

Appendix 5

Year End Highlights

Best start for Children and Young People

- The Children's Services Ofsted rating has improved from Inadequate to Requires Improvement to be Good between the 2017 inspection and 2022 inspection. This is a significant achievement and recognition of the focus that the council has had on performance in this area and the positive relationship with Sandwell Children's Trust. Previously children's services had been rated inadequate for more than a decade
- Sandwell scores better than the Region and England average on the Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 indicator, which looks at the points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- An improving picture for percentage of schools rated Good or better by Ofsted – currently Primary 86%, Secondary 74%, Special and PRU 100%.
- In relation to safeguarding, the ILACS inspection (May 2022) noted that we promote the concept of "professional curiosity" across all partner agencies, reminding partners of their shared duty to identify children not in school, including those who are Elective Home Educated or Children Missing Education.
- The new SEND contract commenced in September 2022 and is being tracked by the Children and Education Scrutiny Board.
- Public Health Nursing programmes are thriving under the new Cooperative Working Agreement drawn up between Public Health and the Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust. Performance on indicators such as New Birth Visits (NBV) and Newborn Screening rates being significantly better than the national average.
- Public Health are leading an inter-agency review of children's mental health provision in Sandwell. This has brought together NHS, social care and education partners alongside consultation with the SHAPE Youth Forum. The aims are to strengthen referral pathways and expand community-based support.

People Live Well Age well

- A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy was developed which forms the first joint strategy between the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board and the Sandwell Health and Care Partnership (part of the Black Country Integrated Care System). This new strategy is the first in England to include a joint outcomes framework between Council, NHS and Voluntary Sector agencies and will ensure greater integration of health improvement work in the Borough. Over £1m of new funding has already been secured through this partnership for Public Health programmes.
- We have worked to ensure that we have a Council wide response to health inequality. A good example is our current work on cost of living and winter wellbeing. Work from several teams has fed into a Council-wide strategy aimed primarily at our most deprived groups. Strategic and operational contributions have come from colleagues in Housing, Finance, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Public Health. We are collaborating as one team on everything from the provision of warm spaces and financial advice through to voluntary sector mobilisation and communications. Funding and supporting 30 additional warm spaces run by voluntary and faith groups; training over 130 Cost of Living Champions to provide reliable sources of information; distributing winter warmth bags to residents via community groups.
- A Cost of Living Summit with 60 community/voluntary and business partners was convened in March 23, bringing together organisations to design better support services for residents in need.
- Public Health have formed a new collaborative programme with the University of Birmingham. This will facilitate new and innovate health improvement programmes to be run in Sandwell while also increasing the Council's workforce capacity through the hosting of postgraduate students.
- There has been progress in helping people make everyday choices about how they choose to live their lives and reviewing access to day care provision to improve independence and choice. The realignment of intermediate social work teams with community social work teams and the new flagship Integrated Health and Care facility, Harvest View, are major steps forward.
- The Joint Carers Strategy and delivery plan has been refreshed and the new version (2022 -2026) was approved in June 2022 by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- Commissioning of the new stop smoking service is complete; the stop smoking support systems within maternity units and in the community are well underway.
- The engagement of the Faith Sector in Public Health work is also moving apace to further strengthen our links with communities across the borough.

Strong, Resilient Communities

- Sandwell secured the Towns Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis to a value of £67.5m of Town Deal funding; submitting all the business cases within the deadline, achieving almost the highest amount for any single local authority. Progress reported in November 22 noted that 15 of the 16 projects have moved into the delivery stage.
- Working with Library Services, new youth clubs have been opened in Wednesbury and Oldbury. The Council is reviewing the Youth Service offer. A bid for a new purpose-built youth facility in West Bromwich has been submitted to the Government's Levelling Up Fund.
- Delivery of Library + is on track with a libraries strategy being developed.
- Last Summer, during the Commonwealth Games, Sandwell had its proud moment in the international spotlight - hosting 11 days of swimming and diving competition, the Sandwell Aquatic Centre had been delivered on time and within budget to a world class standard.
- The council also held Shine a Light festivals in each of the six towns in the lead up to the Games to celebrate our communities. Sandwell Council worked closely with regional partners to ensure transport networks ran smoothly up to and during the Games as well as maintaining public realm, food licensing and working with 90 Games Volunteers. The Queen's Baton Relay and the Commonwealth Games Live site in the borough were a great success and this was due to the many staff who brought their enthusiasm and pulled out all the stops to make it a success for Sandwell.
- To build on the fantastic opportunities offered by hosting the Commonwealth Games, the Legacy Build phase of the Aquatics Centre to add local leisure facilities has now commenced and the Games legacy plan is being refreshed that will see greater

opportunities for increased physical activity by local residents and communities.

- A myriad of events in each of the six towns have been delivered by the council, working with partners locally, including delivery of first Pride event, delivery of Queen's Platinum Jubilee events and delivery of QBR, In addition, Sandwell Valley Phase One relaunch was completed to improve our facilities for local communities and maximise the offer of this fantastic venue.
- Various projects have been initiated to reduce the council's carbon emissions both in the council's estate and the wider borough. Including Solar panels and heat pumps on council buildings and working with community groups to fund climate related projects. The Council has established new governance arrangements for both Members and Officers to take forward the approved Climate Change Action Plan.
- Serco fleet replacement programme 2022/23 is on track.
- Community Safety Strategy 2022-26 in place outlining prevention of violent extremism priorities.
- Implementation of the Local authority Trading Company has commenced for delivering leisure services in Sandwell.

Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods

- On average, 77 new council homes are being delivered per annum and 500 council homes are being retrofitted using external and internal funding including successful bids to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Willow Gardens, 90 extra care flats in Rowley Regis, is fully open operationally as part of the council's approach to supporting people to live independently.
- Walker Grange plan to upgrade and refurbish flats to be dementia friendly approved for implementation.
- Progress to deliver 54 affordable flats for young people through Live and Work Scheme started in January 23
- West Bromwich Towns Fund has been secured as a major step in bringing forward residential development in the town centre. The gas showroom site in West Bromwich has been sold to a housing association for residential development and a significant land asset in town centre has been acquired for mixed residential development.
- The Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group is fully operational with an agreed 12-month work plan. This will enable our tenants to

more effectively hold the council to account and their voice to be heard. Training has also been rolled out to tenant volunteers for the new Tenant Auditor Programme.

- Empty Homes Strategy 2023-28 launched
- Damp and Mould Team set up in November 22 and work ongoing to address all identified cases, including holistic tenant support
- Homelessness Strategy was adopted in June 22, focused on increasing prevention, early intervention and rapid rehousing. Homelessness preventions continue to increase each month, showing impact of the new operating model
- A Housing Needs Assessment has been produced and presented to Scrutiny Board (SNAC). This has informed the development of a Housing Strategy for Sandwell.

A Strong Inclusive Economy

- Sandwell's Anchor Network of key anchor organisations is established and progressing well, with an Anchor Network Co-ordinator in place to further progress this work. The purpose of the Anchor Network is to galvanise the combined power of the key organisations in the borough to address issues they collectively agree need focused action.
- Monitoring of the Regeneration Strategy and pipeline indicates that the vast majority of the 66 projects are on track or amber, meaning they are progressing through the delivery stages.
- Negotiation with WMCA to secure the best possible UKSPF allocation for Sandwell to deliver employment and skills.
- The council actively engaged in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal discussions with WMCA partners and submitted a clear list of Sandwell asks from the process, with its key priority being options to fund and support the retrofitting of the Council's HRA Housing stock at scale. The Deal for the West Midlands was announced in the Chancellor's budget in March 23 and included funding for the metro extension to Brierley Hill from Wednesbury.
- Building on the successful allocation of £67.5m Towns Fund, funding is being sought to deliver the council's Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline that was agreed in March 2022. For instance, four bids were submitted totalling circa £88m to the Government Levelling Up Fund.

- Following the halt of the Black Country Plan, Cabinet resolved in November 22 to commence preparation of a Sandwell Local Plan – forecast adoption date end of 2025/early 2026.
- The £400m project for a new Waste to Energy Plant in Sandwell has commenced construction and will create circa 400 new construction jobs. This facility will be operated by Enfinity and the Council is exploring the feasibility of a local heat network using heat and steam from the plant.
- Approval secured for £3.2m of Black Country LEP Legacy Funding to bring forward the Swan Lane site in West Bromwich for residential development which will deliver 147 new affordable homes in partnership with Green Square Accord (Housing Association)
- The project for a new Health Centre in Wednesbury being funded and delivered by the Council for the NHS has commenced construction along with 5 new Council homes on the same site.
- The new Visit Sandwell website was launched, a gateway to promoting the many attractions, events and facilities across Sandwell for local residents and visitors.
- Sandwell's Inclusive Recovery Action Plan for Businesses (IRAPB), developed in conjunction with local businesses, was endorsed by Cabinet in March this year. Funding for additional resources is being sought through UKSPF to support the delivery of the Action Plan aligned to the IRAPB but the council has also approved an investment of circa £1m of its own resources to take forward the implementation of the Action Plan.

Connected, Accessible Sandwell

- The council is progressing key infrastructure projects as part of its pipeline. West Midlands Metro Extension Phase 1 Wednesbury to Dudley is under construction and several large projects are moving through the design stages.
- The £16m capital programme of improvement works is underway at 48 locations in the borough. These will deliver improvements to road safety, congestion, town centres, street lighting, speed reduction, bridge refurbishment, cycling, walking, major route signing. Funding has also been secured for 37 pairs of on-street residential charge points which were delivered in 2022.
- Towns Funding has been secured for a Canal and River Trust project in Rowley Regis and Sandwell is on track to deliver

towpath and access improvements on Dudley No2 Canal, Birmingham Old Line Canal and Midland Metropolitan University Hospital canal.

- The ULEV charging scheme Phase 1 is commenced and will complete in 2023.

One Council One Team

- A permanent and stable team of directors and a new Chief Executive is in place.
- The council has completed the review of many key processes and strategies, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Contract Procedure Rules, Equalities Strategy and Action Plan, a new workforce planning framework, Corporate Performance Management Framework and the Member Development Programme.
- The Customer Access Strategy is under development - research has commenced on good practice, Project Group and Engagement sessions to be established. Additional funding has been secured to support the development of the Digital Inclusion Strategy and work to tackle digital exclusion.
- Sandwell Wellbeing and Perception Survey was completed in Summer 2022 together with a budget consultation exercise which fed into the budget setting process.
- A corporate approach to consultation and engagement has been established and technical solution procured.
- Progress on developing and establishing a positive culture across the organisation, developing a new set of values and behaviours as a result of employee engagement activity.
- Progress on track for implementing the council's core finance and HR system – Oracle Fusion, aiming to take full advantage of the transformational benefits this system can bring.