

# Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Long-Term Plan for Smethwick
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration & WMCA Cllr Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning Tammy Stokes
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Regeneration Manager, Jenna Langford jenna_langford@sandwell.gov.uk

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to establish a Smethwick Long-Term Plan Board through undertaking necessary selection processes to make appointments to the Board, and finalise the associated Terms of Reference.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to make any changes to the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick Town Board terms of reference in response to any further Government guidance or Board requirements.
- 1.3 That authority be granted to the newly appointed board, once constituted to develop a Long-Term Plan for Smethwick, to include public consultation, and to submit to Government, subject to S151 Officer authorisation.
- 1.4 That Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, the S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to review



and formally accept the Long-Term Plan funding offer/ grant conditions from Government.

- 1.5 That approval be given for the Council to act as Accountable Body for the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick programme and adopt programme governance arrangements.
- 1.6 That the geographical boundary for the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick as determined be endorsed, and the Assistant Director of Growth & Spatial Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration WMCA be authorised to make any necessary representations to Government to amend the boundary in consultation with the new Board.
- 1.7 That the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to approve public consultation in relation to the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The requirements set out by Government include establishing a Town Board by 1 April 2024. The purpose of the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick Board is to bring community leaders and representatives together to produce, oversee and deliver the Long-Term Plan. The key components of the Board Terms of Reference are outlined in 4.7, along with the proposed process for board selection. Once the Board is constituted, it is proposed that the Terms of Reference can then be finalised and approved. Details received from Government to date have been limited and more detail may be provided at a later stage. It is therefore necessary to be able to adapt the arrangements for the Board to ensure compliance with emerging government guidance or Board requirements.
- 2.2 The Long-Term Plan for Smethwick is to be produced, overseen, and delivered by the Board and submitted to Government by 1 August 2024. The submission of the plan enables the £20m endowment style funding to be drawn-down to deliver plan interventions of a 10-year period, in accordance to the draw-down profile, submitted as part of the plan.



- 2.3 It is envisaged that upon submission and acceptance of the Long-Term Plan by Government, the council will be expected to enter into a funding agreement or memorandum of understanding. The premise will be that the council agrees to act as the Accountable Body for the programme and as such programme governance will need to be established.
- 2.4 Government have confirmed that investment from the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick is eligible within the boundary plan provided by Government as part of the data pack (appendix 1). Government have advised there is scope to make representations to the department to alter those boundaries (4.14).
- 2.5 The Long-Term Plan is to be driven by local people and local priorities and as such public engagement and consultation will be required throughout the development of the plan.

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

	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b> Safety and Security is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support strong and resilient communities.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b> High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support a strong and inclusive economy.</p>
	<p><b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b> Transport and Connectivity is an investment theme of the Long-Term Plan funding programme which will support a connected &amp; accessible Sandwell.</p>

### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In October 2023 the Government Department for Local Communities and Housing (DLUHC) announced their '*Long-Term Plan for Towns*' an investment programme of £1.1 billion into 55 towns for local people's priorities such as regenerating local high streets and town centres or securing public safety. The announcement was accompanied by the publication of '*Our Long-Term Plan for Towns*' prospectus.



- 4.2 Each of the 55 towns selected are to receive £20m ‘endowment-style’ funding to invest over the next 10 years. Town selection for funding allocation was undertaken by Government according to the Levelling Up Needs Index which considers metrics covering skills, pay, productivity, and health, as well as the Index of Multiple Deprivation. For Sandwell, Government have selected Smethwick to receive Long-Term Plan for Towns funding. Other Black Country towns allocated funding are Darlaston (Walsall), Dudley (Dudley), and Bilston (Wolverhampton).
- 4.3 The Government intention is for the £20m endowment style funding (25% revenue / 75% capital) over a 10-year period will provide long-term certainty to deliver a range of interventions within three broad investment themes to be driven by the needs and wishes of local communities:
1. Safety and Security
  2. High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration
  3. Transport and Connectivity
- 4.4 The view of Government is that this flexibility means Towns such as Sandwell are more able to capitalise on private and philanthropic investment, aligning timings with businesses and investors to maximise the benefits for local people.
- 4.5 The funding will be devolved directly to Sandwell and will be able to roll over funding into future years. As the Local Authority, Sandwell will be the accountable body and will remain responsible for ensuring good use of public funds through the existing duties of the Section 151 officer.
- 4.6 To access the £20m endowment-style funding Sandwell will need to produce a Long-Term Plan for Smethwick, based on the priorities of local people, and put to local people for consultation. A Town Deal Board for Smethwick for the purposes of the Long-Term Plan will need to be established that brings community leaders and representatives together to produce, oversee, and deliver the Long-Term Plan.



4.7 The terms of reference for the Board will be based on learning from the Towns Fund Programme Governance model, adapting arrangements from the existing Town Deal Board for Smethwick. The new Board once constituted will review and finalise the terms of reference at its first meeting. The proposed terms of reference will then be submitted for approval by the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth & Spatial Planning, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority. The terms of reference will comprise the following components:

- Governance Model
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Board Positions
- Code of Conduct
- Decision Making
- Scrutiny
- Transparency and Accountability
- Board Member profiles
- Conflicts of Interest
- Scheme of Delegation

4.8 It is proposed that the existing positions and members of the Smethwick Town Deal Board be retained for the Long-Term Plan Board:

- Chair of Smethwick Town Deal Board
- Deputy Chair of Smethwick Town Deal Board
- Cabinet Member Regeneration & West Midlands Combined Authority
- SMBC Smethwick Town Lead

The other existing positions will also be retained, though the process of repurposing the Town Deal Board for the Long-Term Plan will provide an opportunity to review these positions in the revised context. Where additional representation is required it is proposed to advertise the board positions, requesting that expressions of interest be submitted for the retained Board members to consider and appoint by panel. The Town Deal Board were consulted on the 29 February 2024 and agreed to this approach.



- 4.9 The Long-Term Plan is to comprise the 10-year vision for Smethwick and a 3-year investment plan, setting out how the funding will be allocated and spent, with the local authority as the body ultimately accountable for funding. The endowment approach means that funding is released over a 7-year period and local authorities have the flexibility to spend it over 10-years, with 'light touch' assurance from DLUHC. The full funding profile will be available in early 2024. The funding is delivered through the powers are set out in Section 50 of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.
- 4.10 Government have stated that where a Town Deal Board is already in place (Smethwick Town Deal Board), this can be re-purposed to meet the needs of the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick. As with Town Deal Boards, Government expect the Town Board to be chaired by a businessperson or a local community leader. On the 15 November 2023 the Smethwick Town Deal Board were advised of the Long-Term Plan announcement from DLUHC and the option to re-purpose the Smethwick Town Deal Board to align with the requirements of the Long-Term Plan programme. Smethwick Town Deal Board members present were supportive of being involved with the Long-Term Plan for Smethwick.
- 4.11 On the 18 December 2023 DLUHC released further guidance confirming that £250k capacity funding (RDEL Grant) is to be issued to Local Authorities to cover the costs of establishing the Town Deal Board and preparing the Long-Term Plan for submission. The capacity funding will comprise £50k, which has been received by the council, to establish the Town Deal Board. Once established the remaining £200k of capacity funding will be released to develop the plan which is to be submitted by the 1 August 2024. Government expect this funding to be utilised for convening a Town Deal Board, community engagement, support to the Town Deal Board to develop the Long-Term Plan, and technical expertise for project development including feasibility studies and business cases. The £250k capacity funding is deducted from the £20m funding allocation.
- 4.12 The plan is to set out a 10-year vision that is long-term, strategic, and backed by insights gained through engagement with local people. The plan is to comprise a vision statement, a strategic case for the future of



the town, the priority outcomes for 2034, planned interventions across the three investment themes, evidence the plan is community led, how the board will attract additional investment, and high-level milestones.

- 4.13 Government have provided a list of interventions which have already been assessed as having a strong case for investment, value for money and benefit-to-cost ratio by Government. Should the Board pursue these interventions, a business case will not be required as part of the assessment process. However, should the board wish to pursue bespoke or 'off-menu' interventions an outline business will be required.
- 4.14 Government advised there is scope to make representations to the department to alter the Long-Term Plan investment boundary, where an amendment remains within the spirit of the programme and includes, as part of the revised area, the town that was originally selected and must remain contiguous. Any representation to amend the investment boundary need to be confirmed by 1 April 2024 and must have been agreed by the Town Board. Having reviewed the Long-Term Plan investment boundary as provided by Government it has been necessary to consider amendments.
- 4.15 The Government have based the investment boundary on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Built Up Areas' (see appendix 1) and as such the boundary excludes investment in key open spaces such as Black Patch and Warley Woods. The boundary does not conform to the ward boundaries of Smethwick Town and includes part of Oldbury (Bristnall) within the boundary, and by Government's own guidance the investment boundary must represent the town as intended.



- 4.16 The proposed revised investment boundary aligns to the Smethwick Town boundary, encompassing Abbey; Smethwick; Soho and Victoria; and St Pauls wards in their entirety. Open Spaces are also included. Subject to Cabinet endorsement and Board approval the intention is to submit representation to DLUHC by the 1 April 2024 to amend the investment boundary accordingly.
- 4.17 The timescales for the Long-Term Plan development and submission set by Government are incredibly ambitious and for Sandwell much of the time will be during purdah. Legal advice has been sought and establishing the board is business as usual and therefore does not contravene purdah regulations. In-terms of plan development, the council will appoint consultancy services to provide the necessary expertise and support to the Board to develop the plan. During purdah this activity will comprise data collection, analysis, and meeting with local communities to harness their local priorities. No public consultation will take place until the purdah period has concluded.
- 4.18 Government have provided £250,000 in capacity funding to establish the board and develop the Long-Term Plan for submission. Going forward the remainder of the £20m will also need to cover the council's costs for being the accountable body for the fund and the programme management costs over the 10-year period. This will require programme management support resource within the Regeneration Programme Management Office, and support from finance to meet our accountable body obligations. The Long-Term Plan when submitted on the 1 August 2024 is only required to provide a 3-year investment plan. The Long-Term Plan will therefore be reviewed after that 3-year period and it may become necessary to prepare a revised plan, which could come at costs not dissimilar to the initial capacity funding provided by Government.
- 4.19 In-terms of plan development and delivery there will be resource requirements across council Directorates who will directly benefit, or their customers will directly benefit from the Long-Term Plan. This resource requirement will form project leads who will be responsible for project development and delivery in conjunction with the Board and the





community. They will also be responsible for reporting into the Programme Management Office. Leadership Team were consulted on the 13 February 2024 and the following Directorates were identified as having to identify where resource was available or required.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council advise Government the deadlines for establishing a board and submission of the Long-Term plan will not be achievable.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Resources will need to be funded from the Long-Term Plan fund to ensure the council's cost of programme management and accountable body responsibilities are funded, this will include finance officer resource. This will also include capacity to review and update the investment plan after the 3-year period.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	Should the plan submission be accepted, the council will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Government. Governance arrangements for the board will be established and approved by the Assistant Director of Legal & Assurance and will be reviewed annually.
<b>Risk:</b>	We are yet to have sight of the funding agreement with Government, so it is not possible to assess risks at this stage.
<b>Equality:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	The Long-Term Plan is yet to be developed.

## 7. Appendices

- a) Government Data Pack
- b) Revised Boundary Proposed



## 8. Background Papers

Long-Term Plan for Towns Prospectus  
Long-Term Plan for Towns Guidance

