions during the Autumn of 2023, and Directors have been fully engaged in the process of generating savings proposals to balance the budget gap in 2024/25.</li> <li>The MTFS as at 15<sup>th</sup> November reported a deficit (prior to savings) of £13m for 2024/25. Savings proposals have been developed to balance the budget, supported by a business case document for each saving. Cabinet workshops have been held on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 24<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December to engage Cabinet in the MTFS process and to ensure that elected members are willing to take each of the proposed savings forward for public consultation.</li> <li>A further iteration of the MTFS will be produced following the final settlement, during January 2024.</li> <li>In relation to SEND transport specifically, a Corporate Transformation project is being set up including specific seven workstreams, one of which is budget management and forecasting, which will produce enhanced quality forecasts to enable improved financial planning. Policy changes are proposed which, if approved, would be implemented in time for September 2024. The position for SEND will be reported to Leadership Team on a monthly basis from November 2023 onwards, including data on the number of children accessing services, and how the monthly cost has increased or reduced, tracking the result of policy changes, work to step down children into lower cost provision, and other cost reduction measures that are actioned.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued implementation of the action plan developed following the CIPFA review (as per the improvement plan timetable).</li> <li>Use of benchmarking data to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements.</li> <li>The council continues to horizon scan and consider the impacts of potential government initiatives and policies on future funding sources and demand for council services.</li> </ul>		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 Onwards	Delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)				<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Business case templates – Savings Proposals</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> <a href="#">Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board</a> Star Chambers</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> External Audit CIPFA financial management review LGA Corporate Peer Review Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - <a href="#">Follow Up- December 2022</a> LG Futures benchmarking data</p>
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18	<p><b>Budget Monitoring and Management 2023/24</b></p> <p>If the council does not put in place effective arrangements to monitor and manage the current year's budget to ensure that planned savings are achieved and efficiencies realised, then it will result in overspends and impact the resilience of the council's finances.</p> <p>Therefore, timely and accurate monthly monitoring of the budget forecast outturn is required to ensure that the revenue and capital expenditure stay within the agreed budget. This applies to the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk owner- Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	*	*	*	*	<p>* The score will continue to remain fluid throughout each 12-month monitoring cycle, however, overall the council is confident that it has processes in place to be able to forecast the outturn position within a reasonable degree of certainty, and confident that it has the resources in place to be able to mitigate a forecast overspend position in the current year, up to a degree of tolerance of approximately 0.5% of the gross budget.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="12">2023/24</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Monitoring Period</th> <th>Apr</th> <th>May</th> <th>Jun</th> <th>Jul</th> <th>Aug</th> <th>Sep</th> <th>Oct</th> <th>Nov</th> <th>Dec</th> <th>Jan</th> <th>Feb</th> <th>Mar</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Revenue Budget Monitoring Position</td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A budget monitoring timetable is created annually and circulated to all in Finance, so that monthly monitoring deadlines are clearly understood and adhered to. Elements of the monitoring timetable relevant to budget holder involvement are circulated to budget holders.</li> <li>Directors and ADs are asked to sign budget accountability letters at the start of the financial year, which set out the budgets available to each senior officer and provide assurance that the budgets are understood and will be adhered to as far as possible</li> <li>As part of the budget monitoring process, year to date expenditure figures are compared with profiled budgets, and variances to date are used to calculate forecast outturn information, in conjunction with information from budget managers, historic data, trend data and any other relevant information</li> <li>Salaries monitoring is carried out at individual post level, using year to date cost information and information from budget managers on any changes in staffing that will take place in year</li> <li>All budget holders are sent their budget monitoring report monthly, and regular meetings are held between budget holders and Finance Business Partners. Budget holders are asked to provide forecast outturn information monthly.</li> <li>Heads of Finance Business Partnering collate information for all directorates, challenging and checking assumptions with Finance Business Partners</li> <li>Directors take ownership of their directorate's monitoring position, signing off the position for their directorate each month as a true reflection of the position</li> <li>Finance Business Partners attend DMT meetings monthly to present each directorate's monitoring position, to ensure that the position is understood by all ADs and that mitigating actions are proposed to deal with overspends as necessary</li> <li>The monitoring position is presented monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and quarterly to Budget Management and Corporate Scrutiny Board</li> <li>Monitoring of current year savings (as per the MTFS) is carried out monthly by Finance Business Partners and present to DMT meetings monthly and Leadership Team meetings monthly, so that the impact of any non-delivery or slippage of savings on the Council's outturn position is understood</li> <li>If at any point, management action (for example an in-year spending freeze or recruitment freeze) or corporate action (for example use of reserves) is required in order to improve the forecast outturn position, Leadership Team is made known of this as soon as possible and provided with a list of actions that could be taken to address the forecast position. A menu of spending control options was presented to Leadership Team in August 2023, and spending controls were put in place following the Leadership Team meeting</li> <li>The council reported its Quarter 2 2023/24 <a href="#">budgetary position</a> which showed a forecast outturn position for 2023/24 of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£1.222m projected overspend for the General Fund revenue</li> <li>£nil variance for the HRA revenue</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Further actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of Oracle Fusion during 2024, which will provide each budget manager with 'real time' access to their areas' budget and spend data.</li> <li>Involving budget managers in the budget setting process will ensure that they understand their budget figures and how they have been developed</li> <li>Introduction of Oracle Fusion will lead to budget managers taking ownership of the budget monitoring process for their areas, actively reviewing data and ensuring that outturn projections are completed. Finance Business Partners will be able to ensure that monthly challenge meetings are taking place with ADs and that mitigating actions are proposed and put in place to address overspends</li> </ul>		2023/24												Monitoring Period	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Revenue Budget Monitoring Position													<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Assigned budget holders</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Leadership Team Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> External Audit Annual Internal Audit review- budgetary control</p>
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Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous score (Sept 2023)	Movement in risk score	Current risk score (Dec 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)	Key Sources of Assurance (3 lines of defence)
19	<p><b>Statement of Accounts</b></p> <p>Failure of the Council to produce its outstanding Statements of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and/or failure to produce a Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 within the required statutory deadline could result in reputational damage to the council and may impact on the council's ability to come out of intervention.</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk owner – Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	8 (amber)		8 (amber)	4 (green) March 2024	<p><b>Current and Ongoing Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A team of interim specialist contractors has been put in place to produce the outstanding Statements of Accounts and to address resulting audit queries</li> <li>The audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts was completed during Summer 2023, and final accounts have now been published.</li> <li>A Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 is due to be provided to Grant Thornton in early December 2023, and the resulting audit is due to be completed by the end of March 2024. A resource plan will be put in place by the Head of Technical Accounting to deal with audit queries during the three/four month audit period, to ensure that officers are available to respond to queries and that there are no delays to the audit timetable.</li> <li>The Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 must be produced by end of March 2024, and further external resources will be procured as required to ensure that this deadline is met. A closedown timetable for outstanding 2022/23 tasks is in place to help to manage this work.</li> <li>A closedown timetable for 2023/24 will be produced by the Head of Technical Accounting by the end of February 2024, and officer training will be delivered as required in advance of the closure period.</li> <li>A plan will be put in place for knowledge and skill transfer between the interim specialist contractors and the council's permanent Technical Finance team to ensure that permanent staff are able to produce Statements of Accounts in the future in-house.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Head of Technical Accounting</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> National guidance/regular updates across the sector</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> External Audit Audit and Risk Assurance Committee</p>
20	<p><b>Oracle Fusion Implementation</b></p> <p>The Oracle Fusion Programme is working to a July Go-Live date for all modules.</p> <p>The HR and Payroll workstreams remain the area with the most risk to meet the target go-live date. This is due to the scale of change (number of modules being delivered), the length of time it has taken to complete design activity and complexity, (data governance in current system and how to transfer effectively to the new system).</p> <p>For Finance the new management team have undertaken a review of the design of the Chart of Accounts and approved an updated design that is planned to be implemented within the updated timeline. Potential further changes to the Enterprise Performance Management Budget Monitoring and Setting modules present a further timeline risk which is being managed.</p> <p>Risk Area – Finance and Resources Risk Owners – Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	9 (amber)		9 (amber)	4 (green) April 2024	<p>The risk score has remained the same.</p> <p><b>Mitigations:</b></p> <p><b>For HR and Payroll</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject matter expertise engagement activities to resources to take on programme role</li> <li>Continuous resource management and repeated realignment of relevant resources</li> <li>Additional line manager representation</li> <li>Direct progress reports to relevant Board member</li> <li>Detailed level of governance, and controls, and task prioritisation</li> <li>Updated Programme plan moving all modules go-live to July</li> <li>Additional resources identified</li> <li>Complex tasks descoped to post go-live</li> <li>Data migration process reviews to streamline and reduce critical tasks</li> <li>Further analysis taking place on other critical activities</li> </ul> <p><b>For Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed new Chart of Accounts design to achieve best practice with minimised impact</li> <li>Exploring rapid implementation of an interface from the existing HR and Payroll system to Oracle Fusion general ledger and budget monitoring</li> <li>All identified changes will be assessed through the Programme change control and governance process</li> <li>Timeline set out for finalising any changes to the Enterprise Performance Management module</li> <li>Added the production of accounting procedure guides to the task list</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> SOCITM</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> SRO updates to Leadership Team Project Board</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> Grant Thornton – <a href="#">Value for Money Governance Review 2021</a> Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- <a href="#">December 2022</a> Grant Thornton review of Oracle Implementation</p>
21	<p><b>Partner Organisations/Contractors Service Delivery</b></p> <p>The council works closely with partners and contractors to provide services to its residents and businesses.</p> <p>In the event Partner organisations or contractors do not provide the required level of service to the public this may result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient / good value for money / high quality services not being delivered</li> <li>Enforcement action</li> <li>Significant financial loss and</li> <li>Reputational damage</li> </ul> <p>Risk Area – All Services Risk Owner – Alice Davey, Director of Borough Economy <b>Objectives impacted: All</b></p>	9 (amber)		6 (green)	4 (green) March 2024	<p><b>Current Controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership Team has established a reporting structure for the council's key contracts and partnership arrangements.</li> <li>Arrangements for scrutiny consideration of the council's key contracts is in progress.</li> <li>A deed of variation and extension period has been agreed and signed with SLT to deliver services up to end March 2027.</li> <li>Contract management training has been rolled out across the Council.</li> <li>A lessons learnt session led by key stakeholders in WM police has been completed during September 2023 to ensure that the recent service disruption due to illegal blockading during the period of industrial action is analysed appropriately to inform future incidents.</li> <li>Follow up report to Cabinet has been provided in October 2023 for Sandwell Leisure Trust to confirm the position to end March 2027</li> <li>Intend system holds details of all contracts that were procured through this system. All contracts procured through the Intend system are added to the Contracts Register by the procurement team.</li> <li>Establishment of consistent contract management for both significant capital and service contracts across the Council. The contract management resources online (Council intranet site) provide templates for a consistent approach to contract management. In addition, the introduction of the contract management module on Oracle Fusion will contribute towards effective contract and performance management (it can capture information around KPIs and risks etc)</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of the current arrangements in place for each key contractor to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that the partnership objectives are aligned to the refreshed corporate plan.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> line</b> Contract management</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> line</b> Economy, Skills, Transport And Environment Scrutiny Board review of the performance and management of the waste partnership contract Reports to the Improvement Board Leadership Team – quarterly monitoring</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> line</b> Grant Thornton – Value for Money <a href="#">Governance Review 2021</a> CIPFA Financial Management and Governance Review 2021 LGA Peer Review 2022 Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Follow Up- <a href="#">December 2022</a></p>





## Appendix 4

### PIs to be Removed or Amended

Subject to Cabinet approval, the following indicators have been removed from the Corporate Performance Report because they are in development and not expected to produce an outturn until 2024/25. These will be considered for inclusion as part of the refresh of our Key Performance Indicators for 2024/25.

PI	Strategic Outcome and Directorate
Healthy pregnancy programme	People Live Well and Age Well Public Health
Universal Healthy Start Vitamins	
The % of places filled on community mental health programmes being delivered	
Development of further metrics as part of corporate governance plan	One Council One Team Assistant Chief Executive (formerly Law and Governance)

Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that the targets for 1 PI is amended this quarter and 3 PIs are amended to annual indicators. They are set out below, with a justification for the changes.



PI	Strategic Outcome and Directorate	Justification
Number of sites that are non-compliant with the national NO2 air quality objective (40 ug/m3 per annum)	People Live Well and Age Well Public Health	Information is only available annually and so will be included in the annual performance report
Children in Care – Health assessments	Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Children and Education	Information is only available annually and so will be included in the annual performance report
Visitor Services and Events Mystery Shopper Scores	Strong Resilient Communities Borough Economy	This indicator will be changed to an annual indicator as there is a cost associated with the mystery shopper. It will take place in Q4 and be reported in the Q4 report.
Members to undertake a minimum of 10 hours of development annually	One Council One Team Assistant Chief Executive	The target has been revised for Q4 from 70% to 65%. A data quality issue has been identified for this PI, which means historic data and the target of 70% is inaccurate. An agreed process is now in place and has been recorded for the data collection.



## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Highfields Primary School – Making Significant Changes (Prescribed Alterations) Consultation Outcome for Change of Age Range
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, Councillor Simon Hackett
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rachel Hill, Project Officer, School Organisation <a href="mailto:Rachel_Hill@sandwell.gov.uk">Rachel_Hill@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

1.1 That in connection with the proposed prescribed alterations to change the age range of Highfields Primary School, Beeches Road, Rowley Regis, B65 0DA (the school) from 3 – 11 years old to 5 – 11 years old, approval be given to the:

- i) publication of the appropriate Statutory Proposal;
- ii) subject to no objections being raised during the statutory representation period for the Statutory Proposal, that the Director of Children and Education be authorised to make a final decision on the proposal for the prescribed alterations at Highfields Primary School, in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director – Legal & Assurance and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education; and
- iii) in the event that any objections are raised during the statutory representation period for the Statutory Proposal, that a report is submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young




People and Education with full details of representations received to inform a final decision on the proposal.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The school has experienced a drop in nursery place applications for some time because as a maintained school nursery it cannot provide the flexibility that a lot of parents need.
- 2.2 In February 2023 the governing body decided to close the nursery temporarily for 2023/24 academic year due to it not being financially viable. At the start of the 2023/24 academic year the governing body reviewed its decision to temporarily close the nursery and are now requesting a permanent closure of the nursery and a change of age range. The change of age range will not affect the pupil admission number therefore the same number of places will be available for Reception to Year 6.
- 2.3 An initial consultation was completed between 13 November 2023 and 11 December 2023. Consultation has been completed and 10 responses were received and having taken the representations into account, and no further action being required, subject to Cabinet approval to this report, statutory proposals to change the age range will be published for 4 weeks.

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

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>The recommendations in this report support:</p> <p>B9 We will provide enough good school places that offer families choice and confidence that their children can experience high quality education and achieve good outcomes.</p> <p>B10 We will work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.</p>
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	B15 We will work with partners to ensure early help is available to children and young people at the earliest opportunity depending on their need.
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**4 Context and Key Issues**

4.1 Highfields Primary School has a 60 place Nursery which offers parents morning or afternoon sessions (30 pupils in each session) and is open during the school day; 9.00am to 3.20pm, term time only. The school employs a class teacher and two members of support staff.

4.2 In September 2022 of the 60 places available at Highfields Primary School’s Nursery class, there were 27 on roll, all attending the morning session. Over the past five years numbers on roll have shown a downward trend.

Year	Number of children in AM session	Number of children in PM session	Total
2022/23	27	0	27
2021/22	21	12	33
2020/21	19	6	25
2019/20	27	12	39
2018/19	27	20	47

4.3 In 2022/23 nursery staff were redeployed across school in the afternoon due to no PM session being run.

4.4 As with all maintained schools Highfields Primary School receives a budget for its Nursery class based upon the number of children who attended in the previous financial year.

4.5 The Authority greatly values the early years provision offered at Highfields Primary School, but the sustainability fund that is available will not be enough to make up the shortfall in places.



4.6 In February 2023 the governing body discussed the future of the nursery provision and voted unanimously to proceed with closing the Nursery from September 2023 and deploy staff to support teaching and learning for Reception, Key Stage 1 and 2. The Council is now seeking a permanent closure of the Nursery.

### **Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)**

4.7 The DfE regulations: 'Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to Maintained Schools' requires that when the Local Authority is proposing a significant alteration, i.e., a change to the age range, it must consult upon the proposal and make a formal decision to make the alteration permanent.

4.8 Initial consultation ran from 13 November 2023 to 11 December 2023. The consultations were published on the Council's Consultation Hub and published in the Express and Star on 11 November 2023 and available on the Express and Star's website for a further 14 days. All Sandwell schools were also consulted.

4.9 10 responses to the consultation were received. 7 responses were in support of the closure;

*"I agree to the closure. Numbers had fallen and parents who did use it were not committed to sending their child regularly using it when they wanted to, more like a playgroup. However, time still had to be invested chasing attendance and safeguarding around absences. Parents want full time provision."*

*"There is not the demand for non full time nursery places without wrap around care."*

*"I agree to the consultation, so all sides of the proposals can be heard."*

*"Presuming this means to continue starting reception at age 4, it seems like a sensible decision. The nursery as it was didn't meet our needs so we chose one with 8am-6pm provision and I believe many other families were in the same position. Seems sensible for school to be able to focus on core age range of Reception to Year 6. Even better if this decision allows focus to be given to continuing and hopefully extending wrap around care to help meet parents' needs for children aged 4-11."*





*“It is having negative implications for other year groups with staffing etc. There are not enough children to maintain the Nursery”*

4.10 3 responses from parents/carers disagreed with the closure;

*“It causes too much disruption to have to find a suitable pre school in the area and then the move child to attend highfields reception-no smooth transition for the child.”*

*“I disagree as I have a toddler who should of been starting nursery Sept 24. I think early years in schools sets them up for normal school routine. School early years provides routine & familiar faces that they'll see for years helps with them settling in.”*

*“Not all parents need or want 30 hours of childcare in a private nursery setting. My older child attends highfields so when my younger daughter is due to start nursery in September, she won't be able to have the same journey and opportunities. She won't have the school environment until reception as i cant be in 2 places at once. I don't feel that private nurseries give the same learning opportunities as a school. There aren't many schools without nurseries nowadays and I feel that this will affect the school numbers in general. I would be interested to know what has been done to try and save the school nursery.*

*Also if the age is changing from 5 does that mean children who are due to start reception as a 4 year old wont be able to?”*

4.11 A place at a school nursery does not guarantee a place in Reception. A child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age, on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. However, schools are required to provide places for children in the September following their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although the age range is 5-11 years admission into Reception at age 4 will continue.

4.12 The school is funding staffing and resources for a 60-place nursery but only filled 27 places in 2022/23 and 33 in 2021/22. The funding for those children does not cover the cost of staffing or resources.

School received £4.23 per pupil per hour for up to 15 hours per week, which equates to £2,411 per pupil for 2022/23.



4.13 Total cost for staffing in 2022/23 for a 60-place nursery was £112,478. Total income from 27 filled nursery places for 2022/23 equated to £65,097. A deficit of £47,381. These figures do not take into account any overheads, general running costs, cost of learning resources, equipment and materials. The deficit is having to be met from the school budget.

4.14 The council’s sustainability fund is not enough to cover 30 empty places.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 Do nothing and keep the age range at the existing range of 3-11 years – this would be a detrimental impact on the school’s budget and resources.

5.2 Retain the existing age range of 3-11 years, but reduce the Nursery to 26 places, 13 AM session / 13 PM session. The Governing Body has considered reducing the overall capacity of the Nursery to fewer places but in the long term, does not consider there is sufficient demand to provide a sustainable solution for future years.

5.3 Combine the school’s Nursery and Reception classes to form an Early Years / Foundation Unit. The Governing Body has considered the option but for the reasons stated in para. 4.11, the financial viability of operating a unit model would create additional financial concerns for the school.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>Financial and Staffing There will be no effect on staffing. Early Years staff will be redeployed across the school to support children aged 5-11 years improving the educational outcomes of those children.</p> <p>Land / building implications – There will be no effect on the building or land. The nursery accommodation can be used by the school for intervention space for the children.</p>
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<p><b>Legal and Governance:</b></p>	<p>Any proposed changes to the age range of a school must be carried out in accordance with the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education, 'Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools'. The guidance requires the local authority to undertake a statutory consultation for a period of at least 4 weeks.</p> <p>The guidance is issued in relation to any exercise of functions under The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations') and should be read in conjunction with Parts 2, 3 and Schedule 3 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. The proposal is also subject to and assessed as compliant with the requirements of the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations and The School Organisation (Removal of Foundation, Reduction in the Number of Foundation Governors and Ability of Foundation to Pay Debts) (England) Regulations (2007) ('the 'Removal Regulations').</p>
<p><b>Risk:</b></p>	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.</p> <p>The Cabinet has a statutory duty under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 to make a decision on a prescribed alteration proposal.</p> <p>Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported with regards to this proposal.</p> <p>One risk has been identified on the project risk register; report not being approved</p>



	The risk has been assessed and mitigating measures are in place.
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. The recommendation has a positive impact on age as the school budget can be utilised to better support pupils in Reception, KS1 and KS2. The impact on disability is positive as nursery staff have been redeployed and can therefore provide dedicated and direct support to pupils who may have a disability.</p> <p>There is a neutral impact on other characteristics. The nursery has no children currently attending the service. Families will have access to the family information service where they can receive advice and guidance on other service providers that are available across Sandwell.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The closure of the nursery will provide more internal and external space available for reception and KS 1.
<b>Social Value:</b>	<p>There are no staff redundancy's proposed as staff will be redeployed across the school.</p> <p>Resources will be used to improve the educational outcomes of the pupils.</p>
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No impact on climate change.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	<p>The report recommendations will enable the age range of Highfields Primary School to be reduced from 3-11 years to 5-11 years.</p> <p>The closure of the nursery will lessen the financial burden on the school budget and provide better outcomes from children age 5-11 years and will fulfil the role of Corporate Parenting by supporting the care and safeguarding of all children throughout their time attending the school, from Early Years through to end of Key Stage 2.</p>

## 7. Appendices

None



## 8. Background Papers

None



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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences - West Midlands Regional Working Agreement
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways Councillor Danny Millard
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes [Affects all wards]
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Highway Network Development & Road Safety Manager Simon Chadwick <a href="mailto:simon_chadwick@sandwell.gov.uk">simon_chadwick@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given for Sandwell Council to enter into a new Regional West Midlands Working Agreement with West Midlands Police in relation to the operation and management of Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences across the whole of Sandwell Council adopted road network.
- 1.2 The authorisation be given for the delegation of all approvals on operational decisions and details of the final agreement to the Director of Borough Economy / Executive Director Place in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways including;
  - The development and management of operational policy regarding enforcement, site selection and operation.
  - Approval of all terms and conditions in any new regional agreement in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance.



- 1.3 That approval be given for the Director of Law and Governance / Executive Director of Finance and Transformation to execute any documentation necessary to give effect to recommendation in 1.1.
- 1.4 That approval be given for Sandwell Council to continue operating within the current terms and conditions of the existing Black Country Average Speed Enforcement Working Agreement for an additional interim year 2024/25 or until such time as the Regional Working Agreement is finalised and adopted.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations






- 2.1 Speed has been identified as a key risk factor in road traffic injuries, influencing both the risk of road traffic crashes and the severity of the injuries that result from them.
- 2.2 West Midlands Police (WMP) is the only authority within the region that has the power to undertake speed enforcement whilst local highway authorities have the ability to install and maintain detection equipment on or near the highway. This therefore enables a collaborative approach between West Midlands Police (WMP) and local authorities to collectively deliver a data led programme of speed enforcement.
- 2.3 Currently there are three 3 sub-regional Average Speed Enforcement Working Agreements between West Midlands Police and the Black Country authorities, Birmingham & Solihull and Coventry, which were developed separately between 2016 and 2021. These three separate agreements result in duplication and inefficiencies in the back office which hinder the performance of WMP.
- 2.4 The current agreements all expire in March 2024 and therefore it is felt the time is right to develop a single West Midlands Regional Working Agreement to help rationalise and drive efficiency of West Midlands Police speed enforcement across the region. This will have the benefits of increasing the number of camera enforcement sites available for the borough moving forward and increasing the level of prosecutions the Police can undertake in each area.
- 2.5 The intention is also to expand the scope of the new Regional Agreement to include the camera enforcement of all relevant endorsable traffic offences. This will allow the use of emerging technology for the introduction of red-light cameras for enforcing red light running at traffic



signals and single site spot speed cameras in residential streets, in addition to expanding the existing average speed camera network, should the criteria for their use be met.

- 2.6 However, it is expected that any new Regional Agreement will require considerable discussion and negotiation between all parties before commencing in April 2025. Consequently, an interim arrangement is required for the existing three separate working agreements to continue in place from April 2024 to March 2025, with some minor changes through way of addendum, to ensure there is no break in average speed enforcement arrangements across the region.
- 2.7 It is felt that the development of a new Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences - West Midlands Regional Working Agreement will ultimately lead to a significant reduction in the number of killed and seriously injured (KSI) road casualties in Sandwell. This will help achieve the challenging road safety targets recently approved in the new Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 and the West Midlands Refreshed Road Safety Strategy 2030.

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

	Improving speed compliance through targeted and data led enforcement will increase safety on the borough's roads, encourage active travel, and contribute to improving residents' quality of life and air quality.
	Facilitating an increase in speed enforcement in the borough will contribute to improved air quality, improved safety, and encouragement of active travel.
	Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. A safe highway network is an important enabler of this, particularly the efficient operation of our transport networks.
	Both new and existing residential developments rely on good quality and safe access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The ability to be able to help facilitate greater speed enforcement by the police will help facilitate this.
	Helping facilitate greater speed compliance through police enforcement will contribute to reduced congestion and improve journey times and journey time reliability (including for public transport) on key strategic routes.







Our highways are the arteries of our communities. They connect our residents to employment, education, local services and indeed the wider world. They enable economic growth, social mobility and are vital in ensuring good health outcomes. Therefore a safe and reliable road network is essential.

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 As the Local Traffic Authority, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) has a statutory duty to ensure (as far as is reasonably practicable with regard to policy objectives and obligations) the expeditious movement of traffic on the Authority's road network and to introduce initiatives to help reduce identified road casualties.
- 4.2 In the UK, exceeding the speed limit is an offence under Section 89 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. West Midlands Police (WMP) is the only authority within the region that has the power to undertake speed enforcement. In addition, Section 95a of the Highways Act 1980 gives highway authorities the power to install and maintain equipment on or near the highway to facilitate the detection of traffic offences.
- 4.3 This legislation enables a collaborative approach to be undertaken between WMP and local authorities to collectively make data led decisions on where to deliver endorsable traffic camera enforcement schemes.
- 4.4 In the period 2016 to 2021, the seven constituent West Midlands local authorities agreed 3 separate Average Speed Enforcement (ASE) Working Agreements with WMP and the Police and Crime Commissioner. This were exclusively aimed at initiating digital ASE camera systems in the region, aimed specifically at reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured due to high speed violations.
- 4.5 Birmingham and Solihull commenced a joint pilot scheme in 2016 whilst Coventry then set up its own separate working agreement around 2020. Finally, the 4 Black Country councils worked in partnership to develop a collaborative Black Country ASE Working Agreement in 2021 with the two identified sites becoming operational in Sandwell in January 2022.
- 4.6 As part of these working agreements Local authorities agreed to procure, install and maintain speed enforcement technology equipment





(known as the asset). WMP agreed to take on the role of enforcing speed violations and be responsible for the back-office equipment for processing of any speed violations captured by the cameras.

4.7 The aims of the current ASE schemes are to:

- Positively influence driver behaviour.
- Ensure that motorists comply with the posted speed limits on roads, resulting in a safe environment for all road users.
- Promote safety for all road users in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and support the delivery of the West Midlands targets for the reduction in the number and severity of road traffic casualties.
- Work collaboratively both with road safety partners and with other road safety interventions, including engineering, educations and behaviour change campaigns;
- Ensure that the schemes are self-financing but not profit driven, with a targeted approach whereby the most dangerous of drivers ultimately help finance the safety benefit for all road users through attending speed awareness courses.

4.8 The three separate ASE working agreements currently expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and a review undertaken collectively by WMP and the seven councils has identified a number of limitations with the current position;

- WMP has to spend valuable resource in administering and managing the enforcement operations for three separate agreements which resulted in only 13% of all potential speed limit violations being acted upon.
- This resulted in only 10,875 offenders during 2022 being eligible or accepted to attend a speed awareness course, minimising the road safety benefits offered through a driver offenders rehabilitation scheme.
- The current schemes are not performing well enough to ensure the greatest road safety benefit and consequently are not self-financing, which places a financial burden on WMP and the local authorities.

4.9 Therefore it is felt the time is right to develop a single West Midlands Regional Working Agreement to help rationalise and drive efficiency of West Midlands Police back office operations. This will have the benefit of improving speed enforcement in Sandwell and the wider West Midlands



by being able to significantly increase the number of camera enforcement sites and increasing the level of prosecutions the Police can undertake in each area. This will also ensure the longevity of the scheme by making it self-financing.

4.10 WMP new Chief Constable and WM Mayor have both may a strong commitment to improve road safety in the West Midlands through improved enforcement and greater partnership working and see the expansion of digital enforcement technology as key to ensuring a significant reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads of the West Midlands.

4.11 Therefore the intention is to expand the scope of the new West Midlands Regional Agreement to include the enforcement by camera of all relevant endorsable traffic offences. Moving forward this will allow the potential use of digital red-light cameras for enforcing red light running at junctions and crossings, and single site spot speed cameras in residential streets, in addition to expanding the existing average speed camera network. Any new infrastructure will only be considered in line with a strict justification criterion approved as part of the new regional agreement.

4.11 It is expected that any new Regional Agreement will take a great deal of discussion and negotiation between all parties before commencing in April 2025. Consequently, an interim arrangement is required whereby the existing ASE working agreements continue in place from April 2024 to March 2025, with some minor changes through way of addendum, to ensure there is no break in Average Speed Enforcement across the region.

4.13 Cabinet is therefore requested to approve Sandwell to continue operating within the current terms and conditions of the existing Black Country Average Speed Enforcement Working Agreement for an additional interim year April 2024 to March 2025, until such time as the Regional Working Agreement can be finalised and signed up to.

4.14 Sandwell currently has 2 Average Speed Enforcement sites;



- A4123 Wolverhampton Road between Hagley Road and Pound Road
- A34 Birmingham Road between Scott Arms and Borough boundary with Walsall

The benefits of ASE have been exceptional with results between 2018 and 2022 showing a 50% reduction in all road casualties, no fatal injuries (there were 3 in the three years previous), and a 40% reduction in serious injuries.

On the A4123 speed compliance for the 40mph limit improved from 56% prior to the cameras to 95% after the introduction of ASE.

- 4.14 The development of a new Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences - West Midlands Regional Working Agreement will ultimately lead to a significant reduction in the number of Killed and Seriously injured (KSI) road casualties in Sandwell as well as the wider region, by targeting enforcement of the highest speed roads in the borough. This will help achieve the challenging road safety targets recently approved in the new Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 and the West Midlands Refreshed Road Safety Strategy 2030.
- 4.15 New WMP efficiencies and an increase in back office staff will allow an expansion of the digital camera enforcement network for endorsable traffic offences in the borough, further enhancing safety for all Sandwell's road users.
- 4.16 Due to the complexities of agreeing the roles, responsibilities, terms and conditions of any new regional agreement and the need for continual two-way communications between legal teams Cabinet are requested to agree in principle for Sandwell Council to enter the Camera Enforcement of Endorsable Traffic Offences - West Midlands Regional Working Agreement but delegate all approvals on operational decisions and details of the final agreement to the Director of Borough Economy or the Executive Director, Place in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways and the Director of Law and Governance or the Executive Director Finance and Transformation.



## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Do Nothing is not recommended as WMP will not continue to operate under three separate ASE working agreements after March 2025. Hence Average Speed Enforcement would cease in Sandwell, with WMP relying solely on speed camera vans to undertake limited speed enforcement in the borough which would have a significant detrimental impact on the ability to reduce the most serious road casualty rates.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Any future requirement for capital expenditure for the ongoing purchase of additional enforcement cameras will be identified through the Local Network Improvement Plan (LNIP) road safety capital allocations budgets. Moving forward the maintenance operation will be cost neutral balancing contravention income with revenue resource requirements. Any surplus will be used to implement complimentary road safety and traffic management improvements to the network or improve the enforcement infrastructure stock.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	There will be a requirement for Legal Service to consider the terms and conditions of any new regional agreement before signature and sealing.
<b>Risk:</b>	Without entering into a new agreement, WMP will not continue to operate under three separate ASE working agreements after March 2025. Hence Average Speed Enforcement would cease in Sandwell. This will significantly affect the council's ability to reduce KSI casualties in the borough
<b>Equality:</b>	From initial inspection it is not believed that this decision discriminates against the protected characteristics. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are included in Policy to draw attention to the detail of, and the need to comply with, the Act.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The principal benefits associated with enforcing speed related contraventions are the mitigation of unsafe, illegal, and inconsiderate driving, reducing traffic congestion, improving safety and improving equality.



	These will have a positive effect on Sandwell as a good place for local communities and visitors.
<b>Social Value</b>	There are no implications for social value directly arising from this report.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	By having the ability to reduce traffic speeds will have a positive effect and help reduce the effects of emissions on the air quality and climate of Sandwell.
<b>Corporate Parenting</b>	The work to reduce road casualties across the road network supports the Council in the broad role as a corporate parent.



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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Sandwell Valley 10 Year Master Plan
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environment, Councillor Laura Rollins
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Borough Economy, Alice Davey
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes – adoption of the 10 year master plan and delegated authority for spend decisions within the parameters of this report
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Assistant Director, Borough Economy (Green Spaces, Visitor Services, Events) – Matthew Huggins; <a href="mailto:matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk">matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval is given to adopt the 10-year Master Plan and to:
- a. authorise the Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environment and the Assistant Director for Borough Economy (Green Spaces, Visitor Services, Events)/Executive Director Place to proceed on a phased basis for the spend of capital;
  - b. approve the capital borrowing requirement for £7.856m to be released in the three phases set out in this plan.
- 1.2 That subject to a satisfactory strategic finance appraisal being undertaken, approval is given to three phases of delegated authority for release of the capital funds as follows:





- a. Phase One: April 2024 – March 2025 – Investment into infrastructure, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, King George V Pavilion, Land Train, entrance and shop expansion at Forge Mill Farm, and the development of a nature conservation and heritage plan. Total capital investment for this phase: £3,332,033.00
- b. Phase Two: April 2025 – March 2026 – Investment into Swan Pool Water sports Centre and Café. Total capital investment for this phase: £2,774,024
- c. Phase Three: April 2026 – March 2027 – Investment into Forge Mill Farm Food Education Barn. Total capital investment for this phase: £1,750,000

## 2. Reason for Recommendations

- 2.1. This report and appendices provides a detailed overview of the 10-year Sandwell Valley Master Plan.
- 2.2. Sandwell Valley Country Park spans 1,800 acres of open countryside (designated as ‘Green Belt’ within the Sandwell Local Plan), and includes the following:
  - Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre (previously known as Sandwell Park Farm)
  - Victorian Gardens and Rabbit Village (as part of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre)
  - Forge Mill Farm
  - Sandwell Showground used for large events of up to 20,000 people
  - Sandwell Valley Amusements (Children’s Funfair)
  - King George V Pavilion (KGP) – with changing room facilities and previously Sandwell Valley Cycle Hire
  - Mini-Golf, Foot-golf, and BMX Bike Pump Track
  - Adventure Playground and Children’s Play Area
  - Sandwell Valley High Ropes high roles





- Sandwell Valley Sailing Building, Swan Pool
- Sandwell Valley Urban Bike Track, linked Cycle Route 5 (opened in Sept 23)
- Brown's Farm (due for demolition)
- Five houses as staff accommodation
- The Sandwell
- Ice House Structure
- Priory Woods Local Nature Reserve
- Sots Hole Local Nature Reserve
- Various fields rented out for grazing, horse stables, and a model flying club
- Catering and Retail Outlets, including the Tea Rooms at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Adventure Cabin, Dartmouth Park Café, and various catering facilities at Forge Mill Farm.

2.3 Over the last 2 years a range of improvements have been implemented across Sandwell Valley. These are summarised in Appendix A.

2.4 This Master Plan for Sandwell Valley brings together these services to build on these improvements with the aim of making Sandwell Valley a destination of choice, as well as revenue targets as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2.5 The Master Plan for Sandwell Valley will work towards realising the potential of Sandwell Valley in the following way:





- a. Investing in Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, providing facilities for weddings, events and activities, an increased café offer, an outside heritage zone play area, and wet weather provision within the building.
- b. Investing in a new watersports provision and café at Swan Pool. This increases the natural supervision of Swan Pool through design, whilst providing modern facilities to the various water sports and swimming clubs using the site. The café will serve the thousands of visitors to Swan Pool each year, including the increased number of visitors for the recent Urban Bike Track at Sandwell Valley.
- c. Investing in a new food and education barn, increasing the offer at Forge Mill Farm for schools and visitors.




- d. Investing in infrastructure improvements, to address a lack of signage and connectivity across the site.
- e. Investing in a land train, to improve the connectivity across the site, between Dartmouth Park, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Swan Pool, and Forge Mill Farm.
- f. Improvements to the parking on site to decrease traffic issues, and to continue exploring options for transport improvements to the sites.
- g. Investment into the King George V Pavilion and associated facilities (mini golf, multi-sports area, foot golf, cycling hire).
- h. Developing a 10-year conservation and heritage plan for Sandwell Valley

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

The aim is to ensure the long-term viability of Sandwell Valley, whilst making this a sub-regional destination bringing more visitors from the region to Sandwell. This contributes to the Corporate Plan in the following way:

	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b> The Master Plan offers children and young people the opportunity to experience interaction with rare breed animals, and access to events and activities in the holidays and at weekends. The education and outreach team also deliver a programme of school visits and out of school education activities. The new Swan Pool Watersports Facility will provide water based activities and learning for children and young people.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b> Sandwell Valley Country Park provides an opportunity for physical activity that improves physical and mental health. Various groups use the country park for activities, including volunteer activities, and walking groups.</p>
	<p><b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</b> The Sandwell Valley estate provides a landmark visitor destination in Sandwell, improving the local neighbourhood as well as offering the Borough as a place to visit.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b> Events provide an opportunity for local businesses to benefit from increased visitor numbers to Sandwell. Sandwell Valley Master Plan provides investment into the borough, through</p>



	the development of new facilities that will bring additional revenue into Sandwell Valley.
	<b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b> The improvements set out in this plan provide better connections in between the various sites, with new way finding, and bike e-charging and bike storage locations.

## 4 Context and Key Issues

### Sandwell Valley Master Plan Overview

4.1 The political priorities identified in Cabinet Manifestos in 2022 were:

- a. To develop a 10-year master plan for Sandwell Valley.
- b. To develop Forge Mill Farm into a Centre of Excellence in Animal Welfare, Food Education, and Farming.

4.2 Prominent TLS, expert consultants in leisure and country parks were, appointed in Dec 2022 to work with the Council on the development of a Master Plan. The Master Plan Scoping document is attached in Appendix B.

4.3 Since then, a series of meetings and workshops have taken place in the development of the Master Plan to date. These include: two cabinet workshops, site walk arounds with the consultants and cabinet member, and three cabinet member / director briefings. This includes:

Key Meeting	Date
Consultation Initial Scoping Brief Session	19 <sup>th</sup> Jan 23
Sandwell Valley Scoping Masterplan – Cabinet Workshop	25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 23
Sandwell Valley Master Plan Update	5 <sup>th</sup> April 23
Sandwell Valley Newton Road Walkabout	21 <sup>st</sup> April 23
Pre-Cabinet Master Plan Update and Session with Cabinet Member	17 <sup>th</sup> May
Master planning session with Planned Lead at Sandwell	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 23
Sandwell Valley Scoping Masterplan – Cabinet Workshop	24 <sup>th</sup> May 23
Officer meeting with consultants on entrance / exit options	20 <sup>th</sup> August 23
Entrance and Exit Options Working Group Session	28 <sup>th</sup> Sept 23
Approval of timescale and key decision dates (completed)	25 <sup>h</sup> October, 2023



Financial model and business plan drafted based on Master Plan draft (Completed)	20 <sup>th</sup> November, 2023
Financial Model and Capital Requirements Testing with Capital Team (Completed)	20 <sup>th</sup> Nov – 27 <sup>th</sup> Nov, 2023
Capital Board presentation and decision (completed)	4 <sup>th</sup> Dec, 2023
Cabinet Member Working Group Session – Finance (completed)	7 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023
Presentation to Leader’s meeting pre-consultation	13 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023
Public consultation on Master Plan	14 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023 – 7 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2024
Scrutiny Session	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023

4.4 As part of stakeholder engagement, additional meetings have taken place with the following groups and individuals:

- a. Residents, Friends Groups and SANDNATS (Sandwell Naturalists) who live in the vicinity of Sandwell Valley (3<sup>rd</sup> Feb and 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024)
- b. Sailing Club, Swimming Club and other water sports groups (13<sup>th</sup> January)
- c. Planning Policy (30<sup>th</sup> January)
- d. Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (6<sup>th</sup> Feb)
- e. RSPB Centre, Sandwell Valley (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb)

4.5 The public consultation held on Citizenspace (the Councils consultation portal) between 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023 and 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024 received 177 responses, with 176 of respondents having visited Sandwell Valley. The respondents to the consultation, including those in 3.2, were largely supportive of the proposals. A summary of responses and the actions taken is attached in Appendix D.

4.6 Following this consultation, the following updates have been made to the final master plan for Sandwell Valley:

- a. The addition of a dog training field, with secure fencing, for dog walkers to let their dogs off the lead (location to be determined).
- b. Improved disability access at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Swan Pool, and Forge Mill Farm.
- c. Additional clarity that Sandwell will work with stakeholders and partners to prepare a conservation and heritage management plan in 24/25.



- 4.7 The projected 10-year net budget for the master plan, including revenue, has been robustly tested with the support of CIPFA Cco. This has been adopted in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, including borrowing costs.
- 4.8 This includes phases stages of investment over three financial years. These are 24/25, 25/26, and 26/27.
- 4.9 The milestones within this plan are subject to approval given by Cabinet in March 2024, following public consultation and scrutiny of the Master Plan, with the major works to improve Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre in Q4 of 24/25 (including a downgrade in income for this quarter whilst work takes place).
- 4.10 To deliver the Master Plan commitments in its entirety would cost £7,856,057. This is broken down over three phases as follows:

Works	Summary	24/25	25/26	26/27
Signage and Interpretation Updates	To improve connectivity and accessibility across Sandwell Valley Country, and signposting to income units	£ 145,000.00		
Key Infrastructure Improvements	Car Parking Improvements; Drainage improvements to 4 fields; Grass protection for overflow car parks	£ 680,000.00		
Bike / Cycle Points	To improve connectivity and allow for greater use of cycling across Sandwell Valley	£ 35,000.00		
King George V Refurbishment	Essential maintenance works, and a general appearance uplift. This will increase the value of operator fees and commission to the Council.	£ 250,000.00		
Playzone Upgrade	Upgrading the current pitch to an all weather, multi-sports pitch to encourage and promote health	£ 100,000.00		
Mini Gold Upgrade	To match the level of mini-golf expected by customers, increasing operator fees and commission to the Council.	£ 80,000.00		
Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre Refurbishment	This is essential to make the Courtyard weatherproof, and increase capacity of the café and income units on site; improvements to the venue for weddings hire; repairs and maintenance	£1,252,033.00		
Dog Training Field	A secure and fenced area for dog walkers to take their dogs of the lead for walking and training	£ 50,000.00		
Conservation and Heritage Management Plan	This will allow work to take place with SANDNATS, BBC Wildlife, RSPB and other stakeholders to develop a 10 year conservation and heritage plan.	£ 20,000.00		
Heitage Discovery Zone	This will provide Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre with an educational and fun visitor experience, with one of the largest play areas linked to heritage in the region. This will result in increased footfall toward Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre.	£ 500,000.00		
Land Train	The zones are split by between 30 mins to 1 hour, and not easy to get from one side to the other. The addition of a land train will allow transport during peak times throughout the year – in a cost neutral way (where people pay a small fee for the trip).	£ 150,000.00		
New Watersports Centre and Café	The current 'Sailing Club' building is underused and not up to appropriate safety standards. This investment will allow a for a purpose built watersports centre and café, operated by the Council or an external operator.		£2,554,024.00	
Equipment Allowance for Watersports	This is to allow for investment into equipment for the watersports centre, providing access to opportunities for children and young people to learn how to sail, canoe, and use the water safely.		£ 150,000.00	
Forge Mill Farm Food Education Barn	Forge Mill Farm is currently expanding with a play and learning facility. Another building at Forge Mill Farm is cited for development as a Display and Food Education Centre to expand the education offer and visitor experience.			£1,750,000.00
Project Manager Role (over 2 years)	To manage the procurement and implementation of the plan.	£ 70,000.00	£ 70,000.00	
Totals		£3,332,033.00	£2,774,024.00	£1,750,000.00
TOTAL INVESTMENT		£7,856,057.00		





- 4.11 To deliver the above investment, and to ensure value for money, a project manager for 24/25 and 25/26 financial years will be appointed, funded within the Capital Borrowing.
- 4.12 Each phase will be subject to the following conditions, before the next phase is approved:
- The next phase is within the proposed budget, based on the latest costs.
  - Relevant approvals are given through planning, conservation, and heritage processes.
  - The Master Plan for Sandwell Valley will be included in the directorate service plans, with further detail on the implementation phases for that year.
- 4.13 The next stage of development in the Master Plan is to prepare a conservation and heritage management plan for Sandwell Valley.
- 4.14 There are significant social value impacts associated with the Master Plan, which are included in Appendix D of this plan.
- 4.15 The Master Plan develops opportunities for a variety of activity which will be completed concurrently to develop the vision of a vibrant site. This includes:
- Sandwell Valley Amusements (due for retender in 2024)
  - Cycle Hire and Foot Golf (due for retender in 2024)
  - New Café at Forge Mill Farm (due to open in the Summer of 2024)
- 4.16 Further partnerships with external operators will be considered as we progress with the Master Plan, with further potential partnerships in catering, events, and weddings.
- 4.17 The following provides a summary of how the master plan aligns with the income streams and outlines the growth potential for each:

Income Stream	Description	Strategy	Growth Potential
Admissions (SVVC & FMF)	Charges for admissions to SVVC	Improved visitor experience; small	Post 26/27 financial year potential to full



	activities, FMF, and ticketed events (i.e. fireworks)	annual increments in fees to meet benchmarks; new winter offer, including indoor play and learning facilities.	capacity for admissions; new visitor experiences at SVVC; new indoor play and learning centre charges; increase in ticketed events.
<b>Catering and Retail</b>	Catering and retail units at SVVC, FMF, LWH, events and other green spaces	Operating model and additional catering units to achieve economies of scale and consistency in quality; sales points at peak visitor locations; Price points and offers for all visitor demographics	Additional catering units at other peak locations and council venues; catering provision to venue hire across Council; post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity for catering units
<b>Visitor Services Site Events (inc. SVVC, FMF, LWH)</b>	Visitor events that are held at destination sites (i.e. cinema, music, comedy, experiences)	Deliver an annual programme of events and premium experiences at visitor services locations to increase income from non-peak days and evenings.	Post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity for evening events; increase in premium experiences (i.e. farmer experience days); inclusion of other Council venues in offer
<b>Weddings</b>	Wedding receptions and parties (and other celebrations) at visitor service sites	Offer affordable wedding reception packages at our destination sites.	Addition of new wedding venue locations; post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity;
<b>Birthdays</b>	Themed birthday party packages for children at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre and Forge Mill Farm	Offer affordable birthday party packages for children of various ages, with optional add ons.	Post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity; premium party packages; additional venues (i.e. museums)
<b>Venue Hire</b>	Hire of locations, rooms, and facilities for meetings, conferences, training, special events, and externally run events.	Utilisation of new venue hire software, a new website for venues and venue hire, and a targeted package of offers for venue hire.	Post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity for venue hire; development of facilities for larger conferences and training events; inclusion of other Council venues in package
<b>Education and Outreach</b>	School visits linked to the national curriculum in a range of subjects Inc. farming, animal welfare, food production, forestry, wildlife	Target schools within the West Midlands Combined Authority; start with programmes in farming and animal welfare, and increase programmes offer each year.	Overnight school packages; out of school hours programmes and activities; post 26/27 financial year potential to full capacity for education and outreach.
<b>Contracts and Rental</b>	Contracts for concessions (i.e.	Increase rental and contract values to	Master scoping for Sandwell Valley



	Sandwell Valley Amusements, Land Train) and rental of land and property.	market benchmarks; tender new contract opportunities (i.e. pedalos, bikes);	Country Park and estate to explore growth potential for further contracts and rental of land and property.
<b>Car Parking Income</b>	Car parking income from Sandwell Valley and Forge Mill car parks already in place with charges.	Additional car park at Forge Mill Farm with c.70 new spaces, and increase utilisation of other car parks through design changes; increase in visitors resulting in increase in parking each year.	Potential for increase in car parking charges (which are currently lower than benchmarked country parks).

4.18 The validation and testing of the financial model and 10-year financial estimates for Sandwell Valley have been worked through with external assurance from CIPFA Cco, built up from first principles and detail inputs and outputs.

## 5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 It is proposed for Cabinet to adopt the full master plan. The investment amount of £7.856m, delivered in a staged way over three financial years. This investment has been approved by Cabinet as part of the Capital Plan, within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.2 The option to not invest in Sandwell Valley at any of those levels would impact the net budget position, remaining at c.£700k. The do-nothing option would also leave Sandwell Valley Visitor and Swan Pool Sailing Centre in its current condition.

## 6. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The Master Plan includes £7.856m allocated within the Council's capital programme, and as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	As part of the process of developing this Master Plan, Cabinet Members have been consulted through three Cabinet Workshops, and an addition three sub group meetings. Planning policy, highways, and the heritage





	officer have also been consulted on these plans and have raised no objections.
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>The risk of not undertaking any investment into Sandwell Valley is that we are unable to achieve the political priorities outlined at the start of this paper, and we will remain at c.700k net budget with limited opportunities for significant income growth. A full appraisal of this investment has taken place. Officers have also worked with specialist consultants (CIPFA CCo for Finance and business plan) and Prominent TLS (for Sandwell Valley Master Plan), and all assumptions have tested and validated as prudent by these consultants.</p> <p>The delivery of the Master Plan across three phases provides additional assurance and governance around deliverables and spend.</p> <p>We will work with external partners to continue benchmarking against established Country Parks with similar facilities and offering.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	The infrastructure, cycling, and land train improvements will allow improved accessibility to Sandwell Valley Country Park and connect the zones. Refurbishments will also ensure disability accessible facilities at Swan Pool Water sports Centre, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, and Forge Mill Farm.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The health benefits include additional visitors using the walkways and biking routes, cycling facilities, and securing the long term future of Sandwell Valley.
<b>Social Value:</b>	A social value impact assessment is included in appendix D but includes increased education and school visits, increase in the opportunities for physical activity and water sports, and a sub-regional destination at the heart of Sandwell.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	Improving Sandwell Valley Country Park as a sub-regional destination and moving to a surplus position allows for the Council to maintain the conservation elements of the Sandwell Valley Estate.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	The plan includes free access to paid facilities for children in care and care leavers.



## 7. Milestones

Procurement, Preparation					24/25				25/26				26/27							
Delivery					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
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<b>TOTAL INVESTMENT</b>		<b>£7,856,057.00</b>																		



## 8. Appendices

Appendix A: Recent Improvements

Appendix B: Master Plan Scoping Document

Appendix C: Master Plan Social Value Impacts

Appendix D: Master Plan Consultation Summary



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**Over the last 2 years a range of improvements have been implemented across Sandwell Valley.**

- a. Conservation and grounds maintenance improvements, particularly in the local nature reserves within the estate (funded through Covid funds).
- b. Changed the name of Sandwell Park Farm to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, as the building is no longer suitable for the care of animals.
- c. Removal of the main greenhouse within the Victorian style gardens, replaced with appropriate paving for events and activities within the walled garden (funded through Covid funds).
- d. Refurbishment of the traditional green house at the back of the walled gardens, to allow for education and outreach to take place using these facilities in future (funded by a Covid grant).
- e. Additional interpretation and leaning resources for visitors to the Victorian Garden, including its history, Victorian Garden methods, and conservation (funded through UKSPF and Covid Funds).
- f. Introduction of a Rabbit Village to the Victorian Gardens, featuring houses representing Sandwell Towns and housing rescued rabbits (Funded through Invest to Save).
- g. The addition of a new Farm Trail, doubling the size of the farm and increasing dwell time (Funded through UKSPF).
- h. The addition of four new catering facilities: The Wagon, Farm Snack Shack, Adventure Cabin, and Dartmouth Park Café (funded through Invest to Save).
- i. Improvements to the catering offer, with a new catering and retail manager, improved menu options, and barista style coffee.
- j. Two new dedicated websites: [www.sandwellvalley.com](http://www.sandwellvalley.com) and [www.forgemillfarm.com](http://www.forgemillfarm.com).
- k. New premium event offers, including Bedtime at the Farm, Evening Events at the Farm, events for dog lovers, and the securing of Digbeth Dining Club at Sandwell Valley.
- l. The addition of a new events field at Forge Mill Farm, for peak days and summer (funded through UKSPF).
- m. The development of a weddings business plan, with the support of consultants. This has resulted in an improved wedding offer which now includes Sandwell Valley as a wedding destination (funded through Invest to Save).
- n. The introduction of digital systems, including an Electronic Point of Sale system to improve stock controls and sales, and a digital rota system.
- o. The introduction of a bank staff model to increase the number of trained seasonal staff for peak days and evenings.
- p. The recruitment of a marketing officer, to focus on visitor services.
- q. The building of a new play and education barn and café at Forge Mill Farm, funded through UKSPF and Covid Grants (due to open in summer 2024).
- r. The introduction of a new education and outreach team, estimated to reach over 8,000 students in 23/24 and on track to achieve full cost recover in three years.

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# Sandwell Valley Master Scoping

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Final Master Plan February 2024



# Introduction

Page 260

Prominent T LS is delighted to have worked with Cabinet Members and Council Officers to prepare this Master Plan for Sandwell Valley as part of the master scoping exercise. The Master Plan provides a long-term vision for Sandwell Valley which promotes ecological and financial sustainability, and connects the community with the heritage.

This master plan has been developed with the aim of ensuring that Sandwell Valley is a sustainable, accessible, relevant and valued community asset for future generations.



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# Executive Summary

This master plan sets out a vision to secure a sustainable future for Sandwell Valley. The master plan is supported by a business plan, which provides a 10-year financial forecast for Sandwell Valley, building on the baseline information provided by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council officers (SMBC).

In summary, the plan recommends:

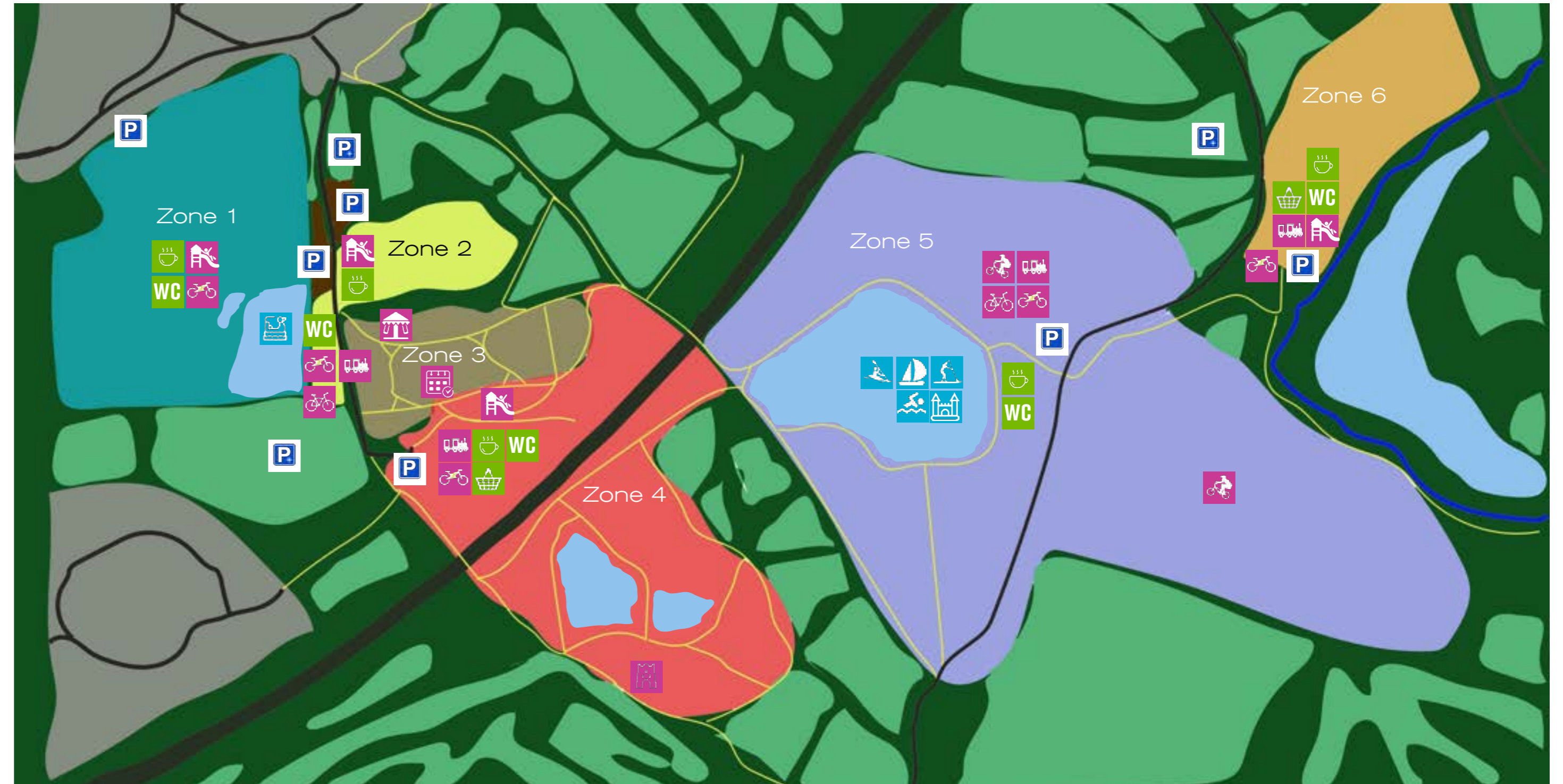
- To work with partners and stakeholders to prepare a ten year conservation and heritage plan for Sandwell Valley, to protect, nurture, and improve these elements for current and future generations.
- Sandwell Valley is zoned into six key areas:
  - Zone 1: Dartmouth Park
  - Zone 2: Pavilion, Adventure Play & Activities
  - Zone 3: Showground & Fairground
  - Zone 4: Sandwell Valley Country Park & Priory Woods
  - Zone 5: Swan Pool, Jubilee Woods & Urban Bike Track
  - Zone 6: Forge Mill Farm
- Each zone is promoted as a 'day out', offering different attractions for visitors.
- Connectivity between each zone is improved and promoted with e-bikes, improved signage, marketing and the use of a land train at peak periods.
- The delivery of events focuses on the family market, particularly on affordable seasonal trails to provide days out to local families.
- Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre receives improvements that help better connect people with it's rich heritage whilst improving commercial sustainability by increasing the attractiveness as a wedding and conferencing venue and providing more reasons for families to visit during peak periods.
- Swan Pool to receive a significant uplift by replacing the sailing club with a new water sports centre that also provides an attractive public cafe area overlooking the water.
- Improvements to Forge Mill continue with the introduction of a display barn and new education centre to support the expansion of the existing education programme.
- Improvements to car parking, including marking of bays, reinforcing overflow car parking areas and enhancements to signposting and booking methods. Car park improvements should not compromise existing green space, and promote the overall attractiveness of the park.

To deliver the sustainable master plan prudential borrowing totaling £7,856,057 is recommended.

Delivering the master plan will help increase the attractiveness of Sandwell Valley for the benefit of the community, increase overall visitor numbers and promote a sustainable future.

# The Master Plan

More detail is included on page 78, which includes a key.



# Project Methodology

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) is seeking a master plan for Sandwell Valley. Sandwell Valley has a comprehensive business plan in place which aims to increase visitors to attractions to 200,000 visitors a year and plans to be financially sustainable within the next three financial years.

To provide an objective, data-led master scoping exercise for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, this document follows a robust, evidenced based approach.

This approach should remove any element of professional bias and through clear, logical reasoning will ensure that no option or opinion is unfairly or prejudiced over any other.

The project methodology is based on a well-defined series of steps that have been used successfully in other locations. These steps are outlined on page x.

This document includes the following:

- As assessment of the existing provision within Sandwell Valley, highlighting key strengths and weaknesses within the context of a local, regional, and national short and long-term strategies and policies
- Stakeholder engagement, which includes direct meetings with key stakeholders and a wider online survey
- Benchmarking of existing provision, against other similar Country Parks
- A gap analysis detailing the potential opportunities at Sandwell Valley
- A mapped vision that addresses the gaps
- A supporting business model to deliver the vision
- Key recommendations and next steps

The skill set within our team of experienced consultants and partners adds value to the local research, feedback and evidence to provide Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council with a commercially and ecologically sustainable and viable set of recommendations.





# Strategic Context

The value of parks and open spaces is recognised at national level in terms of the contribution they make to healthy lifestyles, quality environments, sustainability and opportunities for learning.

As one of the largest area of undeveloped countryside in the West Midlands, Sandwell Valley is a major asset, not only for Sandwell, but for the wider region.

Strategically, Sandwell Valley Country Park contributes towards the overall corporate 2030 vision of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Within the 2021-2025 Sandwell Plan, Big Plans for a Great Place, there six identified outcomes that can be in part fulfilled through the Sandwell Valley Country Park. These outcomes are listed below with commentary as to how it is believed that the Country Park can contribute towards achieving them in italics :

- The best start in life for children and young people

Sandwell Valley Country Park provides a series of fantastic, local outdoor spaces for children and young people to enjoy spending time within to enrich their lives and form positive, lifelong, childhood memories.

- People live well and age well

Sandwell Valley Country Park provides spaces to be active, spaces to relax, spaces to socialise and spaces that enhance a feeling of well-being for everyone in the borough. The Sandwell Valley Country Park is already a well-loved, local asset and contributes towards people leading a healthy life.

Specifically, the Country Park can help the Council meet several of the 'healthy lives' objectives that are listed within the corporate plan.

Activities within the park can:

1. Promote physical and mental well-being
2. Create local, community based opportunities for people to work together to maximise the participation within the boroughs assets

3. Bring people and organisations together with a common purpose of improving and enriching the lives of Sandwell residents

- Strong, resilient communities.

Sandwell Valley Country Park contributes to a strong cohesive and resilient community in Sandwell, through providing a place that the whole community are proud off and a place that they can come together to enjoy time together.

The Country park will become a key visitor and destination gateway into Sandwell to enhance the local cultural offering.

- A strong and inclusive economy.

Sandwell Valley Country Park is home a series of successful businesses and events that all contribute towards a strong local economy.

- A connected and accessible Sandwell.

Sandwell Valley Country Park is at the heart of the borough and is well connected by road and via public transport. Sandwell Valley Country Park also contributes to the following strategies:

- [Green Spaces Strategy](#)
- [Climate Change Strategy](#)
- [Local Plan](#)

## National Policies

The management of Sandwell Valley must also be delivered within the context of national policies. These policies are wide ranging but include policy from the following organisations:

### [Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs \(DEFRA\)](#)

DEFRA's aims are to tackle climate change through domestic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to secure a healthy, resilient, productive and diverse natural environment. Many of these aims are achieved through Stewardship Schemes. Sandwell Valley has a Higher Level

Stewardship Agreement with Natural England to enhance the conservation value of grassland, woodland, hedgerows and fen habitats.

### Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is the Government department responsible for the protection and expansion of Britain's forests and woodlands. The West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework defines its aim as "to create a viable and inclusive woodland and forestry sector that maximises sustainable development through delivery of economic, environmental, cultural and social benefits to the people of the region".

Sandwell Valley's woodlands continue to be managed in ways that help realise these objectives.

### Natural England

Sandwell Valley contributes towards Natural England's Urban Greenspace benchmark standards, which recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:

- An accessible natural green space, of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home
- Statutory Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home; one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home

Sandwell Valley makes an important contribution to Natural England's targets on accessible natural green space in providing 260 hectares of accessible countryside.

### Country Parks Renaissance

Sandwell Valley works towards meeting Natural England's recommendations for a country parks renaissance through:

- Participating in the Country Park Accreditation Scheme. (Sandwell Valley has been accredited since 2009)
- Identifying funding and income generation opportunities for Sandwell Valley

### Single Data List

The Single Data List has been set by the Department of Communities and Local Government and are intended to be the only means of measuring national priorities that have been agreed by Government.

'160-00 Nature Conservation' measures the number of local sites in positive management. This refers to biodiversity and uses a formula to measure the way in which people manage local wildlife sites, which can be LNR's, SINC's or SLINC's.

The indicator will assess the proportion (%) of the total number of local sites under positive conservation management.

The countryside areas within the management remit of Sandwell Valley staff, score very highly with most sites actively managed for nature conservation.

# Sandwell Valley - Current Assessment

Sandwell Valley is set in over 250 hectares of countryside that includes farmland, woodland and open water. The M5 runs through the centre of Sandwell Valley which also sits within densely populated urban area with 344,391 people living within 15 minutes drive.

As a destination, Sandwell Valley has a good catchment with 2,315,120 people living within 30 minutes drive and 3,887,662 within 45 minutes drive.

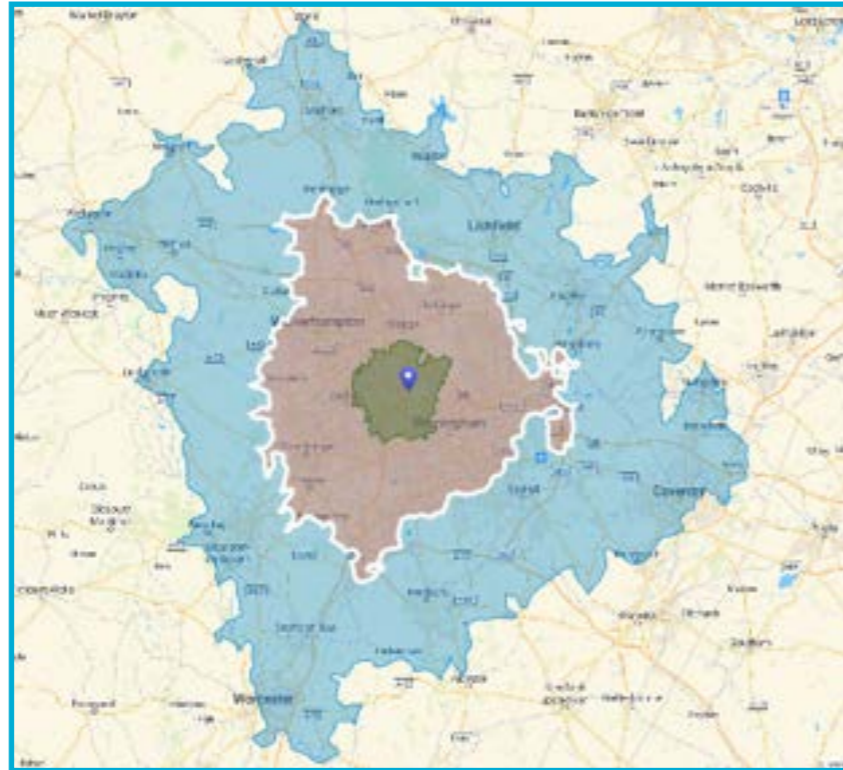
The Borough of Sandwell comprises six towns, which have their own distinct identities- West Bromwich, Smethwick, Oldbury, Tipton, Rowley Regis and Wednesbury. Sandwell is an ethnically diverse area with high levels of deprivation.

## Activities

Sandwell Valley includes a diverse range of attractions and feature which includes Nature Reserves, Scheduled Monuments and Listed Structures. Dartmouth Park is a Green Flag park in it's own right, however for the purposes of this Master Plan and zoning activities, Dartmouth Park is referred to.

As a destination attraction, Sandwell Valley offers a wide range of activities and amenities which includes:

- Adventure Play
- Walking Trails
- Cycle Hire (not currently in operation)
- Farm Park
- Watersports
- Mini Golf and Footgolf
- High Ropes
- Rabbit Village
- Cycle Routes
- Events space
- Funfair
- Boating lake
- Sports Pitches
- Playgrounds
- Mountain Biking
- Viewing Tower
- Outdoor Gym
- Conference & Meeting Space
- Splashpad
- Parking
- Food and beverage outlets
- Toilets & Baby Change Facilities



## Governance

Sandwell Valley is currently managed in-house with a range of concessions and tenant arrangements. This includes (but is not limited to) leases to Sandwell Valley Amusements & Adventure Golf, high ropes, cycle hire (currently vacant), and Sandwell Valley Sailing Club.

## Visitor Numbers

Sandwell Valley has multiple points of entry, which makes it difficult to establish accurate visitor numbers.

Estimates of unique annual visits range from 90,000 to 500,000 per annum.

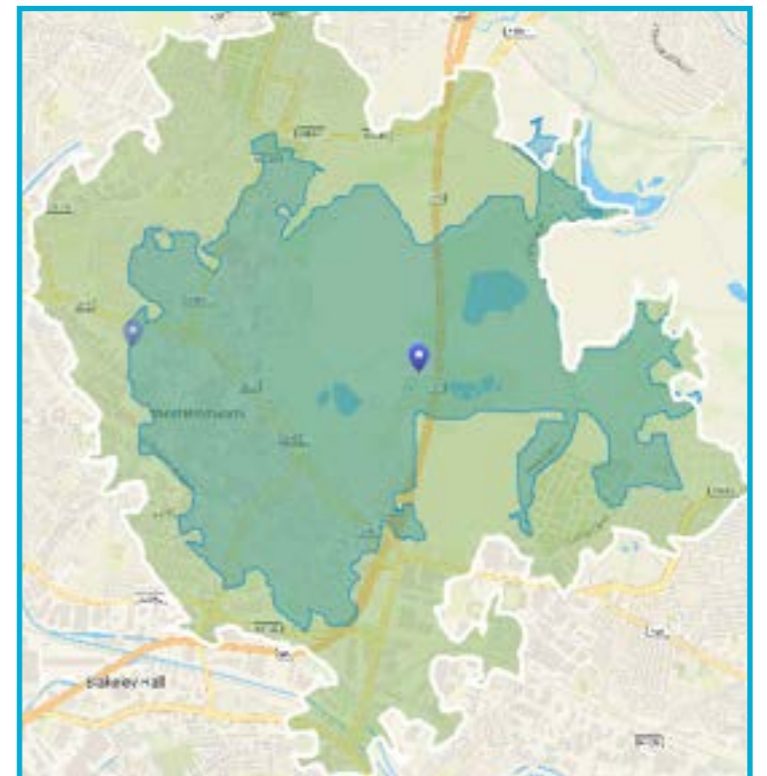
The ability to provide accurate and/or consistent measurement of visitors is essential to developing a sustainable master plan.

## Local Catchment

A local catchment analysis (30 minute walk and 15 minute cycle) suggests that 28,326 people live within 15 minutes cycle and 11,123 within 30 minutes walk of Sandwell Valley Visitors Centre.

As the largest green space within the area, it is reasonable to assume that local residents will take advantage of Sandwell Valley.

The age of the local population is primarily people between 30 to 59 years of age, with 20% of the population 0-14 (significantly higher than the UK average)





Public Transport Links To Sandwell Valley

Sandwell Valley is somewhat isolated from major public transport routes. Ideally a bus route would connect Sandwell Valley Visitors Centre with the local community. The existing entrance to Sandwell Valley off Dagger's Lane and Salters Lane is two way and narrow.



In addition to this, the residential streets leading to the entrance are often filled with parked cars - transforming the two way road into pinch points.

Existing bus routes flow along Newton Road (Routes 5 16 & 46), Hallam Street, Segar Street and Lloyd Street (Routes 16,45,46,64 and 66) . The closest stops are highlighted in orange on the map below:



West Midlands Cycle Hire have a docking point at the Lloyd Street entrance to Dartmouth Park highlighted in blue on the map above. Entrances to Sandwell Valley are indicated with the diamond shape.

In addition the National Cycle Network Route 5 enters Sandwell Valley via the Europa Estate and through Priory Woods before continuing up towards Swan Pool and Forge Mill Farm.



A recent report by a traffic management consultancy identified that Sandwell Valley has more sustainable public transport links than other event venues. It also highlighted an opportunity for growth with increased capacity to the Metro network.

In summary, despite being a valuable local asset, Sandwell Valley (particularly the inner aspects of the park) is fairly disconnected. The majority of visitors will travel by car, however for residents without a car, or with mobility issues, options to get to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Swan Pool or Forge Mill Farm appear to be to cycle, taxi, minibus or take a bus to either Newton Road or Lloyd Street and make their way on foot/wheelchair etc.



Entry & Egress

The M5 partitions Sandwell Valley into two main vehicle access routes:

Salter's Lane

Salter's Lane provides the main entry into the West of Sandwell Valley, which is home to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre and is the destination that 'Sandwell Country Park' brown signage direct visitors to.

The Salter's Lane entrance is shown in orange on this map:

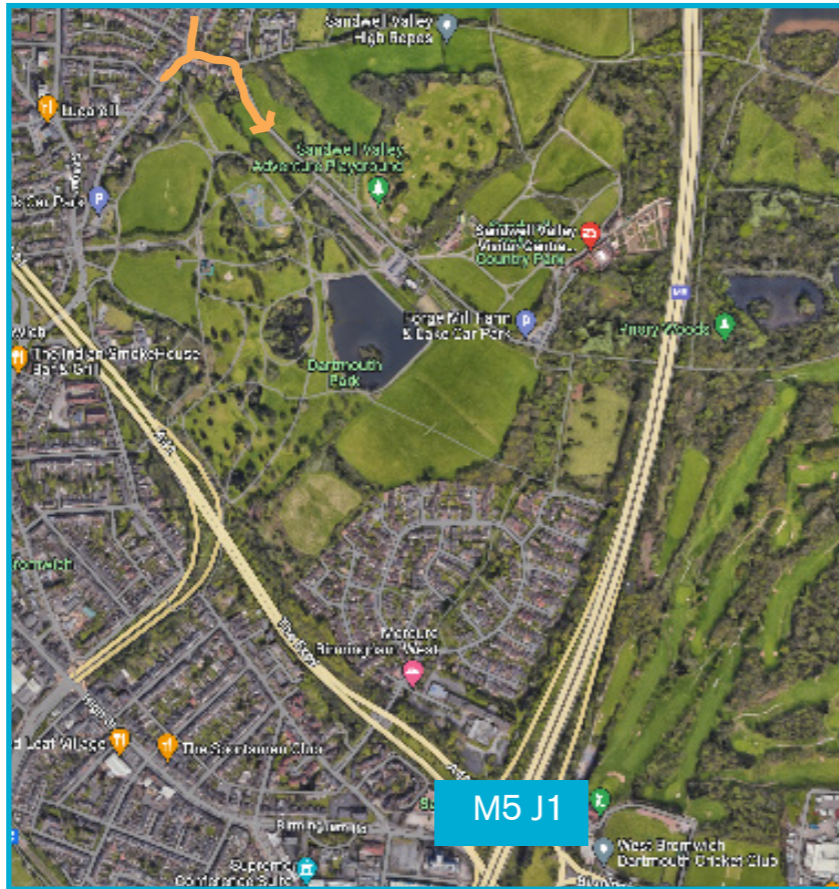
Salter's Lane is accessible via Dagger lane and a residential area with two way traffic.

Residents park on the side of the road creating a narrow entry and exit point for Sandwell Valley visitors.

This creates a challenge for both residents and visitors on busy days such as when events are being held.

The Salter's lane entrance into Sandwell Valley Country Park is gated and narrow. This presents a challenge for large vehicles exiting the Country Park as others are entering.

Once cars are within the grounds of Sandwell Valley Country Park, there is multiple parking options and locations.



Public traffic is unable to cross the M5 from the Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre side (West) to the Swan Pool side (East), however Sandwell Valley staff are allowed to cross with their vehicles.

Park Lane

Park Lane provides access to the East of Sandwell Valley Forge Mill Farm and Swan Pool. Forge Mill Lane is accessible from the North and South with connections off Newton Road to the North and Birmingham Road to the South.

Newton Road provides good connection to the North and South via the M6 and regional connections to Walsall and Birmingham.

Birmingham Road provides connection to the M5 which connects to the south.

Visitors have the option to park at Forge Mill Farm or at Swan Pool.

Forge Mill Farm is a working farm, but also a stand alone destination attraction as a farm park.

Swan Pool is home to Sandwell Valley Sailing Club and mountain bike tracks within Jubilee Woods.

The area is undergoing improvements with the addition of an urban bike park and new car park using redundant Environment Agency land owned by Birmingham Council

The Eastern section of Sandwell Valley is also home to Sandwell Valley Nature Reserve which is operated by RSPB.

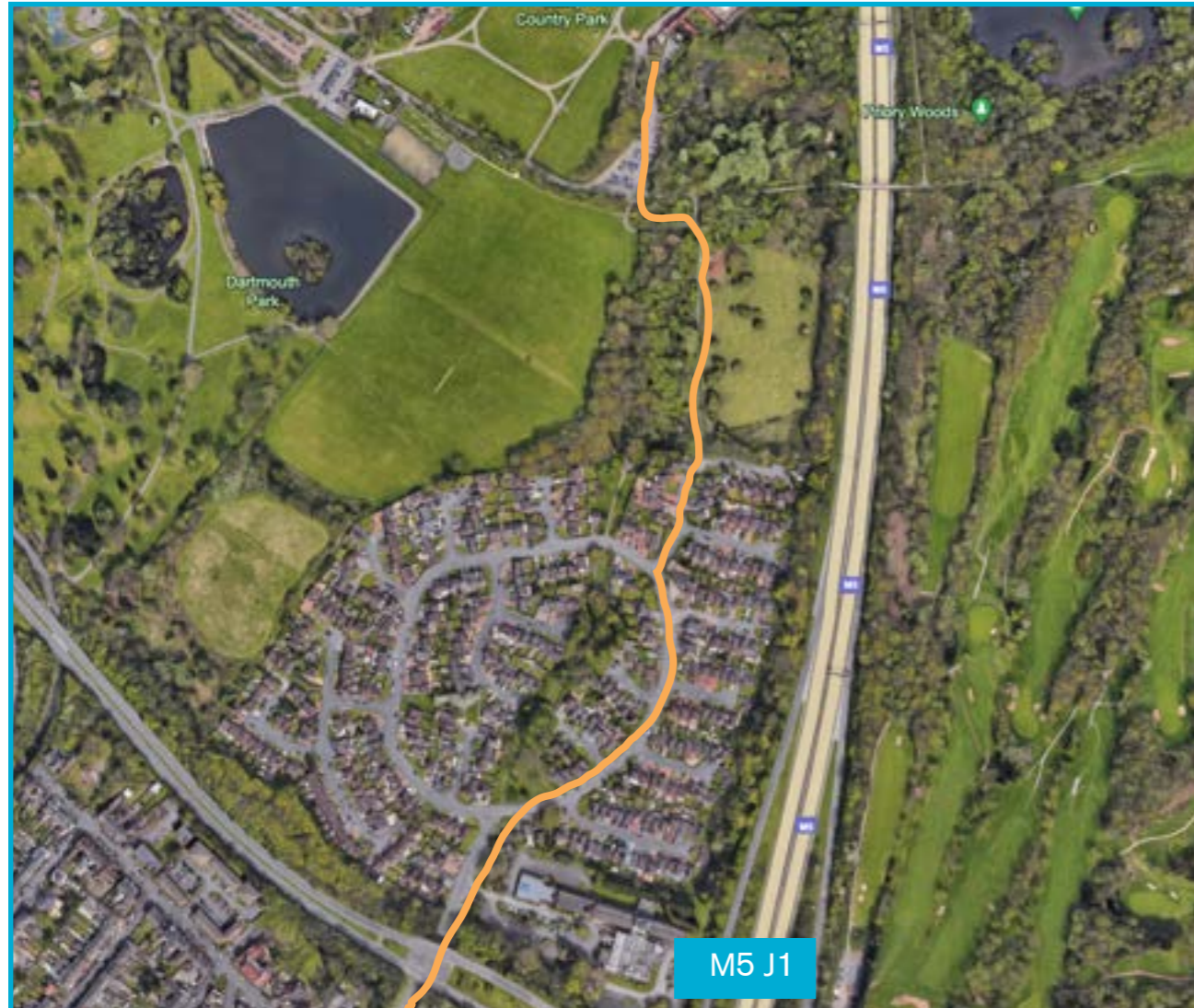




Additional Access

During events and periods of high visitor numbers, an alternative access route via the Europa estate is utilised. This is either as an exit point for events or for staff and emergency access.

The route connects with Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre via the following route shown in orange:



The residential estate is well connected and links to the M5 junction 1.

Attractions - Activities

Sandwell Valley is home to a wide range of attractions mainly concentrated in the West side of the park.

Dartmouth Park is a popular and well-maintained formal park with a cafe, pavilion, play area (including splashpad), sports fields, meeting space, toilets/changing rooms and boating lake.

Funding has been used to provide a new community cafe within the existing pavilion, which is now open and growing its income.

Dartmouth Park is home to a 'Friends of Dartmouth Park' group, who regularly meet and arrange activities and volunteering sessions that help promote and maintain the park.

A sports pavilion and venue formerly used for bike hire and mini golf draws the eye on entrance via Salter's Lane.



The building is not aesthetically pleasing, particularly as a first impression of Sandwell Valley Country Park. The building is currently not in operation, but there are plans to commission a new operator from 2024 season.



However, a historical image shown in the bottom right corner of the image shows how a bit of activity can help transform the appearance of the building.

An adventure playground, high ropes and footgolf course and cafe are adjacent to this pavilion, in addition to a mini golf course and sand based pitch.

The pavilion serves the King George V playing fields, which are nearby.



A self contained fairground with supporting catering options operated on a concession is located adjacent to the Showground. This fairground provides rent to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.



Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre is at the end of the Salter's Lane entrance road and is home to the Courtyard Kitchen, Victorian Gardens, shop and Rabbit Village. Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre was previously Sandwell Park Farm.

Due to modern animal welfare standards, the site is no longer suitable to house animals in the way that it did before Covid.

There is currently a programme of events in development to run every weekend from October 1st. There are also two annual event themes of Easter at the Valley and Santa at the Valley which are popular and bring in an income.



The Showground is located outside of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre adjacent to the fairground.

The Showground and its associated event paddocks is a location for large scale events. It offers a full, facility event space attractive to large operators with a hard standing road vehicle route,

numerous event power points capable of sustaining major infrastructure, water and flexibility of space to create a wide variety of event and festivals set ups including multiple stages and zones, back stage and VIP areas, boneyards and camping options.

Swan Pool is an attractive body of water and home to Sandwell Valley Sailing Club. The sailing club are based within a large building that is surrounded by external boat storage.



The building looks derelict from the outside and has graffiti on its walls. The majority of the external boat storage area appears to be use to store boats no longer in use. There are signs of anti-social behaviour around the sailing club area with smashed glass, empty beer cans and canisters for laughing gas witnessed on site visits

Swan Pool has a walking route that extends around the water, and is home to a mountain bike course within Jubilee Woods.

An Urban Bike Track has been completed and opened officially in Nov 23 with funding from Sport England, Sandwell Council and Birmingham Council, with two zones adjacent to Swan Pool, and another across the road (Park lane).

There is a car park with approximately 150 car parking spaces and toilets (however these are closed to the public).

Forge Mill Farm is a visitor attraction and education facility that is open to the public as a farm park. Forge Mill Farm has a plan in place to become a centre of excellence for animal welfare and an education centre, in addition to being a visitor attraction.

Forge Mill Farm is particularly attractive to younger people, and does really well at attracting young visitors via the various events and trails that are delivered at the park. This has recently diversified into evening events and attracting the insta generation.



Attractions - Walking Routes

Sandwell Valley is home to numerous walking route and trails suitable for all abilities and occasions. Walking routes are supported by a series of interpretation boards and maps that help visitors



navigate and connect to/understand the nature and heritage.

Trail maps exist within interpretation boards and are made available to visitors. In addition, effort has been made via signage to help visitors understand how far, how long and how difficult (and accessible) routes are.

Whilst paths through wooded areas should reflect the natural environment additional maintenance is required in Priory Wood and Jubilee Woods.

Attractions - Cycling Routes

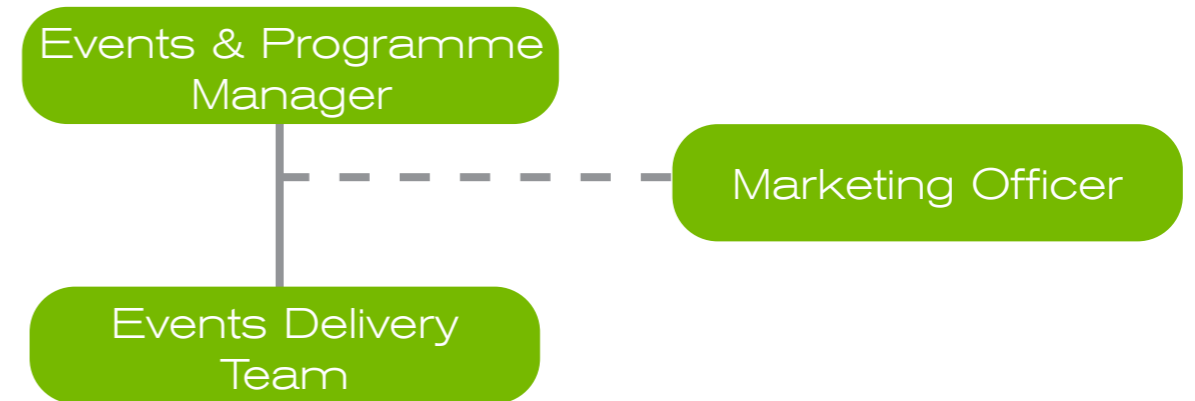
Sandwell Valley is a popular cycling destination and is connected via National Cycle Network Route 5. NCN 5 crosses the M5 on the southern pedestrian bridge and continues north west past Swan Pool to Forge Mill Farm.

NCN 5 links to the mountain bike routes at Jubilee Woods and will connect to the new Urban Bike Park.

In addition, multiple routes through the park are suitable for a range of bikes. Sandwell Valley is relatively flat, so is attractive for beginners.

Marketing & Market Placement

Marketing Sandwell Valley is essential to attracting new visitors and encouraging visitors to return all year round. It is our understanding that the Council is working towards the following marketing team structure:



Within a country park setting, events are essential to driving visitor numbers. It is clear that there is ambition and strategic drive both locally and within the leadership to deliver a high quality events programme.

As is common with this space, social media is the dominant marketing medium, however print and other media efforts do exist.

Recent effort has been made to tidy up the social media accounts since the marketing strategy was submitted in October/November 22, however it is clear that Forge Mill Farm still dominates the Sandwell Valley Country Park space (approximately 40% of posts on Sandwell Valley Country Park relate to Forge Mill Farm).

Whilst Forge Mill Farm is a core part of Sandwell Valley, it is capable of being established as a stand alone destination venue due to the strength of it's leader and content/activity that it delivers.

Sandwell Valley Country Park has the largest following (32k Facebook followers), which presents a good opportunity to promote activities within Sandwell Valley.

In addition, the Visit Sandwell page provides an addition layer of social media marketing, however this page has a broad scope beyond Sandwell Valley.

Sandwell Valley has recently launched two new distinct websites:

- [www.sandwellvalley.com](http://www.sandwellvalley.com) and [www.forgemillfarm.com](http://www.forgemillfarm.com) and currently updating all other sources and redirects to these sites.

Visit Sandwell includes a search function with filters for events, things to do and supporting amenities.

<https://www.visitsandwell.com>



The website format is similar to many across the UK. Developed by SimpleView, who specialise in this type of activity finder website. Visit Sandwell is the successor to Discover Sandwell. Discover Sandwell appears in places across the digital portfolio, with links taking visitors to the redirect page.

As with all finder websites, the usefulness/quality is in the content. This is where Visit Sandwell struggles. Filtering activities for 'Family' brings up a single location - 'Black Country Museum'. This suggests that the other 'family' friendly locations such as Forge Mill Farm Park have not been uploaded with the correct information to allow this filter to be applied.

A common problem with finders is ensuring that the most relevant items are shown. The primary use of Visit Sandwell is likely to provide inspiration to visitors and residents looking for something to do (days out). Visit Sandwell has multiple libraries and leisure centres on the list. Whilst this may be a popular choice for some, the sheer number on the finder means that more relevant locations and activities are pushed to the back across 25 pages of options.

The "searching for something" function within the purple bar isn't maximising the opportunity for highlighting activities, due to the restrictive format of the selection criteria it actually makes you think that there is very little happening in the borough:

- Selecting "Shopping" if no criteria is input, the 'catch all' only shows New Square West Bromwich, which indicates the Sandwell only has one shopping complex in the whole region.
- Selecting "Food & Drink", only lists 6 restaurants / pubs in the region.
- Selecting "Things To See & Do" produces 66 results, which is great, but there needs to be more structure to how these are presented, many of the early entries on the list are Leisure Centres. It is highly unlikely that tourists visiting the region will get to a leisure centre on their short break. So the priority in which these are listed needs correcting.

- Within the 'What's On' section there are a large range of activities listed which is excellent. On closer inspection however the vast majority are outside of the borough, with some in Coventry, Wolverhampton, mostly in Birmingham and even as far as Malvern Hills which is 1 hour away. To really highlight the range of activities in Sandwell this list needs presenting in a different way or refining to showcase Sandwell activities first.

This can be addressed by reviewing the filtering options, and refining/prioritising the most appropriate attractions. It is unclear if this is the case with Visit Sandwell, however some similar websites allow for paid promotions within the finder - ensuring that a particular activity or venue appears at the top of the list. This can be equally helpful and unhelpful, it is recommended that certain key locations are prioritised to bump them up the list.

Sandwell Valley appears on a series of third party websites which include options for visitors to place reviews.

At first glance, it is great that so many third party websites are promoting venues, events, tourism and activities within Sandwell. Unfortunately, the information included within these third party websites are often updated manually (without an API), resulting in a lot of information either being out of date or presented within a manner that does not give the best first impression.

Some sites also allow users to write reviews and upload images. These reviews are not currently being responded to consistently by the team.

The new marketing officer, the new websites, and the implementation of the marketing strategy will benefit the impact of events and activities and the general offer at Sandwell Valley.

As part of this master plan it is accepted that the following is either in place, or in progress:

- A permanent and commercially minded Marketing Manager has been recruited to take a lead on ensuring the Sandwell Valley offer is clearly communicated to visitors
- New websites for Sandwell Valley and Forge Mill Farm have now been launched (Dec 2023).
- Third party websites are updated and monitored/responded to consistently moving forward
- The Marketing Manager works closely with the events team to ensure that events are promoted with clear ticket sale targets issued
- The Visit Sandwell is either updated and maintained consistently or removed completely
- Social media pages are controlled by a marketing professional - with posts scheduled in advance and within pre-approved brand standards (access restricted)
- Social media pages limit what, where and when content is posted - for example keeping Forge Mill Farm content with the Forge Mill Farm page

## Ticketing, Parking and Point of Sale Technology

Understanding who visitors are, where they have come from and why they have visited is essential to developing a thriving Country Park. The collection of data is therefore paramount to the future success of Sandwell Valley.

Sandwell Valley currently uses Ticketsource to facilitate event tickets and booking of activities. Ticketsource owns the customer data and does not link to venue point of sale system - preventing products (secondary sale) to be added to a ticket. This limits the revenue making opportunity of single events, and the ability to contact audiences regarding future programming.

Sandwell Valley has recently updated its point of sale technology which will provide valuable data as to what is sold, where and at what margin. The system includes an integrated stock control module which supports financial security and provides clear auditing lines.

Any upgrade to the ticketing system should consider the ability to integrate with this point of sale system. This will allow the two systems to work seamlessly and provide visitors with a complete experience.

Parking is managed by the Council and offers a wide range of parking options:

- Up to one hour - 40p
- Up to two hours - 80p
- Up to three hours - £1.20
- Up to four hours - £1.60
- All day - £2
- One year season ticket - £40

The parking meters use PaybyPhone to manage bookings via an app or over the phone. Users can also pay by cash, apart from in the Swan Pool car park, which only allows access via the app or phone.

Mobile internet signal is very limited at Swan Pool, and therefore customers are often forced to use the phone number, or run the risk. This was witnessed and experienced on a number of site visits.

As part of this master plan it is proposed that:

- Ticketsource is replaced with a system that gives the Council control over customer data
- The new ticket system should be compatible with the new EPOS/Website and allow 'bolt on' purchases for events (the ability to link a ticket to products)



# Benchmarking Sandwell Valley

Country Parks across the UK have different offerings, facility mixes and features that make them unique. Benchmarking destinations on a like for like basis is therefore a challenge, however it is possible to review and benchmark destinations based on their ability to generate revenue, cost control, visitor numbers (albeit the quality of visitor data is questionable across the market), governance methods and the level of /variety of activity that is delivered.

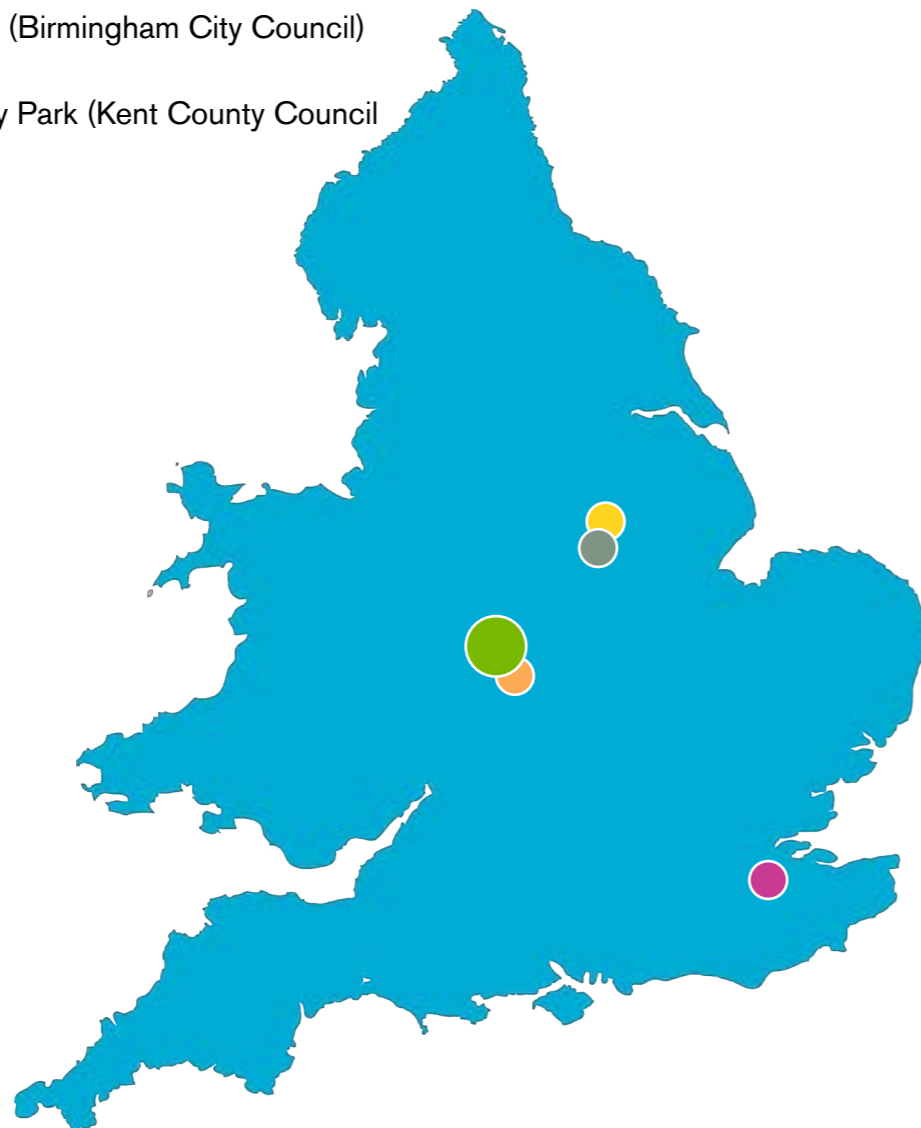
Two key benchmarks which we have intimate knowledge of are:

- Rufford Abbey Country Park (Nottingham County Council)
- Holme Pierrepont Country Park (Nottingham County Council)

To provide a more complete view, the following sites have also been reviewed:

- Lickey Hills Country Park (Birmingham City Council)
- Leybourne Lakes Country Park (Kent County Council)

- Sandwell Valley



## Rufford Abbey Country Park

Rufford Abbey Country Park is owned by Nottinghamshire County Council with the management outsourced to Parkwood Leisure who operate under the trading name of Parkwood Outdoors. This management arrangement includes both the commercial activities and the green space/ ranger service.

Set in 150 acres of beautiful parkland, Rufford Abbey offers over 870 years of history, from its origins as a 12th century Cistercian monastery to its period as a Jacobean era family home. The park includes a nature reserve, lake, weir and formal gardens. The site has multiple stakeholders and stewards which include Historic England who monitor the Special Ancient Monument site.



The key operational challenge for Rufford Abbey was maximising the potential of the park during peak periods. The park has limited parking capacity of up to 1,000 cars (using overflow car parks - some of which have 28 or 90 day (Historic England Special Ancient Monument) restrictions on them.

The entrance and exit to the park is on a narrow, but busy road (as it is adjacent to Centre Parcs) with conflicts with local residents in relation to event/peak period parking (visitors block residential access with inconsiderate off site parking).

Visitor numbers were estimated at 350,000 per annum, however there was no consistent data collection method to confirm this number.

In addition, Rufford Abbey Country Park had an identity crisis. The site has two areas - the Rufford

Abbey end and the Rufford Mill end. Brown signage and other directional signage differentiated between the two causing confusion to visitors. A 25-30 minute walk between both ends of the provided connectivity issues, particularly within the context of very disjointed signage and information boards which had been installed in phases without consideration of each other.

To address these challenges which are not too dissimilar to those faced at Sandwell Valley, the park implemented a master plan which included the following improvements:

- Dedicated and signposted walking trails to direct visitors around the 150 acres (passing key catering and retail points)
- Interpretation boards along the trails with interactive check in features - engaging with the primary market (families)
- Car park space efficiency work to maximise capacity at peak periods - including reinforcing the suitability of overflow car parking areas (Included new car park machines - data capture)
- A themed adventure playground that explored the local heritage through interactive play - the largest in the local area (with supporting catering outlet)
- Rowing boats and pedalos for the hire on the lake
- A new archery range
- A dedicated ice cream parlour
- A refurbished retail area which focussed on children's gifts
- A new interactive museum area - explaining the Rufford Story
- Improvements to the cafés, restaurant to increase capacity and increase speed of service
- New historically themed mobile retail catering outlets at key locations around the park
- Investment into the gardens, including restoring an historical fountain to its former glory

- Refurbishment to the wedding venue



- Creation of the Orangery Garden Centre (within the historical Orangery)  
The developments were supported by a schedule of seasonal and themed children trails (offering an affordable day out to parents), improvement marketing and a new events programme which included outdoor cinema in the summer and spectacle of light shows in the winter.

The impact of this work was an increase of 50,000 visitors per year to approximately 400,000 visitors per year (backed by the new data collection methods deployed) and importantly an approximate 35% increase in the average spend per visitor. For the Council, this turned a heavily subsidised asset into a cost neutral one.

Rufford Abbey has since consistently performed outstandingly on Visit England assessments, won multiple local and regional awards which include visitor attraction of the year and importantly remains a valuable local resource.



Holme Pierrepont Country Park

Holme Pierre Pont Country Park is home to The National Water Sports Centre and is set in a 270 acre Country Park on the outskirts of Nottingham. It is owned by Nottinghamshire County Council with input from Sport England and currently operated by Serco Leisure. Prior to implementing its master plan it had the following facilities:

- 2000m international standard regatta lake
- World class canoe slalom and rafting course
- 130 pitch camp site
- Meeting, Conference rooms & associated
- Activity Lakes (including water ski tow)
- 60 bed accommodation block
- Catering facilities

Prior to it's master plan, the site had an identify crisis, identifying simply as The National Watersports Centre, despite the 270 acres of attractive Country Park that surrounded the regatta lake and facilities.

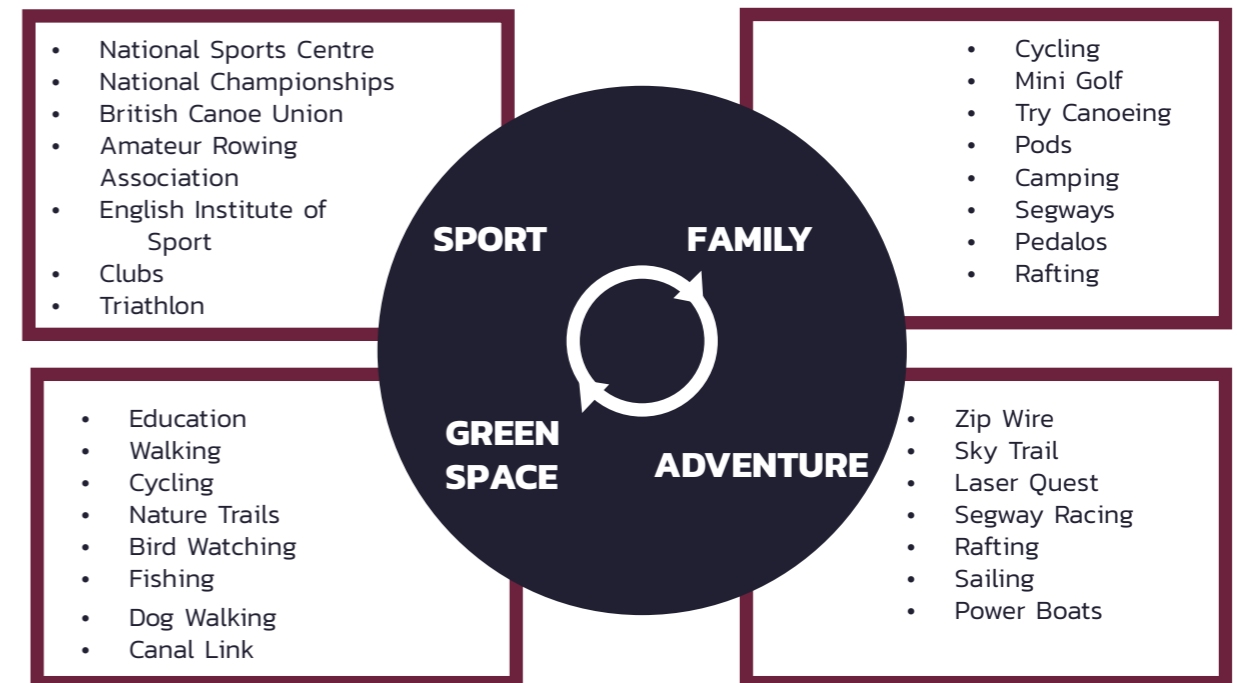
Potential visitors were highly unlikely to know there was a country park in the location due to the branding and related directional and brown signage for the site stating The National Watersports Centre. This was mirrored online and within marketing material.

Despite this, visitors in the know took advantage of the long walks, diverse ecology and scenic views.

Due to a need to provide a sustainable future for the park, a master plan backed by an investment strategy was agreed with the aim of bringing the park to a cost neutral position within four years.

The master plan split the park into four categories of focus - Sport, Family, Green Space and

Adventure. These four categories represented the four priorities identified from the site review, stakeholder engagement and industry trends/knowledge. The new activities that were delivered within each categories is shown below:



The master plan re-branded The National Watersports Centre as Holme Pierre Pont Country Park, Home of The National Watersports Centre. A map showing the new activities created within the park are shown below:





Master plan has allowed the park to meet its financial targets but also:

- Adapt staff culture towards a customer centric and commercial approach (rather than Elite Athlete focus)
- Opened up the park to a new audience - particularly popular with local residents and those travelling for an activities filled break
- The park is recognised as a family friendly venue particularly appealing to young audiences
- The events programme has now extended beyond sporting events to large scale non-sporting events



Lickey Hills Country Park

Located 10 miles south west of Birmingham, Lickey Hills Country Park is a 524 acre park operated by Birmingham City Council. The park offers a range of activities for visitors which include:

- Family days out
- Wildlife spotting
- Sporting activities
- School trips
- Dog walking
- Recreational walking

Lickey Hills has a Green Flag Award and is designated as a Country Park.

The Park has a visitor centre which is open from 10am to 5:50pm in the summer and 4:20pm in the winter. The visitor centre also acts as a gift shop.

There is a cafe (outsourced to an operator) which serves light snacks.

A popular point of interest for Lickey Hills Country Park is the view point at Beacon Hill. Beacon Hill rises to 297m above sea level, providing expansive views across the surrounding countryside - with views on a clear day extending to Oxfordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Wales.



The park also includes adventure play and connected golf courses.

Lickey Hills Country Park offers visitors a series of set walking routes of varying difficulty and distance which are built around the Park's attractions.

Ranger led activity is delivered within the park particularly for school groups. This centres around ecology, the environment and caring for local green space.



Lickey Hills Country Park welcomes 500,000 visitors per year serviced by 445 free car parking spaces spread over three car parks.

Recently the park tried to introduce parking charges as a way of funding improvements to the car parks but following public consultation it was decided that introducing parking charges was not appropriate at this time, give the financial pressures on residents.

The reasons for the proposed introduction of parking charges was:

- Visitors to the park will benefit from reinvestment of revenue from car park charging into the park for its ongoing upkeep and future works
- The three car parks serving the park will benefit from significant investment to address safety concerns and ensure they are fit for purpose
- Long-standing traffic management issues can be effectively managed and resolved. e.g. Warren Lane carriageway
- Improve accessibility by addition of formal disabled bays in the car parks
- The presence of enforcement officers can act as a visual deterrent which may deter any anti-social behaviour.
- Ability for the Parks Service to meet savings targets for 2019/20 and onwards.

The proposed parking charges were:

- Up to 1 hour 50p
- Up to 4 hours £2.20
- All Day (4 hours +) £3.30
- Annual Season Ticket - £52
- Blue Badge Holder - FREE



Leybourne Lakes Country Park

Leybourne Lakes Country Park was created in 2004 and is a popular 230 acre Country Park featuring multiple lakes, habitats, wildflower meadows, hedgerows and scrub. The park offers a wild variety of activities for visitors which include:

- Walking trails
- Children’s play area
- Fishing
- Cafe
- Watersports Centre



The Watersports Centre is a new addition, completed in September 2022. A watersports offering existed prior to the opening of the watersports centre, however this was delivered from a series of temporary containers and structures.

The new watersports included a cafe and function area, decking for outdoor seating, toilets and changing rooms to service visitors and those taking part in water based activities.

The building was designed with sustainability in mind with energy savings features integrated throughout. This has reduced the overall operating costs providing a long-term sustainable operation.

Since opening the watersports centre has welcomed 60,000 visitors in the first 9 months.

The building is operated by the local leisure trust TM Active who have helped make the operation a success.

This has included catering for all of Leybourne Lakes Country Park users with the sale of ice cream and dog treats.

Watersports activities include:

- Canoeing & Kayaking
- Scuba Diving
- Windsurfing
- Open Water Swimming
- Stand Up Paddleboarding

The prominent new building combined with a cafe and public toilets for the Country Park has helped open up the watersport activities to a wider audience.

Birthday parties, and functions can be delivered from the centre, which provides a spectacular backdrop.



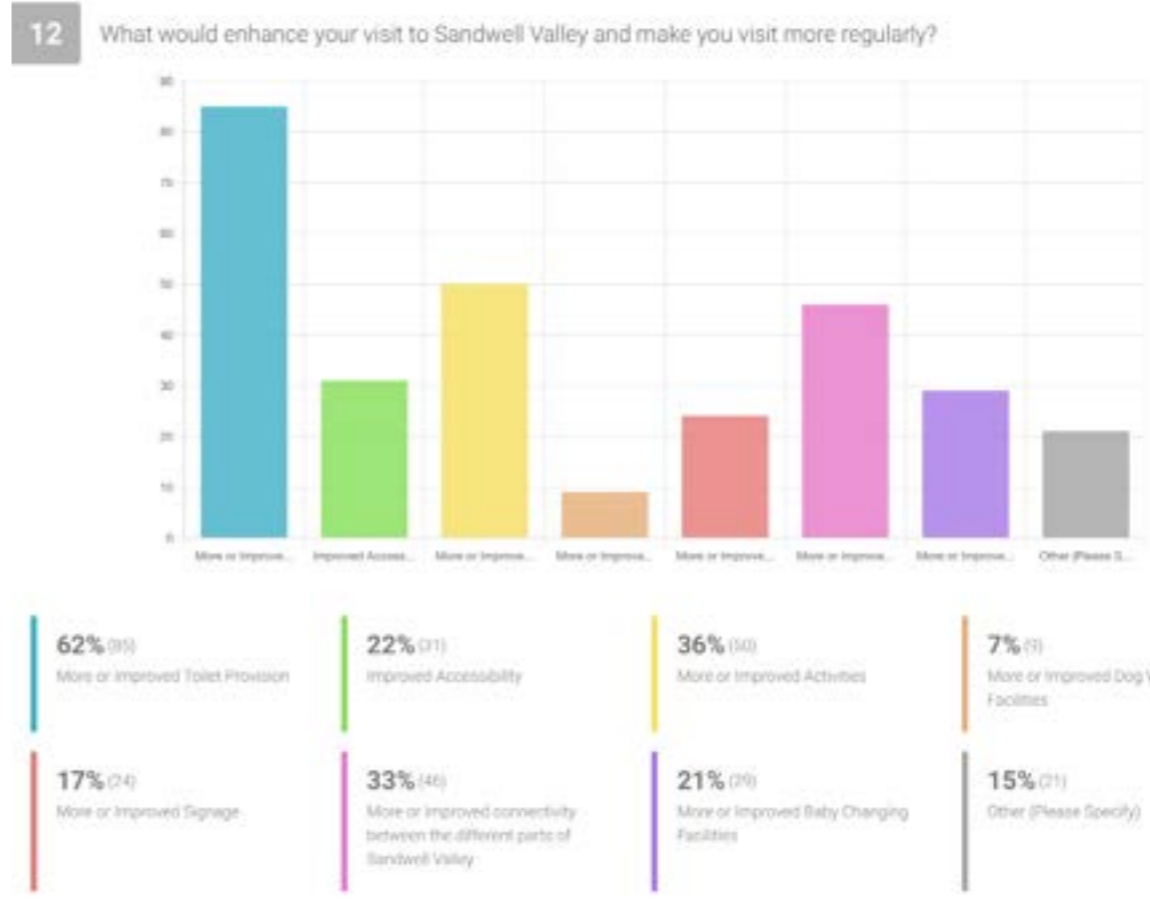
# Visitor Survey

## Consumer Survey

From February to April 2023, an online visitor survey was open, this was published on social media channels, utilised paid social media and was promoted via a direct mail campaign that was delivered to over 3,000 local residents, providing a QR code link to the survey.

The aim of the survey was to provide some insight into what visitors think of Sandwell Valley Country Park, and what improvements they would like to see. The survey received 147 responses, and provided the following insights.

1. Of those who completed the survey, 65% lived in Sandwell, 35% were from outside the borough.
2. 91% had visited Sandwell Valley in the past 12 months.
3. Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre was the most popular attraction, followed by Dartmouth Park, Forge Mill Farm and the Adventure Playground.
4. Some of those who responded had attended events in the past 12 months, including the Pumpkin picking at Forge Mill Farm, Christmas Grotto and Bank Holiday Car Boot Sale.
5. 79% of those travelled by car, 8% used public transport, only 2% cycled.
6. Of those attending by car only 31% experienced traffic issues on entry - 82% of these respondents suggested that these issues were related to delays waiting for a car park space.
7. 66% of visitors travelling by car experienced issues on exit.
8. 48% of those experiencing issues on exit suggested that this was related to delays getting out of the car park, and 43% attributed this to getting out of the park itself.
9. 39% of visitors stayed 1-2 hours on average, with 35% staying 2-3 hours.
10. Asked what could enhance their visit, the most popular response was 'more or improved toilet provision', with more or improved activities and increased connectivity between the different part of the park also being popular responses. Some of the more individual responses included 'better online information' and 'more food and drink places'.



11. 83% of those completing the survey were in favour of Sandwell Valley hosting large events in the park.
12. Asked what type of events they would like to see, 'Family Festivals', 'Family Music Nights', 'Movie Nights', 'Seasonal Community Events' and 'Craft and Antique Fayres' were the most popular choices.
13. The 17% that were not in favour of Sandwell Valley hosting large events in the park were asked what their biggest concerns were. Litter, anti-social behaviour, crime and damage to the park were the most common concerns raised.



# Gaps & Opportunities

To become financially sustainable and successful, country parks need to be able to maximise the peak periods of operation (school holidays and weekends), whilst retaining the ability to attract a steady flow of visitors, with minimal operational overheads during off peak periods.

It is important to address the most important challenges for Sandwell Valley (these are the same for all country parks) which are:

1. **Entry and egress during peak periods** (and the impact of that on the local road network/community)
2. **Parking capacity and location to attractions** (generally the majority of visitors will travel by car)
3. **Connectivity** (How easy it is to move around the country park, both in terms of quality of footpath/cycle path and signage)
4. **Data Collection and Management** (How visitor data is collected, managed and applied to improving visitor experience and informing improvements)

All of these aspects link together to provide the backbone of any master planning strategy.

## Entry and egress during peak periods

There will always be big differences in visitor numbers depending on time of year, weather and/or activity or event that is being held on any given day. Having an efficient and flexible approach to managing these variables is essential to the success of the business plan. If visitors experience difficulty entering or exiting the park, this will influence any future decision to visit.

Supporting the entry and egress of visitors is an essential part of the master plan, and links to many different thread of the overall vision. These include:

- Improvements to parking capacity, availability, signposting and sustainability.
- Improved connectivity between areas of Sandwell Valley encouraging visitors to park in different part of the park.
- Improvements in the way customers are communicated to and with, including the ways they book events and activities in advance. For example booking specific time slots to spread visitors out throughout the day.
- Data collection and management - collecting and analysing data to improve the visitor experience and directly improve visitor operations.

Congestion on entry can lead to congestion and queues at key commercial points within the park. This is likely to reduce visitor satisfaction and decrease the likelihood of a repeat visit.

## Parking capacity and location to attractions

Increasing car park capacity is not always feasible and is often leads to a reduction in attractiveness of a park. However simple sustainable measures can be taken to improve parking capacity. These include:

- Ensuring that parking bays are clearly designated - this can be achieved by re-painting existing lines, or for overflow car parks on grass or grasscrete marking out bays with logs or stakes to encourage responsible parking.
- Signposting visitors the car park that best suits their visit. This can start online if a visitor books an activity, they are recommended to park in a specific car park. Additionally, car parks should be signposted with the option to indicate if they are full or not at busy periods (using sliding signs or marshals to support this).
- Installing ground protection measures to extend the life of overflow car parks on grass.
- Where necessary (and in support of a sustainable business plan) improve water drainage in overflow car park areas to reduce the impact of wet days ruining a season.

## Connectivity

Sandwell Valley covers a vast area and visiting the entire site in a day is beyond the majority of visitors (who will spend 1-2 hours visiting). Therefore, making efforts to:

- Reduce the travel time between areas or clearly signpost the time and distance between areas.
- Create 'days out' or experiences that last 1-2 hours within different areas of Sandwell Valley centred around key entry points/car parks and refreshment/toilet areas.
- Clearly signpost areas and their suitability for visitors based on the most common activities within each area, the accessibility (both in terms of disability access and terrain difficulty etc).

For example, an active visitor who is visiting to exercise followed by a hot beverage may be encouraged to park at Swan Pool and walk to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre for their refreshments before returning to their car at Swan Pool. This helps reduce congestion at the main entrance and spread visitors out across the park - contributing to improved visitor satisfaction.

## Data Collection and Management

Having control of customer data will provide invaluable insights to the management team, allowing them to make informed, visitor centric decisions. A country park will always have peak and off-peak periods, and a lot of the strategy will be around maximising the opportunity at peak periods. Understanding how often and when visitors attend, how long they stay and how much they spend will help the team plan in advance and prepare a schedule of events and activities that are targeted for the audience. Parking, booking and spend data is essential, and can be achieved through an integrated approach.



# Vision - The Master Plan

The following vision for Sandwell Valley represents a strategy to address existing challenges, improve connectivity, achieve local and national priorities and ensure a sustainable future for Sandwell Valley.

To help visualise the master plan, Sandwell Valley has been split into distinct zones as outlined in the image below:

- Zone 1: Dartmouth Park
- Zone 2: Pavilion, Adventure Play & Activities
- Zone 3: Showground & Fairground
- Zone 4: Sandwell Valley Country Park & Priory Woods
- Zone 5: Swan Pool, Jubilee Woods & Urban Bike Track
- Zone 6: Forge Mill Farm





Zone 1 – Dartmouth Park

Dartmouth Park is a well-maintained Grade II listed park which has recently undergone a £6m restoration project that was supported by Heritage Lottery Fund and BIG lottery.

There is a range of activities for visitors including a play area, ornamental lakes, playing fields, outdoor gym equipment, floral displays, sensory garden and community pavilion with viewing tower and premium event spaces.



Investment into the pavilion has now provided a new café area for the park, which opened in June 2023

Dartmouth Park hosts large public events such as firework displays and is accessible from multiple points around its perimeter. Car parking is available at Sandwell Valley Country Park and off Lloyd Street.

For larger events, park and ride arrangements are used, with the local Tesco Extra recently providing the parking spaces.

The park also benefits from public transport connections along Seagar Street and Reform Street.

The Friends of Dartmouth Park are key stakeholders who meet regularly at the Pavilion building, and quarterly with the Assistant Director and Cabinet Member.



Vision

The vision for Dartmouth Park is to ensure that it is kept to a high standard of upkeep with visitors to all zones of Sandwell Valley fully aware of what is on offer at Dartmouth Park via clear directional signage and park maps.

Whilst Dartmouth Park hosts events, and will continue to do so, its primary function is as a valuable outdoor recreation area for residents. With a rich heritage, it is important that the story of Dartmouth Park is communicated clearly to visitors.

To support the overall sustainability of the park, it is recommended that a close relationship is continued with the 'Friends of Dartmouth Park' group.



Volunteers should continue to be supported to help enhance the appearance of Dartmouth Park and work to maintain and improve accessibility to all areas, and communicate the heritage to residents and visitors.



There are areas within Dartmouth Park that are particularly dark, creating a hazards during events. Currently the park deploys additional measures such as temporary floodlighting systems which come at a cost.

Consideration should be given to providing a permanent solution that will increase safety and save money in the long term.

In summary, this master plan recommends the following improvements within Dartmouth Park:

1. Improved signage that links to the other areas of Sandwell Valley.
2. Installation of cycle points to help connect to the rest of the park.





Zone 2 – Pavilion & Adventure Play

The Pavilion provides a first impression for visitors entering Sandwell Valley Country Park. The building is aesthetically tired, the toilet facilities are functional, and service Zone 2 and those accessing/exiting Zone 1.

Mini golf, outdoor gym and AstroTurf pitch facilities are adjacent to Pavilion which also provides changing facilities for sporting activities on King George V Playing Fields.

The Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. To provide a aesthetic facelift to the existing building, exploring renewable energy options to boost sustainability
2. Replace the sand based pitch by working with the Council's Leisure department to place a bid for a Football Foundation Playzone Area (these areas are suitable for multiple sports and are highly durable)



3. Update the mini-golf course or upgrade to adventure golf
4. Re-instate cycle hire, and include e-bike charge points at the Pavilion - it is recommended that a single operator is appointed (or this is delivered in house) to manage cycle hire, and outdoor activities across Sandwell Valley)
5. Update signage and trails that clearly visualise how the zone links to the rest of the park (this should include other cycle/e-bike hire and drop off points)

These improvements will help create a positive first impression, provide a valuable additional income and help connect visitors to the whole of Sandwell Valley.



### Zone 3 – The Showground & Fairground

The showground and events space is currently home to Sandwell Valley Amusements, a Junior Funfair, and large event fields. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council have an ambition to establish Sandwell Valley as the home of regional and sub-regional events.

To help achieve this ambition the showground area needs to be maintained and supported to deliver such events. Large scale events attract larger volumes of traffic to Sandwell Valley. Should the Council wish to deliver events for over the current capacity of 19,999 guests, further feasibility work would need to be commissioned to explore what would be required to deliver this.

The Fairground concession is currently due for renewal, this provides a regular rent payment to the Council. There is some question as to if this type of activity is appropriate for Sandwell Valley, and if the catering aspect conflicts with the other Council operated catering outlets.

The Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. The fairground offering is re-tendered when the current contract expires in 2024, with the requirement for the successful operator to ensure that the catering offer does not conflict with the Council's own offer (prices and scope).
2. Signage is updated to reflect the new developments surrounding Zone 3
3. Efforts are made to increase and extend the life of overflow and event car parking capacity by ensuring bays are marked (to improve efficiency of parking) and grass protection material is used (particularly on main routes in and out of car parks)
4. A long term solution to access and egress is explored which provides a more efficient flow of traffic

Addressing the access and egress challenge at Sandwell Valley would benefit the overall sustainability and long term viability of the destination. As the population of Sandwell and surrounding areas grows, the connectivity of Sandwell Valley is likely to be tested. The current entrance/exit via Salter's Lane is very residential, with traffic management measures required at peak periods and events.

Creating an access/exit that avoids residential streets / or is more directly connected to major roads such as the A41, Newton Road, Birmingham Road, M5 and M6 is a more sustainable approach in the long-term.

King George V Playing Field in particular provides excellent overflow/event parking capacity. In addition the Europa Estate exit option is close by, allowing cars to exit Sandwell Valley with a more direct route to the M5/A41.





### Zone 4 – Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre & Priory Woods

The recently re-branded Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre (Formerly Sandwell Park Farm) is a key area of focus for this master plan as there is the opportunity to re-establish its identity and purpose since the animals were transferred to Forge Mill Farm.

The location of the Visitor Centre is at the end of the road, which passes car parks that are next to Zones 1 and 2. Should a visitor park in the car parks along the entrance road, the visitor centre is still a fair distance away, with visitors passing the adventure playground and various activities along the way.

To ensure that the Visitor Centre is utilised to its full potential, the Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. Zone Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre with Priory Woods and the heritage within the woods (The Sand Well, Priory Ruins Priory Hall, Ice House etc).
2. Redevelop the internal space to cater for weddings and events which utilise the impressive architecture (including converting and upgrading the current staff toilets to be suitable for public use).
3. Provide a major year-round attraction at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre via a new 'Heritage Discovery Zone' primarily targeting a young family audience, school groups and people with disabilities. This area to be serviced by a new café with internal and external seating.
4. Provide a new toilet and baby changing area to service the Heritage Discovery Zone.
5. Provide clear and concise signage and interpretation boards that are suitable for families and a younger audience.
6. Deliver a year-round trail events that explore the surrounding routes and heritage.
7. Update signage and branding around the park, and externally to signpost visitors to the visitor centre.
8. Provide a connectivity map which details routes around Sandwell Valley, with walk and cycle times and difficulty of terrain.

These improvements will ensure Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre is a central focal point and connectivity hub of Sandwell Valley.



All improvement recommendations have been developed with the purpose of enhancing the heritage will need to be delivered delicately working in partnership with the local conservation and planning team.

The history and heritage of Sandwell Valley can be communicated from Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. Linking Priory Wood, Priory Ruins and Sand Well via clearly communicated and accessible trails starting and ending at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre can provide visitors with a free activity packed full of fresh air, exercise, ecology and local heritage.

All of the infrastructure for this already exists, it just requires updating and upgrading to be suitable for the primary market (Families) and integrated into the events (seasonal trails) programme.





This can be achieved by updating interpretation boards and signage across the zone to provide consistency of message. These boards can be future proofed by integrating QR codes which link to content that can be updated when required.

Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre is currently underutilised and lacks a clear purpose / place within the customer journey of Sandwell Valley.

Previously a Farm Park, the location now hosts a Rabbit Village This Rabbit Village is located in the Victorian Walled Gardens, disconnected from the reception and shop.

The Green Houses (mistakenly viewed as historical, but put in place in the 1980s) have recently had funding to:

- Remove the Green House from the right hand corner of the Victorian Garden, creating an event ready space, particularly for weddings and premium events.
- Restore the Green House in the far right hand corner, for use as part of the education and outreach programme to continue maintaining the Victorian Gardens.

Compact Tea Rooms are located at the rear of the main building, they are not the most accessible but have access to an attractive outside space.

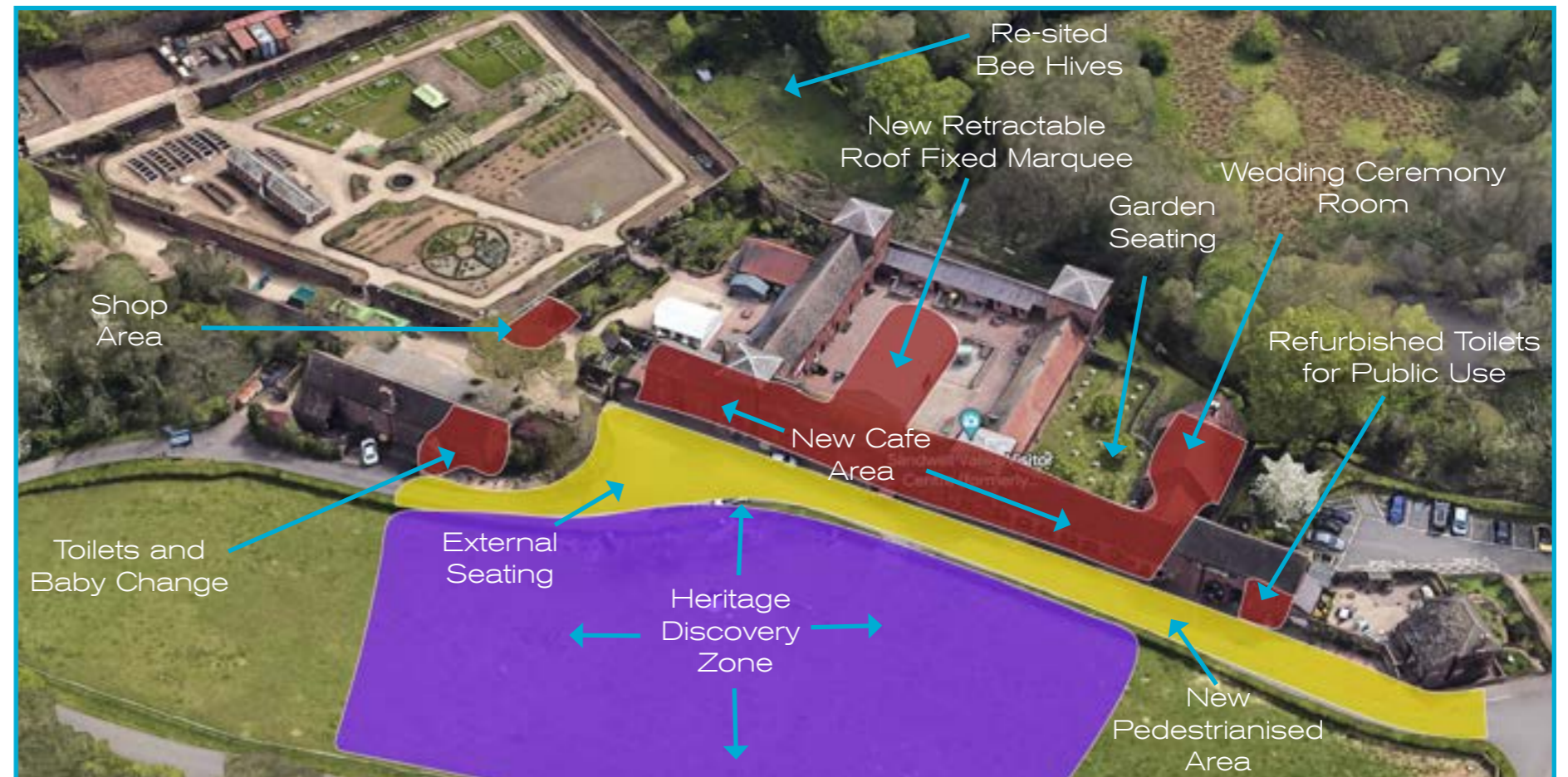
The recommended improvements aim to provide year-round use and reasons to visit and revisit. The proposed improvements are shown on the map and include:

- Pedestrianised (bikes allowed) area with bike parking and E-bike charging points immediately in front of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre
- Heritage Discovery Zone on the existing paddock outside of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre (Helping to connect young people and people with disabilities with the heritage)
- Converting part of an existing building to deliver new toilets and baby change facilities to support the Heritage Discovery Zone
- New Cafe area which when the barn doors are open will connect directly to a new external seating area and the Heritage Discovery Zone
- New retractable roof Marquee fixed within the courtyard area - to support events and increase the number of cafe covers

- Internal cafe seating area
- Wedding Ceremony Room utilising the existing shop area
- Access to a new garden area (where the bee hives currently are) with seating / use for wedding photos / welcome drinks
- New shop area, converting the concession stand outside the tea rooms
- Bee Hives to be removed or relocated to the rear of the building (monitor suitability of this location against risk of stings with the public)

In addition to these improvements, all signposted trails and cycle routes will connect to the front of Sandwell Valley Visitor centre. This will place Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre at the heart of Sandwell Valley.

This revised facility mix will attract year-round visitors and support (and weatherproof) small and large weddings and events.





Heritage Discovery Zone

The primary purpose of the Heritage Discovery Zone (HDZ) is to provide Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre with a year-round attraction. The HDZ targets children under 8 and those living with disabilities, providing an accessible educational play experience. The HDZ will be developed working in partnership with heritage consultants however the initial ideas of how this could look is outlined below:



The main play structure could mirror Sandwell Hall, and/or Sandwell Priory.



Bringing key parts of local heritage together via interactive and engaging play such as this water play feature concept which was inspired by the original Sand Well.



Providing substantial accessible play equipment and features will help attract local people living with disabilities and disability groups from across the West Midlands.

A key market will be school groups who will combine ecological and historical tours of Priory Woods/the surrounding area with educational play. The play area will reinforce what they have learnt on their tours and provide lasting experiences.

It is important to aim for a 'best in class' HDZ. This will help draw visitors from far away.

The area will work well with the existing adventure play in Zone 2 as the Zone 2 area is more suitable to older children.





Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre Internal Areas

The ability to flex the operational delivery of assets is key to financial sustainability within destination attractions. It is common for 80% of annual revenue to be achieved within the peak periods of the year (weekends and school holiday periods). The biggest on-cost to any operation is staffing, therefore the proposed developments have been delivered with the aim of reducing the base level of staffing requirements during the off peak periods, whilst providing the ability to process large volume during the peak periods.

The proposed revised layout is shown below:

Creating a new cafe area within a space currently used for storage will help connect Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre to visitors by opening up the large barn doors into the newly pedestrianised area.

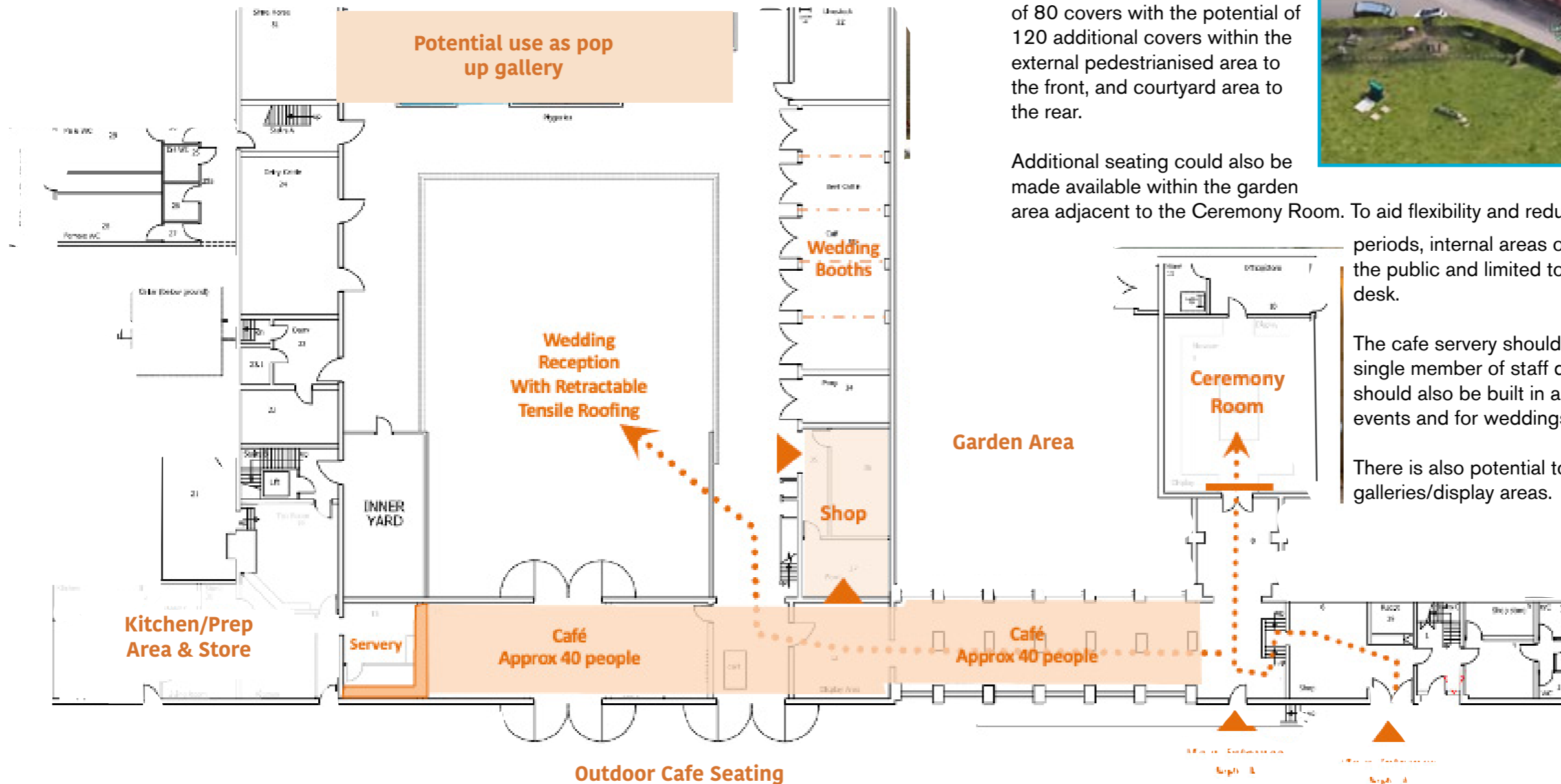
The cafe could extend internally (without) breaking through existing walls into the long room to the right and into the courtyard area behind another set of large barn doors.

This will provide internal seating of 80 covers with the potential of 120 additional covers within the external pedestrianised area to the front, and courtyard area to the rear.

Additional seating could also be made available within the garden area adjacent to the Ceremony Room. To aid flexibility and reduce overheads during off peak periods, internal areas of the cafe could be closed off to the public and limited to those areas closes to the cafe desk.

The cafe servery should set up to allow operation by a single member of staff during off-peak periods. The cafe should also be built in a way as to act as a bar during events and for weddings.

There is also potential to use other areas for pop up galleries/display areas.





The space has been designed to support the delivery of medium to large weddings and events. Key to the all-year-round delivery of events and weddings is the proposed retractable roof within the courtyard space.



As with the image above, the roof will be respectful to the heritage location, and not be connected to the main building. It will require connection with the ground, and therefore careful consideration of this must be made and discussed with the heritage consultant prior to submitting planning permission.

The original cobbled floor will be retained with temporary event flooring used (that levels the floor whilst protecting the cobbles) for events and weddings.

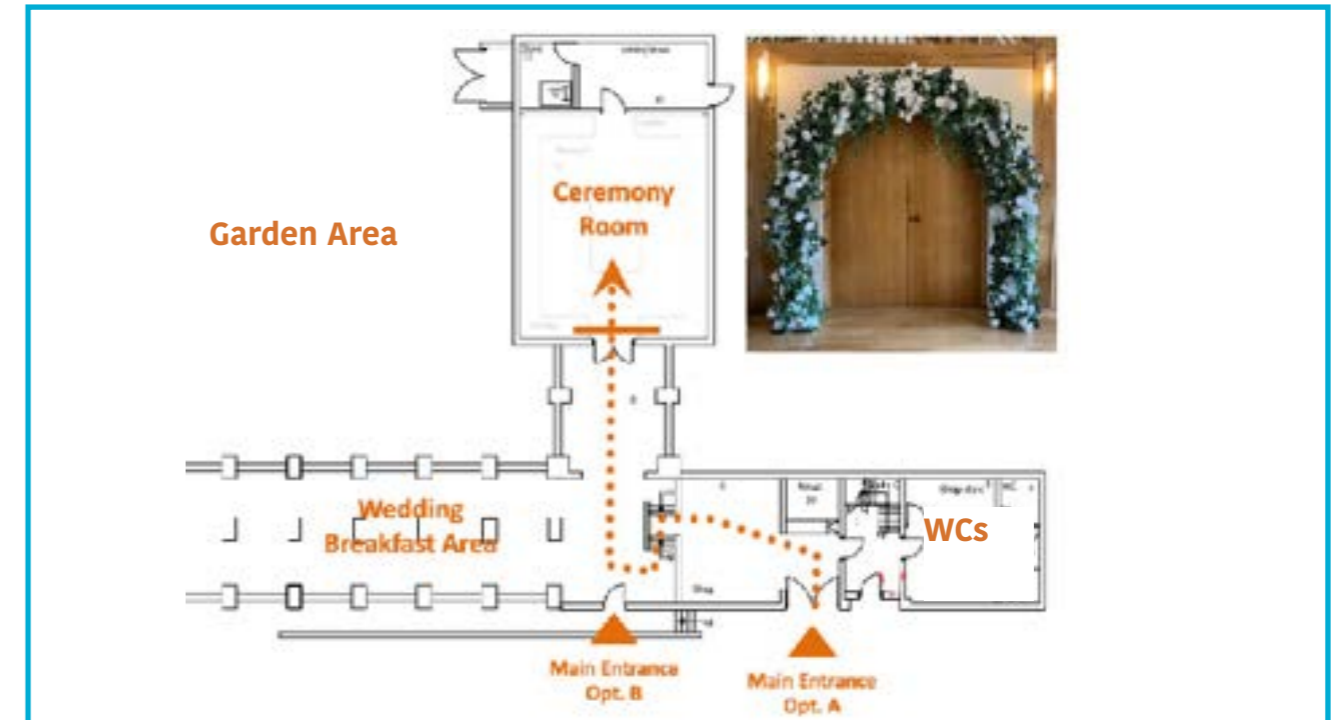
The venue currently uses marquees to support one off events as shown in the Google Earth image here:

Having a permanent fixture will reduce costs in the long term whilst providing a year-round use of the courtyard area for a range of events and occasions.

Unlike the image, the retractable roof will connect the building to the courtyard via a rubber flap - providing a weather resistant link between the two areas.



Wedding ceremonies will be conducted in the new Ceremony Room with entry into the room outlined below:



Photographs can be taken in the garden area which currently houses the bee hives. These hives will be relocated to a safer/more appropriate area.

The new space allows for weddings of differing sizes to be delivered. Wedding breakfasts can be delivered in the long room closest to the Ceremony Room or within the courtyard under the marquee.

The existing stables within the courtyard will be provided with power where possible to allow for wedding activity booths and pop up stores.

External caterers will be able to make use of the kitchen area which will support the cafe, either as a prep area for pre-prepared food, or as a full kitchen to deliver event and wedding catering directly.

The shop will be relocated to a new prominent position of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, which will be linked via new walking trails and routes through Sandwell Valley.





Zone 5 – Swan Pool

With the development of the Urban Bike Park, Swan Pool is preparing to welcome a large audience. This anticipated increase in footfall, growing building replacement liability (Existing Sailing Club) and the ambition of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to provide a sustainable Sandwell Valley has led to the following Master Plan proposals for this area:

1. Replace the sailing club with a new café and water sports centre
2. Extend the existing car park and create a one way entrance and exit (to improve access and egress)
3. Update signage and interpretation boards – linked to the new developments
4. Link the urban bike park to the new café area by installing bike parking
5. Install e-bike charging points and cycle hire space (linked to the Pavilion cycle hire in Zone 2)
6. Install a land train that connects Swan Pool to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre and Forge Mill Farm

The combination of these recommendations provides a sustainable destination attraction within Sandwell Valley. The connectivity of Zone 5 is currently better than Zone 4 due to access via Park Lane onto Newton Road (which leads to the M6) to the North and Birmingham Road (which leads to the M5) to the South.

Zone 5 is also connected by pedestrian (and internal traffic) bridge over the M5 to the Western section of Sandwell Valley and to the National Cycle Network via Route 5 which run through the site.

This connectivity provides an opportunity to establish Zone 5 as a regional and sub-regional destination attraction, with a key focus on watersports and cycling. Setting aside watersports and cycling, the location as a stand alone destination is attractive to visitors looking for a walk around Swan Pool or through the woods. Whilst the M5 can be heard in the background, the location provides a peaceful and visually stunning location which is a perfect location for those looking to escape a urban landscape and reconnect with nature.

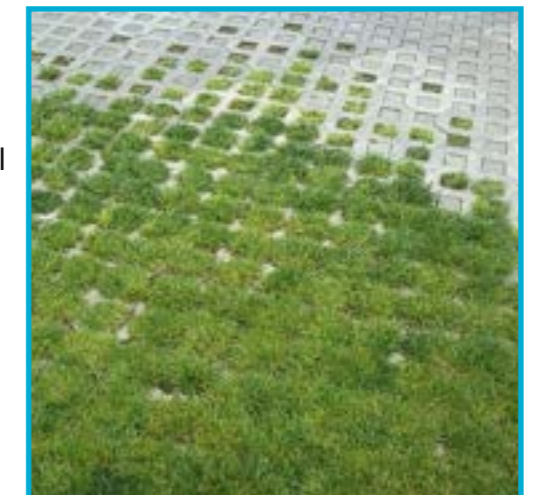
When complete, the site plan of Zone 5 is shown here. Zone 5 is connected by walking and cycle path to Zones 4 and 6. A new land train (peak periods), cycle hire and E-bike chargers will also help boost connectivity between zones.



Key to driving the success of Zone 5 is ensuring that parking arrangements are suitable for the potential of the area.

To ensure that this is the case, it is proposed that the site where the existing sailing club is located should be converted into an overflow parking area for bikes and cars utilising grasscrete or similar to create a more natural looking feel.

In addition to adequate parking, ensuring a clean flow of traffic in and out of the Zone is important. To aid this, we recommend creating a one-way entrance only and exit. The new cafe and watersports centre will become an activity hub for Zone 6. Providing much needed catering, toilet facilities and an improved watersports offering.



The initial design is outlined below:

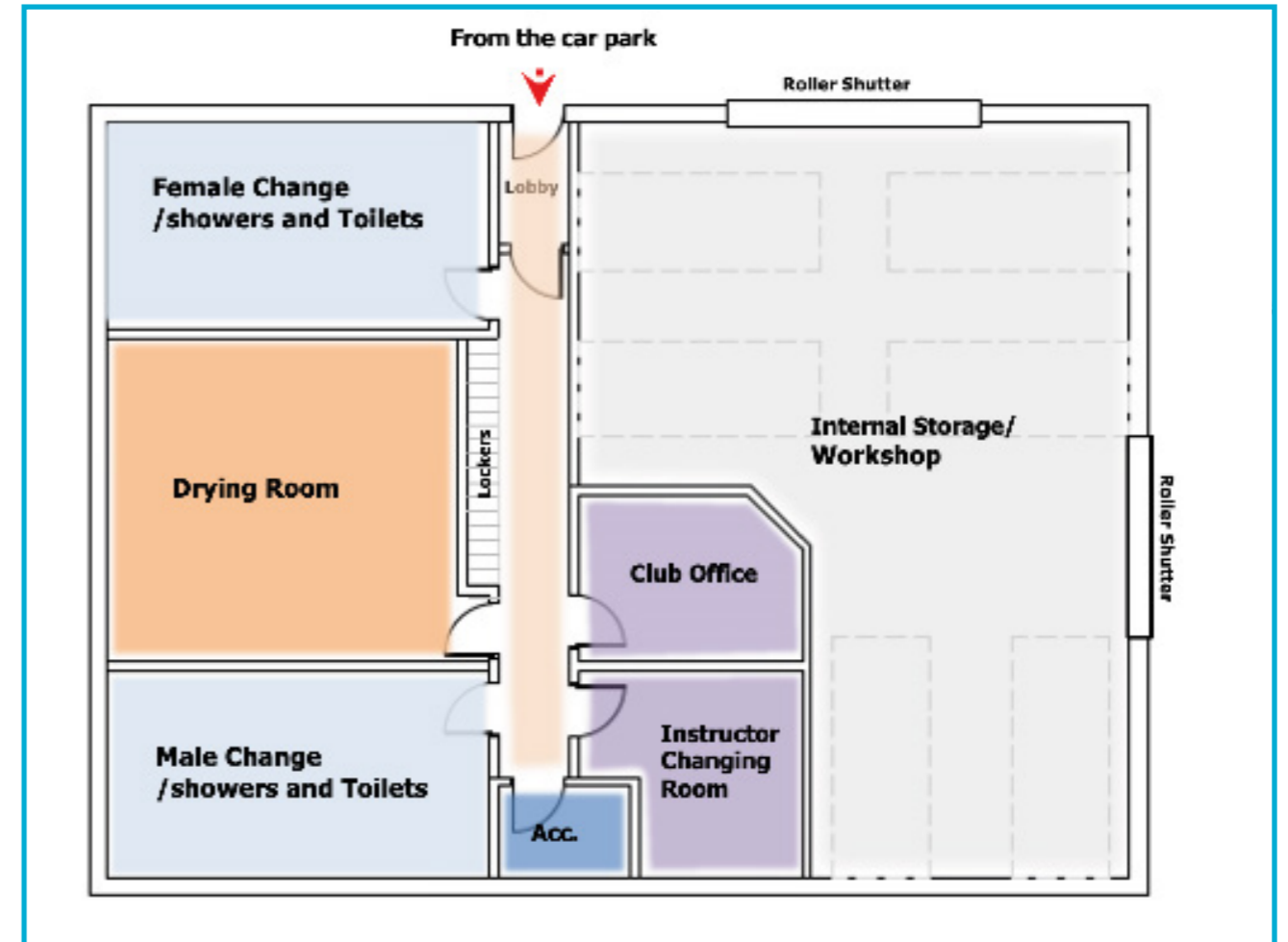


The water facing element (ground floor) will open up onto pathway, with seating extending onto a decked area. Customers will be able to enter to use the cafe or be served via a hatch.

The rear view shows the watersports centre entrance (lower ground floor) which will be home to the sailing club and include a drying room, changing rooms and a workshop/safety talk area.



The draft layout for the watersports area is shown below. The watersports centre will be fully accessible, and include a staff changing area.



Boats and larger equipment will be stored externally either in the existing area of the yard that is used, and/or within new containers which can be stored immediately outside of the centre.

It is anticipated that the area immediately outside of the centre could also house a container used to support the cycle hire service which would operate across Sandwell Valley. This would allow customers to hire a bike or similar piece of equipment in Zone 2 and drop it off in Zone 5 (or vice-versa).

It is anticipated that the watersports centre will deliver/support a full range of watersports activities such as:

- Sailing
- Stand up paddleboarding
- Kayaking

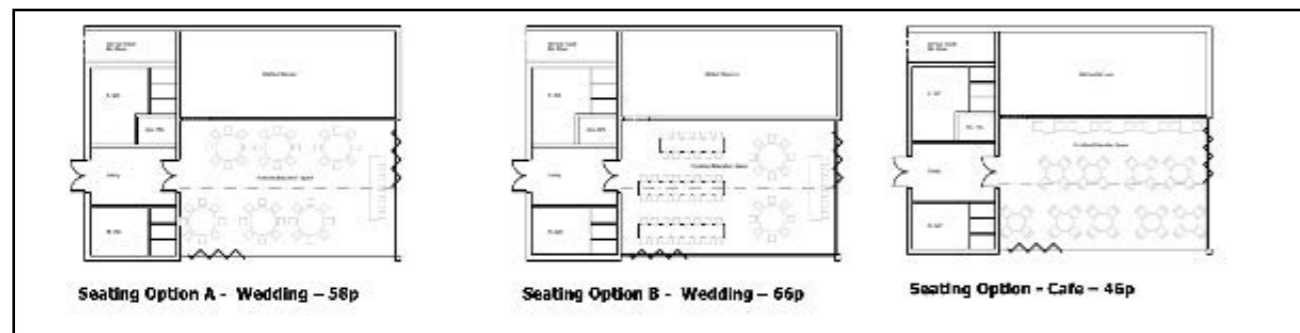


- Canoeing
- Raft building
- Outdoor swimming



The proposed venue will blend in with the natural environment, with glazing providing stunning views over the water. The internal design of the cafe/function room space suggests space for 50 seated guests, with access to the external area via sliding doors where there will be additional covers providing a seated capacity of approximately 80.

The primary purpose of cafe/function room space will be to service visitors to Swan Pool during peak periods. Use of the function space will be for Sandwell Valley Sailing Club, room hire and weddings. There are various seating layout options for weddings which give an indication of the space within the venue.



It is anticipated that the venue will have a kitchen and bar on site, allowing food to be prepared on-site and drinks to be served.

The site currently has some challenges with anti-social behaviour. It is anticipated that the addition of this cafe/watersports centre will improve overall security by providing increase supervision all year round.

The introduction of an Urban Bike Track combined with the existing cycling connectivity (via NCN Route 5) and the mountain bike tracks through Jubilee Woods will transform Zone 5 into a regional destination attraction.

To ensure that the potential of this areas is realised, all directional signage and interpretation boards should be updated to reflect the anticipated target audience. This would include placing estimated cycle times between key locations and cycle hubs/network routes.

Concerns were raised around the flood risk within the area selected for the building. Measures to counter this risk have been included within the design and costing work that has been completed.

## Zone 6 – Forge Mill Farm

Forge Mill Farm is visitor attraction and education facility that is open to the public as a farm park. Forge Mill has recently undergone developments to improve its customer journey with further improvements planned to add a play barn, demonstration barn, cafe and education facilities with investment of around £1.5m.

Forge Mill is particularly attractive to younger people, and does really well at attracting young visitors via the various events and trails that are delivered at the park.

The current diversification initiatives at Forge Mill Farm are transforming the Farm's into a stand alone and popular destination venue.

The venue currently has a passionate and driven leader who has been supported to deliver meaningful change.

The Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. Proceed with the new education area / kitchen and display barn
2. Complete and launch the new play barn
3. Redevelop the shop area to ensure that the visitor journey ends in the shop
4. Install E-bike points to link Forge Mill Farm to the rest of Sandwell Valley
5. Update signage and interpretation boards to reflect the developments
6. Ensure that the new Land Train stops at Forge Mill Farm
7. Explore Overflow Parking on the adjacent fields

Key to the success of any visitor attraction is ensuring that visitors leave satisfied that they have received value for money. Measuring dwell time is a common key performance indicator used within visitor attractions.

The development of the farm trail at Forge Mill Farm has extended the dwell time, however it is currently possible to complete a visit in less than an hour.

Visitors should not be rushed around the attraction, and they should not be on site for too long either. A sweet spot for a customer visit is a 60-90 minute dwell time. This gives visitors enough time to feel like they have received great value for money whilst also increases the likelihood that they will take advantage of the refreshments available on site. A 90 minute visit also allows for regular turnover within the car park, allowing more visitors to attend each day, with an increased spend per visit.



The effectiveness of this can be monitored through the ticket and car park data. Based on this data, Forge Mill Farm could then confidently adapt and flex its advance ticket sales to include timeslots with pre-determined capacity that relate to the car parking spaces and the overall visitor capacity of the farm. This approach will help ensure an even flow of customers throughout the day, allowing the Council to ensure that the standard of visit is consistent throughout the day.

Planned developments such as the play and display barn will contribute to increasing the overall dwell time at Forge Mill Farm.

To further enhance the customer experience, developing a fit for purpose display barn is recommended. Display barns are highly popular within other farm parks, providing additional income through the selling of experiences in addition to providing reasons for visitors to attend such as during lambing season (a peak period of interest within farm parks).



To support the educational activities at Forge Mill, it a food barn and fit for purpose education centre is also recommended. Reviewing locations the most economically viable option is to combine the display barn, which can also used to host specific events with the food barn and education centre by re-purposing and extending an existing barn.

Initial designs and layouts are shown in the following images:

The proposed location is shown here:

The re-purposing of the existing barn allows a smooth customer journey to be maintained and will reduce build cost by utilising existing foundations and utility connections.



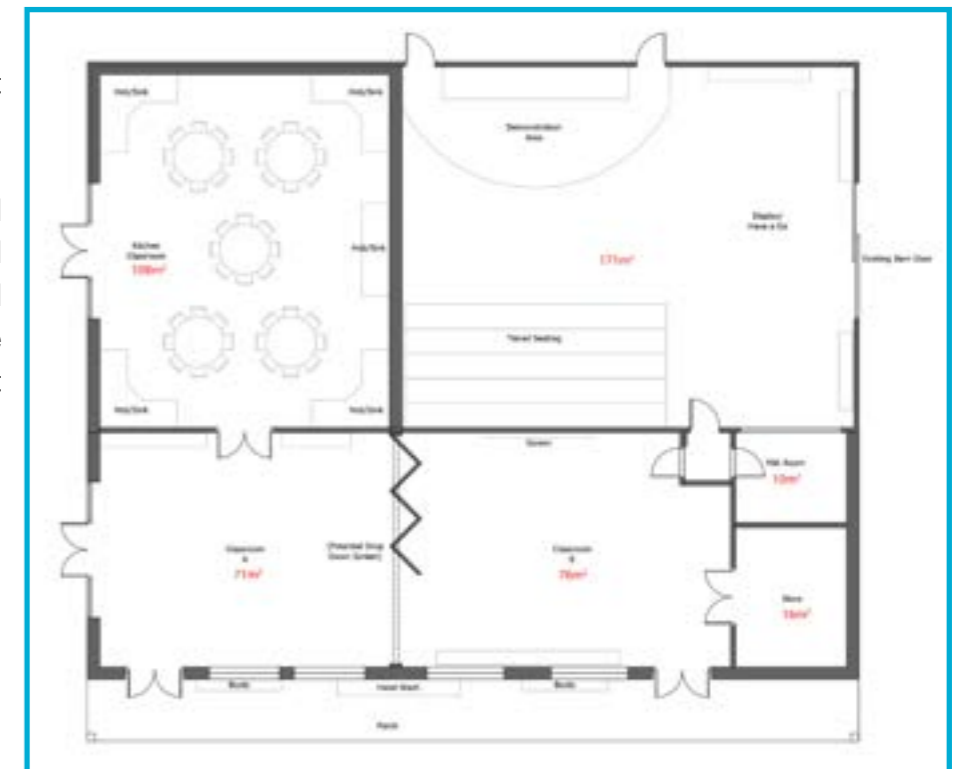
In addition, the building is the first to be seen on the journey (after the ticket hall), therefore



will provide a great first impression for visitors.

The two classrooms and a kitchen classroom will provide a year-round asset to support the educational activities at Forge Mill Farm.

Having a pre-defined customer journey that passes key refreshment areas and ends within a shop area is common practice within visitor attractions. The redevelopment/re-organisation of the shop area will allow for a more defined journey.

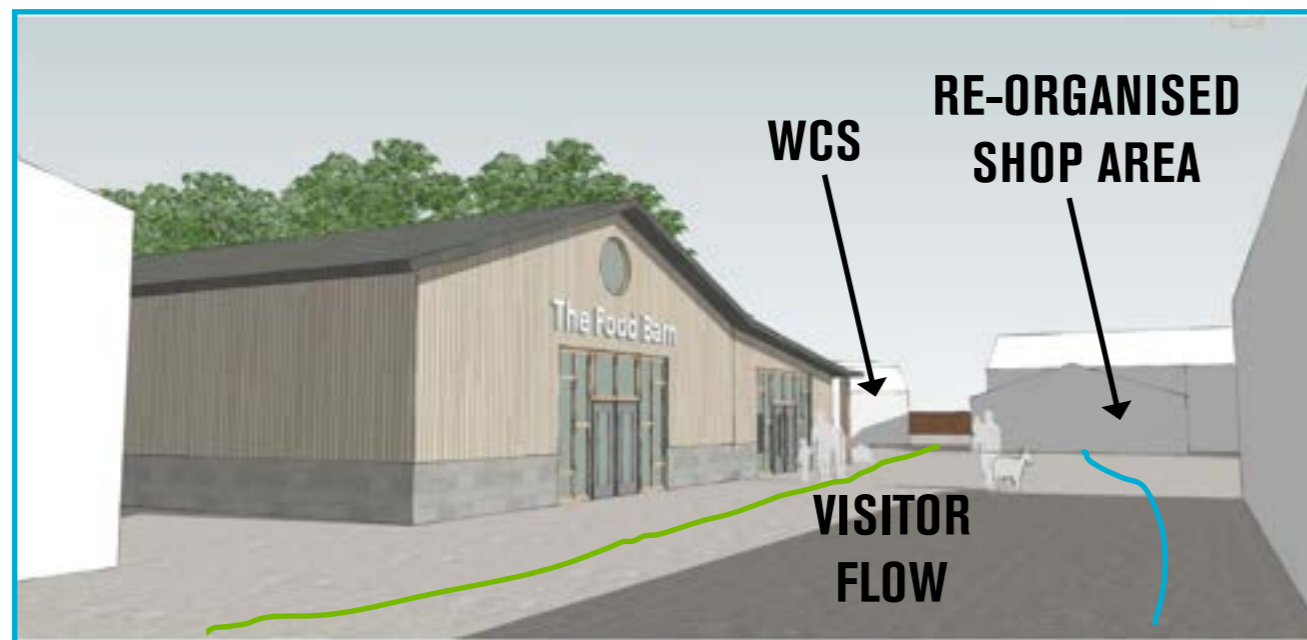




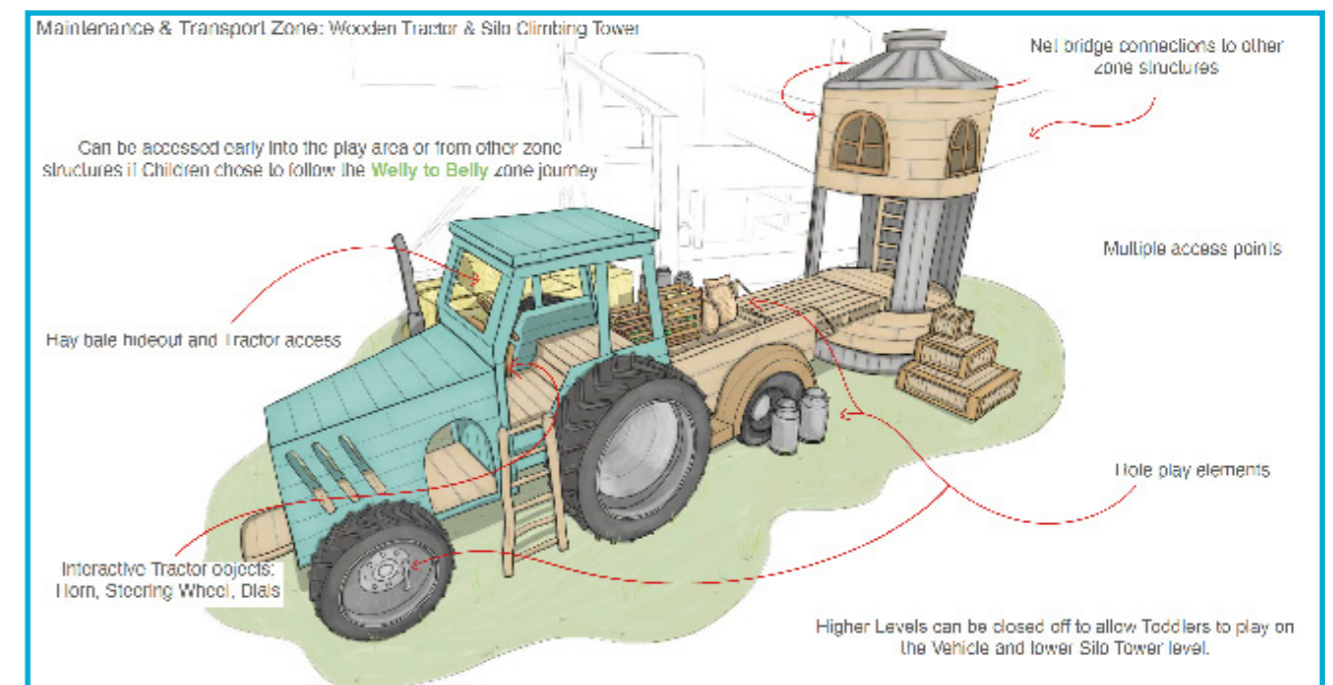
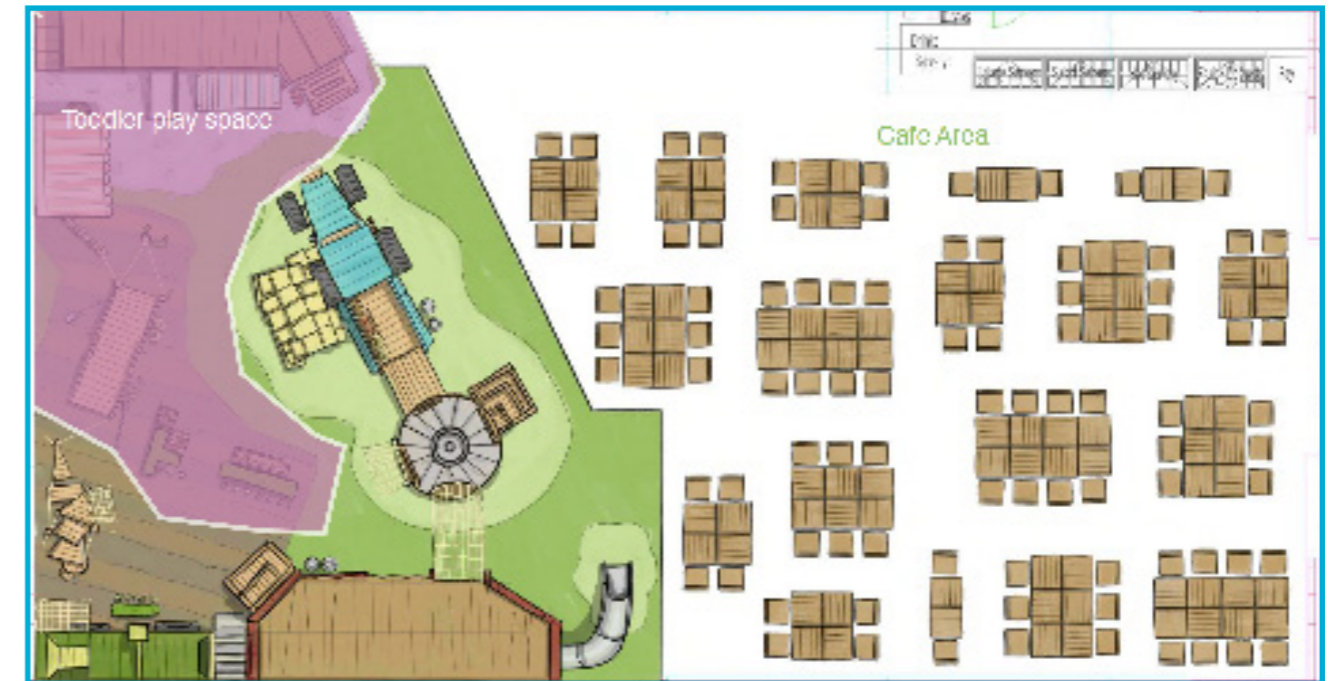
Combined with refurbishing the toilet area and the new display barn, food barn and education centre this will completely transform the first impression that visitors experience.

This approach will contribute to extending the visitor dwell time to within 60-90 minutes and increasing spend per visitor.

The new play barn combines indoor play with a cafe and party room. This provides a good additional revenue point for the attraction, increases the dwell time and overall spend per visit. The play barn will keep the farming theme, allowing children to



continue to learn about the animals and farm life through play.





### King George V Playing Fields General Parking and Overflow Parking Areas

King George V Playing Fields is currently used for overflow parking, with parking meters already installed. The Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. Create grass protection routes for parking – with the aim of preserving the ground condition and extending the use of the area into as much of the peaks periods of between April to October.
2. Provide power, water and drainage (if possible) to support large scale outdoor (marquee) weddings in this area

For all of the highlighted areas the Master Plan proposals for this area are:

1. Improvements to drainage be made where possible/practical
2. Ground protection mats are deployed during events for the traffic routes to ensure that the area recovers quicker and maintains the ability to function as an overflow car park or camping area
3. If camping is going to be a regular occurrence, ensure that the area is linked with water (blue pipe to a stand tap)
4. For the Forge Mill overflow parking area it is recommend that parking meters are installed to service the area. Precedent for this has been established at King George V Playing Fields





# Major Events - Feasibility

## Input from Sandwell Events Team and The Event's People

There is significant opportunity to enhance the events offer at Sandwell Valley with a programme of major events. The site is currently under used for this purpose and as the events industry recovers from the affects of Covid-19 there is significant opportunity in this area, as providers are looking for new spaces and opportunities.

A traffic management study has shown that the venue is one of the most accessible in the region in terms of connectivity, close to major road networks and public transport hubs that are seeing increased capacity (eg the Metro line through West Bromwich).

Major events are place makers, particularly for venues seeking to establish as sub-regional destinations. Many come with national acclaim and put venues on the map across the country. The income generated from major events and festivals is not only significant to the venue, but to the local economy. As the industry looks to improve its sustainability, there is a clear trajectory towards using local suppliers and investing locally, while event goers continue to spend off site in the immediate area while travelling to and from events. Sandwell does not currently have any major multi day events. These bring in large income boosts to the accommodation sector by increasing local bed nights. There is capacity within local accommodation to facilitate increased bed nights for major festivals.

There were 141.5 million visits to outdoor events in 2018, with a total on-site and off-site spend of £39.5bn. Through incomes earned at events and elsewhere, this contributed £30.4bn in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy, and provided 589,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

(Value of Outdoor Events 2018, Bournemouth University and the Event Industry Forum)

In addition, it has been identified that the neighbouring Greater Birmingham and Solihull area has the potential to attract £210m-£390 million in GVA (creating 4,700-9,000 jobs) with an increased cultural offer focusing on events and festivals. This is partly due to the Central Birmingham area having a saturation of events with a limited number of large outdoor venues.

The event site at Sandwell is exceptionally well resourced in terms of infrastructure, hard-standing and power in particular. There are established 10k and 5k running routes that can be extended to a half marathon as well as Swan Pool which is suited to Triathlon swimming and hosted a high quality Swim England junior championship each year, The Showground and western Valley are currently limited by a lack of drainage and by grass field parking. This reduces the amount of events the land can hold as it needs time for recovery, reseeding and repair between events – and this can be for extended periods during wet months.

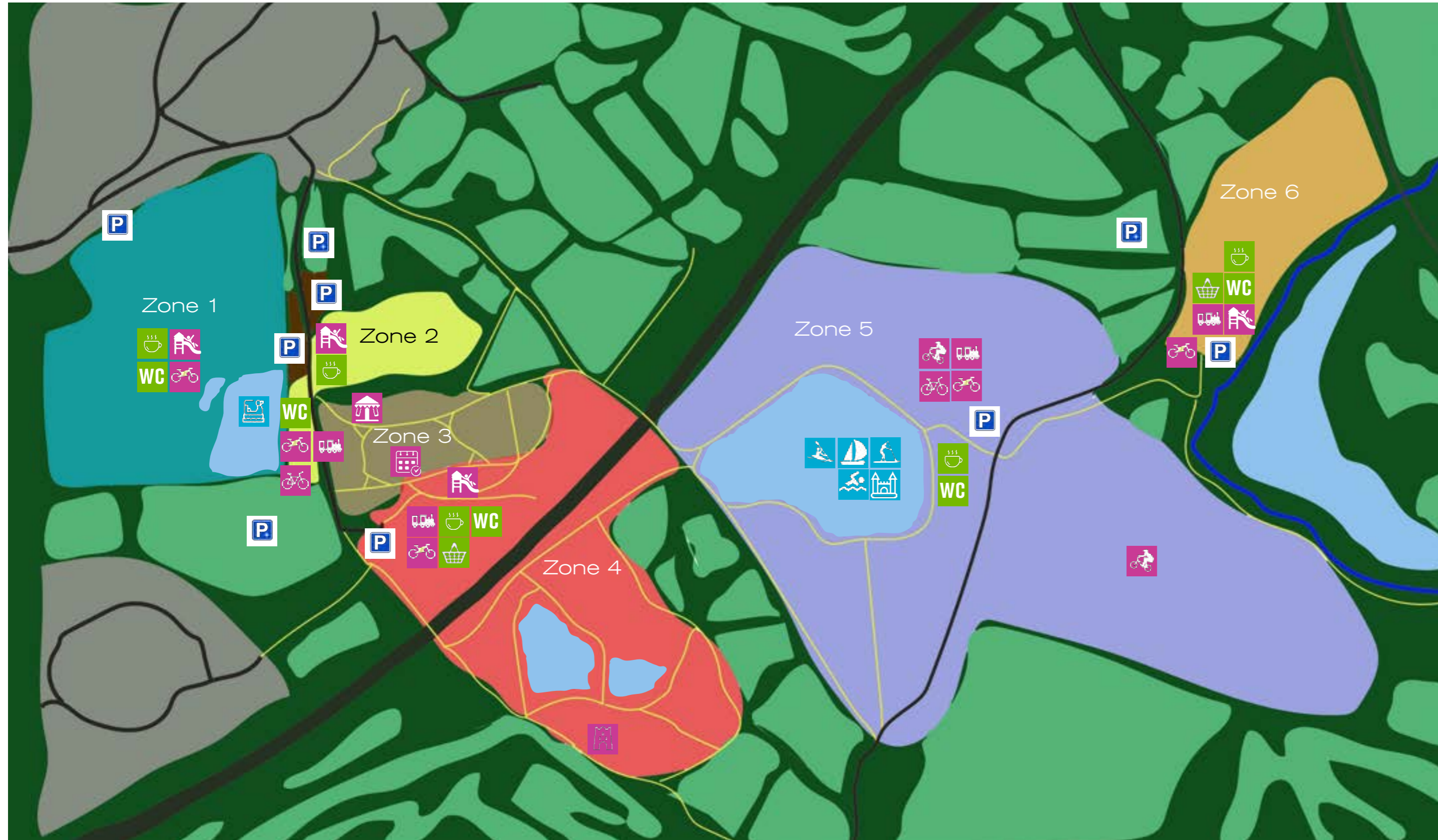
Improvements to these areas, would give the site the ability to hold 12 or more major events a year with an audience capacity of 19,999 a day. Recent traffic management consultancy work has demonstrated that the local road network could manage this level of use with the current ingress/egress and road networks. Traffic management plans have been drawn up by event

size which can be implemented depending on the size of the event. Conversations have taken place with local transport operators who are able to increase capacity on networks to facilitate large audiences and clear plans are now in place for traffic and parking management around local residential areas.

There are currently funding opportunities around 1. Restarting the events industry, providing post Commonwealth Games legacy and 2. Improving sustainability around events. There is also a push for national sporting and arts organisations to spread their pound outside of the capital. Arts Council England are highly supportive of events in the Sandwell area and have invested significantly in two large scale events in the Borough this year, while British Volleyball and British Cycling have an interest in the Sandwell Valley Site. Conversations are also opening up with some other large national festival and arts organisations.

Major events when successfully managed are long term relationships, many held year on year in the same location, bringing year on year growth.

# Master Plan Summary



## DOCUMENT KEY

### Activities/Features

- |                              |  |                            |  |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Play area                    |  | Boating Lake               |  |
| Land Train                   |  | Sailing                    |  |
| Cycle Hire                   |  | Canoeing & Kayaking        |  |
| Mountain Biking              |  | Stand Up Paddleboarding    |  |
| E-Bike Charge Point          |  | Open Water Swimming        |  |
| Priory Ruins & The Sand Well |  | Inflatable Obstacle Course |  |
| Major Events                 |  |                            |  |
| Fairground                   |  |                            |  |

### Facilities

- |                                    |  |                   |  |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Toilets (Accessible & Baby Change) |  | Car Park          |  |
| Cafe                               |  | Overflow Car Park |  |
| Shop                               |  |                   |  |

- |                           |  |       |  |           |  |                       |  |
|---------------------------|--|-------|--|-----------|--|-----------------------|--|
| Woodland                  |  | Water |  | Grassland |  | Path or Minor Road    |  |
| Residential or Urban Area |  | River |  |           |  | Main Road or Motorway |  |



# Capital Expenditure Cost

The breakdown of the anticipated capital costs for each zone are highlighted below:

Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3
Signage & Interpretation Board Update £20,000	Signage & Interpretation Board Update £20,000	Signage & Interpretation Board Update £20,000
E-Bike Recharging Point £5,000	E-Bike Recharging Point £10,000	
	Pavilion Refurbishment £250,000	
	Playzone (match funding with Football Foundation) £100,000	
	Mini Golf Upgrade £80,000	
<b>£25,000</b>	<b>£460,000</b>	<b>£20,000</b>

Infrastructure & Other	
Car Parking Improvements	£250,000
Drainage Improvements to 4 Fields	£200,000
Grass Protection for Overflow Car Parks	£190,000
Project Management Of Capital Works	£140,000
Dog Training Field	£50,000
Conservation Management Plan	£20,000
<b>£880,000</b>	

Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6
Signage & Interpretation Board Update £40,000	Signage & Interpretation Board Update £30,000	Signage & Interpretation Board Update £15,000
E-Bike Recharging Point £5,000	E-Bike Recharging Point £10,000	E-Bike Recharging Point £5,000
Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre Refurbishment (New Cafe/Retracting Roof) £1,252,033	Land Train £150,000	New Education Centre / Display and Food Barn £1,750,000
Heritage Discovery Zone £500,000	New Watersports Centre £2,554,024	
	Equipment Allowance £150,000	
<b>£1,797,033</b>	<b>£2,894,024</b>	<b>£2,020,000</b>

Total Capital Provision
<b>£7,856,057</b>


















# Implementation Roadmap

KEY

Procurement/Preparation   
 Works & Completion 

This implementation plan will be delivered by a dedicated project manager throughout.

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Zone	Development	2024/25				2025/26				2026/27			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Infrastructure & Other	Car Parking Improvements Drainage Improvements to 4 Fields Grass Protection for Overflow Car Parks Dog Training Field Conservation Management Plan												
Zone 1 - Dartmouth Park <small>(Gateway to Sandwell Valley)</small>	Signage & interpretation board updates E-Bike Recharging Points												
Zone 2 - King George V Pavillion, Adventure Play Area & Activities	Signage & interpretation board updates E-Bike Recharging Points King George V Pavillion Refurbishment Playzone (Match funding with FA) Mini-Golf Update												
Zone 3 - Showgrounds and Fairground	Signage & interpretation board updates												
Zone 4 - Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre and Priory Woods	Signage & interpretation board updates E-Bike Recharging Points Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre Refurbishment Heritage Discovery Zone												
Zone 5 - Swan Pool, Jubilee Woods, & Urban Bike Track	Signage & interpretation board updates E-Bike Recharging Points Land Train Swan Pool Water Sports Centre Equipment Allowance												
Zone 6 - Forge Mill Farm	Signage & interpretation board updates E-Bike Recharging Points New Display & Food Barn												





## Cabinet Report – Sandwell Valley 10 Year Master Plan Approval - Appendix D: Social Value Impacts

Activity	Who will benefit	Social Value Outcomes (Community, wellbeing, sustainability, diversity)	Extended impact (vision 2030)
Wider Country Park visits (Zone 1-4)	Sandwell residents, community groups, visitors from outside of Sandwell, Schools, collages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of trails, zones and increased connectivity will take hundreds of thousands if people further into the country Park than the existing playground and car parks.</li> <li>- Increased physical activity improve physical well-being, and mental health of Sandwell residents.</li> <li>- Access to green open spaces, nature, wildlife without having to leave Sandwell will improve resident’s mental well-being.</li> <li>- Provision of new play areas provide great ‘days out in Sandwell’ benefiting communities and providing equal opportunities to those unable to travel due to ability or cost.</li> <li>- Encourage a wider sense of community and civic pride in Sandwell.</li> </ul>	<p>Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>People live well and age well</p> <p>Centre of community life leisure and entertainment</p>
Swan Pool- water sports and bike track (Zone 5)  (Not applicable in in bronze option)	Sandwell residents, community groups, visitors from outside of Sandwell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formation of new club/societies and the provision of facilities for existing community groups within Sandwell to further build a sense of community.</li> <li>- Provide equal opportunities to Sandwell residents are unable to travel outside of Sandwell to participate in water sports and activities.</li> <li>- Improved well-being confidence and ability to build resilience in challenging times, particularly for young people.</li> <li>- Increase outdoor water safety skills within Sandwell diverse residents.</li> <li>- Provide great days out in Sandwell creating civic pride.</li> <li>- Encourage physical activity to improve physical and mental well-being.</li> <li>- Ensure that future Sandwell residents understand how to protect green spaces, lakes, ponds and watercourses for wildlife and nature.</li> </ul>	<p>High aspirations for young people</p> <p>Centre of community life leisure and entertainment</p> <p>Improve long term health and well being</p>
Forge Mill farm visits (Zone 6)  (Reduced offering in silver and bronze options)	Sandwell residents, community groups, visitors from outside of Sandwell, schools, groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity for high quality experiences and encounters at an affordable price for the whole community- up to 123,000 individual visits a year by 27/28.</li> <li>- Provide equal opportunities and experiences for Sandwell residents, particularly those who are unable to travel outside of Sandwell, to encounter farming, animals, the outdoors and food production in Sandwell.</li> <li>- Improved mental well-being through interactions with animals and the outdoors in a safe and accessible environment.</li> </ul>	<p>Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>People live well and age well</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Celebrate the farming heritage of many of Sandwell’s diverse residents to being able to share animal and farming experiences with next generation.</li> <li>- To prorate sustainable practice and inspire the next generation.</li> <li>- To provide exciting and accessible day out for residents with disabilities on an accessible site.</li> <li>- To empower Sandwell residents to shop, cook and eat in a way that promotes physical and mental well-being throughout their whole life.</li> <li>- Provide increased employment and training opportunities through increase visitor numbers</li> </ul>	<p>Centre of community life leisure and entertainment</p> <p>Raising aspirations</p>
<p>Education and outreach engagements (whole site)</p> <p>(Reduced offering in silver and bronze options)</p>	<p>Schools, collages, community groups, SEND, LAC, Under-fives, older adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of quality, curriculum targeted school trips within Sandwell that require limited travel time/cost for up to 15,000 a year by 28/29.</li> <li>- Encourages more ‘first-time use’ of the country Park leading to further future visits</li> <li>- Improving confidence, well-being and ability to build resilience in Sandwell residents, particularly young people.</li> <li>- Encourage increased physical activity to improve physical well-being, and mental health of Sandwell residents.</li> <li>- Introducing green careers and setting a culture of hard-working responsible young people with a clear focus for the future.</li> <li>- Encourage improvement in attendance/behaviour, tough reward-based approach.</li> </ul>	<p>High aspirations for young people</p> <p>Create a skilled and talented workforce</p> <p>Provision of High-quality education</p>
<p>Volunteers and community projects (whole site)</p>	<p>Young People, Unemployed residents, retired people, people with disabilities, out or work parents/carers, community groups, Sandwell green spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteering to improve community outcomes and green spaces accessibility.</li> <li>- Build a greater sense of community, build relationships and tackle loneliness.</li> <li>- Introducing green careers and setting a culture of hard-working responsible young people with a clear focus for the future.</li> <li>- Encourage increased physical activity to improve physical well-being, and mental health of Sandwell residents.</li> <li>- To prorate sustainable practice and inspire the next generation.</li> <li>- Improving confidence, well-being and ability to build resilience in Sandwell residents, particularly young people.</li> </ul>	<p>High aspirations for young people</p> <p>Create a skilled and talented workforce</p> <p>stronger community links built</p>
<p>Forge Mill Farm Food Barn and Food Field</p>	<p>Schools, collages, community groups, SEND,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To empower Sandwell residents to shop, cook and eat in a way that promotes physical and mental well-being throughout their whole life.</li> </ul>	<p>Residents live healthy lives longer</p>

<p>(Zone 6)</p> <p>(Not applicable in silver and bronze options)</p>	<p>LAC, Under-fives, older adults, groups and organisations outside of Sandwell.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide skills, advice and training on how to cook affordable meals from scratch to tackle the obesity and food poverty crisis.</li> <li>- Improved community engagement through wider growing projects, demonstrations and displays.</li> <li>- To welcome groups and organisations from outside of Sandwell to showcase sustainability, community and diversity in Sandwell.</li> <li>- Support the provision of quality, curriculum targeted school trips within Sandwell that require limited travel time/cost for up to 15,000 a year by 28/29.</li> <li>- Opportunity for high quality experiences and encounters for the whole community when they visit Forge Mill Farm- up to 123,000 individual visits a year by 27/28.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>Provision of High-quality all education</p> <p>Nationally recognised centre of excellence</p> <p>Raising aspirations</p>
<p>Conservation and environmental stewardship work (whole site)</p>	<p>Sandwell residents, greenspace, wildlife,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regenerative approach to managing the land will promote improvements in natural habitats.</li> <li>- Strategic winter grazing will reduce soil damage, nutrient leaching and subsequent damage to watercourses, invertebrates which have within them and bird and small mammal species which rely on them.</li> <li>- Mark to promote diversity within grasslands, hedges and field margins to encourage more insect species, small mammals and birds.</li> <li>- Protection and management of hedgerows to provide environments for wildlife to live within and feed off promoting increased numbers of larger bird species.</li> <li>- Managing land and animals to reduce reliance on insecticides and antiemetics.</li> <li>- Promote carbon sequestration through better soil management to increase organic matter levels within the soil. Positively Contributing to Sandwell's climate change objectives.</li> <li>- Management of local nature reserves promote target species and improve habitat.</li> <li>- Welcome groups and land managers from all around the UK to promote knowledge exchange great civic pride.</li> </ul>	<p>Nationally recognised centre of excellence</p> <p>Raising aspirations</p> <p>Improve long term health and well being</p>

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**Cabinet Report - 10 Year Sandwell Valley Master Plan - Appendix D: Consultation Themes and Responses**

Comment	Theme	Response
Longer options for walking routes, as well as shorter ones for different abilities	Accessibility and Connectivity	The walking trails will be updated, with improved signage to designate walking route types.
Improved disability access to sites	Accessibility and Connectivity	As part of the infrastructure investment, we will be improving accessibility to Swan Pool, Forge Mill Farm, and Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. Further scoping work will be completed to identify improvements to disability access across Sandwell Valley, and potential additional funding sources for this.
Transport between the sites	Accessibility and Connectivity	The land train and cycle hire will provide additional routes between the sites for all abilities. In addition, people are still encouraged to walk and enjoy the nature of Sandwell Valley in between the sites.
Improvements to the Swan Pool Car Park, to allow for cash payments	Accessibility and Connectivity	As part of the feedback from this consultation, we will work with parking colleagues to explore options to improve use of this car park.
Support for increase and improvements in signage	Accessibility and Connectivity	Signage and way finding will be improved across Sandwell Valley to enable visitors to find the destination they are heading for, but also discover new elements of Sandwell Valley for the first time.
Concern about entrance and exit options encroaching on green space / woodland introduction of a park and ride scheme	Accessibility and Connectivity Accessibility and Connectivity	The proposed improvements to the car parks, increasing the number of designated bays through suitable markings, and using an alternative exit for large event days is designed to provide a solution to the traffic on peak days, but also to avoid green space or woodland being used for new exit / entrance options. We will continue to review this option with our transport partners.
Car park and entrance road from Salters Lane needs refurbishment (pot holes)	Accessibility and Connectivity	The proposed infrastructure improvements include repairs to the car parks and entrance from Salters Lane.
More links for public transport to Sandwell Valley	Accessibility and Connectivity	Sandwell Valley benefits from good transport links, unlike other Country Parks. West Bromwich Town Centre, and bus and metro links, are within ten minutes walk of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, and bus routes that stop near Forge Mill Farm. We will improve the signposting to these transport links.
Problems with car parking facilities, not enough car parking available	Accessibility and Connectivity	The proposed improvements to the car parks, increasing the number of designated bays through suitable markings, and using an alternative exit for large event days is designed to provide a solution to the traffic on peak days and to provide more car parking spaces.
Parking issues for residents during peak visitor days and major events	Accessibility and Connectivity	For large events which impact local residents, we have worked on off site parking, premium on site parking, and temporary parking restrictions. We will continue to monitor this for large events, and work with residents on sourcing a solution to these issues.
Concern about the use of Europa Estate as an exit during peak days	Accessibility and Connectivity	This is proposed for large events and peak days associated with this. This will be for a limited number of days per year. However, this is currently a proposal and will be subject to further discussion with residents.
Return of pedalos to the lake at Dartmouth Park	Attractions	This will be scoped in the first year of the master plan to establish whether this is a viable option, and to procure a partner if this is the case.
Concern about the Sandwell Valley Amusements not in keeping with the Country park	Attractions	The Sandwell Valley Amusements has become a part of Sandwell Valley, and is enjoyed by many families as an affordable day out. We are currently about to tender for the delivery of this attraction for the next few years.
Support for the increase in sporting facilities, cycle hire, and adventure golf at King George V Pavilion	Attractions	The investment into the King George V pavilion and procurement of a partner for this will provide cycle hire facilities, sporting facilities, and adventure golf for visitors.
Refurbishment for 'The Fort' in Dartmouth Park	Attractions	This is not within scope of the master plan for Sandwell Valley. However, we will work with the Friends of Dartmouth Park and other stakeholders to consider what investment is required to improve the facilities and how best to implement these.
Improved football and sports facilities Improved watersports facilities	Attractions Attractions	The Master Plan includes proposed improvements to the current tennis courts, planned to be a play zone with multi-sports activities. We will also renew the King George V Playing Fields to be bookable for football, during football season. The Master Plan includes a new water sports facility at Swan Pool.
Increase in healthy food offers	Catering	We have recently updated our menus to provide a broad range of offers, including vegan and gluten free options. Healthy options are available on all menus, and we will continue to review this.
Increase in use of locally sourced produce and food in sales	Catering	We are currently planning menu improvements to include locally sourced produce and food, and increasing the offer in our shops for this. This includes food grown at Sandwell Valley (excluding meat produce).
Concerns about charging for entry to the park	Charges	Sandwell Valley Country Park and Dartmouth Park - including all Green Spaces in Sandwell - are free to access. The facilities within the park may incur charges, such as catering and use of attractions.
Affordable pricing for events and activities at Sandwell Valley	Charges	It is intended that Sandwell Valley is an affordable day out, whatever your means. So visitors are able to enjoy the countryside with no spend, but those visitors that do want to spend on attractions, catering, and facilities can do so. Our fees and charges are set and approved by Cabinet and are intended to be affordable. Some events and activities are premium, and targeted at an audience who are more likely to spend this amount.
Concern about costs and the impact on other services	Charges	The Sandwell Valley Master Plan has been tested with financial experts, CIPFA Cco, and a ten financial model produced based on the investment. It is intended to produce a surplus, reducing the current net annual cost to the Council of £700,000 for Sandwell Valley.
Concern about the commercialisation of Sandwell Valley	Charges	The Master Plan is focussed on the improvements to the offer at Sandwell Valley, which has a commercial focus to achieve revenue plans as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Access to Sandwell Valley Country Park is free of charge, although some facilities and offers are charged for.
Removal of parking charges	Charges	Charges are set annually by Council. We do not propose removing the parking charges at Sandwell Valley. The parking charges help to maintain the sites and car parking facilities.
Improved gardens at Dartmouth Park	Conservation and Land Management	The Master Plan addresses improvements to Sandwell Valley, and Dartmouth Park is considered in the plan as a gateway to Sandwell Valley. We will continue to work closely with the Friends of Dartmouth Park and other stakeholders to maintain and improve Dartmouth Park.
Better litter management across Sandwell Valley	Conservation and Land Management	As part of the infrastructure investment, we will explore the use of bins and whether smart bins can be trialled in some locations. We will also use signage and interpretation to promote people picking up their litter and the impacts of littering to nature and wildlife.
Introduce safe BBQ Areas	Conservation and Land Management	We do not currently plan on introducing BBQ areas, but will consider this further in the development of a conservation and heritage management plan for Sandwell Valley.
Ensuring Sandwell Valley is maintained for the benefit of birds and wildlife	Conservation and Land Management	We will work with stakeholders, such as SANDNATS, RSPB, and BBC Wildlife, to develop a Conservation Plan for Sandwell Valley which will look at how best to support the birds and wildlife in Sandwell Valley.
Increase in park rangers and general security of the sites	Conservation and Land Management	We will review the resources required for the conservation and heritage management when developing this plan.
Ensure the bee hives are retained	Conservation and Land Management	The bee hives at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre will be maintained, but may move location. This will be considered as part of the design plans, ensuring the bees can be maintained.
Concerns about the land train impacting on wildlife	Conservation and Land Management	The land train will be operated in a way as to not impact the wildlife of Sandwell Valley. We are currently exploring sustainable ways of operating the land train and this will be a key factor in the procurement of the land train.
Concern about additional lighting and the impact on the environment and nature	Conservation and Land Management	There are no plans to introduce artificial lighting to Sandwell Valley Country Park, beyond that already exists.
Impact of increased cycling across the site on nature and conservation	Conservation and Land Management	We will work with stakeholders, such as SANDNATS, RSPB, and BBC Wildlife, to develop a Conservation Plan for Sandwell Valley which will look at how best to support the birds and wildlife in Sandwell Valley, whilst allowing cycling to be a positive impact.
Increase in CCTV and monitoring of antisocial behaviour	Conservation and Land Management	In developing a Conservation and Heritage Management Plan, we will consider the security and anti-social behaviour impacts and how these can be addressed. The investment includes an increase in CCTV at the three main sites of Forge Mill Farm, Swan Pool, and Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre.
Increase in wildflowers, dedicated areas for natural habitat	Conservation and Land Management	We will work with stakeholders, such as SANDNATS, RSPB, and BBC Wildlife, to develop a Conservation Plan for Sandwell Valley which will look at how best to support the birds and wildlife in Sandwell Valley, and to increase natural habitat where possible.
Potential ecological impacts on wildlife and birds of the Swan Pool proposals	Conservation and Land Management	The final plans for Swan Pool Watersports Centre will be subject to planning permission, including ecological impact assessments.
More education around wildlife and conservation across Sandwell Valley	Conservation and Land Management	We will increase the interpretation of wildlife and nature across Sandwell Valley, and create a space to showcase the ecology and conservation of Sandwell Valley at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre.
Increase in bird nesting boxes	Conservation and Land Management	We will work with stakeholders, such as SANDNATS, RSPB, and BBC Wildlife, to develop a Conservation Plan for Sandwell Valley which will look at how best to support the birds and wildlife in Sandwell Valley, and to increase natural habitat where possible.
Look at the sustainability of the new buildings / refurbishments	Conservation and Land Management	We will work with stakeholders, such as SANDNATS, RSPB, and BBC Wildlife, to develop a Conservation Plan for Sandwell Valley which will look at how best to support the birds and wildlife in Sandwell Valley, and to increase natural habitat where possible.
Work with SANDNATS, RSPB, BBC Wildlife and other stakeholders to maintain conservation and promote this for education	Conservation and Land Management	As part of the design and planning permission process, ecological impact assessments will be completed for all proposals.
Ecological surveys and impact assessments will need to be completed for the proposed developments	Conservation and Land Management	As part of the Master Plan, it is proposed to invest in the King George V Pavilion and to seek a partner to deliver Cycle Hire from this location.
Reopening of the cycle hire facility Bike washing facilities	Cycling Cycling	We will consider this as part of the infrastructure spend, and the viability of this idea. We will consider this as part of the infrastructure spend, and the viability of this proposal. We will work with colleagues and stakeholders to fully assess the potential impacts and risks associated with this proposal, as well as the benefits.
Concerns about E-Bike Charging Points and the use of E-Bikes in pedestrian areas	Cycling	As part of the Master Plan, a new and expanded café is proposed for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. We are planning to have dog friendly access to at least parts of this café.
Introduction of dog friendly café access Introduction of dog washing facilities	Dog Facilities Dog Facilities	We will consider this as part of the infrastructure spend, and the viability of this idea. This idea has been added to the Master Plan, with implementation planned in Phase One (24/25 financial year).
Introduction of a dog walking area for dog walkers to let their dogs off leads	Dog Facilities	We are currently working on a five years events strategy, and will consider all potential events at Sandwell Valley as part of this.
Classic car show event at Sandwell Valley Showground	Events	Our annual events plan for Sandwell Valley includes art classes and events, and we will look to increase these subject to the viability and attendance.
Art classes at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Events	In 24/25 financial year, we will pilot this idea alongside the Children's Festival to be held in the summer. We will continue to explore this idea for further camping events, dependent on the viability and attendance.
Consideration for camping events in Sandwell Valley	Events	Our annual events plan for Sandwell Valley will include a trial of a number of market days at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre.
Increase in farmers markets and markets at Sandwell Valley	Events	Our annual events plan for Sandwell Valley will include a number of events for older people, particularly during non peak days. We will continue to scope the viability and attendance at these events.
Sporting and other activities for the over 50s and older generations	Events	The number of large scale events at Sandwell Valley Showground will be managed carefully to minimise the disruption to local residents and to ensure maximum benefit for the borough and visitors. We will continue to engage residents as we develop the events schedule for major events, and to seek ways to minimise impacts on the local area and maximise benefits.
Concern about large events, and the impact on residents	Events	The number of large scale events at Sandwell Valley Showground will be managed carefully to minimise the disruption to local residents and to ensure maximum benefit for the borough and visitors. We will continue to engage residents as we develop the events schedule for major events, and to seek ways to minimise impacts on the local area and maximise benefits.
Increase the number of large events at Sandwell Valley Showground	Events	Our annual events plan for Sandwell Valley will include a trial of a number of exercise and sporting activities at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre.
Increase in exercise classes and sporting activities for visitors	Events	The completion of the play and education barn at Forge Mill Farm is due in the Summer 2024. The Master Plan also proposes investment in phase 3 (26/27 financial year) into a new food and education barn.
Improved farming education facilities	Forge Mill Farm	Forge Mill Farm Shop and entrance toilets will be refurbished and expanded in Autumn 2024. This includes a large shop, additional toilets and baby changing facilities, and better disabled access to the farm.
Needs expansion of the Forge Mill Farm shop	Forge Mill Farm	The design proposals within the master plan have been worked on by architects and cost consultants. However, these will be subject to final design work, and we will work stakeholders to ensure the final designs deliver what is expected (including working with the Sailing Club and other water sports groups, for Swan Pool).
Further engagement with residents and stakeholders in the final designs and proposals	General	This will be scoped in the first year of the master plan as part of the development of a Conservation and Heritage Plan, including scoping potential funding.
Question about heritage maintenance of the heritage assets across Sandwell Valley	Heritage Management	This will be scoped in the first year of the master plan as part of the development of a Conservation and Heritage Plan, including scoping potential funding.
Investment is needed in Priory Woods and other heritage sites in Sandwell Valley	Heritage Management	We will include a museum in the new Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre to cover the history of the site, and interpretations of the farm equipment and practices used.
Investment into restoration and preserving the farm heritage of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Heritage Management	As part of the planning permission process for the proposed improvements to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, we will consult with Historic England and liaise closely with our heritage officer. We will also work with other stakeholders on the final design elements of this site.
Historic England and other stakeholders will need to be consulted on the proposals for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Heritage Management	As part of the Master Plan, it is proposed to invest in a new heritage discovery zone that will provide play and learning facilities for children and babies, as well as older children. The new play and education barn at Forge Mill Farm will also provide further play facilities for these age groups.
More play facilities for children and babies	Play and Children	We will complete a procurement exercise for a renewed offer at Sandwell Valley Amusements in 24/25 financial year.
Improved fair ground offer	Play and Children	As part of the Master Plan, it is proposed to invest in a new heritage discovery zone that will provide play and learning facilities that are accessible for all learning abilities and disabilities, as well as older children. The new play and education barn at Forge Mill Farm will also provide further play facilities for these age groups.
Increase in disability accessible play facilities	Play and Children	The master plan includes additional and improved toilet and baby changing facilities at Swan Pool, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, and Forge Mill Farm.
Improved and increase in the toilet facilities and baby changing facilities	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	The Master Plan includes an expanded café offer at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, allowing for outside seating, expanding the seating capacity inside to 80 covers, and providing a new menu and catering offer, including self service items.
Improved café offer at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	The farm animals were removed from Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre in 2018, and now have a permanent and larger / more suitable home at Forge Mill Farm. It is not proposed to reintroduce farm animals to Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, and to retain this at Forge Mill Farm.
Farm animals at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	We will work with stakeholders in the final design for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre improvements to ensure access is maintained as far as possible throughout the year to the toilets and café facilities.
Café and toilets at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre open even when hired out for weddings	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	We will work with stakeholders in the final design for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, including Historic England and our heritage officer. We will continue to scope the viability of a retractable roof, and will compare this to the costs and requirements for a marquee.
Concern about retractable roof and the impact on the aesthetics and heritage of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	It is proposed to include a museum on the heritage of the site, and an ecology room for visitors to explore the ecology and conservation of Sandwell Valley. A programme of events and activities for visitors, to include weekends and peak days, will provide additional benefits.
Increase in facilities and activities at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	There is a need to achieve additional income from venue hire for the revenue targets for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. It is anticipated that the site will have between 30 - 40 weddings a year, focussed on evenings and non peak days.
Concerns about the use of Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre as a Weddings venue	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	As part of the wedding booking process, terms and conditions will require suitable behaviour for participants in the wedding. Deposits will be taken to ensure this happens.
Concern about wedding hire increasing traffic and anti-social behaviour	Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre	

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## Report to Cabinet

13 March 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Grants – Delegation of authority to accept grants
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Peter Hughes Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA,
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Director - Growth & Spatial Planning Tammy Stokes Interim Section 151 Officer Brendan Arnold
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes Type (b) - an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to more than £1m.  Type (c) – an executive decision which is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Andy Miller Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager <a href="mailto:andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk">andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA and the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning in conjunction with the Interim Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to accept City Region Sustainable Transport Fund grants from West Midlands Combined Authority under the Terms and Conditions contained in the Grant Agreements for the following schemes;



- Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package
- Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension Sustainable Access Measures
- A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor






## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is a five-year capital settlement to enable the city regions to achieve their ambitions in terms of transport investment. The fund is overseen by the Department for Transport (DfT) and in the West Midlands it aligns with the emerging Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5). CRSTS commenced in 2022-23 and is the main source of transport capital funding for local transport schemes with a scheme cost of £50m or less.
- 2.2 Projects within the programme are reported to Cabinet individually. Each project must progress through the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Single Assurance Framework (SAF) process to enable funding to be confirmed and allocated to the Council through grant agreements. There are multiple stages to the SAF process corresponding with the submission of Strategic Outline Business Cases (SOBC), Outline Business Cases (OBC), and Full Business Cases (FBC). Early drawdown of funding can occur following approval of the SOBC meaning that separate grant agreements may be required at different stages in a project's progression. In addition, where projects are delivered in phases, each phase may require a separate FBC and subsequent grant agreement.
- 2.3 In order to avoid the need to bring multiple reports to Cabinet seeking approval to enter into these grant agreements, and to enable them to be turned around in a timely fashion without creating undue delay in scheme programmes, it is considered prudent to delegate the power to authorise officers to enter into grant agreements to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA.



2.4 Approval is therefore required to enter into grant agreements with the WMCA and accept grants for CRSTS funding to enable the projects listed to be further developed, including the submission of each business case stage, to enable detailed design to be carried out, and following full approval, for the schemes to be constructed.

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

	<p><i>People live well and age well:</i> The projects contained in the CRSTS programme contribute to safe and efficient roads for local people and visitors, and to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.</p>
	<p><i>Strong resilient communities:</i> Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this. The CRSTS programme is a key component in ensuring that the transport network meets the needs of the Borough's communities in the future.</p>
	<p><i>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods:</i> New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The CRSTS Programme will make a significant contribution to this objective.</p>
	<p><i>A strong and inclusive economy:</i> The provision of a high-quality transport network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.</p>
	<p><i>A connected and accessible Sandwell:</i> The provision of a high-quality, sustainable transport network catering for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education, and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.</p>





## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The approved WMCA CRSTS programme includes the following projects which are, either wholly or partially, located in Sandwell:
- Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension Sustainable Access Measures
  - A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor
  - Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package
  - A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor
- 4.2 The first two of these projects were approved in principle at Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023, whilst the Smethwick scheme received a similar approval at Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- 4.3 The A4123 project was approved at Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> February including a recommendation relating to the acceptance of grants which is similar to that contained in this report. This project therefore not covered by the recommendation at 1.1.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Authority to accept grants and enter into grant agreements could be sought from Cabinet for each agreement as they arise. However, this would result in multiple reports appearing on Cabinet agendas. As such, approvals would be ancillary to the main project approvals already granted by Cabinet – this option, therefore, is not considered to be an efficient approach.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The projects will be funded through devolved allocations to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as part of its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. All fees, including SMBC staff time recharges, are including the estimated scheme cost and are thus covered by the grants.
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<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The delegations described in this report are in accordance with paragraph 1.3 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Constitution.
<b>Risk:</b>	The OBC and FBC for each project will include a full risk assessment. In addition, the Strategic Investment Unit will carry out appraisals of business cases prior to submission and its recommendations will be taken into account.
<b>Equality:</b>	There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.  An Equality impact Assessment will accompany the business case for each project. This is a precondition of funding.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
<b>Social Value:</b>	There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.  However, decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principle theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects will need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases as a prerequisite of securing funding.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

## 7. Appendices

N/A



## 8. Background Papers

Report to Cabinet - 06:12:23 WBHE Sustainable Access Measures

Report to Cabinet - 06:12:23 A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor

Report to Cabinet - 17:01:24 Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package

Report to Cabinet - 07:02:24 CRSTS Update and Local Transport Settlement



## Report to Cabinet

13 March 2023

<b>Subject:</b>	Ratification of Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority and HM Government
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration and the WMCA. Councillor Peter Hughes Councillor Piper – Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources
<b>Director:</b>	Brendan Arnold, Director of Finance and S151 Officer Tammy Stokes, Assistant Director Spatial Planning & Growth <a href="mailto:Tammy_Stokes@sandwell.gov.uk">Tammy_Stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</a>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes - borough wide impact
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Assistant Director Spatial Planning & Growth <a href="mailto:Tammy_Stokes@sandwell.gov.uk">Tammy_Stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

It is recommended that -




- 1.1 Approval be granted to the single settlement Memorandum of Understanding as set out in the report and attached Appendix A.
- 1.2 the Leader of the Council be authorised to endorse Sandwell Council's entry into the single statement Memorandum of Understanding when the matter is determined by the West Midlands Combined Authority Board.
- 1.3 Cabinet note and endorse the proposed high-level next steps for the single settlement negotiations and implementation.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The 'single settlement' was one of the most significant commitments in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) trailblazer deeper devolution deal announced at the 2023 Spring Budget. The trailblazer deal was ratified by WMCA Board on 13 October 2023 on the basis that there would be further decisions about particular elements of the deal, including the single settlement.
- 2.2 A draft of the MoU was considered and agreed in-principle by Mayoral and Portfolio Leaders on 3 November 2023. Now the final MoU has been published, the WMCA Board will be asked to agree the MoU at their meeting on 15th March 2024.
- 2.3 This report seeks to update Cabinet on the single settlement negotiations and proposed next steps and grants authority to the Leader of the Council to confirm the Council's agreement to the MoU through the decision-making mechanisms of the WMCA.

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

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>The single settlement will devolve funding for Adult Skills to the WMCA which will support young people.</p>
	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>The single settlement will devolve funding for housing delivery to the WMCA.</p>
	<p>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</p> <p>At every Spending Review, WMCA will be allocated a single funding settlement for local transport.</p>

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The 'single settlement' was one of the most significant commitments in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) trailblazer deeper devolution deal announced at the 2023 Spring Budget. The trailblazer deal was ratified by WMCA Board on 13 October 2023 on the basis that there would be further decisions about particular elements of the deal, including the single settlement.





4.2 A draft of the MoU was considered and agreed in-principle by Mayoral and Portfolio Leaders on 3 November 2023. Now the final MoU has been published, the WMCA Board will be asked to agree the MoU at their meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### **What is the single settlement?**

4.3 At every Spending Review, WMCA will be allocated a single funding settlement for local transport, adult skills, housing and regeneration, local growth and place, and retrofitting buildings<sup>1</sup>.

4.4 The funding WMCA receives will cover the length of Spending Review periods and be calculated using allocation formulae. The quantum of single settlement funding WMCA will receive will be confirmed as part of the Spending Review. WMCA will retain the right to refuse the single settlement.

4.5 WMCA expect to receive the first single settlement at the beginning of the first financial year after the next Spending Review – likely to be 1 April 2025, but this is subject to HMG confirmation.

4.6 This consolidated funding will replace the individual, short-term and restrictive grants the region currently receives from HMG relating to the functions of the single settlement<sup>2</sup>, ending competitive, time- and capacity-intensive bidding where relevant. Where an individual fund is within scope of the single settlement, WMCA and its constituent local authorities will not need to – nor be able to – bid to government for an additional share beyond what we will be directly allocated as part of the Spending Review process. WMCA and LAs will continue to be able to bid into HMG for competitive funds where they are outside of the scope of the functions of the single settlement.

4.7 As set out in the MoU, the single settlement will not include any funding lines that fall within the scope of the local government finance settlement, or which directly underpin local authority statutory and/or core responsibilities. The above represents only a summary of some of the main features of the MoU. The full MoU is appended at Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding for retrofitting buildings is included on the basis of a pilot arrangement. The scope of retrofit is the subject of on-going negotiations with HMG.

<sup>2</sup> See paragraphs 4 – 11 inclusive of [the single settlement MoU](#) for a full description of the functions the single settlement will cover.



4.8 It should be noted that the Council has secured significant funding from Central Government since March 2021 when £67.5m Towns Fund funding was announced. Including;

- £20m Capital Regeneration Funding (Tipton)
- £20m Levelling Up Round 2 Funding (Haden Hill Leisure Centre)
- £20m Levelling Up Partnership Funding (Wednesbury)
- £18m Levelling Up Round 3 Funding (Smethwick)
- £20m Long Term Plan Funding (subject to further approvals) (Smethwick)

4.9 As highlighted in above the single settlement will restrict Sandwell from bidding for funds from central government where these have been devolved to the WMCA through the single settlement.

### **What does the single settlement mean for the West Midlands?**

4.10 The single settlement represents a significant change to how the region will receive funding from HMG for the relevant functions. In particular, it will enable Local Authorities, including Sandwell, to develop place-based strategies, which will set out how the functions of the single settlement, and other sources of public and private investment, will come together in places to drive inclusive economic growth over the long-term. This will be additional to the funding that will continue to apply across the region as a whole.

4.11 The single settlement will provide the region with multi-year certainty over a consolidated funding allocation. This will enable a long-term, joined-up approach to funding delivery, which will, in turn, support the development and delivery of locally-led place-based strategies.

4.12 The WMCA will secure significant additional flexibilities over the funding received through the single settlement. WMCA consider that this will allow them alongside Local Authorities to deliver projects and programmes more closely aligned to local needs and opportunities.

4.13 The single settlement will empower local decision-making. WMCA Board will decide the region's place-based strategies and agree 'functional' strategies for adult skills, buildings' retrofit, housing and regeneration, local transport, local growth and place; and approve the individual projects, interventions and programmes that will receive funding. This represents a major power shift from Ministers in Westminster to local leaders in the West Midlands.



## **Did anything substantive change in the MoU between MPL and publication?**

- 4.14 A draft version of the MoU was agreed 'in principle' by Mayor and Portfolio Leaders (MPL) on 3 November 2023 and a final version published by HMG on 22 November 2023 at the Autumn Statement. No substantive policy changes to the MoU were made between the MPL decision and publication of the MoU.
- 4.15 The following two items of note arose between MPL and the MoU being published:
- No agreement was reached with HMG over the breadth of the retrofit / net zero function of the single settlement. Therefore, a decision on the final scope of the retrofit / net zero pillar of the single settlement was deferred until March 2024 to allow further negotiation to occur.
  - The Department for Transport (DfT) confirmed its position, which was tentative in the MoU draft at MPL, that prior DfT approval will be required for business cases of transport schemes estimated to cost above £200 million funded through the single settlement. This is still a significant increase on the point at which DfT call in business cases as part of the current City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

## **Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

- 4.16 The single settlement will cover the WMCA constituent authority area (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton). However, the MCA Board may decide, at its discretion, to use the single settlement in non-constituent local authority areas if it considers, based on evidence, that doing so would be beneficial to the MCA area.

## **Next steps**

- 4.17 The MoU establishes the basic principles of how the single settlement will operate. However, there will be several further decision points and a lot of work to undertake across the region to prepare for implementation.
- 4.18 The process of implementing the single settlement between now and 1 April 2025 – when WMCA expect to receive the first single settlement



allocation – will be a complex and significant undertaking for the WMCA and the local authorities.

4.19 Within the region, there will be detailed engagement between Local Authorities and the WMCA during the early part of 2024 to develop, agree and deliver the implementation strategy in the round.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 Not to enter into the MoU. This would be contrary to the spirit of the agreements already entered in to under the Deeper Devolution Deal. This option is therefore dismissed.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>At this point in time, the final funding allocation for WMCA’s single settlement is unknown. However, as set out in the MoU: “The [funding] formulae [that will be agreed between WMCA and HMG by March 2024] will seek to deliver the principle that the [we will be] no worse off in terms of quantum of funding received than [we] would have been had the single [settlement] not been in place.”</p> <p>Whilst on the basis of the above, the WMCA does not expect the quantum of funding allocated to the region to significantly increase or decrease, longer term funding certainty, increased flexibility and the direct awards of traditionally competitive funding will enable better strategic financial planning and delivery.</p> <p>Uncertainty over the eventual quantum of the single settlement should be set against the backdrop of existing arrangements: the region enjoys no certainty over the funding we will receive via competitive funding processes. Importantly, the WMCA reserves the right to refuse the single settlement as part of its future involvement in the Spending Review process should the region decide the arrangements for the settlement would be detrimental. If we decided to do so, we would be funded through the arrangements in</p>
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	<p>place for other areas (outside of WMCA and GMCA) who are not in receipt of a single settlement.</p> <p>Beyond the implications relating to the overall funding quantum of the single settlement, should WMCA fail to achieve the outcomes agreed with Government, either through delivery slippage, under performance or by investing in initiatives which do not make a positive contribution towards the agreed outcomes, the WMCA will be subject to a range of ‘interventions’ by HMG<sup>3</sup>.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>The proposed memorandum of understanding whilst not legally binding is otherwise intended to provide the the broad outlines of agreement between the WMCA (and its constituent authorities) and that of HM Government.</p> <p>Whilst HM Government may determine an alternative policy position which may result in the revision or cancellation of the memorandum in whole or part as a result, the assessment of the WMCA assessment is that the probability of this occurring at this stage is low.</p> <p>The single settlement itself does not confer any new legal obligations or duties on WMCA or its constituent local authorities. Existing specific duties, for example, the legal duties accompanying the devolution of the Adult Education Budget, will not be altered as a consequence of it being included within the single settlement, nor will general legal duties be altered, such as obligations on the managing of public money.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	None at this point.
<b>Equality:</b>	The implementation of the single settlement has the potential to yield several positive equalities and socio-economic implications. The Equity Impact Assessment and the Single Assurance Framework process require WMCA to give sufficient care and

<sup>3</sup> See ‘Table A.1 Matrix of Mitigation’ on pages 27 – 28 of the [MoU](#).





	attention to potential equalities impacts as part of the formulation of individual project business cases.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	None at this point.
<b>Social Value:</b>	None at this point.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No agreement was reached has been reached with HM Government over the breadth of the retrofit / net zero function of the single settlement. Therefore, a decision on the final scope of the retrofit / net zero pillar of the single settlement has been deferred until March 2024 to allow further negotiation to occur. The potential climate change mitigation impacts will be assessed through future reports.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	None.

## 7. Appendices

[Appendix 1 - Memorandum of Understanding for the Single Settlements for Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities](#)

## 8. Background Papers

[West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer deeper devolution deal](#)





HM Treasury

# Memorandum of Understanding for the Single Settlements with Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities

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Memorandum of  
Understanding for the Single  
Settlements with Greater  
Manchester and West  
Midlands Combined  
Authorities

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# Introduction

1. At Spring Budget 2023, the Government (HMG) announced the trailblazer devolution deals with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The deals set out HMG's commitment to implement single, departmental style settlements ('single settlements') for GMCA and WMCA ('the MCAs') at the next Spending Review (SR).
2. This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the principles under which the single settlements with the MCAs will be agreed and implemented at the next SR. It also outlines the process for agreeing and monitoring outcomes associated with the single settlements and the accountability arrangements. HMG and the MCAs will review this MoU before the end of every SR period to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
3. This MoU covers funding which flows from HMG to the MCAs via the single settlements.<sup>1</sup> It is not intended to apply to funding which flows from HMG to the MCAs via other mechanisms (e.g. Police and Crime Commissioner functions, waste functions or funds outside the scope of the single settlement) or locally-raised funds.

## Scope

4. As set out in the trailblazer devolution deals, the single settlements will include HMG funding falling under five thematic policy areas ('themes'). These are: local growth and place; local transport; housing and regeneration; adult skills; and buildings' retrofit<sup>2</sup> in the MCA areas. As per paragraphs 10-11, buildings' retrofit's inclusion is on a pilot basis for the first single settlements.
5. The MCAs have specific functional responsibilities in each of these themes. Where national HMG funds<sup>3</sup> are in scope of the MCAs' functional responsibilities, they will be included in the single

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<sup>1</sup>The single settlement is an agreement between government, the MCA and its constituent local authorities. However, the MCA Board may decide, at its discretion, to use the single settlement in non-constituent local authority areas if it considers, based on evidence, that doing so would be beneficial to the MCA area.

<sup>2</sup>This is specifically buildings' retrofit for decarbonisation matters covered by the pilot agreement to devolve retrofit funding set out at paragraphs 212-218 of the trailblazer deeper devolution deals with both MCAs.

<sup>3</sup>National funds address policy issues and/or opportunities that manifest, potentially to varying degrees, across the country. They do not cover issues and/or opportunities that are demonstrably confined to a limited number of places. As per paragraph 13, the list of funds included and excluded in the single settlement will be confirmed publicly as part of, and on the same day as, the Spending Review.

settlement.<sup>4</sup> The single settlements will not include any funding lines which fall within the scope of the local government finance settlement, or which directly underpin local authority statutory and/or core responsibilities. The process for determining whether specific funds should be included in the single settlements is set out below.

- a. HMG will use the definitions for functional responsibilities to identify whether a new funding line (whether it be announced at an SR, or between SRs) should be included in the single settlements. If the MCAs have concerns, these should be resolved through the Single Settlements Programme Board ('Programme Board') following the SR. HMG should provide for circumstances in which new funding lines may need to be added to the single settlements following this review.
  - b. HMG will confirm as part of the SR announcements the recommended quantum of the settlements as calculated via formulae linked to the functional responsibilities below. For funding announcements made outside of an SR period, HMG will notify the MCAs in a timely manner as to the consequences for the single settlements.
  - c. Should the MCAs judge this amount and/or the approach taken to conflict with the principles set out in this MoU, they will use the escalation mechanisms detailed at paragraphs 59-64.
  - d. Ultimately, the MCAs reserve the right to reject the settlement in its entirety. In this eventuality, the MCAs would revert to the funding mechanisms and accountability arrangements in place for each individual funding programme.
6. The MCAs' functional responsibilities are outlined below.

## Local Growth and Place

- a. Activity that promotes place-based economic development, improves productivity, and aims to reduce inter-and-intra-regional spatial economic disparities.
- b. Coordination and delivery of local programmes to drive business productivity whilst ensuring integration between local and national business support activity, enabling businesses to access support.<sup>5</sup>
- c. Regeneration, place-making, and improvements to local infrastructure.
- d. Activities that promote pride in place, including but not limited to measures to improve social cohesion, the

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<sup>4</sup> If an HMG department changes its name, all the single settlement provisions that applied to the previous department will be transferred to the new department/s.

<sup>5</sup> As per the trailblazer deeper devolution deals, paragraph 180.

improvement of public facilities and the public realm, for instance on high streets.

## Local Transport

- a. Oversight and delivery of the area's transport strategy. This includes developing local transport plans and considering how transport will support wider objectives such as employment, housing and net zero.
- b. Working with their Local Highway Authorities on delivery of local transport capital projects, including but not limited to highways maintenance and small-scale renewals as well as transformational local projects. This excludes strategic national transport infrastructure.
- c. Managing local public transport services, including but not limited to the local bus network, mass transit, local rail integration, integrated multimodal fares, network information and branding, promoting safety and tackling anti-social behaviour.
- d. Delivery of the local active travel strategy and schemes.
- e. Delivery of local transport decarbonisation schemes, such as the local electric vehicle infrastructure funding programmes.
- f. Strategic oversight of the local road network and promotion of road safety.
- g. Undertaking scalable, feasible, and tangible transport innovation, including trialling new transport-related products and processes, improving existing services via technological upgrades, and implementing regulatory changes or best practice.

## Adult Skills

- a. All non-apprenticeship adult skills funding and functions<sup>6</sup>, including but not limited to:
  - i. Ensuring that residents aged 19 and over in their area, who are eligible for funding, have access to appropriate education and training
  - ii. Encouraging and providing adults with the skills and learning they need to equip them to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning
  - iii. Provision of statutory entitlements to provide free courses for adults<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Subject to consideration of exceptional instances, as per paragraph 133 of the trailblazer deeper devolution deals, and paragraph 66 of this MoU.

<sup>7</sup> As per The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)); The West Midlands Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2018 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)); and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Adult Skills (Specified Qualifications) Regulations 2010.

## Housing and regeneration

- a. Regeneration via enabling and improving local housing supply.
- b. Delivery of capital investments to unlock additional housing and regeneration.
- c. Remediation and development of brownfield sites.

## Pilot of buildings retrofit

- a. The MCAs' functional responsibilities will be finalised by spring 2024, and will likely include at a minimum:
  - i. Retrofitting social housing and other residential buildings containing households at risk of fuel poverty in the local area
  - ii. Decarbonising public sector buildings managed by the MCAs and their constituent authorities through the installation of low carbon heat and energy efficiency measures
7. In addition to the scope of the single settlement, which is defined by the functional responsibilities set out above, in the trailblazer devolution deals HMG made commitments to consider whether additional funding streams may be included in future iterations of the single settlement, with reference to the topics listed below:
  - a. funding relating to prevention<sup>8</sup> early intervention and/or multiple – social, economic and health – disadvantages<sup>9</sup>
  - b. future affordable homes provision<sup>10</sup>
  - c. funding for business support programmes<sup>11</sup>
8. HMG and the MCAs will discuss whether to include these additional funding lines, alongside others relating to specific commitments in the trailblazer deals, reflecting the need to reach an agreement on each of the areas above at different points in time.
9. In GMCA's trailblazer deeper devolution deal, HMG committed to engaging GMCA and its constituent authorities about whether GMCA's allocation of future funding streams relating to prevention, early intervention and/or multiple – social, economic and health – disadvantages could be included in the single settlement. To enable this, this MoU confirms that GMCA will be able to use the provisions at paragraph 16 to present the case for the inclusion of any funding stream it deems in scope of this commitment, to the Programme Board, where HMG will provide a response.

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<sup>8</sup> As per the West Midlands MCA trailblazer deeper devolution deals, paragraph 245.

<sup>9</sup> As per the Greater Manchester MCA trailblazer deeper devolution deal, paragraphs 243-244.

<sup>10</sup> As per the trailblazer deeper devolution deals, paragraphs 108-110.

<sup>11</sup> As per the trailblazer deeper devolution deals, paragraph 180.

## Buildings' retrofit pilot

10. The inclusion of buildings' retrofit is a pilot for the first single settlement. Its inclusion does not represent a commitment to permanent inclusion of buildings' retrofit in the single settlements. Whether or not buildings' retrofit continues to be included will be contingent on an assessment of the impact of the pilot. For the duration of the pilot, the buildings' retrofit functional responsibilities will form part of the single settlement and will be subject to the processes outlined in this MoU. The expected duration of the buildings' retrofit pilot is 2025/26 to 2027/28. As a pilot, it may be necessary to have additional conditions on delivery and reporting which will be set out in the section 31 grant, and which will be legally binding.
11. By Spring 2024, we will agree further details on monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the retrofit pilot, as part of the wider work on the outcomes framework. The data and reporting requirements for annual monitoring reports should support the principle of the pilot, gathering sufficient data to effectively compare the pilot's performance with HMG's equivalent schemes.

## Determining the quantum at Spending Reviews

12. The trailblazer deals set out that the single settlements represent a change to the wiring and flexibility of funding from central government rather than necessarily to the quantum that the MCAs would have received in the absence of single settlements at a SR. The single settlements' quantum will be determined by a formulaic process and the formulae will take this principle into account. The formulae will provide the MCAs with a share of funds in the single settlement and seek to deliver the principle that they are not worse off than had single settlements not been in place. HMG and the MCAs will agree an annex to this MoU setting out the formulae by Spring 2024. The final single settlements' quantum can only be set at the SR, when the funds in scope are confirmed.
13. Alongside agreement of departments' funding lines through the SR process, there will be a joint process between relevant departments and HMT to identify the nation-wide departmental funds in scope for the single settlement, based on the agreed functional responsibilities of the MCAs. In agreement with the relevant government departments for each theme, HMT will then apply the relevant formula(e) to determine the quantum of funding in each relevant department's budget that is to be included in the single settlements, and this will be included in settlement letters to departments. This will include an assessment of the quantum that



- will become part of the MCAs' single settlements from that department. HMG will set out publicly, as part of the announcement of the SR, details of how the settlement has been calculated, which funds the MCAs will and will not be able to access during the SR period, the total quantum in each theme, the funding profile over financial years, and the resource (RDEL) and capital (CDEL) split.
14. Following the process to determine the single settlements' quantum, at the start of each financial year the relevant departments (i.e. the departments that own the funding lines being transferred to the single settlements and devolved) will carry out a budget cover transfer (BCT) to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) for the single settlements quantum that has been captured in their budgets, as agreed through the SR. This BCT would be authorised via the Main Estimates process and would mean that the single settlement funding would flow through DLUHC's Main Estimate.
  15. DLUHC will then formally allocate the aggregated single settlements to WMCA and GMCA through a Section 31 grant. Where necessary, this grant will come with conditions related to specific controls (see spending controls paragraphs 30-37).
  16. Where there are new relevant funds that are made available during the SR period, HMT, DLUHC and the relevant government department will determine whether new funds are in scope of the single settlements based on the functional responsibilities set out in this MoU, at paragraph 6. This includes new national budgets or programmes announced during the SR period, as well as any increases to competitive pots that the MCAs have been excluded from. HMG will then apply the relevant formulae to these funds to determine the MCAs' allocative share, where appropriate. The MCAs can proactively identify programmes they believe to be within scope of the single settlements for discussion at the Programme Board, set out in paragraph 49.
  17. The MCAs and their constituent local authorities will not be permitted to bid into competitive programmes for which the MCAs have already received an allocation through the single settlements. As set out in the trailblazer deals, the MCAs and their constituent local authorities will retain the right to bid into new competitive programmes which are not included in the defined list of funds the MCAs will not be able to access during the SR period.
  18. The MCAs reserve the right to refuse the single settlements, in which case the MCAs would be funded through arrangements in place for other areas who are not in receipt of the single settlements.

# Determining the formulae

19. The quantum for the MCAs' single settlements will be set using formulae applied to relevant departmental budgets. The formulae will be used to determine the MCAs' allocative share of relevant funds.
20. Whilst the detail of the formulae will follow in an updated annex, there are some core principles that will underpin the approach, which are outlined below.
  - a. The formulae will be based on objective criteria to ensure the MCAs receive their share of funding to enable them to deliver on their functional responsibilities and meet the outcomes set out in the outcomes framework.
  - b. The formulae will seek to deliver the principle that the MCAs are no worse off in terms of quantum of funding received than they would have been had the single settlements not been in place.
  - c. The formulae and any changes to the formulae will be public.
  - d. HMT will agree the formulae and any subsequent revisions with relevant departments (including, but not limited to, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ); the Department for Transport (DfT); the Department for Education (DfE); and DLUHC) and the MCAs to ensure there is an agreed and consistent approach.
  - e. For non-competitive funding programmes, where there is an existing formula or similar allocative process to determine the geographic distribution of funds associated with one or more functional responsibilities, this formula or process will be used.
  - f. The formulae will be linked to individual functional responsibilities, or groups thereof, or themes. The highest possible level of aggregation will be used, within the constraints of HMG and local policy objectives in different policy areas.
21. HMG and the MCAs agree that the aim is to streamline and simplify the formulae over time and will look at this for the next SR. HMG and the MCAs will agree an annex to this MoU setting out the detailed approach to the formulae by Spring 2024.
22. The formulae will be reviewed as part of the holistic review of the MoU set out in paragraph 2. Where appropriate, HMG and the MCAs will look to ensure that the formulae reflect national policy priorities, and the specific needs of GMCA and WMCA.

# Flexibility

## Moving funding within each of the five themes

23. The MCAs will have full flexibility within the themes of the single settlements to design and implement policy to meet mutually agreed outcomes. HMG will transfer the annual amount agreed for the single settlements at the SR each year as part of a section 31 grant, as per paragraph 15. The MCAs will be able to allocate funding within each theme at their own discretion and will be empowered to use funding under these devolved functions to invest in any lawful way associated with achievement of the outcomes agreed with HMG. This includes the necessary and proportionate resourcing of regional and local capacity, as per the flexibilities set out in paragraph 27.
24. The MCAs will need to make a formal notification in writing to HMG to reallocate funding in line with their agreed limits for each flexibility set out below.

## Moving funding between the five themes

25. The MCAs will be able to move funding between themes. The quantum they will be able to move will be capped at 10% of the annual quantum for the theme they are moving the money out of, apart from Local Growth and Place where there is no cap on moving funding into other themes. This flexibility will allow the MCAs to spend these funds to support the delivery of the single settlements outcomes at their discretion. As per paragraph 28, HMG reserves the right to reduce the level of flexibility if there is underperformance against the outcomes agreed in the outcomes framework and will provide guidance on this following further work with the MCAs. The MCAs will be responsible for ensuring that they do not exceed the 10% cap. This flexibility will allow the MCAs to use their local expertise to best meet their outcomes.

## Moving funding between years

26. The MCAs will have some flexibility to move funding between years. HMG and the MCAs will look to define this position on flexibility based on the principle that, at minimum, the MCAs have no less flexibility than they have at the time of publication of this MoU for specific functional responsibilities and, where possible, have further flexibility to move funding between years across the single settlements' themes. HMG and the MCAs will agree a final position by Spring 2024, for inclusion in the additional spending controls annex.

## Moving funding between RDEL and CDEL and vice versa

27. The MCAs will be able to move up to 10% of CDEL funding within each theme to RDEL, and 100% of RDEL funding within each theme to CDEL. This will work as follows:
- a. The MCAs will receive funding for each theme on an annual basis as set out in paragraph 23
  - b. The split of RDEL and CDEL per theme will be agreed at the SR (and updated if and when additional funds in scope of the single settlements are announced) and the MCAs will receive their annual allocations on this basis
  - c. As per paragraph 25, MCAs will be able to move money between themes in-year. Where money is moved in this manner, it will retain its original classification (either as CDEL or RDEL)
  - d. The MCAs will then be able to move funds between CDEL and RDEL within themes. Specifically, the MCAs will be permitted to move funds from CDEL to RDEL, with the total moved capped at 10% of the theme's quantum of CDEL. The 10% cap will be applied to the theme's quantum after accounting for funding flexed to or from other areas
  - e. For example, having moved 5% of transport CDEL to skills CDEL, the MCAs could then move 10% of the (now higher) skills CDEL budget to skills RDEL, but not to another theme. The MCAs could move 100% of skills RDEL to skills CDEL
  - f. To manage the impact on the public accounts, HMG will profile the flexible amount of funding as RDEL
28. Whilst the MCAs will be able to use the flexibility between funding themes at their discretion, the MCAs should manage this through a systematic centralised process to ensure that the terms in this MoU are being adhered to. The use of flexibility should be reported on as part of wider reporting of outcomes as per paragraphs 48-53 and included in reporting on the outcomes framework and accountability mechanisms.
29. The percentage of flexibility between themes will be reviewed again prior to the next-but-one SR, with a view to increasing flexibility in line with evidence of successful delivery, as part of the wider review of the MoU referenced in paragraph 2.

## Spending control

30. The single settlements include a single, systematised approach to spending controls. This will provide an appropriate amount of flexibility for the MCAs to plan and sequence programmes funded through the single settlements while ensuring that effective risk mitigation tools are available in case of delivery or financial failure. HMG and the MCAs will agree an annex to this MoU setting out the spending controls that will be applied to the single settlements by

Spring 2024. This will include but is not limited to our approach to savings exercises and contingent liabilities. Paragraph 32 below sets out where we have agreed an approach already on future financial commitments and business cases, which will be reflected in the section 31 grant agreements.

31. The single spending controls framework must be consistent with provisions from the following, pre-existing, spending and accountability frameworks:
  - a. The English Devolution Accountability Framework, which requires MCAs to ensure they are delivering value for money
  - b. Managing Public Money (MPM), which requires departments (in particular, DESNZ, DfE, DfT) to exercise their thematic Accounting Officer (AO) duty as per chapter 7 of MPM through ensuring they are confident that the accountability, monitoring, and evaluation system set up for the single settlements is sufficiently robust. Further detail on DLUHC's role as systems AO is set out in paragraph 73
32. To meet these requirements, the single settlements will be subject to some spending controls, including:
  - a. The MCAs will notify HMG before making financial commitments funded by the single settlements beyond the SR period and inform HMG of the nature of the commitment
  - b. The MCAs will not be required to submit formal business cases to HMG for projects that are funded as part of the single settlement, nor will delegated expenditure limits apply to funding through the single settlement, except those set out in paragraph 34
  - c. The MCAs will ensure that robust and appropriate systems are in place to ensure the value for money of all single settlement expenditure. The outcomes framework and associated accountability and controls arrangements will be the mechanism through which HMG retains oversight of the single settlement
33. HMG may introduce additional spending controls in the event of delivery issues. See paragraphs 48-58 for more detail on the processes and structures by which these controls would be enacted.
34. HMG and the MCAs may deliver very large transport investment programmes through the single settlement structure. These will require additional oversight, as follows:
  - a. Any scheme with a capital value of under £50m over its lifetime, which does not otherwise meet the criteria in (b) or (c), will not be subject to any further spending controls
  - b. For any scheme with a capital value of more than £50m over its lifetime and which is not captured by the criteria in (c), the MCA will publish the business case which underpinned the decision to invest to support local transparency and accountability.
  - c. Where schemes cost over £200m over the life of the scheme or require integration into the national transport network

because otherwise they risk causing significant disruption, the scheme can only proceed with the agreement of the Department for Transport through its representative on the Programme Board. This will normally be through agreement of a business case

35. Schemes which are nationally significant infrastructure projects because they cross multiple boundaries beyond those of the constituent and non-constituent authorities of the MCA, or cost over £1 billion, will by default be out of scope of the single settlement.<sup>12</sup> There may nonetheless be consideration on a case-by-case basis as to whether to deliver such schemes through the single settlement framework.
36. To prepare for and provide assurance of readiness for the settlement, DLUHC will request external confirmation of readiness via a 'readiness check'. The terms of the check will be agreed between DLUHC, the MCAs, and the independent, external appointee. HMG will judge whether the MCAs have acted sufficiently upon any requirements set out for improvement.
37. The MCAs will be responsible for updating their Single Pot Assurance Framework, and then enacting both this framework and other systems of internal control.

## Agreeing outcomes and targets

38. The MCAs will be held to account for the outcomes associated with the functional responsibilities set out in paragraph 6. The outcome targets that GMCA and WMCA agree with HMG may be different to reflect local priorities.
39. To facilitate this, HMG and the MCAs will agree an outcomes framework at the SR. HMG will work with the MCAs to agree the provisional process for setting the outcomes framework by Spring 2024. In preparation for the first single settlement, HMG and the MCAs will now commence preparatory work to consider potential outcomes and indicators, with the objective of ensuring that the outcomes framework can be agreed quickly after the next SR. This work will include consideration of what the outcomes and indicators would have been had the single settlements been in place during the current SR period.
40. The primary objective of the outcomes framework is to set outcome-based targets for local and central government scrutiny, to:
  - a. provide a single, streamlined approach to accountability and reporting with HMG
  - b. align local priorities and national priorities

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<sup>12</sup>As per the trailblazer deeper devolution deals, paragraph 48.



- c. monitor activity which can be genuinely influenced within the single settlements' themes whilst moving away from existing programme and project specific monitoring of inputs and outputs that HMG track
  - d. facilitate local flexibility within themes and across themes in moving away from inputs and outputs
  - e. provide sufficient evidence to inform delivery performance within the SR period
41. HMG and the MCAs will agree an outcomes framework that balances local and national priorities.<sup>13</sup> To agree the corresponding outcomes and targets, HMG and the MCAs will work together to set out indicators based on the following suitability criteria:
- a. The outcomes and corresponding metrics will, wherever possible, be:
    - i. directly linked to the functional responsibilities of the MCAs (set out in the earlier section, 'Scope of the single settlement')
    - ii. reflective of national outcomes held by the relevant HMG department and of local priorities identified by the MCAs
    - iii. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound
    - iv. spatially relevant
    - v. based on existing data where possible<sup>14</sup>
  - b. The targets, wherever possible, will be:
    - i. set against an existing baseline
    - ii. achievable and measurable in the SR time period
    - iii. set against quantum in the quarter following the SR
    - iv. where reflecting national outcomes, proportional to the national outcome held by the relevant HMG department
42. As the outcomes framework will set outcomes-based targets for the MCAs to deliver under the single settlements and the realisation of outcomes goals can be difficult to assess over the shorter term, where necessary, the single settlement's outcome targets may be supplemented by target output indicators to provide HMG assurance of MCA delivery during the SR period. However, to enable the MCAs to design strategic policy interventions over multiple years, and realise the policy delivery benefits of the single settlement's increased flexibility, the target output indicators will be:
- a. developed and agreed with the above principles in mind
  - b. proportionate

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<sup>13</sup> It may be necessary in the first iteration of the single settlement to collect additional data for the retrofit pilot to meet legal requirements. This could include criteria to be applied, limited, specific outputs, quality standards to be met and provision of information.

<sup>14</sup> The breadth of data that will be available to the MCA is contingent on HMG and the MCA agreeing the Data Partnership as set out in the trailblazer deeper devolution deals.

- c. indicative of progress toward (an) outcome(s)
  - d. the minimum needed to assure HMG of the MCAs' delivery against a specific target outcome or specific target outcomes
43. Further details of how target output indicators could be used to assess the MCAs' delivery against the target outcomes will be agreed in Spring 2024.
44. The outcomes will be confirmed at the SR alongside the quantum. HMG will work with the MCAs to agree the baseline and target following the SR. The MCAs will reconcile their delivery plans against the quantum confirmed at the SR and the outcome targets confirmed thereafter, outlining how they will deliver the targets over the SR period.
45. Some funds in scope of the single settlements have minimum statutory requirements attached to them, such as the Adult Education Budget. HMG will set out expectations for use of this funding as part of agreeing the final quantum and through the outcomes framework. This will not constitute a formal ringfence within each theme and will be set out as part of the section 31 grant agreement. The status of the funding for the retrofit pilot will be set out in a supplementary annex.
46. Where a new funding line is devolved to the MCAs through the single settlements during the SR period, or a quantum is changed, the MCAs and HMG will agree any necessary changes to the outcomes framework and outcomes targets in line with the principles above.
47. There may be exceptional circumstances when it might be appropriate to renegotiate the single settlements' outcome targets, for example where unavoidable and significant external shocks (such as pandemics or excessive inflation) will impact the MCA's ability to deliver. It is anticipated that these circumstances arising would be very unusual, and HMG is under no obligation to change the targets. If the MCAs wish to renegotiate targets, they should bring proposals to the Programme Board for consideration. HMG and the MCAs expect the outcomes framework will be subject to iteration, evolution, and simplification as the settlements progress.
48. HMG will work with the MCAs to explore how the outcomes framework will align with the Office for Local Government's (Oflog) processes, including which site the outcomes framework is hosted on and who is responsible for the publication of data.

# Governance arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

49. The MCAs are responsible for ensuring that delivery via the single settlements is on track and that plans remain ambitious and provide value for money as set out in the English Devolution Accountability Framework.
50. MCAs' delivery of the agreed outcomes will be overseen by a Programme Board that will be chaired by DLUHC senior officers and attended by the MCAs, HMT senior officials, and senior officials from other government departments (OGDs) that have devolved funding in the single settlement. The Programme Board will act as the default point of contact for the MCAs on all delivery questions, concerns, and conversations, with other bilateral conversations with OGDs about delivery of the single settlements taking place only under exceptional circumstances, or as part of streamlined working level conversations with DLUHC. HMG will agree a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Programme Board with the MCAs and publish this as an annex to this MoU before the start of the next SR period.
51. The MCAs will send six-monthly monitoring reports to the Programme Board, including:
  - a. RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating that provides an assessment of progress towards achieving the targets by the end of the SR
  - b. spend profile, including spend to date against outputs/outcomes
  - c. forecast underspends at the end of the financial year (capital and revenues totals), for information purposes only
  - d. risk management, if necessary
  - e. a short narrative update highlighting any key changes (including any quantum moved between themes), progress and highlights
52. The MCAs and HMG will agree a structure for how these reports will work as part of the ToR. However, the MCAs and HMG agree that these reports will be designed based on the following principles:
  - a. monitoring reports should help the MCAs and HMG better understand how the outcomes could be delivered more effectively
  - b. delivery assessment should be balanced and holistic
  - c. the data and reporting requirements for annual monitoring reports will be proportionate, reflecting the minimum needed to provide HMG with assurance of the MCAs' performance against the outcomes

53. Where a target is rated amber or red, the MCAs will provide further quantitative and qualitative data to explain the rating and set out the 'path to green'. Reports must be signed off by the MCA Chief Finance Officer. To support with mitigating any delivery issues, HMG will employ a matrix of mitigations, set out in Annex A. This matrix will be reviewed following agreement of the outcomes framework to ensure it remains proportionate and fit for purpose. This matrix will be considered by the Programme Board and outlines the options for mitigating different levels of delivery issues. If the Programme Board considers that the 'path to green' set out in monitoring reports is inadequate, they may consider appropriate mitigations or interventions, drawing on the matrix in Annex A. Mitigations in relation to specific themes will be signed off by the thematic lead and DLUHC AO, and coordinated via the Programme Board. HMG will then give notice via a published letter to the MCA that they will intervene, setting out the measures being employed and why. The MCA will then be given a period to submit a formal response on proposed mitigations. If this response is deemed unsatisfactory by HMG, the Programme Board will be empowered to set up task and finish groups to oversee interventions and progress.
54. Conversely, if the MCAs are overperforming on their outcomes targets, HMG will not introduce additional targets for the remaining funding or seek to claw it back.
55. Government will work with the MCAs to develop a robust approach to evaluating the impact of the single settlements, in co-ordination with the development of evaluation processes for the wider trailblazer deals and to enable the comparison of WMCA's and GMCA's delivery under the single settlements against the delivery of national schemes in other areas of the country that have not been devolved.
56. The evaluation will measure whether the single settlements, as part of the trailblazer deal, have achieved their aims, and how their impact compares to areas without a single settlement.
57. The government will continue to work closely with the MCAs on the direction of the evaluation. This will include aligning with or building upon evaluation processes that the MCAs have in place or are developing.
58. Where possible, the government will seek to use publicly or centrally available data that is provided in a sufficiently timely manner to meaningfully report against during the SR period, to avoid placing additional or unnecessary burdens on the MCAs. Where such data is not available, the Data Partnership agreed through the trailblazer devolution deals will be used to explore options for improving access to datasets.

# Risk management and dispute resolution

59. If an MCA is not making progress towards the realisation of an outcome, evidence will be discussed at the Programme Board, and following this, an agreed matrix of mitigation, assessment and escalation will be followed based on the targets set out at the SR (Annex A). Changes to the section 31 grant funding agreement may occur if HMG judges there is a significant decline in delivery of outcomes from the MCAs. Similarly, the grant funding agreement may change if there are changes to departmental funding lines, or other departmental changes in policy or legislation (e.g., on statutory entitlements) that impact the single settlement.
60. The Programme Board will also discuss disputes or concerns regarding propriety in relation to the single settlements. As systems AO, DLUHC will have clear responsibilities in such cases to follow the standards set out in the Local Government Accountability Framework (LGAF) and the English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF) and will follow the matrix of mitigations and interventions where needed.
61. In the first instance, the MCAs and HMG should seek to resolve any disputes between officers and officials, coordinated by DLUHC at a working level. If this is not possible, disputes will be formally discussed and agreed at the Programme Board. Where this appears likely to happen, the Programme Board secretariat should be consulted at an early stage to prepare papers for the meeting.
62. When the secretariat is formally notified of a disagreement, and the next scheduled meeting is longer than one month from referral, the Programme Board secretariat will organise a meeting within two weeks.
63. Through this process, the Programme Board will seek agreement on the facts, provide an opportunity for the parties to set out their positions and facilitate discussion of shared interests, options for resolving the disagreement and criteria for an agreed outcome.
64. Should the disagreement continue past consideration at the Programme Board, the Board Secretariat will organise political engagement between HMG and the MCAs.
65. If the dispute is not resolvable through this engagement, the MCAs should officially communicate their disagreement through a published letter to the DLUHC Secretary of State. The Secretary of State must then respond through a published letter to the Chair of the Combined Authority (the Mayor) and the Levelling Up Select Committee, outlining the reasons for the decision.

# HMG direction under exceptional circumstances

66. In exceptional circumstances, for example during national emergencies or where MCAs' activities significantly undermine national government's ability to deliver its priorities in areas outside of the MCAs' functional responsibilities, HMG may direct the MCAs to use, or not use, funding from within the single settlements in a specific way.<sup>15</sup>
67. The circumstances in which such a direction may be used are:
- a. where the MCAs' approach to delivery of the single settlements, either in whole or in part, is demonstrably undermining national government's ability to deliver its priorities in areas outside of the MCAs' functional responsibilities
  - b. where all mechanisms for discussion and dispute resolution set out in this document have been exhausted
68. Any direction must be published as a letter to the Chair of the Combined Authority (the Mayor) and the Levelling Up Select Committee. The MCAs will be given a period to submit a formal response with proposed mitigations and interventions.
69. If HMG deem this response to be unsatisfactory, HMG will employ the matrix of mitigation, set out in Annex A.

## Accountability arrangements

70. The single settlements will be supported by the establishment of a streamlined, overarching, single assurance framework coordinated by DLUHC rather than multiple frameworks administered by different departments. This will build on, and will be incorporated into future editions of, the EDAF.

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<sup>15</sup>This provision is intended to mirror Section 143 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (legislation.gov.uk), regarding transport functional responsibilities, and the adult skills condition set out in the trailblazer deeper devolution deals as follows: 'There will be specific instances when the national government needs to direct the design of adult skills provision or allocation of adult skills funding - as such, the Secretary of State for Education will retain the ability to do so in the next Spending Review period and beyond. However, this will be the exception rather than the rule, where the scale or urgency are such that a national response is judged required to deliver the required outcomes or where there are national skills priorities that the government believes are not being met sufficiently by the skills system.'



71. The arrangements outlined in this MoU will supersede the existing arrangements for the devolved funding covered by the single settlement, except in the specific case of the first round of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS1) which will continue past the first settlement, until 2027; the existing CRSTS1 arrangements will be superseded by this MoU at the point where the associated funding lines come to an end.
72. As per paragraphs 38-48, the MCAs will be held to account for delivery under the single settlements through the outcomes framework agreed with all relevant departments, HMT, and the MCAs.
73. As the single settlements include devolved funding from departments across HMG, there will be three core roles to administer the single settlement: the systems Accounting Officer (the DLUHC AO), the MCA CEO, and the thematic leads (AOs from contributing departments).

### The role of DLUHC Permanent Secretary, as “systems” AO

74. To provide a single point of contact, DLUHC’s AO will act as the ‘systems’ AO for the single settlement. DLUHC’s AO will be responsible for ensuring institutional propriety, upholding governance structures, approving a local assurance framework, and overseeing the approach to securing value for money. DLUHC’s AO will assume responsibility for the core accountability process to Parliament, including setting out the spending controls listed in paragraphs 32-33.
75. DLUHC will also sign off on the outcomes, any target / output indicators and mitigations for the local growth and place, and housing and regeneration functions.

### The role of the MCA Chief Executive

76. Within the MCAs, core accountability processes will be carried out by the Chief Executive, who will be responsible for agreeing outcomes with HMG, local outcome delivery and value for money, as well as upkeep of their local assurance framework, internal processes, and capability resourcing.

### The role of DfE, DESNZ and DfT Permanent Secretaries, as “thematic” leads

77. Other government departments (OGDs) who have functions covered by the single settlements will sign off on the outcomes and targets which are relevant to their functions and will receive monitoring and evaluation information on their function via the Programme Board. OGD leads will sign off mitigations in their function, as per the matrix of mitigation set out in Annex A. This will be managed via the Programme Board and will require coordination with DLUHC AO as the ‘systems’ AO. In some

exceptional circumstances, an OGD would lead a specific action working directly with the MCAs.

## Parliamentary and select committee scrutiny

78. Although the MCAs should consider their primary accountability to be to their local residents, HMG has a responsibility to ensure that devolved funding supports the delivery of the outcomes framework and that the MCAs have the structures in place to deliver value for money as set out in paragraph 73. Therefore, the single settlements will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny as follows:
- a. DLUHC AO will be responsible to Parliament for reporting on the delivery of the single settlements. Where necessary, the Public Accounts Committee will scrutinise DLUHC's AO for upholding the governance structures and securing value for money. HMG will recommend that the relevant select committee invites the MCAs' Chief Executives for evidence on local delivery.
  - b. DLUHC will recommend that Ministers and mayors as appropriate both be invited to select committees, when relevant, with an increased focus on the role of local leaders in delivering the single settlements.

## Local scrutiny

79. As set out in the trailblazer deeper devolution deal, the MCAs have committed to greater scrutiny including by residents through Mayor's Question Time, by constituent councils when requested and by local MPs at regular broadcast sessions.
80. The MCAs have also committed to raising the profile and resources available to the Overview and Scrutiny committee and implementing the Scrutiny Protocol (as per the EDAF).
81. The Mayor and relevant other Members or Portfolio Holders of the Combined Authority should be prepared to speak to the single settlements at both the Mayor's Question Time and the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

## Local risk management and governance assurance

82. The MCAs are expected to put in place the necessary governance and assurance arrangements and to ensure that all legal and other statutory obligations and consents will be adhered to, which may include, but is not limited to, state aid and subsidy control, equalities duties, procurement, health and safety and fraud.
83. To evidence readiness for the single settlement, the MCAs will be subject to a readiness check. HMG will work with the MCAs to agree the process and criteria for the check. Any concerns highlighted in this process will need to be addressed before the full settlement flexibility is granted, as per the matrix of mitigations in Annex A.
84. Ownership of risk will be transferred to the MCAs. The MCAs will be responsible for mitigation of any risks that arise throughout the delivery of the single settlements.

85. The MCAs will complete their own Fraud Risk Assessment to ensure the safe administration of grants and that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the risk of both fraud and payment error.
86. The MCAs will also be responsible for setting and managing any Novel, Contentious or Repercussive (NCR) spend and business cases, via existing MCA mechanisms (such as WMCA/GMCA's Single Assurance Framework). As per paragraph 34, there may be specific situations where additional processes are required regarding business cases.
87. The MCAs will also be responsible for overseeing the development and maintenance of the MCAs' local assurance framework, governance, and financial monitoring report, as well as drafting and delivery of the local outcome delivery plan, and reporting on progress via submissions to the Programme Board.

### Audit arrangements

88. The single settlements will be subject to formal external audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General to the extent required as part of their audit of DLUHC and other departments. Information access requirements to facilitate this will be set out as part of any grant agreement. MCA expenditure will remain subject to their own existing external audit requirements.
89. The Comptroller and Auditor General will also have the right, should they so choose, to conduct Value for Money examinations on the single settlements, and the MCAs will be expected to cooperate and provide information necessary to DLUHC or the National Audit Office (NAO) to facilitate this.
90. The MCAs will be responsible for ensuring that their own internal audit functions are sufficient to manage risks to public money.
91. Further details on audit arrangements will be provided alongside the outcomes framework.

## Local context on implementation

92. WMCA will use the opportunity presented by the single settlement to develop and deliver transformational place-based strategies. The strategies will serve as strategic, long-term frameworks to guide the prioritisation of single settlement funding, and other policy levers and resources, below the regional level while delivering the outcomes framework agreed with HMG. Place-based strategies will be coordinated by WMCA, agreed collectively by the WMCA Board and developed by local authorities.
93. WMCA will engage and consult across the region to make sure its governance structures and processes reflect the opportunity presented by the single settlement to further empower local leaders and drive collective decision-making for the benefit of the region.

94. Since its inception GMCA has used devolved powers and flexibilities to drive growth and deliver key improvements to the economy, services, and infrastructure. The ten constituent local authorities of Greater Manchester have worked together voluntarily for many years on issues that affect everyone in the region, like transport, regeneration, and attracting investment. GMCA also works in partnership with other public services, businesses, local communities, and the voluntary sector to address issues that affect the whole city-region.
95. GMCA's strategic ambition is set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS), underpinned by a range of supporting strategies on areas such as the economy/innovation, work/skills, spatial development and growth locations, housing, transport, and the environment. GMS is a medium-term strategy which sets out clear outcomes/commitments and a route to deliver the vision of a greener, fairer, and more prosperous Greater Manchester by 2031. The single settlement and the wider trailblazer deal will enable GMCA to deliver in line with the GMS, try innovative new policy approaches, drive forward the local economy, and to be better held to account for delivery.

## Next steps

96. There are several areas throughout this MoU where the government and the MCAs have committed to work together to confirm further details by spring 2024. These details will be agreed and published as annexes to this. This will include annexes outlining:
- a. the formulae to determine the MCAs' allocative share of funding
  - b. the provisional process for setting the outcomes framework, including further detail on the retrofit pilot as per paragraphs 10-11
  - c. further detail on the spending controls HMG will employ for the single settlement

### A.1.1 Annex A: Matrix of mitigation, assessment, and escalation

Where delivery falls below the agreed baseline, or there are wider concerns around failure to deliver value for money, evidence will be discussed at the Programme Board, and where necessary, the below matrix of assessment and mitigation will be followed. Mitigations in relation to specific themes will be determined and signed off by the thematic lead and coordinated with DLUHC. This matrix will be reviewed once the outcomes framework is agreed and targets are confirmed, to ensure it remains proportionate and fit for purpose. This matrix should also be seen in the wider context of the MoU, the principles for governance of the settlement set out in this MoU, the intention of the single settlement to devolve greater local responsibility and accountability, and the MCAs' primary accountability to local residents.

To note: the inspection and intervention processes outlined in the [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#) set out the process where there are very serious concerns of bad governance, poor value for money or inadequate services for residents. This draft matrix solely looks at mitigations to be made in case of failure to deliver progress on the outcomes or value for money for the single settlement.

Table A.1 Matrix of Mitigation

		<b>Minor</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Major</b>
<b>Evidence and indicators</b>	Institutional propriety	Where the Secretary of State has concerns that an authority is failing to carry out its functions in compliance with its best value duty, the Local Government Act 1999 provides significant powers for the Secretary of State to inspect and, subject to there being sufficient evidence, to intervene in that authority.		
	Target output indicators	Slippage in a small number of metrics. Limited impacts in overall delivery of outcomes (to discuss in Spring 2024)	Slippage in numerous metrics. Significant predicted impact on meeting outcomes (to discuss in Spring 2024)	Slippage in most metrics. Major impact on delivery of outcomes (to discuss in Spring 2024)
	Outcome delivery	Limited progress shown against a small number of outcomes. Overall progress against outcomes is satisfactory.	Limited progress shown against some outcomes.	Progress not shown against most outcomes.
	Insufficient reporting requirements	Some gaps in reporting data. Low data quality.	Significant lack of relevant data provided to prove progress against targets.	Reporting requirements not met – no data provided as evidence of progress.
	Maintenance of local outcome delivery plan	Sections of the local outcome delivery plan out of date when reviewed.	Significant portion of the local outcome delivery plan out of date when reviewed.	Out of date local outcome delivery plan that does not show current state of play or projects.
	External reports	3 <sup>rd</sup> line of defence (independent audit) raises some issues with delivery with an Amber rating. No adverse publicity on delivery of the settlement.	3 <sup>rd</sup> line of defence (independent audit) raises significant issues with delivery with an Amber/Red rating. Concerns raised by some constituent councils. Public criticism over spend or delivery of the settlement.	3 <sup>rd</sup> line of defence (independent audit) raises major issues with delivery with a red rating. Majority of constituent councils have issues with how the fund is delivered. Serious allegations over spending. Parliamentary questions raised.



**Proposed mitigations**

	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Major</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalation of M&amp;E (Monitoring &amp; Evaluation) processes, to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>Re-evaluation of outcome indicator and/or target output indicators</li> <li>The MCA will be required to write to the DLUHC SRO or the thematic lead (for the theme where there is a delivery concern) setting out why delivery has fallen, and steps being taken to remedy it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalation of M&amp;E processes, to be on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>Re-evaluation of outcome indicators and/or target output indicators</li> <li>Re-drafting of delivery plans in the theme/s where there are delivery concerns and alignment with outcomes framework</li> <li>The MCA will be required to write to the Permanent Secretary of DLUHC and the Permanent Secretary of the relevant thematic department setting out why there are delivery issues, and immediate steps being taken to remedy the situation.</li> <li>The thematic lead may require the MCA CEO to meet the thematic lead department ministers or Permanent Secretary to explain how they will improve delivery in that area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reintroduction of delegated authority limits, and/or ringfences, in the theme/s where there are delivery concerns</li> <li>DLUHC publicly announces that the AO does not think an investment decision will deliver VfM</li> <li>MCA CEO explains reasons delivery failure and provides materials on plan to mitigate, including how they will factor in any mitigations</li> <li>Suspending settlement</li> <li>Clawback funding</li> <li>Withdrawing funding lines from settlement</li> <li>Deep dive on M&amp;E to determine if VfM/institutional failure - if so, DLUHC can investigate using the Best Value Duty.</li> <li>Request for independent review from the NAO</li> </ul>

### **HM Treasury contacts**

This document can be downloaded from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Sandwell Levelling Up Zone
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority, Councillor Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Tammy Stokes Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes – To result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to - £1m; and Significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth – Tammy Stokes <a href="mailto:tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk">tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Senior Planning Policy Officer - Bart Shirm <a href="mailto:bart_shirm@sandwell.gov.uk">bart_shirm@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the geographical boundary of the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone as shown on the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone Map at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 That Cabinet approve the boundary of the Growth Zone as shown on the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone Map at Appendix 1, which subject to Government compliance checks and enactment of secondary legislation, will allow the council to retain business rates generated within the Zone over a 25-year period above a baseline figure.



- 1.3 That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with Assistant Director - Spatial Planning and Growth and the Cabinet Member Regeneration & WMCA to undertake the necessary actions required by Government for Growth Zone business rates to be retained with a start date 1 April 2024.
- 1.4 That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director - Spatial Planning and Growth, Assistant Director - Legal and Assurance and the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member Regeneration & WMCA to undertake the necessary legal, policy and procedural actions to establish, manage and monitor the Levelling Up Zone.
- 1.5 That Cabinet approve the use of Regeneration Reserves to fund the establishment, management, and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone up to a value of £300,000 over a period of up to three years. Following this period, the effectiveness of the Levelling Up Zone will be reviewed including the amount of receipts from business rate uplift that have been realised.
- 1.6 That Cabinet approve that first consideration is given to the use of retained business rates generated in the Growth Zone to fund the costs associated with the establishment, management, and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone over its lifetime.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The establishment of the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone is a unique opportunity to take full advantage of the benefits created by the completion of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension. The designation of a Growth Zone will allow the retention of business rate growth on selected sites within the Metro corridor and reinvestment in regeneration and economic growth.
- 2.2 Eight development sites within the Levelling Up Zone have been identified for business rate retention above a baseline for 25-years and collectively form the Growth Zone. Twenty-seven other development sites have been identified as regeneration opportunities within the Levelling Up Zone. The




amount of business rates that could be retained is difficult to estimate because of uncertainty about the deliverability of development and subsequent business rate growth within the Growth Zone. Due diligence and high-level financial modelling work undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Council and WMCA suggest that the Growth Zone could generate up to £42 million over a 25-year period. This figure assumes that all the sites within the Growth Zone will come forward for business rate generating uses. Site B – Rattlechain is expected to mostly deliver new homes and possibly a limited amount of business rate generating uses. Additional technical work is required to understand the deliverability and viability challenges at each site.

2.3 The Growth Zone rules set by Government include that business rate growth can only be retained above a baseline figure.

2.4 Authority is sought for the use of Regeneration Reserves to fund the establishment, management, and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone up to a value of £300,000 over a period of up to three years. It is expected that this could fund, for example, a fixed-term Programme Manager post and a budget for technical feasibility studies. It is anticipated that the Levelling Up Zone could become self-funded, and authority is sought for first consideration to be given to the use of retained business rates generated in the Growth Zone to fund the costs associated with the establishment, management, and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone over its lifetime.

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

	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b>          The Levelling Up Zone will allow wealth generated in Sandwell to remain in Sandwell through the retention of business rate receipts in the borough for reinvestment in regeneration and economic growth. It will make the most of the new Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension acting as a powerful tool to help grow and strengthen the Sandwell economy and regenerate brownfield land.</p>
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## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In the Autumn Statement 2022 the Chancellor announced that the Government would be launching a new Investment Zone programme with the aim of catalysing a small number of high-potential innovation clusters in areas in need of levelling up to boost productivity and growth. Sandwell Council submitted an Expression of Interest for the establishment of an Investment Zone along the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Corridor. The original programme was promptly scrapped following a change of Prime Minister and Chancellor.
- 4.2 In Spring 2023 Government confirmed that eight areas in England had been identified to develop proposals for an Investment Zone. This includes the area covered by the West Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority.
- 4.3 The Investment Zone rules set out by Government mean that no more than 3 sites within the Combined Authority area totalling 600 hectares may benefit from tax incentives. A further 2 areas may be selected as business rates retention sites where 100% of the growth in business rates above a baseline may be retained for 25 years.
- 4.4 A working group of senior officers from the West Midlands Combined Authority and constituent local authority members have identified three sites to benefit from Investment Zone tax incentive and/or business rate retention powers (WMCA Board 17/11/2023 item 9 refers):
- Coventry – Warwick Gigapark (including land in Warwick District which is neither a WMCA constituent nor a non-constituent member)
  - Birmingham Innovation and Knowledge Quarter
  - Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor
- 4.5 Land in Sandwell was considered inappropriate as the borough does not have a large area of undeveloped or underdeveloped land that could accommodate an innovation cluster, and the borough does not have a university or higher education institution driving research and development.





- 4.5 Concurrently, Government has agreed a Deeper Devolution Deal with the West Midlands region that secures additional powers including to establish a series of Levelling Up Zones that could operate as a local form of Investment Zones. The secured powers include the designation of three ‘Growth Zones’ in the region where businesses rates above an agreed baseline can be retained by local authorities for 25-years. Receipts generated by a Growth Zone can be used at the local authority’s discretion including to support regeneration and economic growth. The Investment Zone and Levelling Up Zone initiatives have been developed by the region simultaneously as they both cover growth and tax incentives for specific sites in the West Midlands.
- 4.6 The Sandwell portion of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension corridor is proposed as the location of the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone. The new Metro will vastly improve accessibility to and from the area by public transport and will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of several housing and employment development sites.
- 4.7 The purpose of the Levelling Up Zone is to retain wealth in Sandwell by capturing business rate growth along the Metro corridor and reinvesting this back into regeneration and economic growth activity. The Levelling Up Zone will also act as an inward investment tool by raising awareness of the development opportunities that are being created along the Metro corridor.
- 4.8 The Sandwell Levelling Up Zone broadly extends to 1.5-2km either side of the Midland Metro Extension and includes the whole of the town of Tipton and parts of Wednesbury, Oldbury, and West Bromwich. The boundary has been drawn to replicate Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOA) to aid monitoring and reporting. The Sandwell Levelling Up Zone Map is included at Appendix 1.
- 4.9 Eight development sites within the Levelling Up Zone have been identified as the Growth Zone where business rates would be retained. Business rates are charged on most non-domestic properties including factories, warehouses, shops and some schools, nurseries and community facilities. The number of development sites proposed for inclusion within the Growth



Zone has been refined following feedback from Government Civil Servants. The eight development sites that comprise the Growth Zone are:

- A – Coneygre, Tipton
- B – Rattlechain, Dudley Port,
- C – Land east of Whitehall Road, Great Bridge
- D – Land south of Great Bridge Street and west of Ryder Street, Great Bridge
- E – Land west of Danks Way and north of Bagnall Street, Great Bridge
- F – Land north of Harvills Hawthorn, Great Bridge
- G – Land north of Bilport Lane, Wednesbury
- H - Land north of Smith Road, Wednesbury

4.10 The development sites which comprise the Growth Zone have been approved in principle by Government subject to further compliance checks. Government must enact secondary legislation for Sandwell Council to retain business rates within the Growth Zone under paragraph 39 of Schedule 7B to the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

4.11 The Sandwell Growth Zone would be shared with Dudley MBC for legislative purposes. The Sandwell Levelling Up Zone would be distinct from Dudley. It has been locally designed and would be locally managed and monitored by Sandwell Council.

4.12 Growth Zone receipts generated in Sandwell would be retained by Sandwell Council. The Council would be able to decide how receipts generated from the Levelling Up Zone could be spent to support regeneration and economic growth..

4.13 Other development sites are shown for information purposes on the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone Map. The development sites have been identified as they are either proposed for allocation within the draft Sandwell Local Plan and/or have been identified as suitable for regeneration by Planning Officers. The Levelling Up Zone includes several major projects on the Council's Regeneration Pipeline:

- Tipton Town Centre



- Dudley Port Integrated Transport Hub
- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension and the Metro Depot
- Wednesbury Heritage Action Zone
- Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council does not establish the Sandwell Levelling Up Zone and does not benefit from 25-year business rate retention on Growth Zone sites.
- 5.2 The Council approves the designation of the Growth Zone and benefits from 25-year business rate retention without ringfencing receipts for levelling up activity. At the present time neither Government nor the WMCA have set parameters documenting how Growth Zone receipts should be used by the Council. However, the legislative powers have been secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal as part of WMCA objective to level up the region. The Council and WMCA could face reputational risk should the Council reject the spirit of the Deeper Devolution Deal and not ringfence Growth Zone receipts for levelling up activity. Government may choose to undesignate the Growth Zone. Furthermore, by not using initial receipts to unlock the regeneration of further Growth Zone sites the Council may inadvertently reduce the total Growth Zone receipt over the lifetime of the Levelling Up Zone.

## 6 Implications

<p><b>Resources:</b></p>	<p>Approval is sought from Cabinet for the use of Regeneration Reserves to fund the establishment, management and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone up to a value of £300,000 over a period of up to three years. Following this period, the effectiveness of the Levelling Up Zone will be reviewed including the amount of receipts from business rate uplift that have been realised.</p> <p>The budget could fund, for example, a fixed-term Programme Manager post and a budget for technical feasibility studies.</p>
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	<p>It is anticipated that the Levelling Up Zone could become self-funded, and authority is sought for first consideration to be given to the use of retained business rates generated in the Growth Zone to fund the costs associated with the establishment, management, and monitoring of the Levelling Up Zone over its lifetime.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>Following successful completion of further compliance checks by Government, secondary legislation must be enacted to secure business rate retention powers to the Council on rates generated within the Growth Zone above a baseline for 25-years under paragraph 39 of Schedule 7B to the Local Government Finance Act 1988.</p> <p>Governance and oversight of the Levelling Up Zone would be maintained by Cabinet and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration &amp; WMCA.</p> <p>Proposals for standalone capital regeneration and economic growth projects would require assessment by Capital Appraisal Officer and approval from Cabinet as per the Scheme of Delegation.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>Business rate retention powers within the Growth Zone is subject to further compliance checks from Government and is dependent on secondary legislation being enacted.</p> <p>The Growth Zone rules set by Government include that business rate growth can only be retained above a baseline figure. Consequently, growth in business rate receipts within part of the Growth Zone could be cancelled out by a fall in receipts elsewhere resulting in no net increase above the baseline.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Not applicable.



<b>Social Value:</b>	The Levelling Up Zone will support Social Value by retaining wealth generated in Sandwell in the borough for reinvestment in regeneration and economic growth. It will support growth in the economy which will create more and better jobs for residents and contribute to the prosperity of the area.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	Not applicable.

## 7. Appendices

7.1 Sandwell Levelling Up Zone Map

## 8. Background Papers

8.1 Sandwell Cabinet Report – West Midlands Combined Authority Devolution Deal (13 September 2023, item 6)

8.2 WMCA Board Report – West Midlands Investment Zone and Levelling Up Zones Update (17 November 2023, item 9)










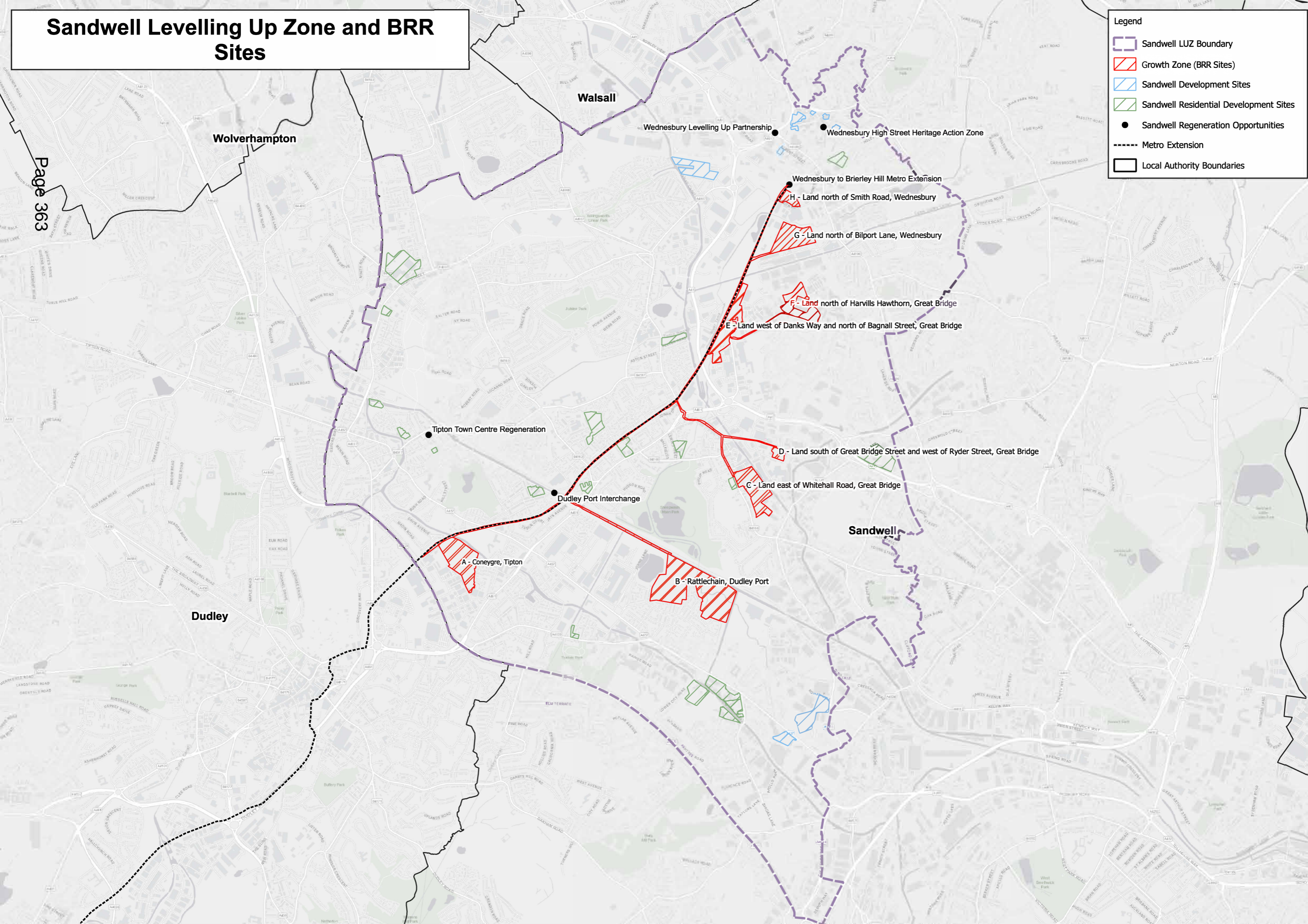
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# Sandwell Levelling Up Zone and BRR Sites

**Legend**

-  Sandwell LUZ Boundary
-  Growth Zone (BRR Sites)
-  Sandwell Development Sites
-  Sandwell Residential Development Sites
-  Sandwell Regeneration Opportunities
-  Metro Extension
-  Local Authority Boundaries





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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Levelling Up Fund Round 3 bid submission
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority, Cllr Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Director Growth & Spatial Planning, Tammy Stokes
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes - Result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to £1m.
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Regeneration Manager, Jenna Langford jenna_langford@sandwell.gov.uk

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, the S151 Officer, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority be authorised to review and formally accept the Levelling Up Fund funding offer/ grant conditions from Government for Grove Lane, Smethwick, subject to an acceptable Financial Appraisal.
- 1.2 That Cabinet endorse the Grove Lane, Smethwick Levelling Up Fund bid.




### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The deadline for the bid submission did not afford time for a Financial Appraisal to be undertaken in advance. With agreement from the S151 Officer, the bid was submitted to DLUHC on the basis that a financial appraisal be undertaken, and if acceptable, the council can then enter into a Memorandum of Understanding, subject to Cabinet approval.



2.2 The bid was previously approved by Cabinet 22 June 2022 and has not materially changed. For completeness the details of the bid are contained within this report and appendices.

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

	<p><b>Strong resilient communities</b> The proposals will support local communities and instil pride.</p>
	<p><b>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</b> The project will enable new homes to be built.</p>
	<p><b>A strong and inclusive economy</b> The project will provide opportunities for local spend and job creation.</p>

### 4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The Government’s Levelling Up Fund was announced in the 2020 Spending Review and is a £4.8 billion fund to support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. Following Cabinet approval on the 22 June 2022, the council submitted 4 bids under the second round of funding:

- Tipton Town Centre, Tipton
- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- Grove Lane, Smethwick
- Youth Provision Facility, West Bromwich

4.2 Of the 4 bids, Haden Hill Leisure Centre was successful, with funding announced in November 2022. In March 2023 Tipton Town Centre was also awarded funding, under the Government’s ‘Capital Regeneration’ Programme. On the 20 November 2023 Government announced the third and final round of the funding, automatically made a provisional funding award of £18,063,128.00 to Grove Lane, Smethwick, based on the high quality of the bid submitted under round 2. The provisional funding offer was subject to a project validation, submitted with the approval of the S151 Officer on the 1 December 2023.



- 4.3 On the 22 December 2023, Government confirmed the next stage of the project validation process, requesting for the bid to be reviewed to take account of the fact that the bid submission under round 2 was made in August 2022 and as such project costs would need to be updated. The consultants who developed the previous bid were re-engaged to undertake the review which was submitted to Government on the 2 February 2024 with S151 Officer approval.
- 4.4 The review of the bid has not resulted in any changes to the scope of the project or the funding ask from the Government or the council:

**Project Funding Total - £20,070,142**

Levelling Up Fund - £18,063,128.41

Sandwell Council - £2,007,013.69

- 4.5 The project still intends to acquire and demolish 3.45hectars of brownfield land in the Grove Lane area of Smethwick by March 2026. By undertaking this project, the identified sites are effectively de-risked to enable residential development to be delivered by third parties. It is estimated that 151 homes could be built along with a primary school.
- 4.6 A financial contribution of 10% or higher of the bid costs was encouraged and is considered by Government as part of the decision-making process. On that basis, Cabinet approved £2,007,013.69 in match funding contribution on the 22 June 2022, to the Levelling Up project and is included in the Capital Programme.
- 4.5 The forecast total investment from third parties, derived from the residential development and the construction of a new school are in the order of £41,614,410.
- 4.6 The project and funding are key in bringing forward the ambitions of the Grove Lane Masterplan approved by Cabinet February 2022 and levering investment into a designated Housing Zone area. The housing development will provide a mix of homes for shared ownership and affordable rent in an area that is income deprived and will become a regional centre for key worker employment.



- 4.7 A summary of the strategic case for the bid is appended to this report (Appendix A). The sites identified for acquisition by the council are appended to this report (Appendix B & C) and were approved by the council on the 22 June 2022.
- 4.8 The updated acquisition estimates are subject to a number of key limitations. There are several details in that, it has been necessary to make high-level assumptions to the mix of unit types for the residential elements and the size of the primary school included. Whilst the assessment has sought to update the data and information used in the original LUF application, some key limitations remain that prevent a full valuation from being undertaken in accordance with the RICS Valuation – Global Standards. Nonetheless, the updated assessment has sought to estimate the values of the sites using recognised principles and best practice guidance.
- 4.9 In addition, it should be noted that the updated estimates are high-level based on information available from publicly accessible sources. Several key information gaps exist which prevent an accurate and robust assessment of the acquisition costs, and it was therefore necessary to make a number of special assumptions. Some of the assumptions made in respect of the acquisition costs are by proxy, and further information would be required to make an accurate assessment.
- 4.10 These limitations along with the updated viability appraisal and updated costs estimates will be subject to Financial Appraisal by the S151 Officer, ahead of entering into a funding agreement with Government.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council withdraws the bid.





## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The funding includes the provision of project management costs to fund necessary posts to deliver the project. A project manager is already in post. The programme will be managed through the Regeneration Programme Office.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The council will be required to enter into a memorandum of understanding to draw-down the funds from Government.
<b>Risk:</b>	The updated acquisition estimates are subject to limitations and are to be kept under review.
<b>Equality:</b>	No implications
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	No implications
<b>Social Value:</b>	The project will provide opportunities for the local supply chain and for the local training and employment.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No implications
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	No implications

## 7. Appendices

- a. Grove Lane Strategic Case
- b. Grove Lane proposed acquisition sites Grove Street/ Halberton Street, Smethwick
- c. Grove Lane proposed acquisition Cranford Street, Smethwick

## 8. Background Papers

None.



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## Strategic Case Summary – Levelling Up Fund Bid – Grove Lane

Levelling Up Fund investment will be used for the acquisition and remediation of 3.45 hectares of poor quality and under-utilised industrial land, demolition of existing buildings to make way for 151 new homes and a 'two form' entry primary school. The LUF bid will deliver much needed investment in a designated Housing Zone area, across four sites, all of which are within the Grove Masterplan. The housing development will provide a mix of homes for shared ownership and affordable rent in an area that is income deprived and will become a regional centre for key worker employment.

Under the proposal the council will acquire the freehold of these sites to consolidate land ownerships and to undertake demolition and remediation to prepare the sites to come forward for residential development. Following land assembly, tenants will be supported to find alternative premises.

The overarching Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework sets out six guiding principles for the Corridor area to deliver a vision of 'promoting the future corridor as a healthy place with a healthy environment and positive outlook built on its history and identity' and contribute to achieving net zero by improving green spaces, encouraging sustainable travel choices, reducing congestion and delivering sustainable new homes. The six guiding principles are:

- Healthy centres
- An active travel exemplar
- A new hospital as an anchor institution
- Green new neighbourhoods
- A green corridor; and
- Health sense of place.

The investment will change the area's profile, refocusing from an area characterised by industrial legacy to a residential community. Sites to the east of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital is dominated by industrial units, some of which are vacant and in a state of disrepair, that are low rise and between fifty to sixty years old. Failure to address these sites would be a missed opportunity in the context of surrounding development, resulting in the area's unprecedented level of investment being surrounded by areas of derelict buildings.

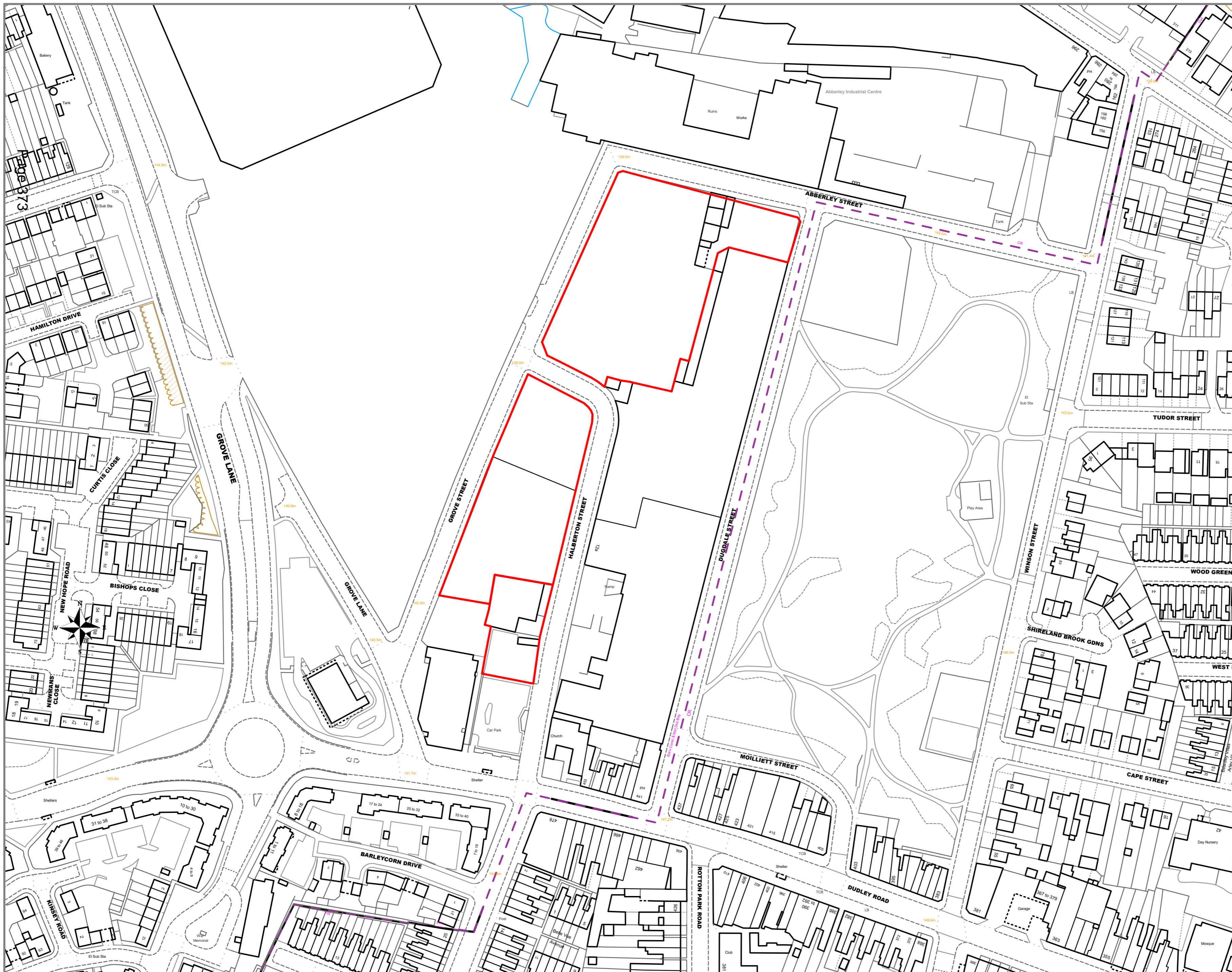
The purchase and demolition of industrial building to facilitate housing development will help to support the housing delivery deficit experienced in the Borough and address market failures by:

- Overcoming the challenge of fragmented land ownership in the Grove Lane areas that restrict the aspirations of the masterplan being realised
- Address viability issues by funding demolition and remediation of sites that were historically utilised for heavy industry. These upfront costs currently restrict housing from coming forward on the identified sites.
- Deliver public good in terms of enabling a housing scheme that meets local needs by providing a mix of units for affordable rent, shared ownership, and private sale. This will ensure the development responds to local affordability challenges and provides accommodation that is accessible to key workers at the neighbouring Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. A scheme of this nature would not be delivered without public funding and by the private sector which would seek to maximise the returns generated from the site.
- Focus on high quality urban realm including the provision of street lighting, both of which will provide a more welcome feel to the area and help to reduce the high levels of crime recorded locally. The roads surrounding the site currently lack street lighting and offers a poor sense of personal safety due to a low level of footfall, dereliction, and poor site lines particularly at the North end of the area where large industrial buildings adjoin the pavement and span around sharp corners of the public highway.

<END>

Grove Street/Halberton Street,  
Smethwick

Scale 1:1250

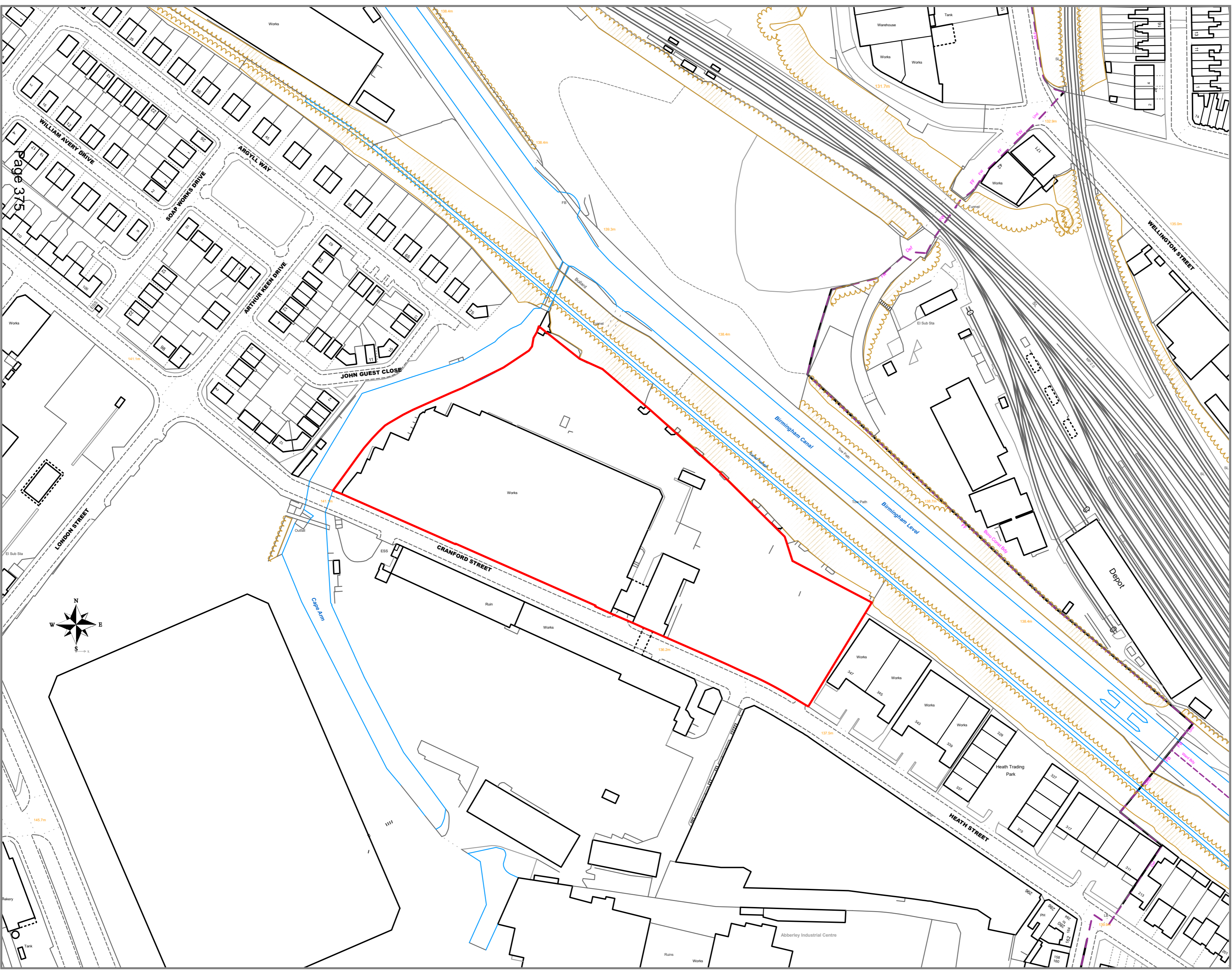


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Cranford Street, Smethwick

Scale 1:1250



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## Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Long-Term Plan for Smethwick
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration & WMCA Cllr Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning Tammy Stokes
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Regeneration Manager, Jenna Langford jenna_langford@sandwell.gov.uk

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to establish a Smethwick Long-Term Plan Board through undertaking necessary selection processes to make appointments to the Board, and finalise the associated Terms of Reference.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to make any changes to the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick Town Board terms of reference in response to any further Government guidance or Board requirements.
- 1.3 That authority be granted to the newly appointed board, once constituted to develop a Long-Term Plan for Smethwick, to include public consultation, and to submit to Government, subject to S151 Officer authorisation.
- 1.4 That Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, the S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to review



and formally accept the Long-Term Plan funding offer/ grant conditions from Government.

- 1.5 That approval be given for the Council to act as Accountable Body for the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick programme and adopt programme governance arrangements.
- 1.6 That the geographical boundary for the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick as determined be endorsed, and the Assistant Director of Growth & Spatial Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration WMCA be authorised to make any necessary representations to Government to amend the boundary in consultation with the new Board.
- 1.7 That the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to approve public consultation in relation to the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick.




## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The requirements set out by Government include establishing a Town Board by 1 April 2024. The purpose of the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick Board is to bring community leaders and representatives together to produce, oversee and deliver the Long-Term Plan. The key components of the Board Terms of Reference are outlined in 4.7, along with the proposed process for board selection. Once the Board is constituted, it is proposed that the Terms of Reference can then be finalised and approved. Details received from Government to date have been limited and more detail may be provided at a later stage. It is therefore necessary to be able to adapt the arrangements for the Board to ensure compliance with emerging government guidance or Board requirements.
- 2.2 The Long-Term Plan for Smethwick is to be produced, overseen, and delivered by the Board and submitted to Government by 1 August 2024. The submission of the plan enables the £20m endowment style funding to be drawn-down to deliver plan interventions of a 10-year period, in accordance to the draw-down profile, submitted as part of the plan.



- 2.3 It is envisaged that upon submission and acceptance of the Long-Term Plan by Government, the council will be expected to enter into a funding agreement or memorandum of understanding. The premise will be that the council agrees to act as the Accountable Body for the programme and as such programme governance will need to be established.
- 2.4 Government have confirmed that investment from the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick is eligible within the boundary plan provided by Government as part of the data pack (appendix 1). Government have advised there is scope to make representations to the department to alter those boundaries (4.14).
- 2.5 The Long-Term Plan is to be driven by local people and local priorities and as such public engagement and consultation will be required throughout the development of the plan.

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

	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b> Safety and Security is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support strong and resilient communities.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b> High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support a strong and inclusive economy.</p>
	<p><b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b> Transport and Connectivity is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support a connected &amp; accessible Sandwell.</p>

### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In October 2023 the Government Department for Local Communities and Housing (DLUHC) announced their '*Long-Term Plan for Towns*' an investment programme of £1.1 billion into 55 towns for local people's priorities such as regenerating local high streets and town centres or securing public safety. The announcement was accompanied by the publication of '*Our Long-Term Plan for Towns*' prospectus.



- 4.2 Each of the 55 towns selected are to receive £20m ‘endowment-style’ funding to invest over the next 10 years. Town selection for funding allocation was undertaken by Government according to the Levelling Up Needs Index which considers metrics covering skills, pay, productivity, and health, as well as the Index of Multiple Deprivation. For Sandwell, Government have selected Smethwick to receive Long-Term Plan for Towns funding. Other Black Country towns allocated funding are Darlaston (Walsall), Dudley (Dudley), and Bilston (Wolverhampton).
- 4.3 The Government intention is for the £20m endowment style funding (25% revenue / 75% capital) over a 10-year period will provide long-term certainty to deliver a range of interventions within three broad investment themes to be driven by the needs and wishes of local communities:
1. Safety and Security
  2. High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration
  3. Transport and Connectivity
- 4.4 The view of Government is that this flexibility means Towns such as Sandwell are more able to capitalise on private and philanthropic investment, aligning timings with businesses and investors to maximise the benefits for local people.
- 4.5 The funding will be devolved directly to Sandwell and will be able to roll over funding into future years. As the Local Authority, Sandwell will be the accountable body and will remain responsible for ensuring good use of public funds through the existing duties of the Section 151 officer.
- 4.6 To access the £20m endowment-style funding Sandwell will need to produce a Long-Term Plan for Smethwick, based on the priorities of local people, and put to local people for consultation. A Town Deal Board for Smethwick for the purposes of the Long-Term Plan will need to be established that brings community leaders and representatives together to produce, oversee, and deliver the Long-Term Plan.





4.7 The terms of reference for the Board will be based on learning from the Towns Fund Programme Governance model, adapting arrangements from the existing Town Deal Board for Smethwick. The new Board once constituted will review and finalise the terms of reference at its first meeting. The proposed terms of reference will then be submitted for approval by the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority. The terms of reference will comprise the following components:

- Governance Model
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Positions
- Code of Conduct
- Decision Making
- Scrutiny
- Transparency and Accountability
- Board Member profiles
- Conflicts of Interest
- Scheme of Delegation

4.8 It is proposed that the existing positions and members of the Smethwick Town Deal Board be retained for the Long-Term Plan Board:

- Chair of Smethwick Town Deal Board
- Deputy Chair of Smethwick Town Deal Board
- Cabinet Member Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority
- SMBC Smethwick Town Lead

The other existing positions will also be retained, though the process of repurposing the Town Deal Board for the Long-Term Plan will provide an opportunity to review these positions in the revised context. Where additional representation is required it is proposed to advertise the board positions, requesting that expressions of interest be submitted for the retained Board members to consider and appoint by panel. The Town Deal Board were consulted on the 29 February 2024 and agreed to this approach.



- 4.9 The Long-Term Plan is to comprise the 10-year vision for Smethwick and a 3-year investment plan, setting out how the funding will be allocated and spent, with the local authority as the body ultimately accountable for funding. The endowment approach means that funding is released over a 7-year period and local authorities have the flexibility to spend it over 10-years, with 'light touch' assurance from DLUHC. The full funding profile will be available in early 2024. The funding is delivered through the powers are set out in Section 50 of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.
- 4.10 Government have stated that where a Town Deal Board is already in place (Smethwick Town Deal Board), this can be re-purposed to meet the needs of the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick. As with Town Deal Boards, Government expect the Town Board to be chaired by a businessperson or a local community leader. On the 15 November 2023 the Smethwick Town Deal Board were advised of the Long-Term Plan announcement from DLUHC and the option to re-purpose the Smethwick Town Deal Board to align with the requirements of the Long-Term Plan programme. Smethwick Town Deal Board members present were supportive of being involved with the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick.
- 4.11 On the 18 December 2023 DLUHC released further guidance confirming that £250k capacity funding (RDEL Grant) is to be issued to Local Authorities to cover the costs of establishing the Town Deal Board and preparing the Long-Term Plan for submission. The capacity funding will comprise £50k, which has been received by the council, to establish the Town Deal Board. Once established the remaining £200k of capacity funding will be released to develop the plan which is to be submitted by the 1 August 2024. Government expect this funding to be utilised for convening a Town Deal Board, community engagement, support to the Town Deal Board to develop the Long-Term Plan, and technical expertise for project development including feasibility studies and business cases. The £250k capacity funding is deducted from the £20m funding allocation.
- 4.12 The plan is to set out a 10-year vision that is long-term, strategic, and backed by insights gained through engagement with local people. The plan is to comprise a vision statement, a strategic case for the future of



the town, the priority outcomes for 2034, planned interventions across the three investment themes, evidence the plan is community led, how the board will attract additional investment, and high-level milestones.

- 4.13 Government have provided a list of interventions which have already been assessed as having a strong case for investment, value for money and benefit-to-cost ratio by Government. Should the Board pursue these interventions, a business case will not be required as part of the assessment process. However, should the board wish to pursue bespoke or 'off-menu' interventions an outline business will be required.
- 4.14 Government advised there is scope to make representations to the department to alter the Long-Term Plan investment boundary, where an amendment remains within the spirit of the programme and includes, as part of the revised area, the town that was originally selected and must remain contiguous. Any representation to amend the investment boundary need to be confirmed by 1 April 2024 and must have been agreed by the Town Board. Having reviewed the Long-Term Plan investment boundary as provided by Government it has been necessary to consider amendments.
- 4.15 The Government have based the investment boundary on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Built Up Areas' (see appendix 1) and as such the boundary excludes investment in key open spaces such as Black Patch and Warley Woods. The boundary does not conform to the ward boundaries of Smethwick Town and includes part of Oldbury (Bristnall) within the boundary, and by Government's own guidance the investment boundary must represent the town as intended.



- 4.16 The proposed revised investment boundary aligns to the Smethwick Town boundary, encompassing Abbey; Smethwick; Soho and Victoria; and St Pauls wards in their entirety. Open Spaces are also included. Subject to Cabinet endorsement and Board approval the intention is to submit representation to DLUHC by the 1 April 2024 to amend the investment boundary accordingly.
- 4.17 The timescales for the Long-Term Plan development and submission set by Government are incredibly ambitious and for Sandwell much of the time will be during purdah. Legal advice has been sought and establishing the board is business as usual and therefore does not contravene purdah regulations. In-terms of plan development, the council will appoint consultancy services to provide the necessary expertise and support to the Board to develop the plan. During purdah this activity will comprise data collection, analysis, and meeting with local communities to harness their local priorities. No public consultation will take place until the purdah period has concluded.
- 4.18 Government have provided £250,000 in capacity funding to establish the board and develop the Long-Term Plan for submission. Going forward the remainder of the £20m will also need to cover the council's costs for being the accountable body for the fund and the programme management costs over the 10-year period. This will require programme management support resource within the Regeneration Programme Management Office, and support from finance to meet our accountable body obligations. The Long-Term Plan when submitted on the 1 August 2024 is only required to provide a 3-year investment plan. The Long-Term Plan will therefore be reviewed after that 3-year period and it may become necessary to prepare a revised plan, which could come at costs not dissimilar to the initial capacity funding provided by Government.
- 4.19 In-terms of plan development and delivery there will be resource requirements across council Directorates who will directly benefit, or their customers will directly benefit from the Long-Term Plan. This resource requirement will form project leads who will be responsible for project development and delivery in conjunction with the Board and the



community. They will also be responsible for reporting into the Programme Management Office. Leadership Team were consulted on the 13 February 2024 and the following Directorates were identified as having to identify where resource was available or required.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council advise Government the deadlines for establishing a board and submission of the Long-Term plan will not be achievable.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Resources will need to be funded from the Long-Term Plan fund to ensure the council's cost of programme management and accountable body responsibilities are funded, this will include finance officer resource. This will also include capacity to review and update the investment plan after the 3-year period.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	Should the plan submission be accepted, the council will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Government. Governance arrangements for the board will be established and approved by the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance and will be reviewed annually.
<b>Risk:</b>	We are yet to have sight of the funding agreement with Government, so it is not possible to assess risks at this stage.
<b>Equality:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.

## 7. Appendices

- a) Government Data Pack
- b) Revised Boundary Proposed



## 8. Background Papers

Long-Term Plan for Towns Prospectus  
Long-Term Plan for Towns Guidance







# Smethwick - local data profile

January 2024

## Contents:

- (1) Indicators for policy investment themes
- (2) Town demographics and deprivation



**LEVELLING  
— UP —**



# About this document

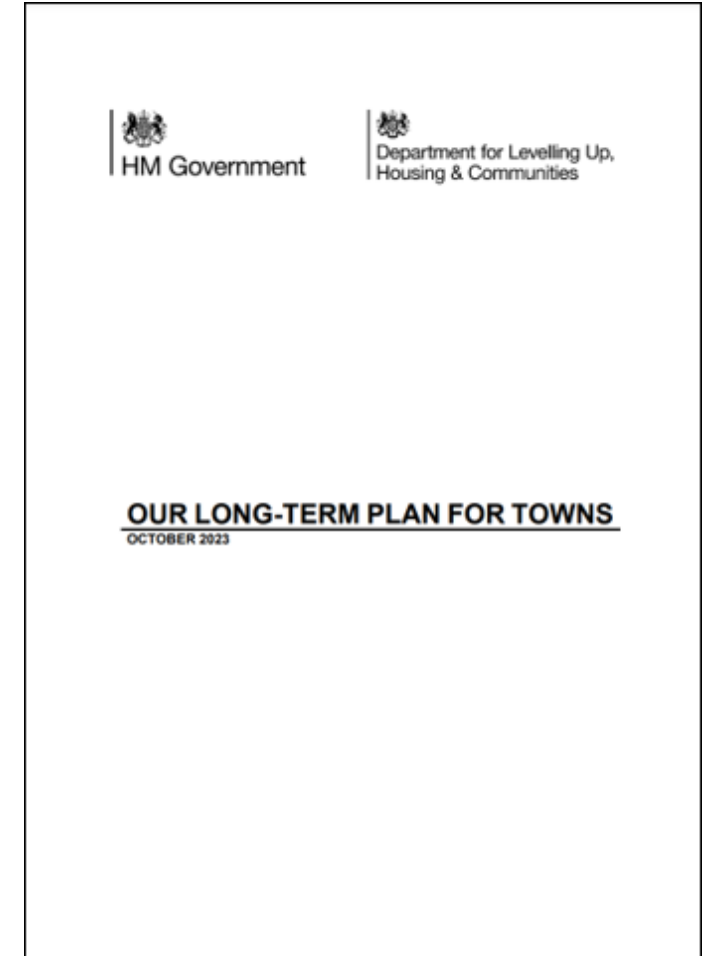
This document, produced by DLUHC in collaboration with ONS, presents high-level data to support the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. This collaboration is supported through the Levelling Up Subnational Data project. It does not make policy recommendations.

## Background

- On 1 October 2023, the UK government announced its long-term plan for towns. This will provide long-term investment in 55 towns to be spent on local people's priorities such as regenerating local high streets and town centres or securing public safety.
- This data pack primarily uses metrics and indicators across the three policy investment themes [as detailed further in the guidance for local authorities and Town Boards](#). Data presented in this pack are at town level, where possible, but other geographies are used where sufficiently granular data is not yet available.
- This is a local data profile. It does not take account of the implementation of current national or local policy interventions.

## Data caveats

- Lockdown restrictions and the furlough scheme were in place at the time Census 2021 was conducted, which significantly impacted 'travel to work methods' data. As such, the data are not reflective of current commuting patterns. We have therefore used Census 2011 data in the commuter flows table shown in this pack. [Census 2021 employment data](#) may also be impacted by furlough and the timing of Census day (March 2021).
- The data sources in this pack are the latest available as of 30th November 2023. In collaboration with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we have derived metrics at town level based on Built Up Areas for 2022 where this data was not previously available. Estimates are at town level unless stated otherwise. These are experimental estimates for small levels of geography that may be more volatile or have higher levels of uncertainty, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.
- Due to data availability, estimates at local authority level are based on geographic boundaries as of 2022.

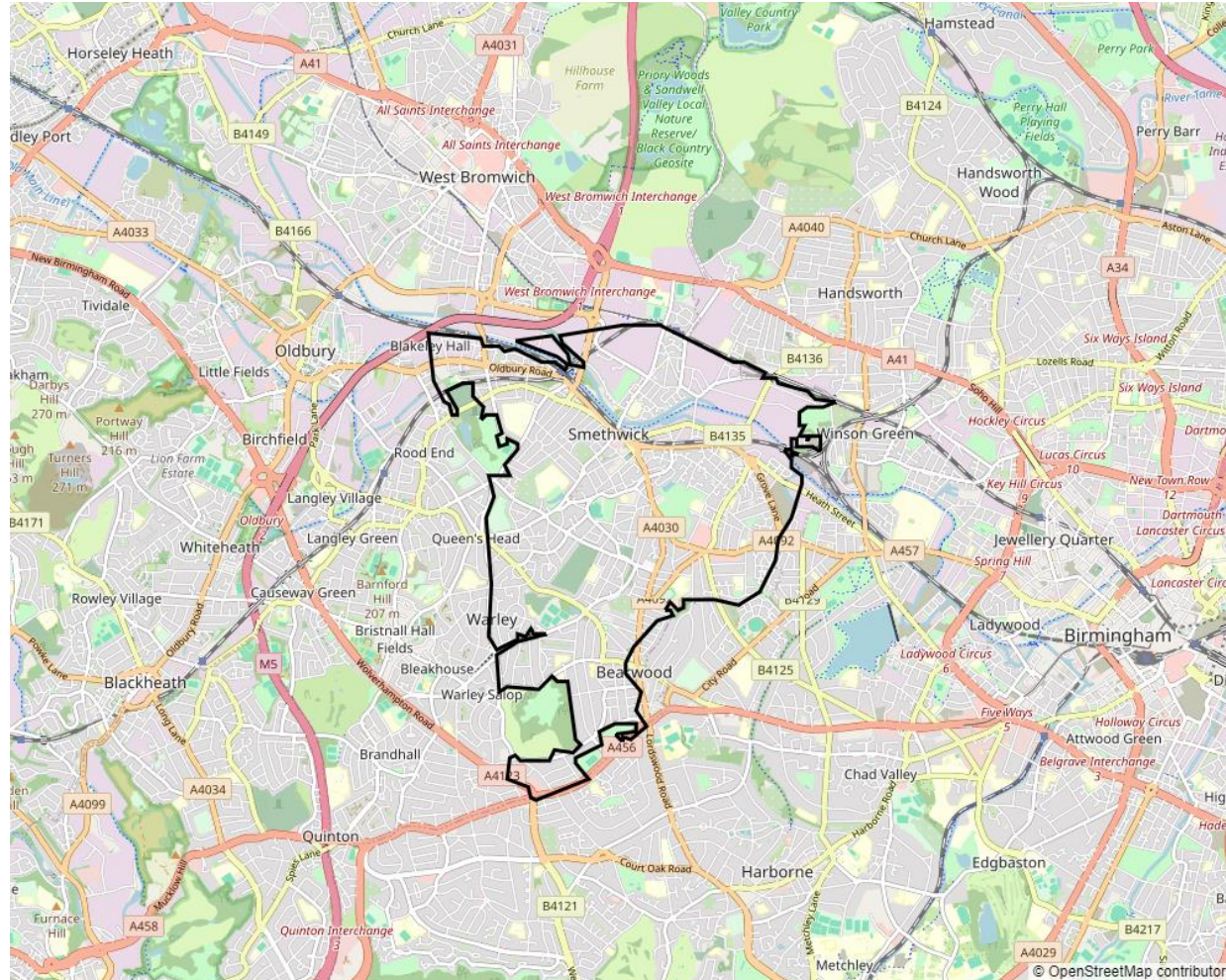




# Map of Smethwick

This data pack defines a town's boundary based on the definition of Built Up Area (BUA, 2022), unless stated otherwise. This reflects the approach set out in the Long-Term Plan for Towns guidance for defining the geographical area covered by the Town Board.

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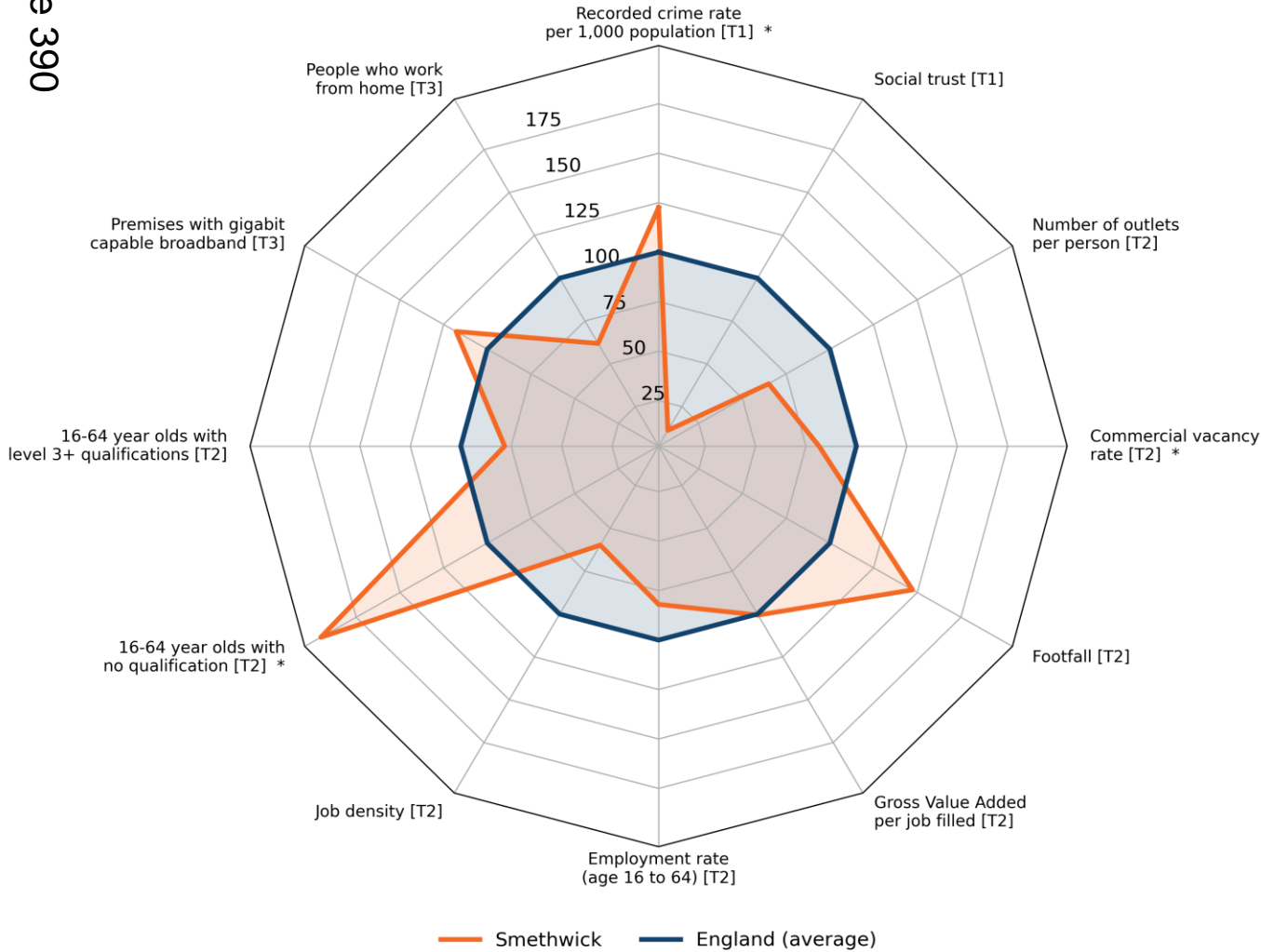
Source: [ONS, 2022](#)



# Overview of town indicators

This page provides an overview of how the town's indicators (listed in Annex B) for policy investment themes fare against national averages.

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The chart on the left shows how Smethwick town's indicators (orange) fare against national averages (dark blue). Town values have been scaled relative to the national averages which were set to 100.

The policy investment themes are listed below:

- [T1] Safety and Security
- [T2] High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration
- [T3] Transport and Connectivity

### How to read the chart:

1. Compare the overall shape of the town data points to the national average shape.
2. The closer a town marker is to value 100 on the chart, the closer it is to the national average.
3. A town marker higher than 100 indicates better performance than the national average, except for the three indicators marked with an asterisk (\*), where the opposite is true.





# Indicators for policy investment themes

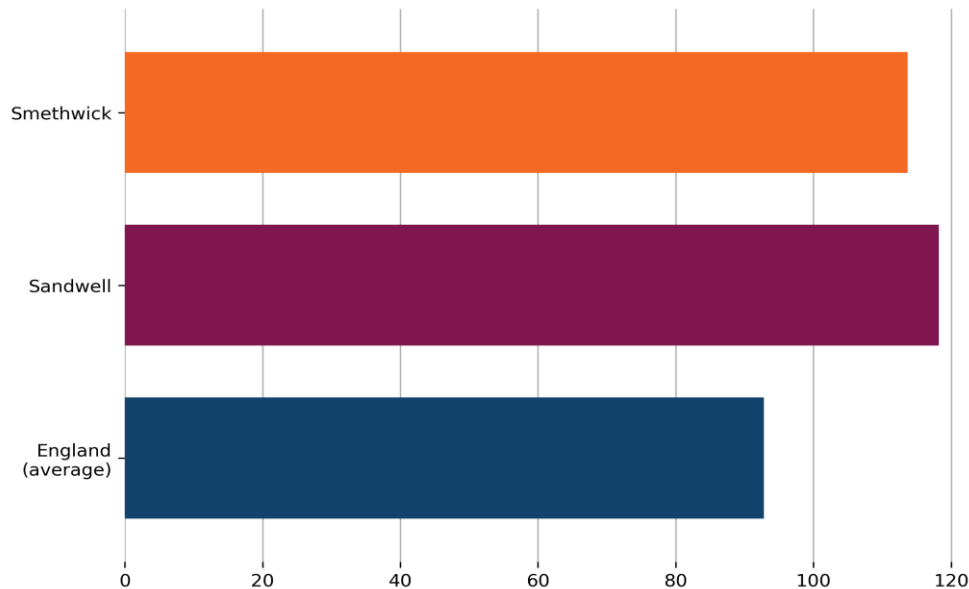


# Safety and Security

“Towns will now be able to use this funding to reduce crime and improve safety in their local area.” (Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, 2023)

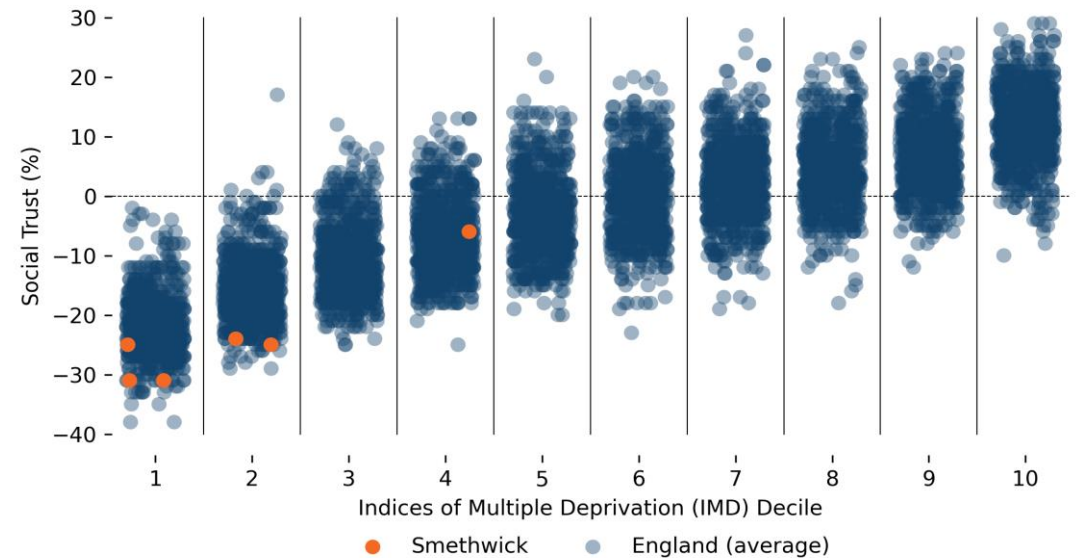
Indicator	Smethwick	Sandwell	England
Recorded crime rate per 1,000 population (2023)	113.7	118.2	92.8
Social trust (%) (2023)	-22.2	-19.2	-3.1

Recorded crime rate per 1,000 population, 2023



Source: [data.police.uk](https://data.police.uk), 2023

Social Trust (%) and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles  
(IMD Decile 1 = Most Deprived)



Source: [MHCLG IMD, 2019](#); [Onward, 2023](#)

Note: Data is at MSOA level, resulting in multiple MSOAs per town. There was an average of 7 respondents per MSOA.

According to [Onward \(2023\)](#), **Smethwick has a social trust score of -22.2%**, which is lower than the England average of -3.1%, showing that there is a lower level of social trust within Smethwick than national levels. More deprived [Middle Layer Super Output Areas \(MSOAs\)](#) are likely to have lower levels of social trust than less deprived MSOAs in Smethwick.





# High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration (1/2)

“Towns would be able to use this funding to enhance their town centres, making them and their buildings more attractive and accessible to residents, businesses, and visitors in a post Covid environment.” (Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, 2023)

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Indicator	Smethwick	England
Number of outlets (takeaways, restaurants, clubs, bars, pubs, fitness facilities and sport clubs) per 1,000 population (Sept 2023)	1.3	2.0*
Commercial vacancy rates (%) (Nov 2023)	8.8	10.8*
Footfall index** based on O2 Motion mobile phone data (March 2022 to March 2023)	147.3	100

\* England average is derived from Built Up Areas with a population between 20,000 and 100,000 only.

\*\* Footfall is defined as the average daily number of outbound journeys (not including journeys to home) within the town/Built Up Area over the period March 2022-March 2023. The mean average footfall of all English towns with a population between 20,000 and 100,000 people, has been standardised to an index of 100, with the figure for this town scaled relative to this average.

10-minute walking distance to green spaces in Smethwick, 2023



Source: [Fields in Trust - Green Space Index, 2023](#)



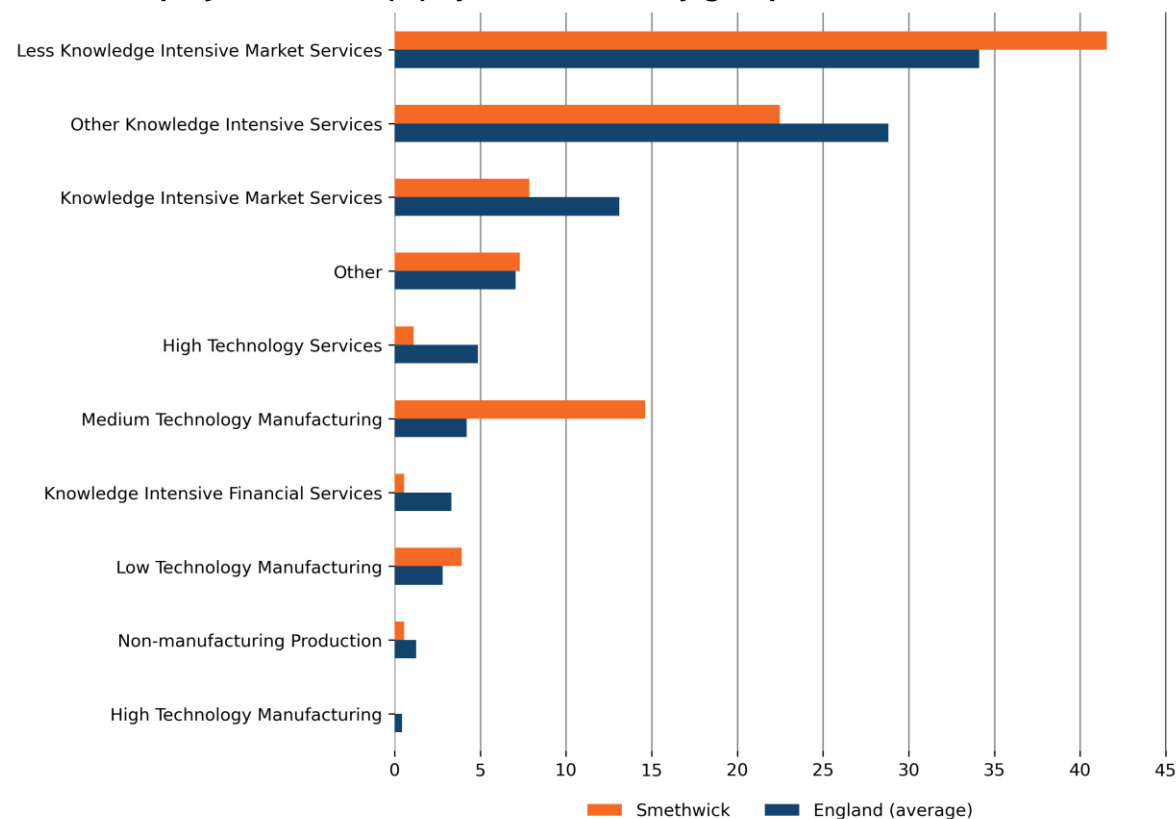
## High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration (2/2)

“Towns would be able to use this funding to enhance their town centres, making them and their buildings more attractive and accessible to residents, businesses, and visitors in a post Covid environment.” (Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, 2023)

Indicator	Smethwick	Sandwell	West Midlands	England
Gross Value Added per job filled (£) (2020)	59,216	50,810	50,076	58,869
16-64 year olds with level 3+ qualifications (%) (2021)	43.5	42.4	51.6	55.6
16-64 year olds with no qualification (%) (2021)	24.6	21.7	14.8	12.6

Indicator	Smethwick	Sandwell	West Midlands	England
Employment rate (age 16 to 64) (%) (2021)	58.2	63.3	68.6	71.0
Job density (2019)	0.49	0.60	0.77	0.82

Employment share (%) by HTEC\* industry groups in Smethwick, 2019



Source: [ONS, 2019](#)

\*HTEC: High-tech industry and knowledge-intensive services industry groups. Calculations are based on rounded data.

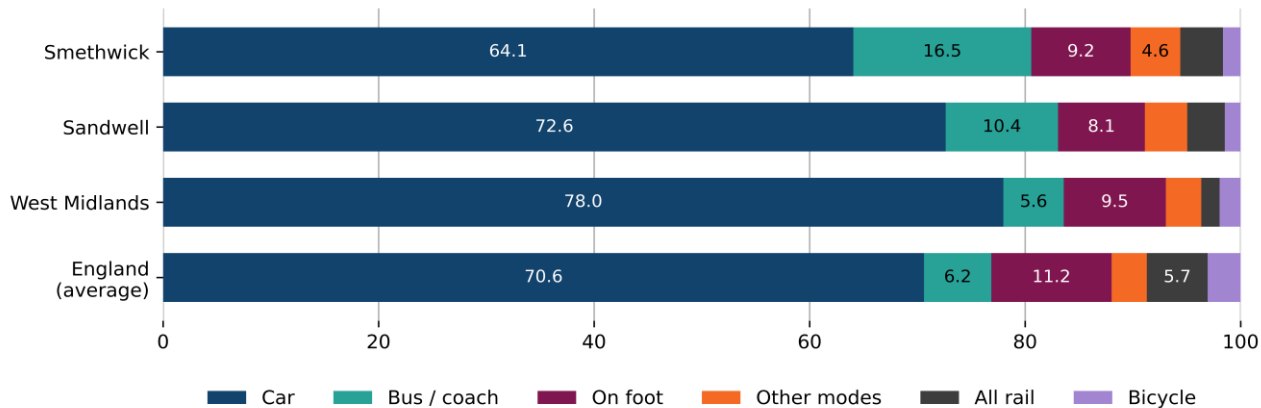


# Transport and Connectivity (1/2)

“This funding could make towns more connected - increasing footfall and viability – to high streets and local shopping centres, and accessibility to local employment opportunities.” (Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, 2023)

Indicator	Smethwick	Sandwell	West Midlands	England
Premises with gigabit capable broadband (%) (2023)	85.9	87.3	76.2	72.9
People who work from home (%) (2021)	19.5	18.7	25.6	31.5

Method of travel to work (%), 2021



Source: [ONS, 2023](#)

We have excluded the “Work mainly at or from home” category from this chart to make it easier to clearly see the methods used to travel to work. Percentages do not include those working from home.

**NB:** Data presented on the chart above (from Census 2021) should not be compared with the tables on the right, which represent Census 2011 data. The tables on the right are based on BUA 2011 geographies, which may be different to the BUA 2022 geographies that the majority of data in this pack are reported at. Census travel data for 2021 were impacted by lockdown restrictions and the furlough scheme that were in place in March 2021.

Flows of commuters entering or leaving Smethwick, 2011

Town name	2011 Population	Incoming	Outgoing	Working local
Smethwick	48,765	13,813	14,650	3,974

Source: DLUHC analysis based on Census 2011 data

Top 10 residence – work connections between Built Up Areas, 2011

Place of Residence	Place of Work	People
Smethwick	Birmingham	6,901
Birmingham	Smethwick	4,684
Smethwick	Smethwick	3,974
Smethwick	No fixed place of work	1,630
West Bromwich	Smethwick	1,329
Smethwick	West Bromwich	1,229
Smethwick	Oldbury (Sandwell)	1,021
Oldbury (Sandwell)	Smethwick	805
Rowley Regis	Smethwick	616
Tipton	Smethwick	586

Source: DLUHC analysis based on Census 2011 data

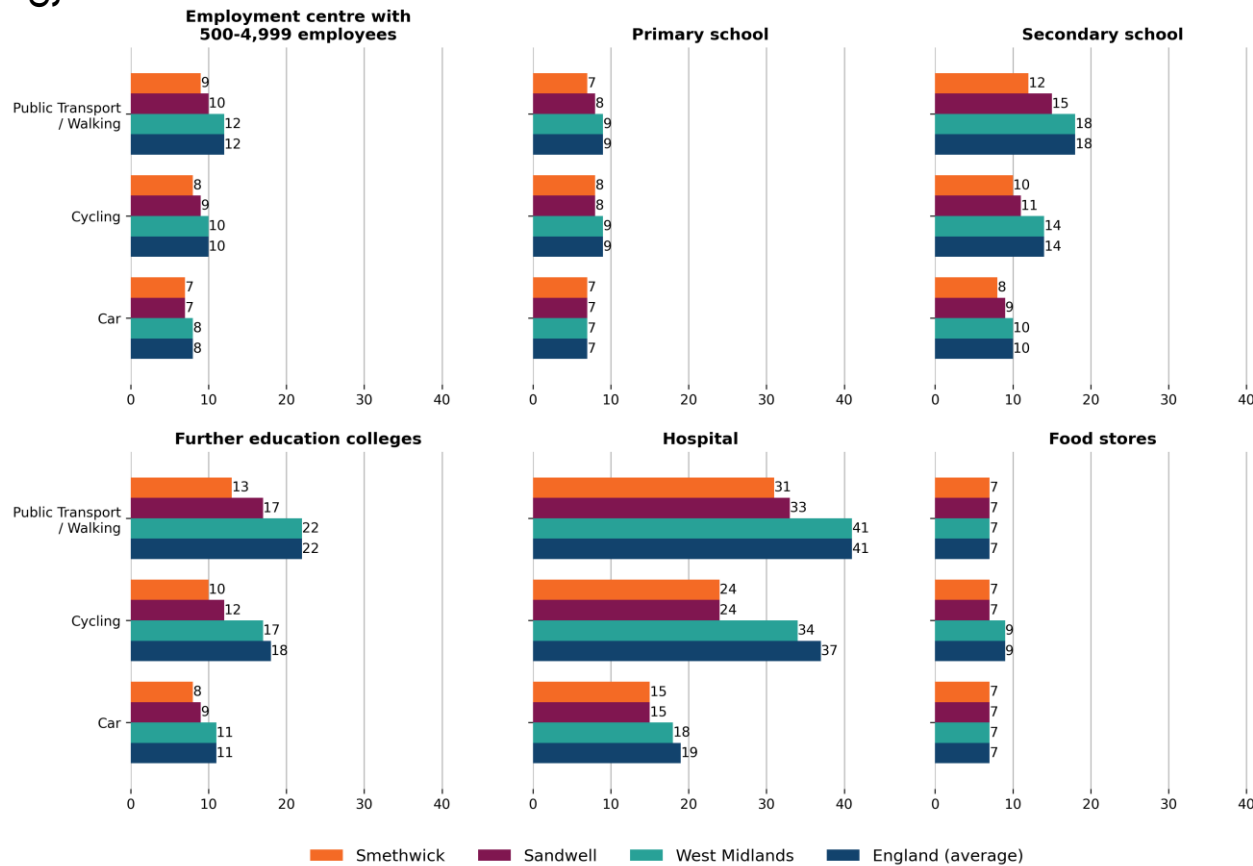


# Transport and Connectivity (2/2)

“This funding could make towns more connected - increasing footfall and viability – to high streets and local shopping centres, and accessibility to local employment opportunities.” (Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, 2023)

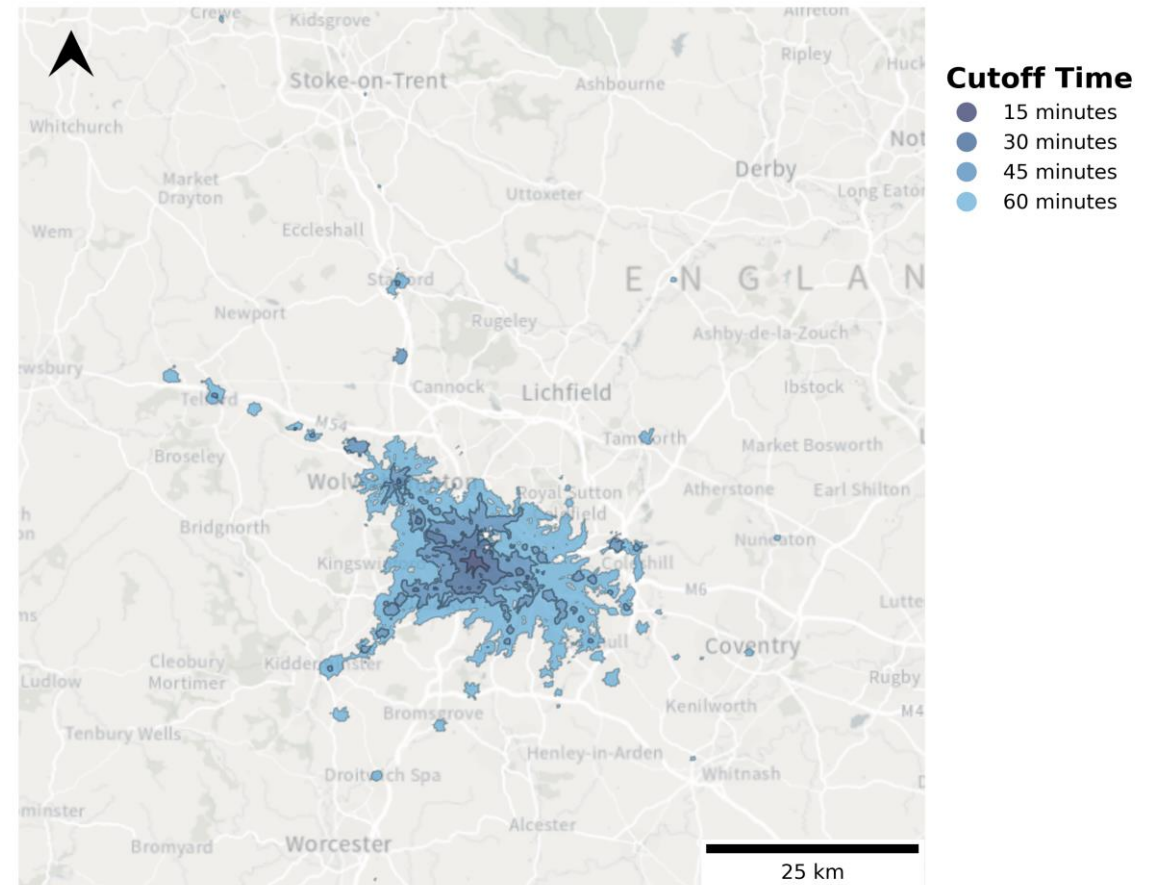
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Average minimum travel time to the nearest key service (minutes), 2019



Source: [Department for Transport, 2021](#)

Public transport accessibility by journey time from Smethwick Galton Bridge train station, between 7:15am and 9:15am



Source: [ONS, 2022](#)

Note: Data is from 15th November 2022



# Annex A - Town demographics and deprivation



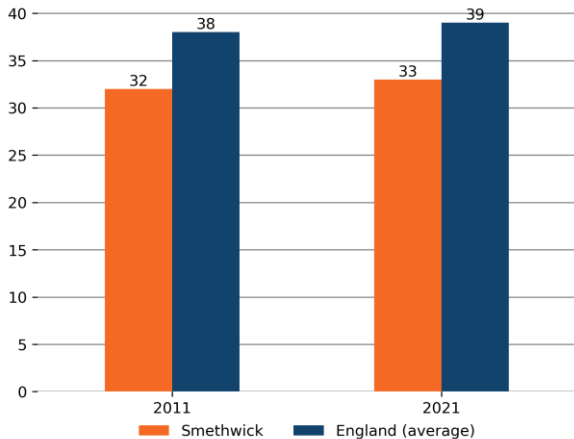


# Demographics: Age and population

## Headlines:

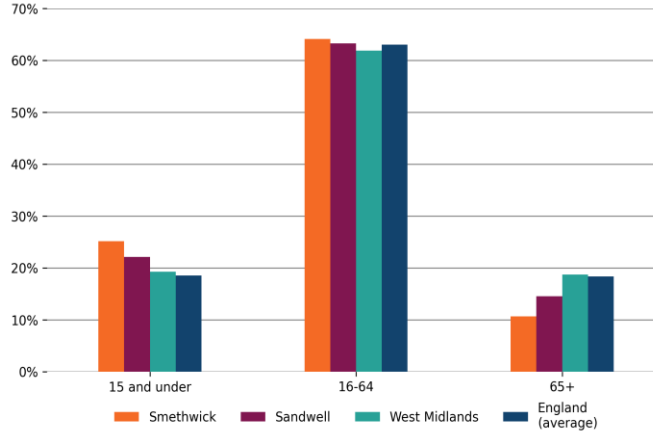
- The **median age in Smethwick (town) is 33 years** (2021). The **median age** for England is 39. The median age for Sandwell (local authority) is 37 years. The map on the right shows the average median age within Smethwick at MSOA level.
- The median age in Smethwick (town) **increased** by 1 year between 2011 and 2021. For context, the median age in England increased by 1 year over the same period (see *bottom left chart below*).
- Smethwick (town) has a **population of 56,343** (2021). Between 2011 and 2021, Smethwick's **population changed by 14.5%**. For context, the population changed by 11.0% in Sandwell, 6.2% in West Midlands, and 6.6% in England.
- 25.2% of people in Smethwick (town) are under 16 years old, and 10.7% are aged 65 and over. For context, the England average was 18.6% and 18.4%, respectively (see *bottom right chart below*).
- Across Smethwick, 30.7% of people identified with a White ethnic group, 42.3% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 14.9% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 4.9% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, and 7.1% with other ethnic groups.

Median age of population, 2011 and 2021 Census



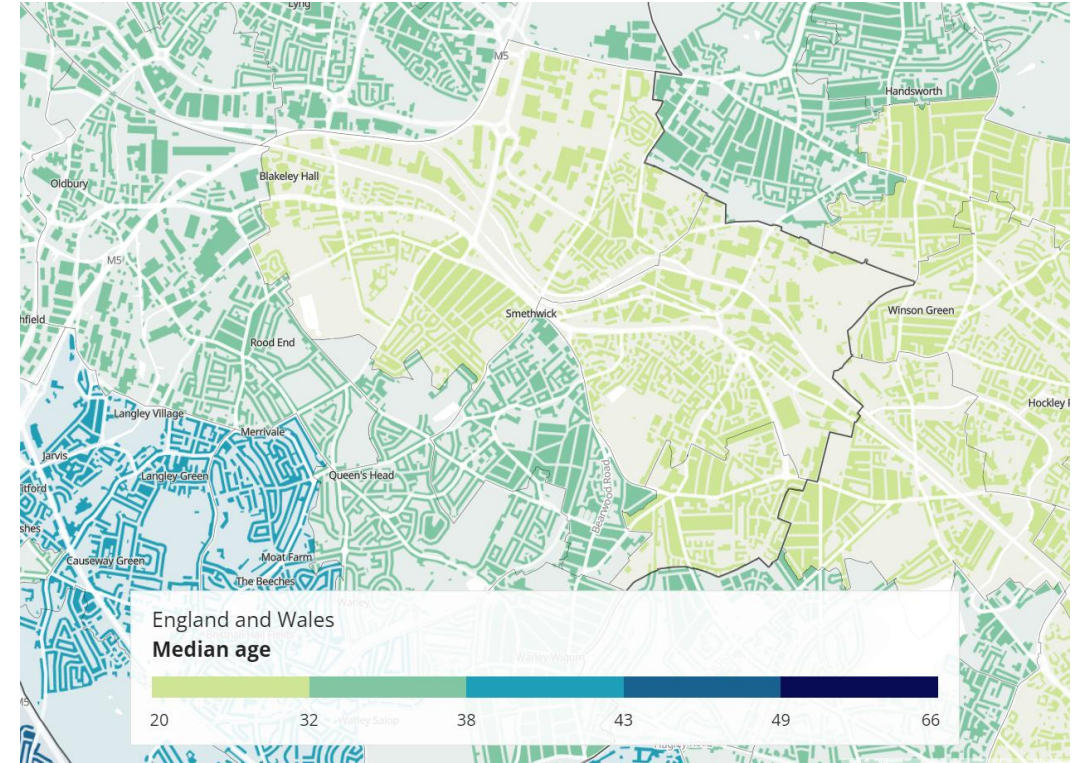
Source: [ONS Census, 2021](#); [ONS Census, 2011](#)

Age profile by location, mid-2021 estimates



Source: [ONS Census, 2021](#)

Median age in Smethwick, 2021



Source: [ONS Census, 2021](#)

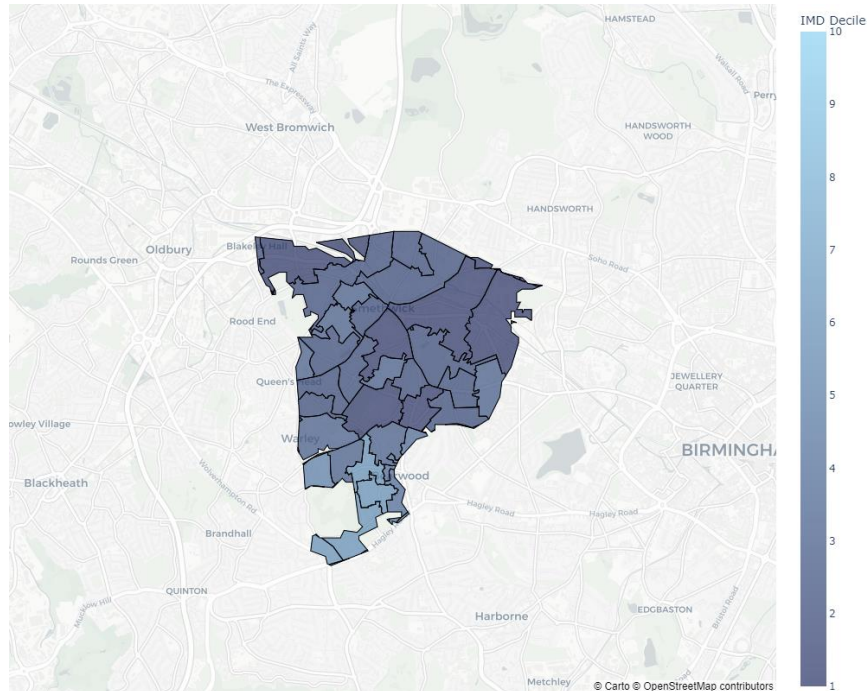




**Headlines:**

- Over 80% of [Lower Layer Super Output Areas \(LSOAs\)](#) in Smethwick are in the top 20% most deprived in England in terms of Living Environment Deprivation.
- Living Environment Deprivation (47.6%) and Income Deprivation Domain (33.3%) were the domains that had the largest proportion of Smethwick's LSOAs in the top 10% most deprived in England.

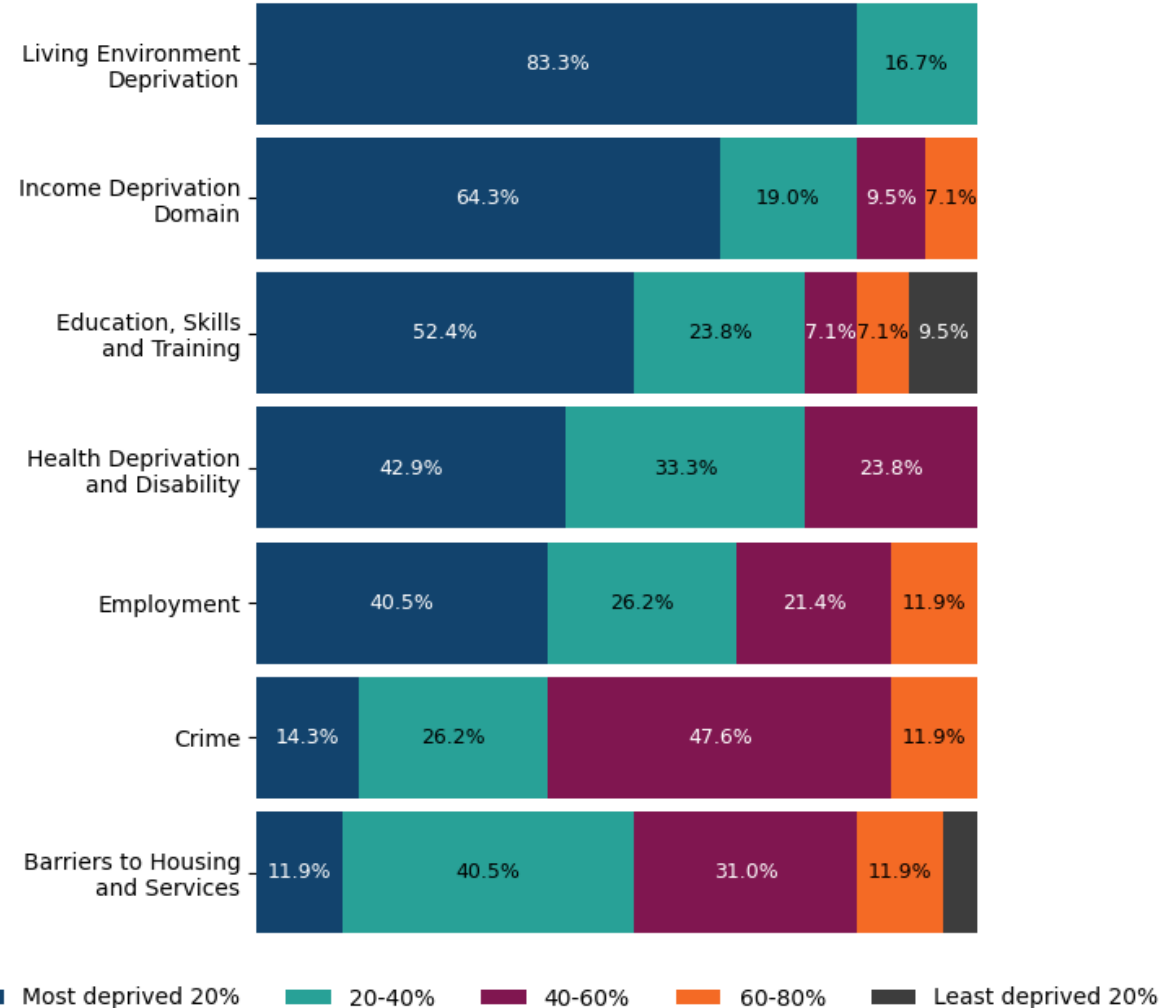
**Deprivation levels across LSOAs within Smethwick by decile (Decile 1 = Top 10% most deprived in England), 2019**



Source: [MHCLG IMD, 2019](#)

# Deprivation

**Deprivation levels (%) across LSOAs within Smethwick, compared to the England average, 2019**



Source: [MHCLG IMD, 2019](#)

Note: Missing labels on the bars represent a percentage of less than 7%.



# Annex B - Data and sources



## Data and sources

Indicator	Policy investment theme	Source
Recorded crime rate per 1,000 population (2023)	Safety and Security	<a href="https://data.police.uk/data/">https://data.police.uk/data/</a>
Social trust (2023)	Safety and Security	<a href="https://www.ukonward.com/reports/good-neighbours/">https://www.ukonward.com/reports/good-neighbours/</a>
Number of outlets (takeaways, restaurants, clubs, bars, pubs, fitness facilities and sport clubs) per 1,000 population (Sept 2023)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	Local Data Company
Commercial vacancy rates (%) (Nov 2023)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	Local Data Company
Footfall index based on O2 Motion mobile phone data (March 2022 to March 2023)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	O2 Motion
10-minute walking distance to green spaces (2023)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/bad00cdfa6b140599b06c64d10dc73c9?data_id=dataSource_21-Local_Authority_GSI_Score_2023_6252%3A183%2CdataSource_22-Local_Authority_GSI_Score_2023_6252%3A183">https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/bad00cdfa6b140599b06c64d10dc73c9?data_id=dataSource_21-Local_Authority_GSI_Score_2023_6252%3A183%2CdataSource_22-Local_Authority_GSI_Score_2023_6252%3A183</a>
Gross Value Added (£) per job filled (2020)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/uksmallareagvae/estimates">https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/uksmallareagvae/estimates</a>
16-64 year olds with level 3+ qualifications (%) (2021)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications</a>
16-64 year olds with no qualification (%) (2021)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications</a>



## Data and sources

Indicator	Policy investment theme	Source
Employment rate (age 16 to 64) (%) , 2021	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#employment">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#employment</a>
Job density (2019)	High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/understandingtownsinenglandandwalespatialanalysis">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/understandingtownsinenglandandwalespatialanalysis</a>
Premises with gigabit capable broadband (%) (2023)	Transport and Connectivity	<a href="https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/spring-2023">https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/spring-2023</a>
People who work from home (%) (2021)	Transport and Connectivity	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS061/editions/2021/versions/4">https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS061/editions/2021/versions/4</a>
Method of travel to work (2021)	Transport and Connectivity	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS061/editions/2021/versions/4">https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS061/editions/2021/versions/4</a>
Flows of commuters entering or leaving your town (2011)	Transport and Connectivity	DLUHC analysis based on Census 2011 data
Top 10 residence – work connections between Built Up Areas (2011)	Transport and Connectivity	DLUHC analysis based on Census 2011 data
Average minimum travel time to the nearest key service (minutes), 2019	Transport and Connectivity	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/journey-time-statistics-data-tables-jts">https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/journey-time-statistics-data-tables-jts</a>

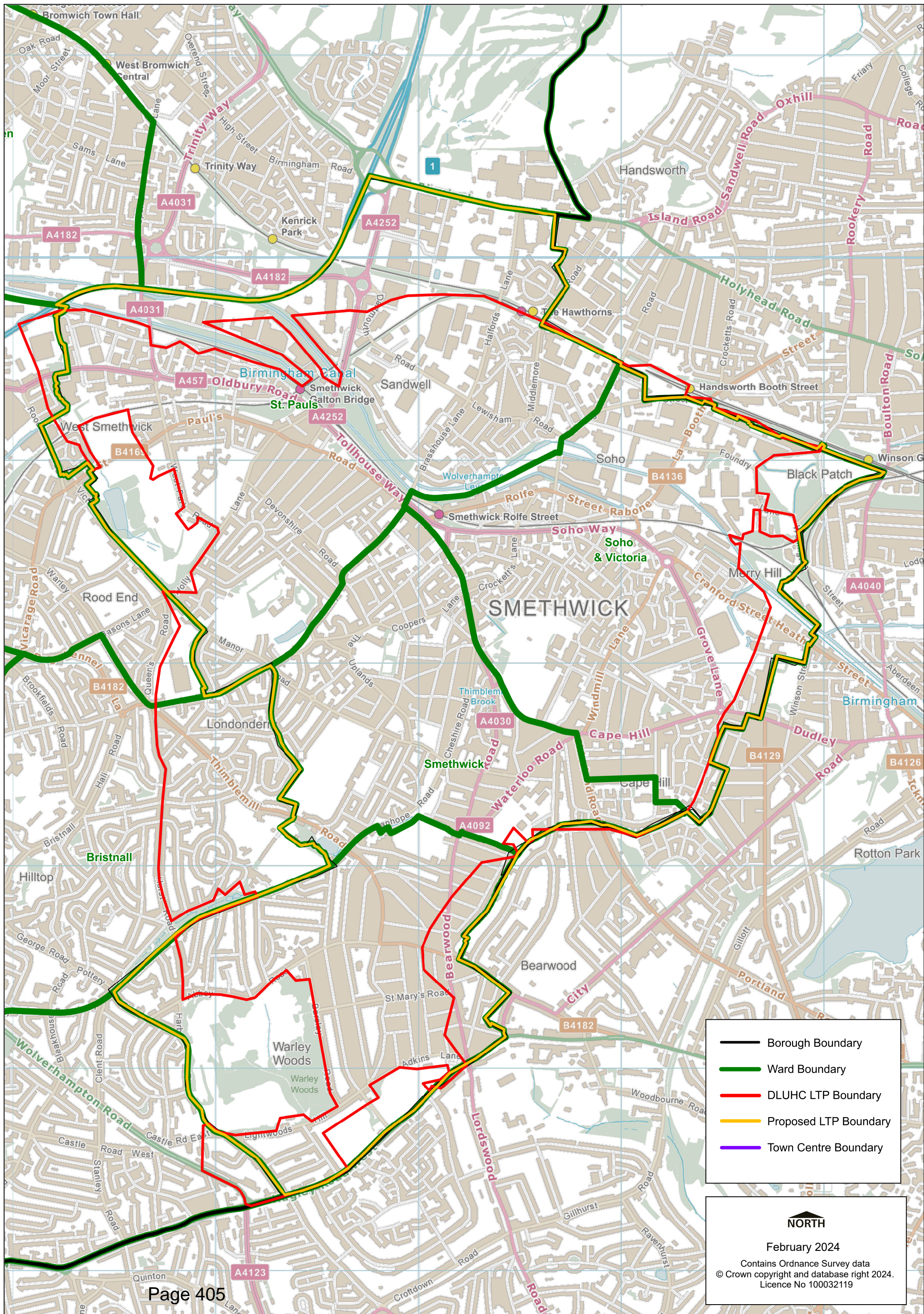


## Data and sources

Indicator	Policy investment theme	Source
Public transport accessibility by journey time from the town train station/landmark (2022)	Transport and Connectivity	<a href="https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/">https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/</a>
Median age (2021)	Used in the demographics section	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021unroundeddata">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021unroundeddata</a>
Median age (2011)	Used in the demographics section	<a href="https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks102ew">https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks102ew</a>
Population estimates (2021)	Used in the demographics section	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/townsandcitiescharacteristicsofbuiltupareasenglandandwales/census2021#qualifications</a>
Population by country of birth (2021)	Used in the demographics section	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS004/editions/2021/versions/3">https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS004/editions/2021/versions/3</a>
English Indices of Deprivation (2019)	Used in the deprivation section	<a href="https://opendatacommunities.org/data/societal-wellbeing/imd2019/indices">https://opendatacommunities.org/data/societal-wellbeing/imd2019/indices</a>

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- Borough Boundary
- Ward Boundary
- DLUHC LTP Boundary
- Proposed LTP Boundary
- Town Centre Boundary

**NORTH**

February 2024

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## Report to Cabinet

13 March 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	Levelling up Partnership
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Leader Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth Tammy Stokes
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Levelling Up Partnership Programme Manager Rebecca Jenkins <a href="mailto:rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk">rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet receive the progress update on the delivery of the Levelling Up Partnership;
- 1.2 That Cabinet receive a further progress update in 6 months.

### 2 Reasons for Recommendations





- 2.1 In September 2023, details of the Levelling Up Partnership (£20.4m) were formally announced by Government. This followed a set of Cabinet approvals in September to establish governance arrangements, approve the target geography as Wednesbury, and to agree the set of projects as follows:
  - Friar Park Urban Village
  - Wednesbury Community Safety Scheme
  - Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements
  - Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements
  - Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion





2.2 Cabinet requested to receive a report on the performance of the Levelling Up Partnership Programme after 6 months. This report provides an overview of performance.

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

The formation of a Levelling Up Partnership and delivery of the interventions within the LUP will contribute to all objectives of the corporate plan

	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b></p> <p>Opportunities for children and young people will be strengthened through an extended offer at Millennium Centre, Friar Park; a significant number of new homes and improved quality and safety of public spaces and greenspaces in Wednesbury.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b></p> <p>The interventions proposed for inclusion within the LUP will strengthen the quality and safety of greenspaces and public spaces in Wednesbury; encouraging physical activity. The interventions will enable a significant number of new quality homes.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b></p> <p>The interventions proposed for inclusion within the LUP will strengthen the deterrents for crime and ASB in Wednesbury.</p>
	<p><b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</b></p> <p>The interventions proposed for inclusion within the LUP will enable a significant number of new homes to be delivered and will improve the quality of neighbourhoods through improvements and enhanced safety measures in green spaces and public spaces.</p>



	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b></p> <p>The interventions proposed for inclusion within the LUP will increase the adult skills offer in Wednesbury and will improve the quality of public spaces in Wednesbury Town Centre; helping the town to thrive and retain and attract businesses.</p>
	<p><b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b></p> <p>The interventions proposed for inclusion within the LUP will enable better connections through green spaces for walking and cycling and improvements to routes between Wednesbury Town Centre and the Metro.</p>

#### 4. Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In March 2023, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that Sandwell was one of 20 places to be invited to form a Levelling Up Partnership (LUP).
- 4.2 Levelling Up Partnerships are targeted interventions designed to identify practical, tangible actions to support priority places to ‘level up’ and to help government develop a more holistic understanding of place. Sandwell and Hull were the first of 20 areas selected to form a Levelling Up Partnership.
- 4.3 In September, the details of the Levelling Up Partnership (£20.4m) were formally announced by Government. This followed a set of Cabinet approvals in September to establish governance arrangements, approve the target geography as Wednesbury, and to agree the set of projects below. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.
- Friar Park Urban Village
  - Wednesbury Community Safety Scheme
  - Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements
  - Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements
  - Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion



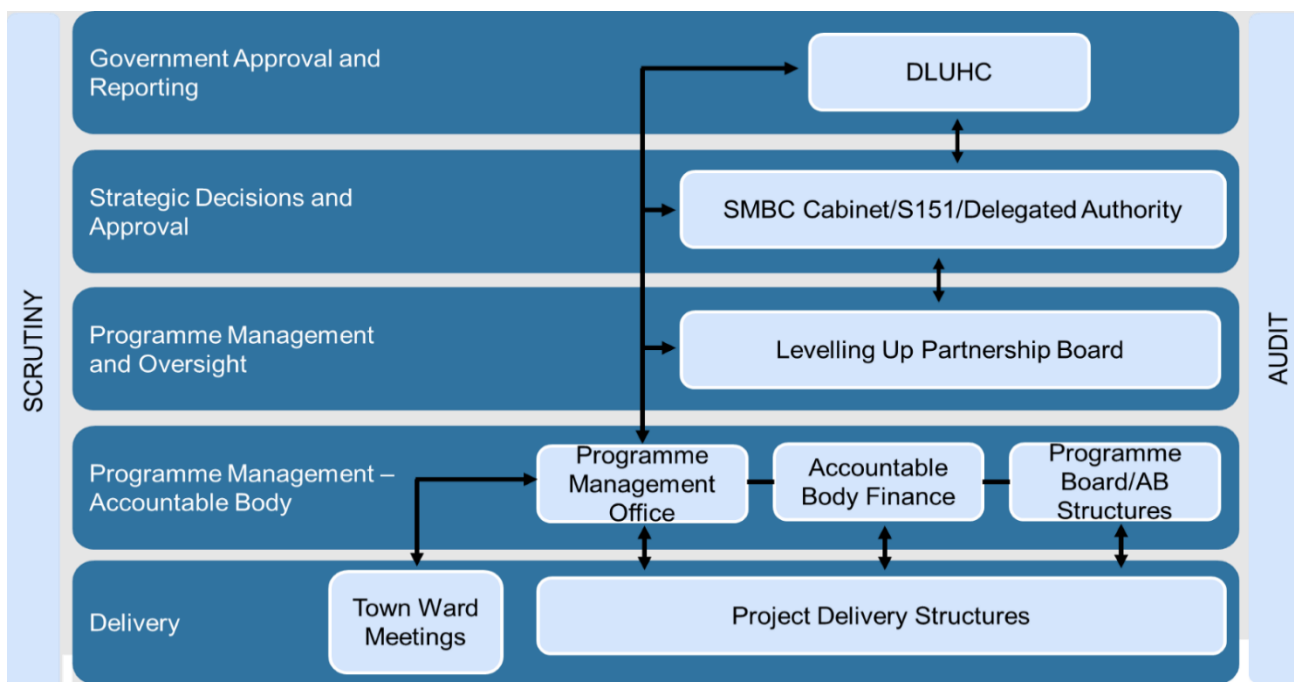
4.4 A grant determination letter was issued in October 2023 for the first financial allocation of £15m capital and £250K revenue. A second allocation of £5m capital and £50K revenue will be made at the start of next financial year. The grant determination letter received in October 2023 sets out that spend must be made by March 2025 which presents a significant challenge for the council to deliver at pace.

4.5 The remainder of this report sets out a progress update on:

- Governance Arrangements and Reporting
- Project Delivery Progress
- Risk Management
- Communication and Engagement

### Governance Arrangements and Reporting

4.6 The governance model for the programme was agreed by Cabinet in September 2023. It is modelled on the Towns Fund governance model and is set out below:



4.7 The Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board has been established to oversee the programme. It brings together Councillors, MPs,





representatives of the voluntary sector, the business community, faith group representatives, and partners. Positions have been appointed to and the Board held its first meeting in December 2023. The Board is scheduled to meet every other month with the next meeting due to take place in February 2024.

- 4.8 Monthly monitoring conversations are in place with the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities.
- 4.9 Internal governance consists of a LUP Project Group and progress reporting to the Council's Leadership Team. The LUP Project Group brings together project Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) for the LUP projects and key enabling services (procurement and finance) to review programme and project progress, issues and risks.
- 4.10 Programme progress reports are made to Leadership Team on a quarterly basis and monthly by exception. This is the first 6-monthly programme update to Cabinet following Cabinet's approval in September 2023.
- 4.11 All LUP projects are scheduled to undergo a capital appraisal as part of the Council's internal assurance arrangements. The first round of capital appraisals (for 3 of 6 LUP projects) took place in November and project spend has been authorised subject to panel recommendations being met.
- 4.12 In October, Council granted approval for an exemption to Financial Regulations which enables project spend to commence ahead of a capital appraisal being conducted. Project spend ahead of an appraisal has been agreed by the S151 Officer.

## Project Delivery Update

- 4.13 A summary of project delivery as at end January 2024 is provided below. Further detail is contained in Appendix 2.



Project	Progress Summary
1. Masterplan – Wednesbury Town Centre	Capital Appraisal approved Consultants appointed Risk around timescales for approval but no impact on spend deadline
2. Community Safety	Capital Appraisal approved CCTV installation due to commence
3. Public Realm	Public Consultation launched (closing 11 March)
4. Friar Park Urban Village	In expression of interest phase for Developer Partner Risk around timescales. Escalated to programme risk register
5. Millennium Centre	Initial designs produced and being reviewed Risk around timescales and costs. Options under review.
6. Greenspaces	Capital appraisal approved subject to recommendations In procurement for first 3 greenspaces schemes Initial design work underway for Hydes Road Risk around costs – controls in place to review project budget following procurement phase
<b>Financial position at end January 2024</b>	
£37K spend to date All projects forecasting within budget	

## Risk Management

4.14 A programme level risk register is in place and this is reviewed monthly by the LUP Project Group. Project level red risks have been identified and are reported to the LUP Project Group and the WLUP Board. The programme risk register is provided at Appendix 3.

4.15 At project level, a risk register is in place for each project and this will be maintained throughout the project lifecycle. The project risk registers are reviewed as part of the capital appraisal for each project.

4.16 There are 2 programme red risks as follows:

4.17



<p>Risk Title and Description</p>	<p><b>Grant Conditions: Delivery Timeline &amp; S151 project sign-off</b></p> <p>If programme delivery cannot be completed by 2024-25 financial year (March 2025) and/or there are concerns around project delivery from S151 assurance, there is a risk of grant clawback, reputational damage and missed opportunities to deliver the benefits of the programme</p>
<p>Controls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeking clarification from DLUHC around grant clawback position and parameters for second year grant allocation</li> <li>- Regular reporting on progress of project delivery and spend is in place</li> <li>- Capital appraisal to be completed for all projects</li> <li>- S151 sign-off of spend in advance of capital appraisal</li> </ul>
<p>Risk expected to reduce</p>	<p>When clarification is received from DLUHC around the clawback position and/or carry forward position</p>

<p>Risk Title and Description</p>	<p><b>Delivery of Friar Park Urban Village Project</b></p> <p>Risk relates to delivery of project within March 2025 deadline due to risk of delays to obtaining EA licenses and/or delays to developer partner procurement process</p>
<p>Controls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early engagement with EA has been undertaken and consultants (technical experts) procured to support the engagement process</li> <li>- Legal review of proposed approach has been undertaken</li> <li>- Full risk assessment to take place to understand issues from proposed approach</li> <li>- Capital appraisal review underway</li> <li>- Seeking clarification from DLUHC around grant clawback position, carry forward to 2025-2026, and parameters for second year grant allocation</li> </ul>



Risk expected to reduce	When EA permitting process concluded and delivery partner is procured And/or When clarification is received from DLUHC around the clawback position and/or carry forward position
-------------------------	---

**Communication and Engagement**

4.18 A programme level communication and engagement strategy is in development based on initial input from the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership (WLUP) Board. The draft strategy is attached as appendix 4.

4.19 The strategy and individual project communication and engagement plans will be considered by the WLUP Board in February 2024.

**5 Alternative Options**

5.1 This report provides an overview of progress of the Levelling Up Partnership Programme. It was requested by Cabinet to provide assurance on delivery progress. Alternative options would be for Cabinet to receive progress reporting through the Council’s performance management framework rather than a bespoke report.

**6 Implications**

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>The LUP presents a £20.4m opportunity for Sandwell with a challenging delivery time constraint.</p> <p>All LUP projects will undergo a capital appraisal. The first round (3 of 6 projects) were approved end November 2023.</p> <p>Council granted approval for an exemption to Financial Regulations which enables project spend to commence ahead of a capital appraisal being conducted. Project spend ahead of an appraisal has been agreed on a case-by-case basis by the S151 Officer.</p>
-------------------	--



	<p>A grant determination letter was issued in October 2023 for the first financial allocation of £15m capital and £250K revenue. A second allocation of £5m capital and £50K revenue will be made at the start of next financial year.</p> <p>All LUP projects are forecasting to deliver within budget.</p>
<p><b>Legal and Governance:</b></p>	<p>The Council is the lead delivery organisation for all LUP projects.</p> <p>Delivery of the projects is being overseen by the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board. An internal LUP Project Group is in place as an internal mechanism for ensuring the council is fulfilling its role as Accountable Body and for resolving issues. Spend will be monitored through the Council's Corporate Asset Management Board. A LUP programme manager has been appointed to oversee the programme.</p> <p>Legal agreements/MoUs may be required to deliver specific projects and will follow standard council process</p> <p>Legal advice has been commissioned for the Friar Park Urban Village project.</p> <p>All LUP projects will undergo a subsidy control screening and assessment as required. Specific subsidy advice is being sought around the Friar Park Urban Village project. It is not expected that there will be any subsidy matters applicable to the other LUP projects.</p>



	The Levelling up Partnership is being managed as a programme. The Wednesbury Levelling up Partnership Board is in place to oversee the programme.
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>A programme level risk register is in place and this is reviewed monthly by the LUP Project Group. Project level red risks have been identified and are reported to the LUP Project Group.</p> <p>Project level risk registers are in place and will be maintained throughout the project lifecycle. The project risk registers are being reviewed as part of the capital appraisal for each project.</p> <p>Red risks are reported to Leadership Team as part of quarterly reporting (and monthly by exception).</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	Through the project development process, consideration is being given to the impact on and improvements that can be made for residents with protected characteristics. Equality Impact screenings and EqlAs will be conducted, as appropriate. Equality implications are included in reporting to the WLUP Board.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The underpinning objective of the LUP is to ‘level up’ and reduce inequalities. The proposed interventions focus on tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way and compliment public health programmes.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The proposed interventions will be delivered in accordance with the Council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and will deliver social value in line with the council’s requirements.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	The proposed interventions include a range of improvements to the quality of green spaces and public spaces in Wednesbury; making a contribution to biodiversity.





	Proposals will also enable the delivery of a significant number of new homes and a range of construction work. Options for energy efficiency measures and reducing carbon through the construction process will be considered as part of the detailed design phase and procurement.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	<p>The voice of the child is incorporated within the LUP governance arrangements through the inclusion of young people’s representative on the WLUP Board. Where consultation is being undertaken as part of the LUP Programme, young people’s views and opinions will be sought.</p> <p>The intervention focusing on the extension of the Friar Park Millennium Centre will include consideration of youth opportunities.</p>

## 7. Appendices

1. Levelling Up Partnership Scope and Intervention Descriptions
2. Summary of LUP Project Delivery
3. Levelling Up Partnership Programme Risk Register
4. Draft LUP Communication and Engagement Strategy

## 8. Background Papers

[Agenda, Reports and Draft Minutes of Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board 18 December 2023](#)

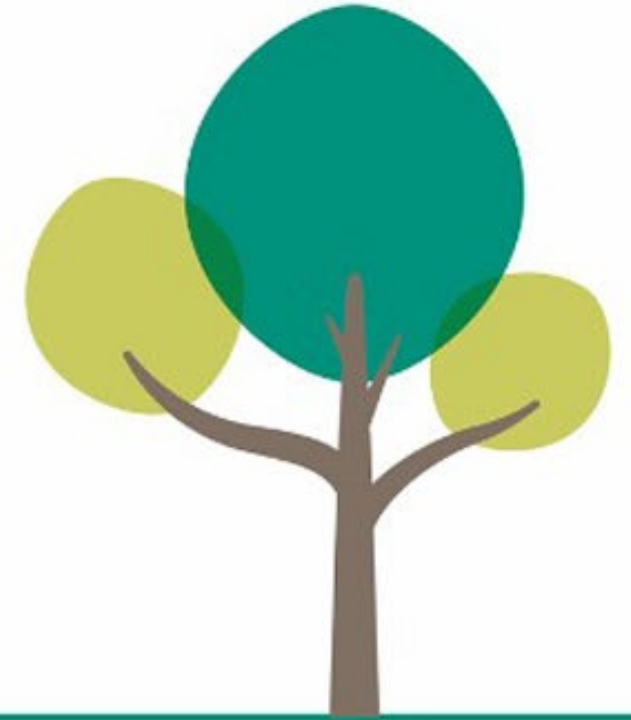
[Agenda and Reports of Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board 29 February 2024](#)



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# Sandwell Levelling up Partnership

## Scope and Interventions

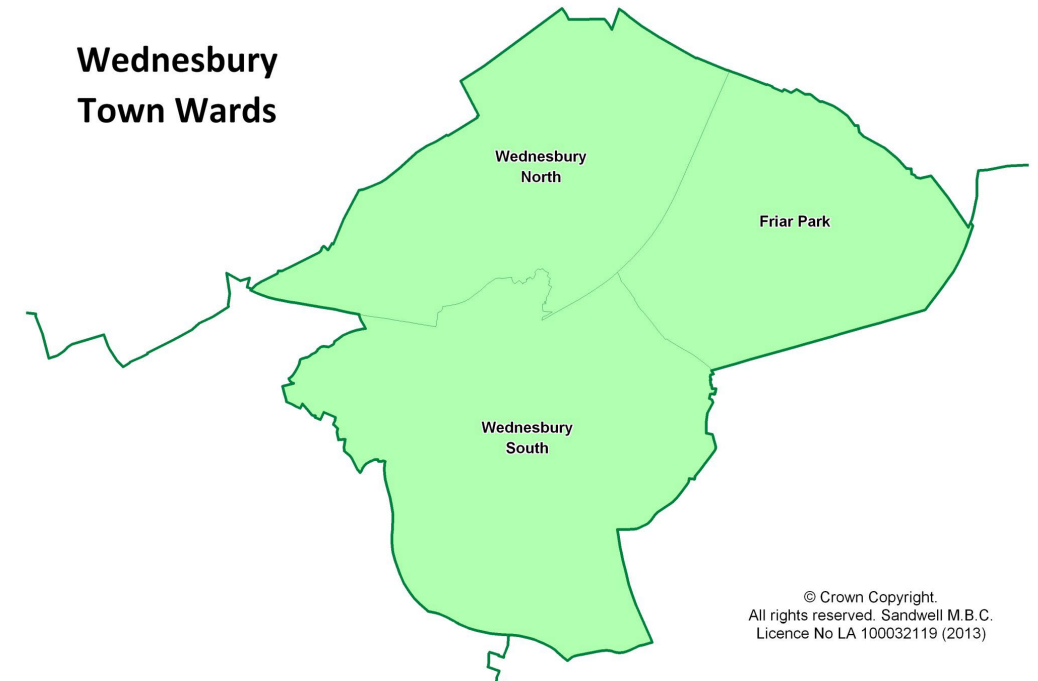




# Levelling up Challenges - Wednesbury with a focus on Friar Park

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- Wednesbury suffers from high levels of **deprivation** and Friar Park is one of the most deprived wards in Sandwell
- Residents of Friar Park ward have **low healthy life expectancy** and **high levels of residents with no qualifications** (33% in Friar Park)
- Wednesbury has the highest proportion of residents who are **economically inactive** across Sandwell's Towns
- **Safety and perceptions of safety** are an issue for residents and young people
- **Large unmet housing need** across Sandwell – **land viability**. Largescale opportunity to deliver Friar Park Urban Village





# The LUP Opportunity: A unique partnership between Government and local stakeholders in Sandwell

In 2 years time, with the active support of stakeholders, the LUP will facilitate:

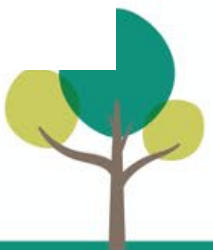
- Good quality housing in Friar Park and be en-route to delivering more
- Improvement to long-standing derelict land in Friar Park and create new green spaces
- Improved residents' perceptions of crime and safety through reducing crime, and strengthening partnerships to address ASB and crime issues into the future
- Improvements in residents' skills and attainment through increasing the skills offer to Wednesbury residents
- Better health outcomes through revitalised green spaces in Wednesbury linked to existing plans for a range of health interventions
- More capacity for community facilities to support a growing population





# How we will measure our success - LUP Programme Outcome Measures

1. Number of new homes enabled
2. Resident satisfaction with their local area as a place to live
3. ha new open space enabled
4. Business vacancy rate in Wednesbury Town Centre/ Business Growth Measure / equiv.
5. Residents Perception of Crime and Antisocial behaviour
6. Recorded crime and ASB in Wednesbury
7. Number of nuisance bike reports in areas with new inhibitors installed
8. Quality score for green spaces
9. Skills/qualifications gained / equivalent measure
10. Numbers of participants in community activities / equivalent measure





# Summary of LUP Interventions

	Project Summary	Output Measures
<p>1. Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan</p>	<p>Building on HAZ improvements to consider how to further enhance the public realm in Wednesbury Town Centre through a masterplanning process. This funding includes LUP programme management costs</p>	<p>Completion of Masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre</p> <p>LUP Programme Management Arrangements in Place</p>
<p>2. Community Safety Scheme</p>	<p>Build on partnership work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour by increasing the deterrents to crime and anti-social behaviour in Wednesbury.</p> <p>This will include installing new and upgrading CCTV infrastructure in Wednesbury Town Centre and Friar Park, providing deployable cameras to tackle fly-tipping across Wednesbury, implementing a radio link scheme, and installing nuisance bike inhibitors.</p>	<p>No. Of new/upgraded cameras in place</p> <p>New business radio scheme implemented</p> <p>No. Of deployable cameras new/upgraded</p> <p>No. of locations with improved preventative measures</p>



# Summary of LUP Interventions

	Summary	Output Measures
<b>3. Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm</b>	Following a masterplanning process, the project will enable enhancements to the public realm and improvements to long standing derelict sites.	Improved pedestrian area No. Problem sites improved
<b>4. Friar Park Urban Village</b>	Fund land remediation viability gap to deliver Friar Park Urban Village Scheme enabling c.630 new homes.	Ha land remediated
<b>5. Friar Park Millennium Centre</b>	Improving the existing community centre in Friar Park to meet the demands from extended community (as a result of proposed development of Friar Park Urban Village) and enhance the skills delivery offer.	Improved library facility Extended meeting spaces Improved kitchen/storage facilities
<b>6. Greenspaces Improvements</b>	Enhancing 4 existing green spaces in Wednesbury to improve safety measures, quality scores, accessibility and provide additional activities.	Improved green space Improved play areas Improved sports facilities



## Intervention 1 – Friar Park Urban Village

This project will fund land remediation viability gap to deliver Friar Park Urban Village Scheme enabling c.630 new homes.



Friar Park Urban Village site is the most challenging brownfield site in the West Midlands.

With an agreed masterplan in place, the [Friar Park Urban Village scheme](#) is currently the largest Council-led residential development opportunity in the borough and the indicative proposals suggest that c.630 homes could be achieved on the site as well as significant areas of landscaping and open space.

The site is highly constrained and suffers not only from the low land values shared across other areas of Sandwell, but also acutely suffers from high levels of land remediation required to bring forward development. Primarily this is a result of the former uses of the site which included a former sewage works. Costs to remediate these works are significant.

The LUP presents an opportunity to bridge these viability issues through LUP funding and enable the Council and its partners to bring forward this major development.





## Intervention 2 – Community Safety Scheme

This project will Build on partnership work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour by increasing the deterrents to crime and anti-social behaviour in Wednesbury.

Perceptions of safety are an issue in Wednesbury with the lowest proportion of residents across all Sandwell Towns feeling unsafe at daytime, and more than 1/3 of Wednesbury residents feeling unsafe at night-time (Sandwell Residents Survey 2022). Assaults and thefts from shops and stores have been consistently the highest recorded offences in Wednesbury.

Resident feedback identified common themes of concerns around ASB and crime, including drug use and dealing, off-road bikes, more police presence/visibility, improved safety at the bus station, groups hanging around the streets. In the Young People's Corporate Plan a commitment has been made to have more CCTV cameras and to have detached youth workers in key public spaces to help young people feel safe. (Residents' Survey, SHAPE young people's survey, and specific engagement around crime and safety issues.

The project will include installing new and upgrading CCTV infrastructure in Wednesbury Town Centre and Friar Park, providing deployable cameras to tackle fly-tipping across Wednesbury, implementing a radio link scheme, and installing nuisance bike inhibitors.





## **Intervention 3 – Friar Park Millennium Centre Expansion**

This project will extend the existing community centre in Friar Park to meet the demands from extended community (as a result of proposed development of Friar Park Urban Village) and enhance the skills delivery offer.

The Friar Park Millennium Centre currently provides a range of activities and facilities for local community use.

The proposed development of the Friar Park Urban Village means that the future capacity of the centre is likely to restrict its ability to meet extended community needs. This has been raised as a key concern amongst existing residents through the public consultation exercises undertaken in relation to the proposed development. In addition, key service providers have identified the potential to extend the existing services to meet existing and new demands from the community.

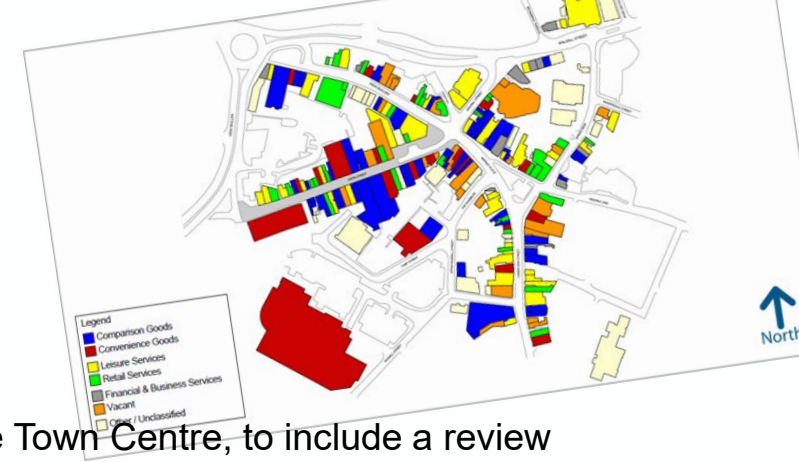
The aim would be to extend the Centre to accommodate a range of new facilities for community use, as well as the provision of a permanent library.





# Intervention 4 – Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements

This project will build on the Heritage Action Zone improvements in the Town Centre to further enhance Wednesbury Town Centre.



Wednesbury Town Centre does not currently have a Masterplan in place. A strategic review of the Town Centre, to include a review of its current uses and future opportunities would provide a solid base for future intervention.

Wednesbury Town Centre is structured similar to a traditional market town centre, with a Market Place and Clock. A large Morrison's supermarket anchors the centre with traditional shops aligning the Town Centre pedestrian and highway networks.

The Town Centre has recently benefitted from public realm improvements and the relocation of an outdoor market to the traditional Market Place. However, this investment (Heritage Lottery Fund) was geographically constrained to the Conservation Area, which is a small area around the Clock Tower on Market Place. The appearance of Wednesbury Town Centre is also impacted by a number of long term derelict sites and some poor-quality buildings which are unoccupied.

One of the key strategic benefits of Wednesbury Town Centre is its connectivity; with a Bus Station in the centre, and a Metro Station a few minutes' walk away. Some improvements have already been implemented to improve the quality of the access arrangements from the Town to the Metro, including a new cycle way. However, the main route remains isolated and somewhat unwelcoming.

Intervention to improve this route via urban greening and other measures will be explored further (via a Masterplan). The Masterplan would also provide an urban realm strategy identifying the best locations for urban greening initiatives and pocket parks. Funding from the LUP would be used to implement the proposals in the masterplan.







## Intervention 5 – Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements

This project will enhance 4 existing green spaces in Wednesbury to improve safety measures, quality scores, accessibility and provide additional activities.

Much of the investment into Green Spaces within Sandwell has been focussed on the Main Town Parks. All of these Town-level sites have achieved the Green Flag award to highlight their quality and success.

Other green spaces in Sandwell have not seen similar investment and are lagging behind. Neighbourhood and local level green spaces, such as the ones identified for funding within this proposal serve the more deprived residents without daily access to travel to borough level parks.

This project will see a host of improvements across four Green Spaces with the lowest quality scores in Wednesbury (Hydes Road Playing Fields, Balls Hill Open Space, Wytnor Lane Open Space, Lakeside and Norbury Road Open Space).

This will bring physical and mental health benefits for residents by providing a better quality and improved access to green spaces. The green spaces will benefit from improved safety measures to improve safety and perceptions of ASB and safety in Wednesbury.



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**Appendix – LUP Project Delivery Overview as at end January 2024**

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Project	Progress Commentary	Next Project Milestone	Finance		Red Project Risks
			Spend to date	Forecast	
1. Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital appraisal approved</li> <li>Consultants appointed</li> <li>Project plan being re-profiled for Cabinet approval in July</li> </ul>	Handover of baseline study and valuations	£22.5K	In budget	Timescale for masterplan approval. No impact on spend deadline
2. Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital appraisal approved</li> <li>WLUP Board approval to commence delivery of CCTV and Business Partnership</li> <li>Nuisance bike measures identified, and costings requested.</li> <li>Business and Community Engagement Officer due to commence in February</li> </ul>	CCTV installation	£nil	In budget	No red risks
3. Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary works (site investigation and designs) underway</li> </ul>	Completion of public consultation	£nil	In budget	Impact of masterplan approval date – being controlled through

Project	Progress Commentary	Next Project Milestone	Finance		Red Project Risks
			Spend to date	Forecast	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out to public consultation on public realm improvements (closing 11 March)</li> </ul>				commencing preliminary works and consultation
4. Friar Park Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultant appointed to progress EA permitting process.</li> <li>Legal input to structure of disposal contracts and regulatory implications.</li> <li>EOIs requested for developer partners</li> <li>Preparation of ITT documents</li> </ul>	Expressions of interest from Developer Partners	£11.1K	In budget	Red project risks around delays to EA licenses and delays to developer partner procurement process impacting on grant timeline conditions. Escalated as programme risk
5. Millennium Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial designs and cost assessment completed</li> <li>Review of building design options underway to aid final designs and cost plan</li> <li>Preparations being made for public consultation.</li> </ul>	Complete design process	£3.4K	In budget	Red risks around timescales and costs. Options under review.

Project	Progress Commentary	Next Project Milestone	Finance		Red Project Risks
			Spend to date	Forecast	
6. Greenspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital appraisal approved subject to recommendations.</li> <li>WLUP Board approval to commence delivery of first 3 greenspaces schemes</li> <li>Initial design work underway for Hydes Rd project</li> </ul>	Completion of tender process for 3 greenspaces	£nil	In budget	Project budget – impact of inflation. Controls in place to review project budget following receipt of tenders

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# Levelling Up Programme - Risk Register

## January 2024

Profile of Current Risk Scores:

Red	1, 9
Amber	3, 4, 6, 7, 10
Green	2, 5, 8



1. Best start in life for children and young people



2. People live well and age well



3. Strong resilient communities





4. Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods







5. A strong and inclusive economy





6. A connected and accessible Sandwell

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Link to business plan objective	Previous score	Direction of travel (up arrow: risk increase, down arrow: risk decrease)	Current risk score (Nov 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)
01	<p><b>Grant Conditions: Delivery Timeline &amp; S151 project sign-off</b></p> <p>If programme delivery cannot be completed by 2024-25 financial year (March 2025) and/or there are concerns around project delivery from S151 assurance, there is a risk of grant clawback, reputational damage and missed opportunities to deliver the benefits of the programme</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> Programme SRO, Project SROs and Programme Manager</p>		Red		Red	Amber (March 24)	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant Determination Letter Received</li> <li>Submission of project profile information to DLUHC Sep 2023</li> <li>Monthly reporting on project delivery progress, financial spend and projections</li> <li>Capital appraisals completed for 3/6 projects</li> <li>S151 sign-off of pre-appraisal spend</li> <li>Monthly monitoring conversations with DLUHC area lead</li> <li>Raised with DLUHC request for year 2 allocation to run to Mar'26 and agreement to capital swaps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital appraisals completed for all projects</li> <li>Feedback from DLUHC around request for year 2 allocation and capital swaps</li> <li>Options for internal management of capital progressed</li> </ul>
02	<p><b>Capital Programme</b></p> <p>If agreement isn't received from DLUHC to Sandwell managing the capital allocation within the capital programme, or that the capital programme does not allow for accountancy treatment to enable the LUP projects, then there will be an inability to deliver the full LUP programme resulting in grant clawback, reputational damage and missed opportunities to deliver the benefits of the programme</p>		Amber		Amber		<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial exploration of options for internal management of capital to enable project funding to carry forward to 25/26 financial year</li> <li>Raised with DLUHC request for year 2 allocation to run to Mar'26 and agreement to capital swaps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion with DLUHC around parameters of year 2 grant due to be issued at start of 2024-25 financial year</li> <li>Feedback from DLUHC around request for year 2 allocation and capital swaps</li> </ul>

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Link to business plan objective	Previous score	Direction of travel (up arrow: risk increase, down arrow: risk decrease)	Current risk score (Nov 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)
03	<p><b>Programme and Project Management</b></p> <p>If appropriate arrangements are not made to manage the programme and its related projects, benefits will be delayed or not achieved. The risk includes consideration of matters concerning capability and capacity to manage the programme and the availability of technical support</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> LUP Programme SRO LUP Programme Manager</p>		Amber		Amber	Green (Jan 24 – linked to SRO confirmation)	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project level SROs and Project Managers in place</li> <li>Programme Manager in place</li> <li>Project Group in place and meeting monthly including technical support reps (finance and procurement)</li> <li>Project progress reporting in place (monthly)</li> <li>Updates to LT quarterly</li> <li>Programme Support Officer in place</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme SRO to be confirmed following Snr Mgmt Restructure</li> <li>EqIA, EnIA, Health Impact screening / assessments conducted</li> </ul>
04	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>If there are unclear lines of decision making, or insufficient involvement of stakeholders in the LUP governance this will lead to miscommunication, delays, missed opportunities and stakeholder dissatisfaction / disengagement</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> LUP Programme Manager</p>		Amber		Amber	Green (Mar 24 -linked to WLUP board first quarter of meetings completed)	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabinet approval of governance arrangements</li> <li>Internal Project Group in Place</li> <li>WLUP Board appointments made</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> WLUP Board held 18/12</li> <li>WLUP Board forward plan in place</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WLUP Board Member induction and return of Code of Conduct and Register of Interests</li> </ul>
05	<p><b>Programme Benefits, Monitoring and Evaluation</b></p>		Green		Green	Maintain Green	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme outcome measures drafted and shared with DLUHC</li> </ul>

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Link to business plan objective	Previous score	Direction of travel (up arrow: risk increase, down arrow: risk decrease)	Current risk score (Nov 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)
	<p>If the programme progress and delivery of benefits (outcomes) and outputs are not robustly monitored and evaluated then there will be a failure to take corrective action or to fully understand the impact of interventions in addressing Levelling Up Challenges</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> LUP Programme Manager</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output measures submitted to DLUHC with project profile</li> <li>Arrangements for project progress reporting in place</li> <li>Baseline outputs reported to WLUP Board alongside approvals made 18/12 for community Safety and Greenspaces projects</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outputs reported to WLUP Board</li> <li>Programme outcome measures to be reviewed in light of PH led work around levelling up framework</li> <li>Baseline outcome measures captured and data sources agreed</li> <li>Change control process in place</li> </ul>
06	<p><b>Communication and Engagement:</b> If consultation and engagement activity does not engage with key stakeholders, build on existing insight from consultation and engagement activities, or there is a lack of engagement in consultation and engagement activities, this will result in interventions not being acceptable to the community, leading to challenge to proposals, reputational damage, delays in implementation and/or grant clawback. This risk includes consideration of proactive communication to share LUP programme achievements and milestones</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> LUP Programme Manager</p>		Amber		Amber	Green (May 24)	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DLUHC conducted engagement with key stakeholders as part of initial deep dive activity</li> <li>Interventions identified align to evidence base of past consultation and engagement including Residents' Survey, and FP Masterplan</li> <li>Project Plans include consultation and engagement activity</li> <li>Consultation and Engagement Activity updated monthly as part of monthly project progress reporting</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans for consultation and engagement activity discussed with WLUP Board</li> <li>Outcomes of consultation and engagement reported to WLUP Board include any objections</li> <li>Internet presence to be created</li> <li>Creation of programme level communication tools</li> </ul>

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Link to business plan objective	Previous score	Direction of travel (up arrow: risk increase, down arrow: risk decrease)	Current risk score (Nov 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutiny consideration of LUP Programme during 24/25 Municipal Year to include communication and engagement strategy</li> </ul>
07	<p><b>Elected Member Involvement and Engagement</b></p> <p>If Elected Members are not sufficiently involved in shaping LUP proposals or represented through LUP governance arrangements there will be missed opportunities to use insight from Elected Members to shape LUP proposals resulting in dissatisfaction, resistance to the programme and scrutiny call-in leading to programme delivery delays</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> LUP Programme Manager</p>		Amber		Amber	Green Apr '24	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabinet involved in deep dive activity</li> <li>Elected Members included in WLUP Board</li> <li>W'bury Members' discussions Sep '23 &amp; Dec '23</li> <li>Standing item at W'bury Members' quarterly meeting</li> <li>Liaison with scrutiny to programme their input as part of 24/25 Municipal Year</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected Members to be invited to participate in project consultation activity</li> <li>Scrutiny consideration of LUP Programme during 24/25 Municipal Year to include communication and engagement strategy</li> </ul>
08	<p><b>Levelling Up Partnership Opportunity</b></p> <p>It the LUP programme and its governance arrangements focus on the delivery of the selected interventions only, this will result in a missed opportunity to build a lasting partnership and address the long term levelling up challenges for Wednesbury and shape future plans and priorities for investment.</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b></p>		Green		Green	Maintain green	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WLUP Board Terms of Reference include a role as providing strategic direction across the LUP</li> <li>Set of programme outcome measures in place</li> <li>WLUP Board forward plan in place</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation of LUP Programme Outcome measures aligned to PH-led levelling up framework development</li> </ul>

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Link to business plan objective	Previous score	Direction of travel (up arrow: risk increase, down arrow: risk decrease)	Current risk score (Nov 2023)	Target risk score and date	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk and action date)
	LUP Programme SRO & LUP Programme Manager						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration to take place into WLUP Board role re shaping other plans relating to Wednesbury (e.g. Town Plan)</li> <li>• WLUP Board forward plan to include consideration of social value through LUP spend</li> </ul>
09	<p><b>Delivery of Friar Park Urban Village Project</b></p> <p>Delay / Issues in obtaining licence from EA for Friar Park Urban Village Project and overall timescales for delivery by Mar-25 spend deadline resulting in potential clawback of funding/ liability for the council, reputational damage and significant impact on achieving the outputs and outcomes of the LUP.</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> Friar Park Urban Village Project SRO</p>		Red		Red	Amber	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive liaison with EA facilitated by DLUHC</li> <li>• Procurement of developer underway</li> <li>• Options identified for managing slippage beyond Mar-25</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project capital appraisal to be undertaken including project level risk register review</li> <li>• Feedback from DLUHC around request for year 2 allocation and capital swaps</li> <li>• Options for internal management of capital progressed</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Legal: Subsidy Control</b></p> <p>If a subsidy applies and this is not identified / not declared within the timescale then a legal challenge could be made resulting in suspension of project activity/ recovery of finance and reputational damage</p> <p><b>Risk Owner</b> Monitoring Officer and Programme Manager</p>		Amber		Amber	Green Mar'24	<p><b>Current and ongoing controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach agreed with Legal Services</li> <li>• Specific subsidy control advice is being commissioned for Friar Park Urban Village project</li> </ul> <p><b>Further Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screening to be undertaken for all LUP Projects and reviewed by Legal Services</li> <li>• Subsidy Control Assessments undertaken and declarations made, if required</li> <li>• Review Subsidy Control position during programme in the event of scheme changes</li> </ul>





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# Levelling Up Partnership Programme

## DRAFT Communication and Engagement Strategy

### 1. Purpose and Summary

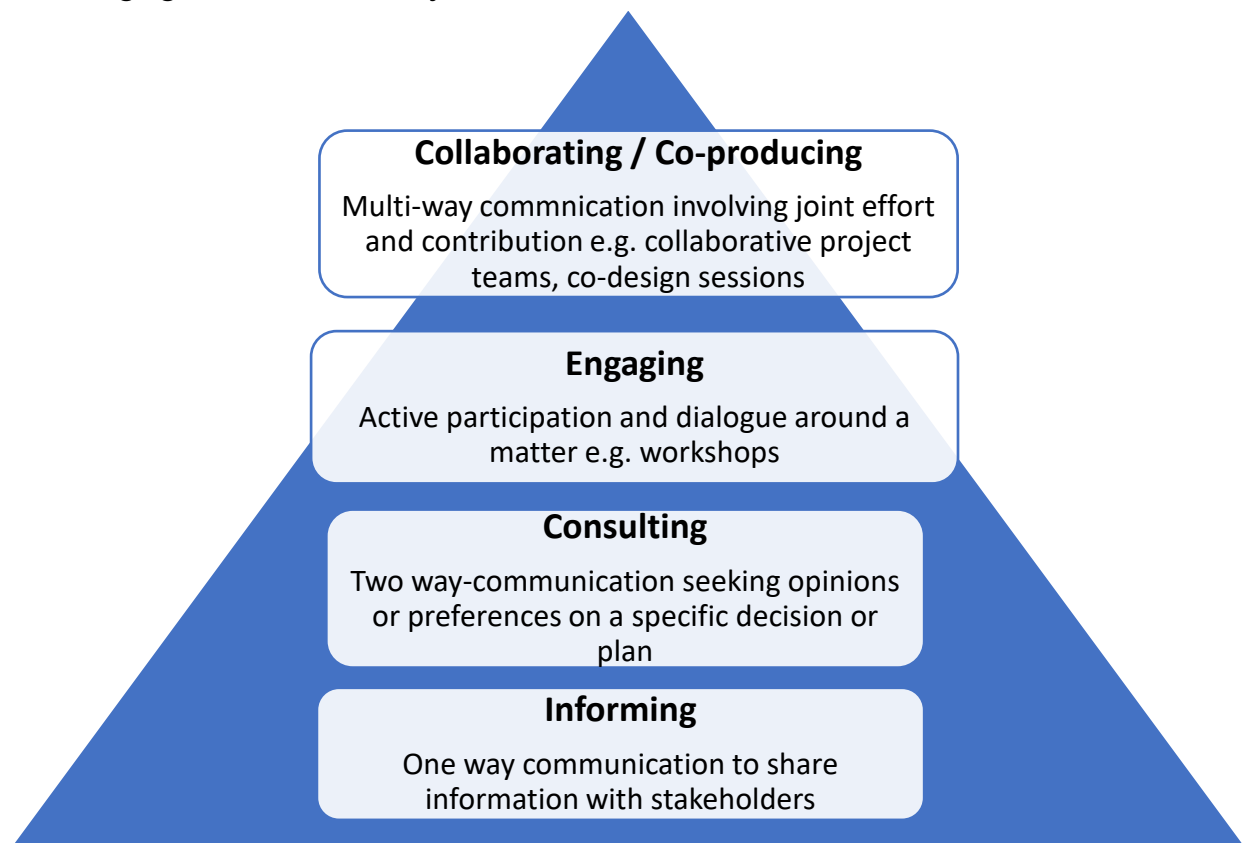
The purpose of this communications and engagement strategy is to ensure a robust and planned approach to communications and engagement throughout the Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) Programme.

It recognises that effective communication and engagement around the LUP programme plays a part in building residents' understanding of changes within Wednesbury and contributes to building social trust.

The strategy recognises that projects being delivered through the LUP will require different types of input or information sharing with stakeholders at different points in time.

Underpinning this LUP Programme Communication and Engagement Strategy are individual project-level communication and engagement plans.

Terminology used throughout the document reflects the communication and engagement hierarchy:



## **2. Contents**

1. Purpose and Summary
2. Contents
3. Programme Overview
4. Communication Objectives
5. Stakeholder Analysis and communication methods
6. Branding requirements
7. Communication and Engagement Plans
8. Monitoring and Evaluation
9. Appendices:
  - Appendix 1 - Stakeholder Analysis
  - Appendix 2 - LUP Programme Communication and Engagement Plan
  - Appendix 3 - LUP Project Communication and Engagement Plans
  - Appendix 4 - LUP Programme Key Messages Document
  - Appendix 5 - Programme summary of consultation activity and press releases

## **3. Programme Overview**

In September 2023, Government announced details of Sandwell's £20m Levelling Up Partnership.

The Partnership focuses on the Wednesbury area and will help Sandwell Council deliver much-needed new homes, help tackle crime and antisocial behaviour, improve green spaces and Wednesbury town centre, and expand the Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs.

Sandwell Council have set up a partnership board to oversee the Levelling Up Partnership. The Board brings together a range of representatives including councillors, MPs, statutory bodies, business leaders, voluntary sector representatives and young people.

6 projects are starting to be delivered. The projects are:

- **Wednesbury Town Centre** – making it greener with new trees and planting, and creating long term plans to tackle derelict sites and keep the Town thriving
- **Friar Park Urban Village** - Preparing the land at Friar Park Urban Village ready to build 630 new homes
- **Community Safety** - Helping partners tackle crime and antisocial behaviour with new and improved CCTV, a new business partnership and making changes in green spaces to discourage nuisance bike activity
- **Greenspaces** - Improving greenspaces at Hydes Road Playing Fields, Balls Hill Open Space, Wyntor Lane Open Space, Lakeside and Norbury Road Open Space
- **Millennium Centre** - Improving the Friar Park Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs

#### 4. **Communication Objectives**

Objectives of the LUP Programme Communication and Engagement Strategy have been formed with the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board.

- **To increase understanding** of the Levelling Up Partnership Programme and its scope across all stakeholders including residents (including bringing clarity around what the programme will not deliver)
- **To encourage residents to become involved** and shape elements of the programme that are in design phase
- To ensure that **young people are involved and engaged**
- To **empower Members** of the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board to play an active role in sharing key messages about the LUP programme
- To ensure communication and engagement approaches are **proportionate** and make best use of resources

#### 5. **Stakeholder Analysis and communication methods**

Stakeholder analysis has been conducted at programme level and used to inform the programme approach to communication and engagement. See appendix 1.

At project level, key stakeholders have been identified to shape individual project communication and engagement plans.

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Communication Methods</b>
DLUHC	Monthly monitoring conversations Standing invite to WLUP Board as advisors Conversations as required Key messages document provided to WLUP Board Members to aid their role in supporting communication and engagement across the programme
WLUP Board	Board Meetings Working Groups Individual discussions
SMBC Cabinet	Programme Progress reporting Briefings with Cabinet Members (portfolios relevant to projects being delivered)
Wednesbury Elected Members	Updates at quarterly Wednesbury Members' Meeting Dissemination by Elected Members on WLUP Board Key messages document provided to Wednesbury Elected Members to aid their role in supporting communication and engagement with residents and stakeholders
<b>Major partners involved in delivery:</b> - Police	Position on WLUP Board Town Tasking – Engagement around community safety project Design out Crime Officer participating in Task and Finish Group for community safety project
- WMCA	Joint Venture Group in place for Friar Park Urban Village Project Invited to attend WLUP Board
- Environment Agency	Initial discussion between DLUHC and EA and EA and SMBC



	Regular dialogue through Friar Park Urban Village Project
- Friar Park Millennium Centre Board and Staff	Chair of Board has a position on WLUP Board CEX is a member of Millennium Centre Project Group
<b>Other partners:</b> - Canal and Rivers Trust	Initial sharing of programme-level information through meeting Invitation to participate in project group for nuisance bike solution should Addison Rd proceed
- TfWM	Position on WLUP Board
<b>Wednesbury Residents (all)</b>	Website presence with regular updates on programme, opportunities to get involved, and signposting to WLUP Board papers and information Information in Sandwell Herald  Press releases and social media (via SMBC)  Project-specific engagement and consultation as required.  WLUP Board Members share information with networks  Email <a href="mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk">Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk</a> shared on website for any queries
<b>Young People in Wednesbury</b>	Young person's representative on WLUP Board  School engagement through project-specific consultation  Sharing project consultation materials with young people's groups  Engagement with young people at Millennium Centre via Project group and staff

	<p>Regular information sharing with the SHAPE youth forum</p> <p>Development of video footage and content Email <a href="mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk">Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk</a> shared on website for any queries</p>
<p><b>Community, VCS Groups and Faith representatives</b></p>	<p>WLUP Board Members (EDI representatives, Faith Forum Representative, and VCS representative) share information with networks</p> <p>Website presence with regular updates on programme and opportunities to get involved</p> <p>Press releases and Social media (via SMBC) Information shared with SCVO</p> <p>Email <a href="mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk">Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk</a> shared on website for any queries</p>
<p><b>Businesses in Wednesbury</b></p>	<p>WLUP Board Member (Business rep) share information with networks</p> <p>Information shared with Sandwell Business Ambassadors Forum</p> <p>Messages disseminated by Business and Community Engagement Officer</p> <p>Website presence with regular updates on programme and opportunities to get involved</p> <p>Press releases and Social media (via SMBC)</p> <p>Email <a href="mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk">Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk</a> shared on website for any queries</p>

## **6. Branding**

All press releases and communications materials will acknowledge the Funded by HM Government logo (requirement of the LUP grant), and the Sandwell Council logo.

There is a requirement for all projects to erect a plaque / similar on project completion acknowledging the Funded by HM Government.

## **7. Communication and Engagement Plans**

A programme level communication and engagement plan sets out key programme activity. This will be maintained throughout the programme. See appendix 2.

Each of the 6 LUP projects will develop and maintain a communication and engagement plan throughout the project lifecycle. See appendix 3.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

To ensure that communication and engagement objectives are being met across the programme, discussion and review will take place with the WLUP Board regularly, with reference to:

- Numbers of residents participating in consultation and engagement activity
- Views on whether young people are sufficiently involved and engaged
- Views on whether WLUP Board Members feel empowered to play an active role in sharing information

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Stakeholder Analysis

Appendix 2 - LUP Programme Communication and Engagement Plan

Appendix 3 - LUP Project Communication and Engagement Plans

Appendix 4 - LUP Programme Key Messages Document

Appendix 5 - Programme summary of consultation activity and press releases

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## **LUP Programme**

### **Communication and Engagement Strategy Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Stakeholder Analysis

Appendix 2 - LUP Programme Communication and Engagement Plan

Appendix 3 - LUP Project Communication and Engagement Plans

Appendix 4 - LUP Programme Key Messages Document

Appendix 5 - Programme summary of consultation activity and press releases

LUP Programme Stakeholder Analysis

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Interest

Influence

	Low	Medium	High	
		Residents, organisations and businesses in vicinity of LUP projects Wednesbury Residents (incl. young people) Community, VCS Groups and Faith representatives working in Wednesbury Businesses in Wednesbury Sandwell's partner organisation	WLUP Board SMBC Cabinet DLUHC Partners involved in LUP project delivery (police, WMCA, EA) Wednesbury Elected Members	High
				Medium
	Sandwell Residents (outside W'bury) Community, VCS Groups and Faith representatives working in Sandwell Businesses in Sandwell	Elected Members and MPs outside of Wednesbury		Low



## Levelling Up Partnership Programme Communication and Engagement Plan

What communications / engagement activity is planned	Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)	When (linked to project milestone)
Website Programme Presence on Regenerating Sandwell Website including introduction to WLUP Board, project introduction, and how to get involved	Inform all stakeholders about the LUP programme and current progress	Launch Jan '24  Updated quarterly (minimum)
LUP Overview in Sandwell Herald including good news stories		February 2024 and ongoing
Mailbox for stakeholders to raise queries / suggestions Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk	Enable stakeholders to contact us with any queries / suggestions	In place and advertised through communication materials
Press Releases	Inform all stakeholders about LUP programme progress and any good news stories	Sep 2023 – launch of LUP
Social Media		At project Milestones
LUP overview included in project level consultation events	Inform all stakeholders about the LUP programme and signpost to website for further information	Throughout
Key messages document	Inform WLUP Board Members and Wednesbury Elected Members about current	March onwards

	programme messages to enable them to assist in sharing information with residents	
LUP Video Content	Inform all stakeholders (espec. Young people and residents with lower levels of literacy skills) about the LUP programme	Launch once project design phases concluded est. June 24

## **LUP Project Communication and Engagement Plans**

- a) Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan
- b) Community Safety
- c) Friar Park Urban Village
- d) Green Spaces
- e) Millennium Centre
- f) Public realm

<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	<i>Residents &amp; Businesses</i> <i>Members</i> <i>WLUP Board</i> <i>MP</i> <i>SMBC internal</i> <i>Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)</i> <i>WM Police</i> <i>Transport for West Midlands</i> <i>NHS</i> <i>WMCA</i>
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inception meeting with consultants</li> <li>• Baseline study and initial site valuations complete</li> <li>• Draft Public realm and urban greening strategy complete</li> <li>• Draft masterplan consultation</li> <li>• Six-week public consultation ends</li> <li>• Cabinet approval of masterplan</li> </ul>

**Communication and Engagement Plan**

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
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Project Overview on Regenerating Sandwell Website	Inform all stakeholders about current project progress	Throughout and updated quarterly (minimum)
Project Overview in Sandwell Herald		Quarterly, as required
Stakeholder meetings	Consult with stakeholders on draft masterplan	February – April 24 (TBC)
Public consultation period	Consult on draft masterplan	w/c 6 May 24 (TBC)
In person events	Consult on draft masterplan	TBC
Community centre workshops	Opportunity to consult with community groups on draft masterplan	TBC
St. John's Academy Engagement	Engage with primary school on draft proposals	TBC
Wood Green Academy Engagement	Engage with secondary school on draft masterplan and complete social value outputs	TBC

<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Community Safety</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	<i>Residents &amp; Businesses Members MP SMBC depts inc Comms Vol Sector Police</i>
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation and survey for CCTV scheme - <b>complete</b></li> <li>• Recruitment for business and community engagement officer - <b>complete</b></li> <li>• Procurement for CCTV scheme – <b>Direct award made in January 24 and mobilisation underway</b></li> <li>• CCTV scheme implemented</li> <li>• Launch Radio Link Scheme</li> <li>• Nuisance bike measures implemented</li> </ul>

### Communication and Engagement Plan

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
Project Overview in Sandwell Herald		Quarterly, as required



Project Overview on Regenerating Sandwell Website – live	Inform all stakeholders about current project progress	Throughout and updated quarterly (minimum)
Engage in Public Realm face to face event	Engage with members of the public	<i>13<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup> February 24</i>
Question re safety in Public Realm Survey	Consult with the public	<i>Closing date 11<sup>th</sup> March 24</i>
Face to Face engagement with businesses	Consultation re radio link scheme and safe spaces	<i>April – Sept 23</i>
Consult with residents living in vicinity affected by nuisance bikes	Consultation and engagement re planned target hardening measures	March – May 24
CBEO attend monthly Wednesbury Town Tasking Meetings	Inform and update tasking partnership	Monthly
CBEO to attend regular members meetings	Inform & update	Monthly

<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Friar Park Urban Village</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	West Midlands Combined Authority (land-owning partner) Friar Park Residents Friar Park Residents with potential interest in construction careers / pathways
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain relevant EA Licences/Permits to enable remediation works</li> <li>• Secure Development Partner and complete Development Agreement</li> <li>• Progress Consents for remediation and protected species relocations</li> <li>• Remediation Works Start on Site</li> <li>• Housing construction commences</li> <li>• Scheme completed</li> </ul>

### Communication and Engagement Plan

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
Update Friar Park page of Regenerating Sandwell Website	Inform stakeholders about timelines, what LUP funding will do and to generate interest in the site's progression.	Updated as milestones reached: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preferred developer selected</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Permission for remediation obtained</li> <li>• Remediation works on site commence.</li> <li>• Next Steps after remediation</li> </ul>
Project Overview in Sandwell Herald		Quarterly, as required
LUP fund signage on site hoardings	Requirement of funding. Confirms to community that government support is working in their area.	On establishment of site compounds – retained throughout remediation programme
Community Engagement – information event at Millennium Centre	Inform residents about progress and what’s coming next	Pre-remediation planning application submission (details on remediation scheme only)  Ongoing as required – specifically required pre-submission of the housing scheme
Consider establishing WebCam to show works going on the site (link onto website too)	Keeping community engaged with activities on site	Commencement of remediation works
School Engagement exercise – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement on site activities (what, why and how)</li> </ul>	Generate interest in the site – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community education activity</li> </ul>	Start of remediation/ongoing through construction (potentially a 10 year project)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotion of construction industry as a career option (from plant operators to civil engineers)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attract potential applicants for apprenticeships/jobs from the local area</li></ul>	Needs to tie into Social Value requirements of developer
Planning Application consultation	Statutory requirement for consultation on proposals for remediation	Once planning application for remediation is submitted (NB this will be coordinated through the DM team – not the project team)

<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Green Spaces</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	<p>Green Spaces team  Green Services team  Local Residents (especially those in vicinity of 4 greenspaces)  Users of 4 green spaces</p>
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Spaces Project Launch</li> <li>• Completion of design for Norbury Road, Wyntor Lane and Balls Hill Green Spaces</li> <li>• Commencement of construction phase for Norbury Road, Wyntor Lane and Balls Hill Green Spaces</li> <li>• Completion of construction phase and launch of Norbury Road, Wyntor Lane and Balls Hill Green Spaces</li> <li>• Completion of design phase for Hydes Road</li> <li>• Planning Permission submission for Hydes Road</li> <li>• Completion of Hydes Road Procurement process</li> <li>• Commencement of Construction phase for Hydes Road</li> <li>• Completion and launch of Hydes Road Project</li> </ul>

### Communication and Engagement Plan

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
Project Overview on Regenerating Sandwell Website	Inform all stakeholders about current project progress	Throughout and updated quarterly (minimum)
Project Overview in Sandwell Herald		Quarterly, as required
Consultation with Hall Green Primary School	Engagement concerning Wyntor Lane improvements	February 2024
Signage to be erected at all sites promoting project and associated activity	Wider circulation to neighbours and residents	February 2024
Consultation with Riverside House	Engagement concerning Balls Hill improvements	February 2024
Consultation with Ward Members and Project Board	First draft of Hydes Road proposals	March 2024
Consultation with Hydes Road users	Potential changes to Hydes Road	March 2024
Press release / photo opportunity	Completion of works at Balls Hill, Wyntor Lane and Norbury Road	April 2024
Formal planning permission consultation	Statutory requirement	April 2024
Press release / photo opportunity	Commencement of construction phase	May 2024
Press release / photo opportunity	Completion of construction phase	April 2025



<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Millennium Centre</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	Friar Park Residents (those who currently use the services at the centre and those who do not)
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Design process</li> <li>• Public consultation</li> <li>• Submit Planning Application</li> <li>• Appoint Contractor</li> <li>• Complete Works</li> </ul>

### Communication and Engagement Plan

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
Project Overview as part of LUP programme on Regenerating Sandwell website	Inform users of the proposed activity	As part of the overall LUP programme
Friar Park Millenium Centre (FPMC) Board Consultation on proposals	Engage: Liaison with FPMC Board on proposed scheme to ensure buy-in to proposals are acceptable	At outline concept stage

Community Consultation – engagement event in Friar Park Millennium Centre	Consult: Formal event to show local community what the proposals entail, and to foster opinion/support	Once viable designs are in place
Video Fly through for use on website/consultation events	Inform: To show how the building will look once the alterations are completed	Once detailed design is undertaken
Planning Application consultation	Statutory requirement to consult with local neighbours as part of the application process	Once application submitted – will be undertaken by DM team directly (and happens in any event)
Regular press releases	Report on progress being made throughout the lifecycle of the project. Use of photographs will be key. Input updates onto Sandwell Herald and Regen Sandwell site where applicable.	Proposed stages: i.Planning Application submission ii.Appointment of contractor iii.Start on Site iv.Completion of Works v.Completion Event
Webcam (subject to contractor approval)	To allow progress to be seen on site (instead of behind hoardings)	Once construction commences
School Engagement exercise within local schools (primary and secondary)	Links to Social Value requirements – to provide:	Once contractor appointed – contractor to lead on this operation and liaise with SV

	<p>i.Community education on site works – what, why and how</p> <p>ii.Promote construction industry as career choice (plant operator to architect)</p>	Officers from the Business and Growth team.
Branding on Hoardings	A requirement of scheme. This will include visually displaying project information on the hoardings to inform locals of what is happening to the centre.	Displayed on hoardings throughout the construction period.
Events - Sod-Cutting Ceremony Completion Ceremony (formal opening of the new centre)	General publicity. Completion ceremony to be celebration of works being completed and new centre opening, involving the community (e.g. open day etc)	At start and end of construction period

<b>LUP Project Title</b>	<b>Public Realm &amp; Site Acquisitions</b>
<b>Main Project Stakeholders</b>	<i>Residents &amp; Businesses</i> <i>Members</i> <i>MP</i> <i>WLUP Board</i> <i>SMBC internal</i> <i>Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)</i> <i>WM Police</i> <i>Transport for West Midlands</i>
<b>Key project Milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary works (site investigation and designs)</li> <li>• Public consultation on draft proposals</li> <li>• Public realm / urban greening works commence</li> <li>• Cabinet approval of masterplan</li> <li>• Completion of public realm/ urban greening improvements</li> <li>• Completion of site acquisitions</li> </ul>

### Communication and Engagement Plan

<b>What communications / engagement activity is planned</b>	<b>Purpose (e.g. inform/consult/engage)</b>	<b>When (linked to project milestone)</b>
Project Overview on Regenerating Sandwell Website	Inform all stakeholders about current project progress	Throughout and updated quarterly (minimum)

Project Overview in Sandwell Herald		Quarterly, as required
Public consultation period	Consult on draft proposals	29 February to 11 March 24
In person events	Consult on draft proposals	13 and 17 and February 24
Sons of Rest Community Centre Workshop	Opportunity to consult with community groups on draft proposals	15 February 24
HAF projects - Millennium Centre and Hill Top Community Centre	Opportunity to consult with parents who are dropping children off or collecting from a session on draft proposals	w/c 12 February (half term)
Youth Group - Millennium Centre & St. James Church (Hill Top)	Opportunity to consult with young people in Wednesbury on draft proposals	w/c 12 February (half term)
St. John's Academy Engagement	Engage with primary school on draft proposals	TBC

## Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Key Messages Document

### Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform WLUP Board Members and Wednesbury Elected Members of current communication messages about the Levelling Up Partnership. This is to assist WLUP Board Members and Elected Members in disseminating messages across their networks.

### Background to the Programme

The Levelling Up Partnership focuses on the Wednesbury area of Sandwell and builds upon regeneration and plans in place to deliver ambitious projects for the community with £20million investment.

Levelling Up is a term used by the Government to refer to a place-based approach to regeneration. It includes a number of initiatives and funding streams including the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Sandwell Council is one of the first local authorities in the country to have a Levelling Up Partnership. This follows on from Sandwell gaining over £107million investment from funds including the Towns Fund and the Levelling Up Fund.

The Levelling Up Partnership will help Sandwell Council deliver much-needed new homes, help tackle crime and antisocial behaviour, improve green spaces and Wednesbury town centre, and expand the Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs.

There are 6 projects agreed as part of the Levelling Up Partnership

- **Wednesbury Town Centre** – making it greener with new trees and planting, and creating long term plans to tackle derelict sites and keep the Town thriving
- **Friar Park Urban Village** - Preparing the land at Friar Park Urban Village ready to build 630 new homes



- **Community Safety** - Helping partners tackle crime and antisocial behaviour with new and improved CCTV, a new business partnership and making changes in green spaces to discourage nuisance bike activity
- **Greenspaces** - Improving greenspaces at Hydes Road Playing Fields, Balls Hill Open Space, Wyntor Lane Open Space, Lakeside and Norbury Road Open Space
- **Millennium Centre** - Improving the Friar Park Millennium Centre so that more can be done to give people the skills they need to secure better jobs

A partnership group has been formed to oversee the delivery of the programme. It involves Councillors, MPs, representatives of the voluntary sector, the business community, faith group representatives, and partners including Transport for West Midlands and West Midlands Police. The group is called the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board.

### **Where can people find more information**

Key information and updates about the LUP Programme can be found at: [Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership - Regenerating Sandwell](#)

At key project milestones, press releases and social media activity will take place. This will come from the Council.

### **What is taking place at the moment**

We are currently out to consultation with residents on the Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm project. Consultation will close on 11 March.

Please help to signpost people to information about the consultation and how to get involved. Information is available at: [Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm and Urban Greening Public Consultation - Sandwell Council - Citizen Space](#)

### **What will be taking place soon**

- Installation of new and upgraded CCTV cameras in Wednesbury Town Centre and Friar Park

- Work commencing at Norbury Road, Wyntor Lane and Balls Hill Green

Contact us at: [Wednesbury\\_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk)

### Document Version Control

Version number	Date	Summary of Changes Made	Circulated to (and date)
1	Feb 24	First version	WLUP Board 29/02/24

## DRAFT LUP Programme Summary of Consultation Activity and Press Releases

Indicative LUP Press Release Forward Plan																
LUP Project	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25
<b>Masterplan</b>					PR: Public Consultation Launch	PR: Event: Consultation with secondary school	PR: Event: approval of masterplan									
<b>Public Realm</b>	PR: Public Realm Consultation Launch 29/01	PR: Event: Consultation with Primary School (tbc)														
<b>Community Safety</b>		Engagement in face to face public realm events	Consultation with residents in vicinity of nuisance bike measures	Face to face engagement with businesses												
			Installation of CCTV (press release held until after system testing)	PR: CCTV live		PR: Launch of Nuisance Bike measures (date tbc)		PR: Launch of business partnership (date tbc)								
<b>Greenspaces</b>		PR: Event: consultation with Primary School	Signage installation (Wyntor, Balls Hill, Lakeside & Norbury)  PR: Event: Completion of Wyntor, Balls Hill, Lakeside & Norbury	Consultation with Hydes Rd users (date tbc)		Event: Planning application submission Hydes Rd (date tbc)						PR: Event: Commence ment of Hydes Rd construction (date tbc)			PR: Event: Completion of construction phase (Hydes Rd) (date tbc)	
<b>Friar Park Urban Village</b>				Community Engagement info event at Millennium Centre (date tbc pre-planning application)			PR Event: Planning Application Statutory Consultation			PR Event: Remediation commences  LUP Signage installed						
<b>Millennium Centre</b>			Community Consultation Event (date tbc)	PR Event: Planning application submission (date tbc)		PR Event: Start on site (date tbc), sod-cutting ceremony (date tbc) LUP signage installed									PR: Event: Completion Ceremony (date tbc)	

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