

Agenda

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

Tuesday, 26 September 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interest**

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.
- 3 Minutes** 5 - 10

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 as a correct record.
- 4 Additional Items of Business**

To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.
- 5 Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029** 11 - 42

To note and comment on the Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029
- 6 Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Action Tracker** 43 - 48



To consider and note progress on the implementation of actions and recommendations.

7 **Work Programme 2023- 24 and Cabinet Forward Plan** 49 - 64

Standing item to consider the work programme of the Board and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Shokat Lal
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution
Councillor Fenton (Chair)
Councillors Lewis, Davies, Dhatt, Fisher, Khan, Maycock, Shaeen,
Trumpeter, J Webb, Younis and Brown

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Minutes of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

11 July 2023 at 5.53pm

In the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Fenton (Chair);
Councillors Lewis (Vice- Chair), Dhatt, Fisher,
Maycock, Shaeen, Trumpeter, Webb and Younis.

Also present: Lucy Clarke (Partnerships and Communities Manager –
Brushstrokes Community Project)
Kambi Agu (Bearwood Community Hub)

Officers: Gillian Douglas (Director of Housing), Louis Bebb
(Housing Policy and Strategy Lead Officer), Jennifer
Collins (Transformation) and Alexander Goddard
(Scrutiny Lead Officer).

37/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors
Davies, Khan and Ms Brown (Co- opted Member).

38/23 **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

39/23 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 23
March 2023 are confirmed as a correct record.

40/23

Urgent Additional Items of Business

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

41/23

Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy

The Board received an overview of the Council's Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy. The draft strategy was undergoing development and aimed to ensure that Sandwell was a welcoming place for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

It set out the Council's ambition to be awarded 'Council of Sanctuary' status, and to join the national 'City of Sanctuary' movement via the Local Authority Network.

The application had been independently assessed by a panel of community groups and individuals with lived experience, and once successful the Council would be recognised as a 'Council of Sanctuary' for a period of three years. In addition, proposals indicated that the panel of community groups would issue recommendations to the Council, detailing how to further welcome asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Progress towards obtaining this status had been made, in particular, Thimblemill Library (Smethwick) had become the first 'Library of Sanctuary' nationwide.

The Partnerships and Communities Manager – Brushstrokes Community Project, set out that the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Partnership had been established with 75 members from community groups. The Partnership had conducted benchmarking exercises with neighbouring councils and had heard representations from residents through consultation exercises.

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

- Members agreed that the ambitions of the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary Strategy were aligned to the Council's aims and ambitions;
- it was acknowledged that the distribution of asylum seekers across the Borough was not even, with the Smethwick locality accommodating a higher proportion of new arrivals;
- acknowledged that provision of community resources, places of worship and support services contributed to the decision of asylum seekers when expressing where they wished to be accommodated;
- that English for Speakers of other languages provision was limited and that waiting lists were extensive for those studying English;
- asylum seekers and refugees may have specific special educational needs, for which support would need to be provided;
- whilst the Home Office could grant permission for asylum seekers to gain employment after they had sought asylum for 12 months, opportunities were restricted to jobs on the Home Office's Shortage Occupation List, which may not align with an individual's skill set or prior experience;
- affordable housing provision was limited across the Borough which posed a barrier in some instances to housing opportunities;
- individuals who were resettling were likely to have greater health and wellbeing needs – a collaborative approach between the Council, community groups and support services would help meet these needs;
- the Council had recently appointed a Refugee Co-Ordinator within the Housing Directorate;
- access to healthcare was a key barrier which had been identified, the translation of information was proposed to support with GP registration and navigating the NHS systems;
- female health care, including access to sexual health and period products should be incorporated within the strategy;
- the establishment of community groups within libraries had been a positive support as it had allowed new

arrivals to socialise and embed themselves within the community;

- additional communication methods of publicising the consultation were suggested, including via Community Groups could increase response rates;
- the publicising of the consultation as part of the Windrush and 50 years of Sandwell celebrations may reach a greater audience;
- funding was often restricted to specific groups (eg. Homes for Ukraine) and was not universal in nature;
- an holistic approach, taking into account all needs, including mental health, education and social isolation would most benefit new arrivals;
- elected members would benefit from training on the subject matter to better inform decision making.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the Director of Housing considers the feasibility of embedding ESOL tuition for asylum seekers and refugees into the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy;
- (2) the Director of Housing considers the inclusion of the educational needs of asylum seekers and refugees under eighteen years old within the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy including SEND, transport and language needs;
- (3) the Director of Housing explores the cascading of consultations via town- based community teams to increase response rates and to all Members;
- (4) the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy is publicised as part of the Windrush and 50 years of Sandwell celebrations;
- (5) the Director of Housing explores the inclusion of female health care, including access to sexual health and period products within the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy;

- (6) training is provided to Members to increase awareness and better inform decision making in relation to the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy;
- (7) the Director of Housing explores the adoption of a holistic approach when progressing the Borough of Sanctuary Sandwell Strategy.

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

42/23 **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Action Tracker**

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

43/23 **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2023/ 24**

The Chair presented an overview of the Board's proposed work programme for the 2023/ 24 municipal year. Each Council directorate was invited to a work programming session on 12 June 2023, which allowed Members of the Board to discuss services, key issues and priorities.

Resolved that the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Work Programme for 2023/ 24 is approved.

44/23 **Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Board received and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Meeting ended at 7.56pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Board

Tuesday 26 September 2023

Subject:	Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029
Director:	Assistant Director - Asset Management Sarah Ager
Contact Officer:	Housing Policy and Strategy Lead Officer, Louis Bebb louis_bebb@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments on the Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The aim of Housing Asset Management Strategy in general is to guide the future shape and direction of the property assets to ensure that they meet corporate objectives and customer expectations.
- 2.2 This strategy sets out how we intend to address the key asset management challenges affecting our communities over the next five years. It sets out the council's priorities and objectives for meeting housing need and working with tenants and residents to build sustainable and cohesive communities across the borough.
- 2.3 The key objective of the council's Housing Asset Management Strategy is to ensure that we utilise our assets in the most effective way for the benefit of both its existing and potential tenants and leaseholders.






2.4 The National Housing Federation definition of property asset management is:

‘Asset management is the range of activities undertaken to ensure that the housing stock meets the needs and standards for the future’.



The principles of effective asset management therefore go beyond just investing in good repairs and improvements and must consider reviewing the overall asset base to ensure it achieves the right balance between need and quality.

2.5 The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029 will help meet the needs identified in the council’s Housing Strategy, Housing Revenue Account 30 year Business Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Regeneration Strategy but also other emerging strategies and plans where housing has a part to play in meeting the needs and aspirations of our communities.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Good quality and suitable housing are essential to delivering this objective. For instance, the Housing Asset Management Strategy will help to steer this objective by dealing with damp and mould – the health risks are particularly rife for young children who may have weakened immune systems.</p>
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well The Housing Asset Management Strategy meets this objective by considering the types of housing needed to support people at each life stage. The document particularly addresses the housing needs for older people within dwellings. Quality homes will have a positive impact on the lives of children and adults and help residents maintain their independence as they get older.</p>
	<p>Strong Resilient Communities Housing and the quality of the neighbourhood contribute to delivery of this objective. Sandwell has diverse communities made up of differing socio-economic status, race, ethnicity and disabilities. The document recognises Sandwell’s responsibility to invest in housing assets within the Borough to promote wellbeing and help people live healthy lives - this will continue to create mixed and sustainable communities.</p>



	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>The Strategy links directly to this priority in the Corporate Plan and expands on how we will deliver and shape future asset management investment and highlights the importance of raising standards of design, quality and sustainability across the Borough.</p>
	<p>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</p> <p>The Strategy outlines how we will lead our partners in Sandwell to make the most of all our assets and make long-term investment decisions that benefit our borough. In addition, the document outlines how we will work with local providers to ensure local spend also has green outcomes.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Housing Asset Management Strategy is an important document in setting out the council's priorities and objectives for meeting the housing asset needs of our communities.
- 4.2 Although not a statutory document, it is nevertheless a key strategy in articulating what actions we will take to work towards maintaining and improving Sandwell's own HRA stock. An action plan will be developed to sit beneath the strategy.
- 4.3 This 2024-29 Strategy will replace the 2017-20 Asset Management Strategy which set out several priorities that remain highly relevant today, namely:
- Providing homes which will be more affordable to our customers.
 - Developing a more environmentally sustainable asset base.
 - Reducing the 'whole life' running costs of our properties.
 - Demonstrate value for money through collaborative procurement & partnerships.
 - Investing strategically in our homes and neighbourhoods.
 - Improving our financial strength so we deliver a sustainable programme of improvement.
 - Appropriately disposing of assets, enabling investment in new homes & reinvestment in existing homes.
 - Create homes and neighbourhoods that meet our customers' needs and expectations both now and in the future.
- 4.6 We have engaged with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Charnwood Borough Council to discuss their



own recent experiences in creating and implementing their own published Housing Asset Management Strategy documents and what some of the challenges and lessons that have been learnt during and after this project. This has produced some really informative feedback through collaboration with other local authorities.

4.7 The key objectives of this strategy are:

- 1) **Planning and service delivery:** Understanding our properties and tenants to drive constant performance improvement and innovation.
- 2) **Modern homes:** Providing homes which are warm, secure, high quality and affordable.
- 3) **Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation:** Improving the energy efficiency of our homes whilst supporting those tenants in Fuel Poverty.
- 4) **Asset Compliance and Building Safety:** Ensuring our properties are safe, secure and compliant, meeting all our landlord obligations.

4.8 Housing Asset Management Strategy Workshops

Throughout May to July 2023, we carried out 5 feedback workshops with over 40 attendees to understand what our Asset Management services currently look like and to establish the approach we need to address the key asset management challenges affecting our communities over the next five years. The consultation workshops included representation from both Asset and Housing Management staff, tenants and leaseholders and an elected member to understand what issues meant the most to them.

4.9 Summary of workshop feedback:

- Overall, support across the strategy document and action plan was relatively high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing with the strategy's overarching objectives.
- Generally, respondents felt that the document needs to acknowledge that there are a number of possible scenarios around asset investment with competing priorities. Whilst some investment is essential and non-discretionary (e.g. statutory compliance activity or work to maintain Decent Homes), other investment is more discretionary.



- The strategy needs to show how we currently maintain our assets, and how we will invest in these in the future.
- National context and strategic context will help to set the narrative for readers and should be included, especially in the constantly changing world of policy and legislation.
- TLSG members in particular stated the that the full document is not very resident friendly and that a summary version should be produced – this should be at least half the length of the full document.
- All workshop attendees felt anything proposed needs to be actionable and realistic.

5 Implications

Resources:	Delivery of the Strategy will be through existing resources including the Housing Revenue Account but is also based on being able to attract funding from external sources such as Homes England and West Midlands Combined Authority as well as Government funding towards retrofit of homes.
Legal and Governance:	<p>There are a variety of legal factors that have to be considered which underpin the strategy. For instance, there have been significant changes to our legal obligations which became law during 2021 because of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022.</p> <p>The Housing Asset Management Strategy Action Plan will provide oversight ensuring implementation of the Housing Strategy 2023-2028, including monitoring of the delivery of actions against the key objectives. Unless there are major legislative changes or significant service changes this strategy will be reviewed every five years.</p>
Risk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial resources available to deliver the strategy, including inflation. • Data quality (stock condition) in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the HRA assets and a robust evidence base on which to make informed decisions about future asset management investment. • Future changes to national policy and requirements (particularly on planning) that could impact on the



	<p>Council’s ability to deliver new housing that meets locally identified needs. For instance, Right to Buy proceeds, climate change and materials used for new homes and retrofits, etc.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The Housing Asset Management Strategy is key to reducing housing related and wider inequalities and addressing the diverse housing needs of our communities.</p> <p><u>Age:</u> A strategic approach is necessary to meet the housing needs of Sandwell’s older population. The document considers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people will have improved supply of suitable and accessible homes where they in particular feel safe and can maintain independence for longer. <p><u>Disability:</u> The numbers of disabled people or those in poor health in Sandwell is significantly higher than the national average. Outlining our priorities for safe and well adapted housing is essential to help people remain independent if they experience health problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the shortage of accommodation for people requiring disabled units. • Greater utilisation of Disabled Facilities Grants – this will provide more housing options and enable disabled residents to remain in their own home for longer. <p><u>Race:</u> The strategy will have an impact on ethnic minority groups in several ways. These households have distinct characteristics in terms of their housing needs which may leave them disadvantaged in some way. How the strategy will address this housing inequality is outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Housing Strategy 2023-2028 commitment to ‘make the best use of the homes we have’ will benefit ethnic minority groups particularly. These households typically live in poorer housing conditions than white households.



Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The proportion of those in poor health in Sandwell is significantly higher than the national average. With the significant health issues in the borough, we know the Strategy can play a key role in ensuring homes help people to maintain independence and quality of life. For instance, we will continue to improve our home adaptations service to enable people to remain at home if mobility becomes an issue and also work to provide new homes that are designed to be adaptable for changing health and mobility needs. In addition, we will aim to be as proactive as possible with ensuring we meet the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).</p>
Social Value:	<p>A large part of social value in this Housing Asset Management Strategy is about creating communities in which people want to live and spend their time. Local areas that cover every need, providing access to all the necessary services and resources, and promoting greater wellbeing and satisfaction will provide social value. Through procuring services to maintain and improve council housing, social value considerations are built into the tendering process to maximise use of local labour, offer apprenticeships to local people and reduce climate change impacts. Additionally, engaging with Sandwell's tenants and residents e.g. through public consultation generates social value through interacting and empowering the community to help shape the Council's HRA asset aims and aspirations for the next 5 years.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>Housing and its additional assets plays a key role in addressing climate change due to its strong environmental impact. The document links to the council's Climate Change Strategy, based on the need to reduce carbon emissions from housing and ensure homes are well insulated. It outlines our commitment to identifying funding to help improve the energy efficiency of our own stock, build new homes to carbon neutral standards and help tenants with the transition to a net zero carbon future.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>Not applicable.</p>



6 Appendices

- Appendix One: Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029

7 Background Papers

- Sandwell's Housing Strategy 2023-2028
https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/34255/housing_strategy_2023_-_2028
- Sandwell Regeneration Strategy 2022-2027
<https://www.bigplansforsandwell.com/media/9575/sandwell-regeneration-strategy-2022-2027.pdf>
- Sandwell 2030 Vision: Corporate Plan 2021-2025
https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/29963/corporate_plan_-_big_plans_for_a_great_place_for_the_people_of_sandwell
- 2021 Census for England and Wales
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000028/>
- Climate Change Strategy 2020-2041
https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/31151/climate_change_strategy.pdf
- Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053
<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s12434/05a%20Appendix%201%20Draft%20HRABusinessPlan%20100123.pdf>
- Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing Policy
https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/34372/adaptations_for_disabled_tenants_in_council_housing_policy_-_june_2023
- Building Safety Act 2022
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/contents/enacted>
- Fire Safety Act 2021
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-act-2021>



Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2029



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1. Introduction

Having a warm, safe and secure home in a thriving and attractive environment is vital for the health, wellbeing and life chances of people who live in Sandwell.

The aim of the Asset Management Strategy is to guide the future shape and direction of the property assets to ensure that they meet corporate objectives and tenant expectations. This strategy sets out how we intend to address the key asset management challenges affecting our communities over the next five years. It sets out the council's priorities and objectives for meeting housing need and working with tenants and residents to build sustainable and cohesive communities across the borough.

The National Housing Federation definition of property asset management is:

'Asset management is the range of activities undertaken to ensure that the housing stock meets the needs and standards for the future'.

The principles of effective asset management therefore go beyond just investing in good repairs and improvements and must consider reviewing the overall asset base to ensure it achieves the right balance between need and quality.

The key objective of the Council's asset management strategy is to ensure that we utilise our assets in the most effective way for the benefit of both its existing and potential residents and the council.

By achieving the strategic housing objectives set out in this strategy, we will support the delivery of the commitments in the Corporate Plan 2021-25, specifically on the themes of 'Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods' and 'Strong Resilient Communities'. The objectives of these themes include:

Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods:

- Ensuring the safety compliance of all council homes and working to improve the energy efficiency of council homes including upgrading heating systems.
- Keeping people independent in their own home through design and adaptation of homes.
- Incorporating more renewable energy measures into council homes, including modern methods of construction and heating.
- Improving tenancy engagement including with those in high rise flats.
- Ensuring that tenants live in safe and thriving communities.

A Strong and Inclusive Economy

- We will lead our partners in Sandwell to make the most of all our assets, spend local wherever possible and make long-term investment decisions that benefit our borough.
- We will spend more money directly with suppliers in Sandwell. We will do this by ensuring we partner with suppliers and contractors who have a long-term commitment to Sandwell and will contribute to growing the local economy.
- We will work with local providers to ensure local spend also has green outcomes.

Strong Resilient Communities:

- We will put the needs of our tenants and residents at the heart of what we do, establishing processes to engage with them to ensure that our residents guide and influence our services.
- We will embed climate change considerations into our decision making to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- We will work to make our own housing stock greener by implementing minimum energy performance standards for our council homes and exemplar schemes for modern methods of construction.

The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 will help meet the needs identified in the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Revenue Account 30 year Business Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Regeneration Strategy but also other emerging strategies and plans where housing has a part to play in meeting the needs and aspirations of our communities. This data and intelligence has also been coupled with the voice of our residents and we have consulted widely before finalising the strategy for adoption. By involving local communities in the process, we can develop sustainable and effective solutions that meet the needs of everyone in the community.

Ultimately, the vision for the Strategy states that our homes should be so much more than just bricks and mortar. Places to feel safe and secure, where communities thrive and grow. This includes providing high quality, energy efficient homes, alongside a housing service that is customer focused, supportive, accountable and professional.

We begin by outlining the background, context and scope that has informed this strategy. In addition, we have ensured the strategy reflects the national changes to housing, welfare and planning policy that have taken place in recent years at a national, regional and local level.

The document then lays out how it will maintain and improve its housing assets. This includes housing, commercial property, garages, and other associated pieces of land.

Finally, we set out the action planning, governance and monitoring arrangements which will ensure we deliver on these strategic priorities.

2. Key Achievements

The last Housing Asset Management Strategy was produced in 2017 and there have been a number of achievements as a result of the previous document. Included in the progress made is the delivery of new affordable homes, improving existing homes, mitigating climate change and contributing to health and wellbeing outcomes:

- Adaptations completed on over 2,000 council owned properties to address disability needs in housing stock across the borough.

- Drawn on external funding in order to award over 500 grants for heating or boiler repairs and over 100 grants to tackle urgent disrepair.
- Since February 2019, we have invested in 4,000 homes to improve their energy efficiency by replacing roofs, doors and windows and installing roof and external / cavity wall insulation.
- Repaired and re-let around 1,500 homes annually.
- Achieved an average time of 16.7 days to complete all types of repairs.
- More than 4,300 emergency / urgent repairs completed annually. 97% of emergency and urgent jobs were completed within 24 hours and on time urgent jobs are completed within three working days.
- Implementation of a new 30 Year Business Plan. This sets out our strategic plan for managing and maintaining our social housing homes.
- Completed over 110,000 responsive repairs annually.
- Reviewed and produced Sandwell's Housing Strategy for the period 2023 to 2028. This will be actively monitored throughout the period.

3. Background

The Council has invested over £170 million in its stock between 2017 and 2023 maintaining and improving its properties used as residential accommodation.

Housing assets are all assets that are on land owned and managed by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA):

- The HRA is the financial account used to manage the Council's activities as a landlord. It is a ring-fenced account and can only be used to provide services to council housing tenants through the collection of rent and other service charges.
- The Council's HRA assets includes dwellings let on secure tenancies, leasehold interests, shops, garages, and other associated pieces of land.

Since the introduction in 2012 of Housing Revenue Account Self-Financing (which resulted in a loan settlement for Sandwell Council of £504million). The local authority has had a greater degree of control over the use and management of the HRA. Self-financing allowed decision making at a local level to drive planning for investment in housing stock and set spending priorities in line with local demand for repairs.

The most recent Asset Management Strategy produced was for the period 2017-2020. There is a need to review the strategy and provide a robust plan for the management of HRA assets to provide more detailed financial forecasting and to provide a consistent transparent approach to how the assets are invested in and the priorities driving how the HRA is spent.

Currently the Council has very limited up to date data on the condition of its stock/assets and the understanding of our properties from evidence-based data. We have commenced a condition survey of the stock initially targeting 5,000 properties

to provide a revised baseline from which to project future demand and investment needs. This is key to understand the work needed to keep them in a decent condition, safe and energy efficient alongside our residents' priorities for their homes. This limited data impinges on the ability to provide a detailed strategy for investment meeting the legislative requirements. However, we will undertake regular reviews of our stock, including commissioning borough wide condition surveys as necessary to ensure our data is no more than 5 years old. This approach will support the asset management function, with this document setting the strategic direction and a more robust delivery plan being developed over the next five years as more quality data is collected.

This document is supported by an action plan, set out at Appendix One, that details the activities required to deliver the evidence-based strategy.

This strategy sets out the key areas for managing the assets, ensuring it links closely to our objectives, and highlights risk and opportunities around all our HRA assets.

Our current strategic approach aims include:

- Providing homes which will be more affordable running costs to our residents.
- Developing a more environmentally sustainable asset base.
- Reducing the 'whole life' running costs of our properties.
- Demonstrating value for money through collaborative procurement & partnerships.
- Investing strategically in our homes and neighbourhoods.
- Appropriately disposing of assets, enabling investment in new homes & reinvestment in existing homes.
- Creating homes and neighbourhoods that meet our tenants and residents' needs and expectations both now and in the future.
- Meeting our commitments to building safety compliance in order to keep residents safe.

3.1 Scope

This document details the approach to managing, maintaining, investing in, and reviewing our homes, land and other associated assets. This document also explains a range of flexible approaches put in place to maintain, improve and develop our housing assets over the short, medium, and longer term, highlighting areas for improvement and review.

The key steps to developing and implementing the robust Asset Management Strategy for HRA assets are all based upon information and intelligence gathering, with the following factors all influencing the strategy:

- Political and Corporate Drivers
- Stock Condition Information
- Intelligence from the industry including workforce, supply chain, material costs
- Resident insight
- Budgetary information – forecasting with market influences.

Once the above are known in full we will develop:

- **An investment plan** – to deliver a detailed 30-year plan based on the demand and the available budget including availability of grant funding.
- **Implementation plan** – to detail the delivery model and prioritised timeline for investment authorised by a Cabinet Report

3.2 Purpose

The asset management strategy will contribute to delivery of our corporate and directorate business plans. It structures our ability to deliver three core components of asset management:

- **Stock investment:** Investing to maintain the stock to a standard that meets tenant and leaseholder needs and regulatory requirements including building safety
- **Active Asset Management:** Activities to improve the performance of assets that have a poor social, economic or environmental performance, because of low demand or high costs, and either repairing them, or replacing elements to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- **Supporting wider objectives:** Being clear where and how asset management is supporting wider objectives, such as, energy efficiency, increasing the supply of new homes and creating sustainable communities.

3.3 Strategic Priorities

This Strategy concentrates on four key themes, each with an overarching strategic objective. These themes contain a range of activities, some which will be considered as 'Business as Usual' and others which will drive innovation, cultural change and moving the council into a more pro-active asset management position.

- **Planning and service delivery:** Understanding our properties and tenants to drive constant performance improvement and innovation. Also, maximising choice for tenants on investment priorities and specification of components at replacement.
- **Modern homes:** Providing homes which are warm, secure, high quality and affordable
- **Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation:** Improving the energy efficiency of our homes whilst supporting tenants in fuel poverty
- **Asset Compliance and Building Safety:** Ensuring our properties are safe, secure and compliant, meeting all our landlord obligations

Each theme is designed to be cross-cutting, in that it will be addressed through all workstreams and contributed to by all areas of Asset Management team and wider organisation. Due to the current environment where there are competing priorities and resources it is critical that any investment considers all facets of the asset rather than be driven by a particular programme or budget.

Actions resulting from this Strategy will be linked to one of these key themes, with a clear target. These actions will be used as a Golden Thread, reflected in service, team and individual objectives, giving clear responsibility and accountability for delivery.

3.4 Context

3.4.1 National Context

The current economic conditions, with high inflation and interest rates, present affordability challenges for our residents, and for our business plan. There are limits (e.g. rent caps) on the extent to which we can increase our income in line with inflation. Resources in our business plan will be constrained and this strategy sets out the challenges that need to be overcome.

The housing sector is currently facing several complex and diverse challenges including increased building industry costs, higher interest rates, a cost-of-living crisis (including increasing energy costs) for our residents, alongside an increased demand on housing need and customer expectation, and new legislative requirements that all Housing Services are facing. There are several key national strategic factors, which will influence how we manage our assets such as housing growth and climate change and the low carbon future. This strategy, therefore, needs to understand and respond to them, considering the local context and the scope for investment within the constraints of the HRA Business Plan and Building Safety regulations.

3.4.2 Housing Growth

The Government and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) have set a clear expectation that social landlords should use any increased rental income generated as a result of a return to annual rent rises to continue to invest in existing homes (capital improvement) and deliver new homes. These rent rises have been re-introduced due to the implications of the reduction in rents between 2016 and 2020 had seen our finances significantly impacted.

Addressing the housing shortage is a priority issue for the government as well as the Council and one that carries clear expectations on how housing supply is increased to meet local housing needs.

In 2022/23, 8,121 applications were made for affordable homes in Sandwell, of those only 2,877 (35%) qualified to join our Housing Register. Over the same period 1,449 properties became available during that year, a clear indication that demand continues to outstrip supply in Sandwell by some margin. The lack of affordable housing is a national issue and the government have set out a number of initiatives to support people into achieving home ownership as well as supporting local authorities to deliver new homes. The Council will continue to prioritise the delivery of new homes alongside remodelling redundant space within existing assets to create new homes.

However, the increasing number of emerging sector priorities, such as net zero carbon and building safety, is increasing the complexity of our investment levels

decisions. It is recognised that these competing priorities, demands and legislation will change during this time and will potentially impact the extent to which we can deliver on our objectives that currently exist.

3.4.3 Climate Change and The Low Carbon Future

Emissions from homes are estimated to account for 22% of all UK carbon emissions (including consumed electricity), and social housing contributes 10% of this. The Government has made commitments to tackle climate change including the 2017 Clean Growth Strategy which set the requirement for registered providers to achieve EPC C by 2030¹. At the time of writing, the Government is also reviewing the Decent Homes Standard which will have requirements for broader changes and investment. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) expects social landlords to be working to understand the actual costs of making carbon reduction improvements to our assets. With the vast majority of our current stock built before 1990, the cost of achieving EPC C are likely to be significant, requiring retrofit measures such as improved insulation, more efficient heating and hot water systems and microgeneration systems (e.g., solar panels). By 2025, new build homes will need to be low carbon and energy efficient. These new technologies will incur additional construction costs as well as increased ongoing repair, maintenance and component renewals throughout the life of the property.

3.5 Legal and Policy Context

There are a variety of national and local factors that have to be considered which underpin the strategy:

3.5.1 Building Safety

Tragic events such as the Grenfell Fire have increased the Government's and the RSH's focus on building safety, maintenance, internal governance, and the importance of resident engagement. The subsequent public inquiries and reviews have brought increased scrutiny of the approach to building management, investment, and maintenance of high-rise blocks, but also the wider issue of ensuring the safety of tenants and others.

Significant changes to our legal obligations became law during 2021 through the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Extensive work has been undertaken in 2021 and 2022 across the stock and we will continue our work to uphold and strengthen how we maintain the safety of residents through our management of higher risk buildings.

¹ An EPC gives a property an energy efficiency rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and is valid for 10 years.

3.5.2 Regulatory Standards

The Regulator of Social Housing's newly proposed Home Standard requires registered providers to:

- ensure that tenants' homes meet the Decent Homes Standard,
- provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas, and
- respond to the needs of tenants.

This applies to the breadth of our asset management activity including the delivery of responsive and cyclical repairs, responsible neighbourhood management, planned maintenance and the HRA Capital Programme, work on vacant properties and the delivery of aids and adaptations.

3.5.3 Decent Homes Standard

The 2020 Social Housing White Paper confirmed a review of the Decent Homes Standard, the first time the Standard has been updated since 2006. The first phase of the review – focused on establishing a case for change to the current standard – concluded in Autumn 2021. Phase 2 of the review, focused on the development of a new Standard, has now begun.

3.5.4 Regulatory reform

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act, which was introduced to parliament in July 2023, will deliver on the Government's social housing white paper commitment to legislate to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer regulation objectives to explicitly include safety. This draft legislation also includes social landlords' duty to appoint a nominated person responsible for complying with their health and safety requirements.

This legislation will bring significant reform to the regulation of social housing with the introduction of routine inspections to assess compliance with the consumer standards and unlimited fines in cases of non-compliance.

The Act sets out that tenants should expect:

- to be safe and secure in their home.
- to know how the council, as their landlord, is performing, in comparison to other landlords through the reporting of proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- to be treated with respect, have voices heard and have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood.
- tenants and residents have a voice in how their services are delivered.

3.6 Strategic and Policy Alignment

The Council's vision, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025, is for Sandwell to deliver 'Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods' and 'Strong, Resilient

Communities'. By achieving the objectives in this strategy, we will support these commitments.

The Housing Asset Management Strategy will align with council plans and strategies but will also influence and guide a range of supporting or inter-related strategies, plans and policies. This will ensure that the management of our assets is part of a wider approach to delivering high quality services and places for the benefit of our residents. The key documents that should be read in conjunction with this strategy include:

- Sandwell 2030 Vision: Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025
- Sandwell MBC Local Development Scheme 2022
- Sandwell Regeneration Strategy 2022 – 2027
- Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053
- Sandwell Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Building Safety Compliance Strategy 2023

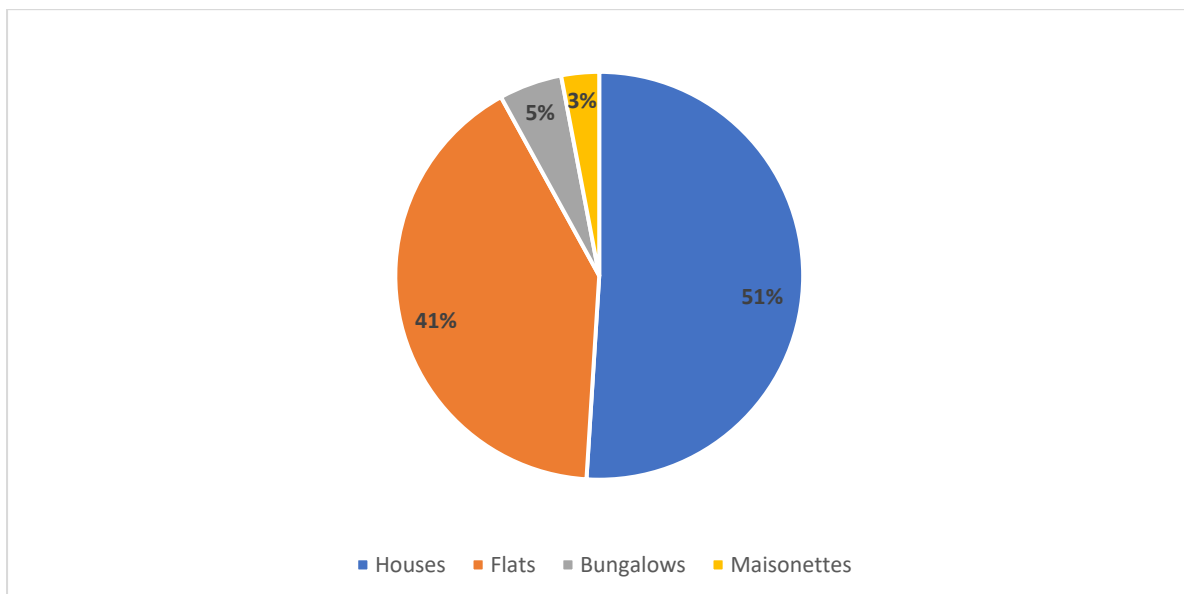
4. The Current Stock Portfolio

4.1 Residential Property

At the end of the financial year 2023, our housing stock consisted of 28,098 properties. There are also the freeholder of buildings in which there are 1,252 leasehold properties across the borough. In addition, we have 119 properties used for temporary accommodation and an additional 196 for supported housing.

4.2 Housing Stock Profile

This stock consists of 1,567 bungalows, 653 maisonettes, 14,916 houses and 10,962 flats. These properties are managed through our own Housing Services (these figures include the private finance initiative area of Harvills Hawthorn).



4.3 Housing council stock mix by Town Area [as at August 2023]:

The mix of property types affects the management and investment requirements of our stock. It also affects how well it aligns with local need and demand. Council stock distribution by town area is uneven, with Wednesbury sharing the lowest at 12.0% and West Bromwich accommodating the highest share at 26.0%. By stock type, 51.0% of bungalows are located in Wednesbury and West Bromwich, whilst nearly 40.0% of maisonettes are sited in Smethwick. Just under a third of flats are located in West Bromwich with Wednesbury having the lowest share at 7.0%. Houses as a stock type are more evenly distributed.

Town Area	Bungalow	Flat	House	Maisonette	Total
Oldbury	195	1,885	2,012	27	4,119
Rowley	196	1,808	2,931	0	4,935
Smethwick	135	1,173	1,777	368	3,453
Tipton	252	1,963	2,588	180	4,803
Wednesbury	298	702	2,372	16	3,388
West Bromwich	531	3,359	3,228	102	7,220
Grand Total	1,607	10,890*	14,908	693	28,098**

* = *3,040 flats are categorised as high-rise.

** = Figures provided are for SMBC stock and PFI Riverside.

4.4 Leaseholders

Whilst we have a relatively small proportion of leasehold properties, ensuring that we manage our services and relationships is vitally important. We hold a legal responsibility with leaseholders to maintain and renew the communal areas and external envelope of their homes. We must meet the requirements of the leases held and ensure that we are providing value for money and will consult with leaseholders regarding any planned improvement works.

4.5 Other HRA Assets

2,700 garages across
297 sites

HRA commercial
properties including
15 shops

69 play areas

Vacant land

5. Managing the Assets

5.1 Housing Stock

5.1.1 Repairs and Maintenance

The council is committed to delivering a high-quality, value for money, modern and effective repairs and maintenance service and to provide homes that are comfortable, maintained, and safe for people to live in.

Sandwell has a direct labour organisation (DLO) of staff who are responsible for the repairs and maintenance of all HRA assets. The purpose of this function is to maintain the condition of the council's assets providing a quality asset for the expected lifecycle of the component – this is the main service that maintains our assets.

The Housing Service delivers circa 110,000 responsive repairs each year alongside cyclical maintenance and capital works; this demonstrates a significant investment over the lifetime of the HRA Business Plan. Performance of the DLO is monitored to ensure the aims and objectives are met, whilst achieving value for money with effective resource management.

Repairs and maintenance activity is a significant driver of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction. The Repairs Service is accessed by most tenants and is highly valued. It is a key service with significant scrutiny.

Our principal aims are:

- To make sure we provide an effective, modern repairs service that tenants and leaseholders can rely on, responding quickly when the need arises.
- To have in place well designed repair and maintenance systems that ensure homes are safe, kept in repair and brought up to, or continue to meet, agreed standards.
- To ensure we repair and maintain the housing stock and communal areas in a way that optimises the use of financial, staffing and other resources and achieves value for money.
- To maximise choice for tenants on investment priorities and component replacement.
- To comply with relevant statutory and regulatory obligations.
- To deliver a repairs service which provides an effective balance between reactive and planned works.

5.1.2 Health and Safety

We have a responsibility in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 to ensure that all residential dwellings are designed, constructed and maintained free from both unnecessary and unavoidable health and safety risks.

Any risks, including any properties with defects which have a high-risk Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazard identified during an inspection or visit are actioned immediately to avoid or minimise any hazard which is identified.

This is part of the repairs and maintenance function, however any improvement identified as a result of this will be carried out as a Capital Improvement as a priority.

5.1.3 Gas Servicing

The repairs and maintenance function are also responsible for an annual inspection of landlord owned gas appliances. This is in accordance with Regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, which places a duty on landlords to ensure that it's gas appliances, installation pipework and chimney systems are maintained in a safe condition.

Under the Health and Safety at work act (Section 3) Sandwell MBC, as a landlord is also obligated to ensure that any flue system that we own that serves a tenant's own appliance is maintained and can safely remove any products of combustion. Where it is the case that a tenant owned appliance is connected to a chimney system we own we also service that appliance as part of best practice.

We take the same approach to flue systems where a solid fuel appliance is encountered that a tenant has had installed, where we also provide 2 safety inspections a year and 1 chimney sweep.

We also provide a responsive repairs service to our tenants where our gas appliances or heating systems breakdown. Where a gas appliance is found to be beyond economical repair or parts are obsolete, we replace the appliance and where necessary make upgrades to the system via capital improvements.

5.1.4 Electrical Test and Inspect

As best practice, we are ensuring electrical installations in properties are inspected and tested by a person who is qualified and competent, at an interval of at least every 5 years.

The standards that should be met are set out in the 18th edition of the Wiring Regulations.

The Regulations state that a landlord must ensure that electrical safety standards are met, and that investigative or remedial work is carried out if the report requires this.

Landlords must obtain a report (usually an Electrical Installation Condition Report or EICR) from the person conducting the inspection and test which explains its outcomes and any investigative or remedial work required.

The electrical installation should be safe for continued use. In practice, if the report does not require investigative or remedial work, the landlord will not be required to carry out any further work.

5.1.5 Damp, Condensation and Mould

As part of our commitment to ensuring tenant safety, a zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould will be undertaken.

Initially, we respond to reports of damp and mould on a reactive basis. This means that we will investigate after a tenant has reported an issue to us, or where a hazard has been identified by a surveyor under Hazard Rating System.

As part of the improvement planning process, we will analyse our repair data to determine whether we have a particular issue in certain locations, or with a certain type of property. This may lead to a focussed investment to proactively deal with damp and mould in certain properties including investing in innovative solutions for ventilation and digital monitoring.

We also take steps to address high levels of humidity in our properties by installing a humidity controlled extractor fans as a priority.

5.2 Capital Improvement

The Council's historical improvement regime was to invest in improvements on a cyclical estate by estate basis. Moving forward, our plans for improvement will be determined by an evidence base using data to measure how properties are performing in terms of condition and energy efficiency prioritising improvements on a 'worse first' premise.

We are currently in a transition period with construction partners continuing to deliver existing commitments made to residents for improvement works based on our traditional cyclical approach and we will begin to implement the needs based assessment as we develop a more comprehensive data set for each property.

A third-party consultancy has been commissioned to carry out stock condition surveys on 5000 of our stock over the next 12 months. The longer term plan is to have a rolling programme of surveys over a five year period, however this initial 5000 surveys will be a representative sample of the housing stock including a variety of archetypes across the whole borough, which will help us design future improvement programmes, provide a more robust strategy and support financial forecasting.

The surveys will help identify the condition of the key components within the dwelling. All components have a pre-determined expected lifecycle when a replacement would be expected. By surveying the component, an assessment can be made as to whether it is failing and due a replacement, or whether there is life remaining. This gives us the evidence base to prioritise the improvement works on a worse first basis.

The key components that we look to install or upgrade on a capital improvement programme are:

- Boilers (or other heating sources)
- Electrical upgrade
- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Windows
- Doors
- Roofs
- Soil stacks

- Fencing
- Loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Internal wall insulation
- PV panels
- Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP)
- Fire safety – e.g. smoke detectors , carbon monoxide, sprinklers, etc.

5.3 High-rise blocks

We have invested in 41 of the Council's 55 high rise blocks to improve the thermal comfort and upgrade the communal areas of the block and ensure that the blocks are compliant with building safety.

Work is in progress on 2 more high rise blocks and design work has been commissioned for 3 further high-rise block refurbishments. The remaining 9 blocks will be prioritised utilising an evidence base considering the outcome of condition surveys, levels of disrepair and housing management considerations.

5.4 Retrofit of housing stock

To some extent, the Council has for many years included retrofit considerations when developing planned improvement programmes for the housing stock. In the early days of retrofit this was limited to cavity wall/loft insulation, double-glazed PVCu windows and heating appliances with high-efficient energy ratings (gas boilers/storage heaters). The need to achieve an EPC rating C by 2030 has increased the emphasis on energy-efficiency works and with this in mind we are now expanding the type of measures included. Successful bids under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) for example, have enabled us to specify external and internal wall insulation where appropriate as part of refurbishment schemes .

For high-rise flats in particular, the inclusion of external wall insulation as part of major refurbishment schemes has had a very positive impact upon the lives of residents, both in regard to thermal comfort and energy bills.

During 2023 the first air-source heat network scheme will be delivered to one of the largest high-rise blocks in Sandwell (including some surrounding low-rise). This should provide a template for future high-rise refurbishment projects and will help to decarbonise the stock, replacing gas boilers and electric storage heaters.

The Council is currently considering development of a major heat network in and around West Bromwich, which could supply heat from a low-carbon source to 12 high-rise council-owned blocks. It could also connect to any future new-build housing developments situated along the designated spine route.

5.5 Aids and Adaptations

Aids and adaptations is a demand led service that will be delivered as a result of Occupational Therapist intervention. Assessments are completed by OT's in line with their good practice guide. Each case will be individually assessed on its own merits

and the Council decides what is reasonable in the light of its need to make housing available to a wide range of people in need, over the long term.

The aim of the Adaptations Service is to enable tenants and members of their household with disabilities to be provided with housing which best meets their assessed needs. The council will consider alternatives to adaptations, such as the provision of equipment or if appropriate assistance with relocation, when deciding on the most suitable option(s) to meet a person's needs. Decisions regarding an individual's needs will be made in accordance with the views of the tenant and the council's Guidance for the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations. All other assistance types are discretionary and subject to funding being available.

Each adaptation request will be looked at individually to ensure that the adaptation meets the current needs of the resident and where possible amended so that it will meet their needs in the future, thus saving on further adaptations being carried out at a later date.

5.6 Voids

A critical aspect of meeting our obligation to residents is through our performance in re-letting properties, ensuring homes remain vacant for as short a time as possible and completed to the agreed re-let standard.

Properties that have the potential to become long term and high-cost re-lets are assessed to ensure that investment is appropriate, and that the properties will be sustainable following investment, with a positive future net present value.

This approach aims to ensure that a property is properly managed when it becomes vacant, is brought up to the council's 'lettable' standard before a new tenant moves in, and that the rent loss is minimised within the whole process. The 'lettable' standard needs to be reviewed to improve the standard in which the properties are let to residents. This will include considering the work required to improve the decency and the thermal efficiency of the property, whilst there are no tenants in occupation. We will carry out an assessment to understand the work required to ensure a void is EPC C or above before re-let

The purpose of this Standard is to:

- Set out the principles and service standards of the void management service.
- Help to meet local housing need by maximising availability of social housing.
- Deliver continuous improvement through efficient management of voids, as well as contributing to sustainable tenancies, maximising rental income.

5.7 Garage sites

On average, approximately 38% of our garage stock is empty at any one time mainly due to the small size of the garages compared with modern cars and their distance from homes. There are wide variations in garage occupancy levels with some locations sustaining sufficient demand and others in which there is only low, or no, demand. This results in some garage sites looking neglected, which can be a factor

in local levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. These garages are managed by the Tenancy & Estate Management Service in conjunction with Strategic Assets and Land as with rent received being paid to the general fund.

A garage strategy is being developed for the future use to maximise income generation. This will shape the investment profile for garages and ensure that the financial and social yield of these sites may be realised.

5.8 Commercial Property

The Council retains strategic responsibility for the portfolio of HRA commercial properties including 15 shops.

All shop premises are managed on a day-to-day basis by Corporate Property whether on their own behalf or under instruction from the Head of Partnerships & Housing Directorate.

Any improvement work will be prioritised on these buildings where there is a clear benefit for the community or there is potential for income. We'll seek out any commercial opportunities to help future funding and re-investment in our communities.

5.9 Play Areas

Our green spaces team includes officers and inspectors who ensure our play areas are well maintained and inspected:

- Monthly inspections take place to check all equipment is safe and check any maintenance issues that are needed.
- Routine inspections are completed every three months.
- Annual inspections are completed for each play area by an external organisation.
- All play area inspection reports keep a record maintenance and improvement actions which are rated on priority. The most urgent issues might require a closure of a piece of equipment until the issue is fixed (i.e. equipment that requires repair), and the lowest level issues (i.e. painting railings) will be completed as soon as we are able, within our budget available

The introduction of the Green Spaces Strategy 2022 - 2025 approved by Cabinet established a programme of works for that year which involved using a mixture of funding to make improvements to play areas. The focus are on those play areas and green spaces with the lowest quality scores, and to raise Sandwell's overall greenspace quality scores from 34/100 to 50/100 by 2025. The approach adopted to housing assets managed by green spaces will be to include in the annual programme of works that is then approved by Cabinet each year and published online. We are currently bulking up this work to ensure all our play areas and green spaces in housing ownership are fit for purpose.

5.10 Land

As a large social landlord, SMBC owns vacant land. There are small areas of land managed by Sandwell's Housing Department that are thought unsuitable for

development (other than as part of a more major programme of estate redesign), together with larger areas of land with potential for residential or non-residential use.

The Council's affordable housing strategy will make use of available land assets and will do this in a way that supports plans for local estate regeneration.

All HRA land will be reviewed on a continual basis to ensure best use is considered and holding costs mitigated where feasible.

5.11 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

As part of the ongoing commitment to seek the views of tenants, we carry out annual Tenant Satisfaction Surveys using the 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' (TSM) perception survey questions. The most recent survey carried out in October 2022 has identified that the key driver of overall satisfaction is the quality of home, followed closely by how well the Council listens to residents' views and acts on them. This highlights the need to work with our residents to improve asset management.

There were standout drivers of overall satisfaction that are clearly interrelated:

- the overall repairs and maintenance service provided
- provision of a home which is well maintained
- being easy to deal with

6. Compliance and Building Safety

Sandwell Council will publish its Building Safety and Compliance plan later this year. This strategic document will set out our approach to ensuring our buildings are safe and meet regulatory requirements set out in the Building Safety Act 2022 (referred to as 'the Act') and its related secondary legislation. In addition, it will reference documents such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' Fire Safety Volume 1, which states 'blocks of flats with a top storey more than 11 metres above ground level should be fitted with a sprinkler system throughout the building'.

This plan will outline how we:

- Follow new design and construction standards
- Meet our commitment to keep residents safe
- Engage with residents and share building safety information with them
- Ensure qualifying leaseholders are protected from building safety defect costs
- Hold those responsible for building safety defects to account
- Work with regulators and provide them the information they need

The plan will also detail how Sandwell is compliant with gas safety, electrical inspections, lifts, asbestos and legionella.

7. Investment Priorities

There are a number of possible scenarios around asset investment with competing priorities. Whilst some investment is essential and non-discretionary (e.g. statutory compliance activity or work to maintain Decent Homes), other investment is more

discretionary. Of our more discretionary investment, some will be key to maintaining the income stream (e.g. the re-modelling or redevelopment of hard to let former extra care schemes / sheltered accommodation) whilst others may be more based on improving tenant satisfaction (e.g. environmental improvements on estates). Enhancements to the data enables us to provide Members and tenants with greater assurance that the highest priority requirements are being met and to illustrate the capacity that remains for any improvement related spend.

As a result, this also means working closely with residents to understand their needs and concerns, incorporating their feedback into housing and asset management decisions. Disrepair and updated legislation mean that budgets are more strained than ever. Whilst compliance and minimum standards will need to be adhered to, certain aspects of capital delivery works may need to be changed or scaled back. Those decisions will be agreed with residents and, where possible, expenditure needs careful consideration and risk management to ensure there are no regrets.

7.1 Investment planning

To date the Council has planned investment on a cyclical and estate by estate basis, however, the objective is to develop a longer-term programme of work that can provide stakeholders with greater visibility of work in the medium term. This new strategy will provide a framework to develop a 5-year programme of work to determine what works are required, to which properties via which works packages in which year. It provides a budget that ensures the investment plan fits within the financial parameters of the business plan.

The stock condition survey results will provide the baseline for the investment planning process. Added to these will be non-survey costs which include: communal area improvements and electrical upgrades, building safety and other compliance costs, estate and external works, door entry systems, and small scale improvements, as well as day to day maintenance (responsive void and cyclical).

Getting the right priorities will require involving a range of staff from across services. To achieve this, a process will be developed to turn the stock condition and other relevant data into a plan that optimises the available budgets and delivers value for money through:

- Alignment to the latest HRA Business Plan in accordance with strategic investment objectives;
- Triangulating repairs data, investment requirements, energy performance, void rent loss and asset performance in order to prioritise the properties will have the greatest impact on reducing revenue costs and income loss;
- Breaking that data down into the planning areas based on locality and stock type;
- Developing efficient programmes – including considering frequency of component replacement combinations and packaging, potentially conflicting programmes (e.g. window replacements against wall insulation programmes) and supply chain preferences;

- Considering the impact on leaseholders and the production of the annual service charge plan resulting from the investment plan.

7.2 Value for money

Our asset management approach will aim to deliver value for money, ensuring that as far as reasonably practicable expenditure is targeted to improve both energy efficiency and decency whilst also considering the whole life costs of assets to maximise financial return.

8. Action Planning

A detailed action plan has been developed identifying the specific actions required, who is responsible, and timeframes involved which will be monitored to evidence impact the action plan. The action plan template can be found **in appendix one**.

8.1 Governance

To make sure that we can deliver our priorities, the action plan will be published alongside the finalised strategy and will be reviewed regularly. We will use key data and other information to tell us what is happening, and review and update our actions accordingly.

Reports will be made to the the Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group and will report regularly to Leadership Team, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Scrutiny Board.

9. Appendices

Appendix One

Action	Short, medium, or long term	Lead

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Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

26 September 2023

Subject:	Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Action Tracker
Director:	Law and Governance Surjit Tour Surjir_tour@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Alexander Goddard – Scrutiny Lead Officer Alexander_Goddard@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







That the Board considers the items within the recommendations tracker and notes the progress on their implementation.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

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



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.
	People live well and age well	
	Strong resilient communities	
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods	
	A strong and inclusive economy	Effective monitoring of recommendations made supports this and allows scrutiny to evaluate its impact.
	A connected and accessible Sandwell	

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The attached Appendix details the responses to and progress on the implementation of recommendations made by the scrutiny function.

5 Implications

Resources:	The resource implications will be detailed in the responses to recommendations as detailed in the appendix.
Legal and Governance:	The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on the Executive to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them.



Risk:	Any risk implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Risk Owner at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board. Any specific risks for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Equality:	Any equality implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board. Any specific equality implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Health and Wellbeing:	Any health and wellbeing implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board. Any specific health and wellbeing implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Climate Change:	Any climate change implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board. Any specific climate change implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Corporate Parenting:	Any corporate parenting implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board. Any specific corporate parenting implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Recommendations Tracker.

7 Background Papers

None.



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Tracking and Monitoring of Actions and Recommendations of Scrutiny Boards

Scrutiny Board Date	Agenda Item Title	Action/Recommendation	Responsible Director /Body	Activity Log
Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities 23/24				
Date	Item	Recommendation/ Action	Responsible Person	Notes
23 MAR 23	Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy	That the Cabinet Member for Housing consider basing homelessness staff at Community Hubs and provide a presence at Sandwell libraries at suitable points throughout the week	Cllr Rollins/ Gillian Douglas	18 September 2023 - Update requested
		That an update on Homelessness be brought to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in 6 months' time.	Gillian Douglas	18 September 2023 - Update requested
		How long is the average response time after making contact with the Homelessness team and having been triaged?	Nigel Collumbell	18 September 2023 - Update requested
		What percentage of Homelessness service users are accommodated in Council housing?	Nigel Collumbell	18 September 2023 - Update requested
	Private Sector Housing Assistance	That the Director of Housing explore the use of assistive smart technology to support disabled tenants.	Gillian Douglas/ Manny Sehmbi	Appearing before the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in March 2024

	Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing	That the Director of Housing investigate the feasibility of transferring applications to other individuals in the property with the same accessibility needs	Gillian Douglas/ Manny Sehmbi	Appearing before the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in March 2024
23 FEB 23	Tree Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023-2028	Checkpoint reports throughout the first 18 months of the Tree Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023- 2028 are provided to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board	Matt Huggins	Briefing note to be circulated September 2023
		Feedback from the survey of trees, to include impact on light to habitable rooms is provided to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board	Matt Huggins	Briefing note to be circulated September 2023
10 JAN 23	Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan	That the Directors of Housing and Regeneration and Growth investigate the feasibility of turning Council owned non- residential properties into residential units.	Gillian Douglas/ Tony McGovern	Update requested September 2023
31 August 2023	Additional Licensing and Article 4 – Options Appraisal	That the Directors of Housing and Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Housing and Built Environment and Regeneration and WMCA, obtain at least 1,000 responses per town from the planned Additional Licensing consultation.	Gillian Douglas Tony McGovern	Recommendations rejected by Cabinet on 13 September 2023 however, officers would aim to obtain as much feedback during the consultation process as possible.
		That the Directors of Housing and Regeneration and Growth work collaboratively with external partners including West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Community Support Officers to identify un-registered HMO's.		Recommendation approved by Cabinet on 13 September 2023

Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2023/24



Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities

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Standing Items:-

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

Meeting Date	Item	Presented by
11 July 2023	Borough of Sanctuary	Louis Bebb/ Jennifer Collins
	Approval of 2023/ 24 Municipal Year Work Programme	Alex Goddard/ John Swann
31 August 2023	HMOs – Additional Licensing and Article 4 Direction	John Baker/ Alison Bishop/ Carl Mercer
12 September 2023	Neighbourhood Partnerships Team Update	Manny Sehmbi/ Marcia Sandel-Massey
	Future Provision of Leisure Services Update	Ben Percival
	Haden Hill Leisure Centre Rebuild	Ben Percival
26 September 2023	Asset Management Strategy	Sarah Ager



9 November 2023	Sandwell Valley Masterplan Update	Matt Huggins
	Fees and Charges for Leisure Services	Ben Percival/ Alice Davey
7 December 2023	Tenant Satisfaction Survey Outcomes	Nigel Collumbell
	Safer Green Spaces Strategy	Matt Huggins
11 January 2024	Heritage Strategy Journey Update	Dawn Winter
	Green Spaces Strategy 2024/ 25 and Programme of Works 2024/ 25	Matt Huggins
14 March 2024	Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing	Nigel Collumbell
	Fees & Charges (inc concessions) for LATC / Sandwell Aquatic Centre Update	Ben Percival
	Safer Sandwell Partnership	Chief Supt. Maria Fox/Tessa Mitchell

To be Scheduled

Reports of the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group on:- (Nigel Collumbell/ Marianne Munro) – (Dependent upon T+LSG Work Programming – timescales TBC)

- Building Safety Review
- Responsive Repairs & Customer Satisfaction Review

Housing Hub Review (Report of the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group) - Implementation of Recommendations Update. – Nigel Collumbell

Playing Pitch Strategy – OCT/ NOV 23 - working group to re-convene (Ben Percival)



- To incorporate all weather sports facilities (Indoor/ Astroturf). TBC.

Working Group:

- Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing.

Article 4 and Additional Licensing consultation outcomes to be brought before the Board when available.

Allotments Review and Strategy – Matt Huggins

Housing Regulations Changes (February 2024)

Housing Repairs Update



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

	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
1	<p>HRA Capital Investment Procurement Strategy Procurement Strategy for HRA related Capital and Revenue contracts. Approval required for extension of contracts.</p> <p>Contact Officers: Phil Deery/Chris Hall</p> <p>Director: Gillian Douglas – Director of Housing</p>	<p>Cabinet – Housing and Building Environment (Cllr Rollins)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>18 October 2023</p>		<p>Report Risk Register</p>



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
2	Future Provision of Leisure Services Contact Officer: Ben Percival Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)	Private – financial or business affairs	18 October 2023	SNAC – 12 September 2023	
3	Playing Pitch Strategy Contact Officer: Robert Marlow / Ben Percival Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		18 October 2023	SNAC	



Page 55	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
4	<p>SAC Closedown Report</p> <p>Final project close down report including closure of any outstanding financial issues.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Alexander Oxley</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern</p>	<p>Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)</p>		<p>18 October 2023</p>		<p>Report</p>



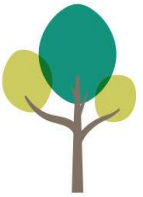
Page 56	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
5	<p>Haden Hill Rebuild to agree the scope of the project and preferred procurement route</p> <p>Contact Officer: Nicola Leavy / Ben Percival</p> <p>Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy</p>	<p>Cabinet – Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)</p>	<p>Private – financial or business affairs</p>	<p>18 October 2023</p>	<p>SNAC – 12 September 2023</p>	



Page 57	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
8	Future Use of Smethwick Swimming Centre – Options Contact Officer: Luke Dove Director: Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet - Regeneration & WMCA (Cllr Hughes)	N/A	18 October 2023	N/A	Cabinet Report



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
9	<p>Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 To agree the approach to invest in HRA assets for the next 5 years</p> <p>Contact Officer: Sarah Ager</p> <p>Director – Gillian Douglas, Director of Housing</p>	<p>Cabinet – Housing and the Built Environment (Cllr Rollins)</p>		<p>15 November 2023</p>		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
10	Building Safety and Compliance Strategy Contact Officer: Phil Deery Director – Gillian Douglas, Director of Housing	Cabinet – Housing and the Built Environment (Cllr Rollins)		15 November 2023		
11	Allotments Review and Strategy Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		15 November 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
12	Animal Welfare Policy – Forge Mill Farm Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leader of the Council (Cllr Carmichael)		6 December 2023		
14	Safer Green Spaces Strategy Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		6 December 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
15	Sandwell Valley Master Plan and 10 Year Business Plan Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		6 December 2023		
17	Fishing Policy Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		6 December 2023		



Page 62	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
18	Bid to Arts Council England – Libraries Improvement Fund Round 3 (depending on amount) Contact Officer: Dawn Winter Director: Alice Davey – Director of Borough Economy	Cabinet - Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Padda)		7 February 2024		
19	Community Hubs Contact Officer: Helen Green	Cabinet - Public Health and Communities (Cllr Khatun)		7 February 2024		



Page 63	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
20	Boroughwide Public Spaces Protection Order Renewals / Extensions Alcohol, Dogs & Use of BBQs on public land Contact Officer: Tessa Mitchell Director: Alice Davey	Cabinet		7 February 2024	January 2024	



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