

Minutes of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

**Thursday 15 February 2024 at 6.05pm
In the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Fenton (Chair);
Councillors K Allcock, Lewis, Maycock, Shaeen and
Webb.

In Attendance: Councillor Padda (Cabinet Member for Leisure and
Tourism) and Sue Smith (Tenants and Leaseholders
Scrutiny Group).

Officers: Matthew Huggins (Assistant Director – Green Spaces,
Green Services, Events), Stephnie Hancock (Deputy
Democratic Services Manager) and John Swann
(Democratic Services Officer).

15/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors
Davies, Dhatt, Fisher and Younis.

16/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

17/24 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 17
and 29 January are confirmed as a correct record.

18/24 **Additional Items of Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

19/24

Fishing Policy (*Sandwell Angling Code of Conduct*)

The Board received an overview of the proposed Fishing Policy for Sandwell's waterbodies - *Sandwell Angling Code of Conduct* - which was due to be considered by the Cabinet in June 2024. The draft Code of Conduct was due to be introduced alongside online payment options for Sandwell Angling Permits.

The draft Code set out the expectations of individuals angling on Sandwell's waterbodies and detailed those waterbodies that permitted angling. The Code sought to enforce good Angling practices, which would ensure no detrimental impact to fish or waterfowl.

Whilst developing the Code a six- week public consultation had taken place which had been promoted online and via the Council's social media channels. The Council had also consulted the Angling Trust, which was the national governing body for angling in England.

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

- A fishing stock mapping exercise was due to commence from April 2024, to better inform efforts to protect fish and ensure sustainable fishing practices.
- Abandoned tents at waterbodies had contributed to increased fly- tipping in the Borough.
- Clarification in the draft Code with regards to the permissance of shelters and umbrellas would be of benefit.
- The Code defined day fishing as angling between dawn- and- dusk. Set times for fishing could make the draft Code easier to understand.
- Enforcement efforts were to be conducted via spot- checks.
- Sandwell Angling Permits would be for sale at three locations within Council owned green spaces, including

Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, however it was anticipated that the majority of anglers would purchase permits online.

- Fishing Rod Licences issued by the Environment Agency were required in addition to Angling Permits.
- The final Code would be communicated via updated signage across the Borough at waterbodies, within the Sandwell Herald and via correspondence sent to Angling Trust.
- The Assistant Director - Green Spaces, Green Services, Events, undertook to support Angling clubs' efforts to book waterbodies for events.
- The price of Sandwell Angling Permits had been compared against comparable local authorities to ensure value for money.
- Members supported Angling at Swan Pool on Saturday and Sunday.
- The Board re- affirmed its recommendation made at its meeting on 17 January 2024 in relation to the feasibility of providing fixed and fire-safe designated BBQ areas in Sandwell's green spaces (Minute No 6/24 (Implementation of 3 Boroughwide Public Space
- Protection Orders relating to Alcohol Consumption, Dog Fouling and BBQs/Fires) refers).
- The Council would respond to intelligence in relation to poaching in collaboration with the Wildlife Crime Officers at West Midlands Police.
- Animal feed for waterfowl and other aquatic wildlife was sold within Sandwell Valley, animal feed sold at other waterbodies may promote ecology aims.
- Messaging promoting approved fishing practices cascaded via schools in the locality of Council waterbodies may better educate residents.
- The use of drones to monitor angling practices at waterbodies may support enforcement activities.
- Individuals with mobility and access needs needed to be supported be able to fish at the Borough's waterbodies.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Assistant Director Borough Economy (Green Spaces, Green Services, Events) considers the following amendments to the draft

Sandwell Angling Code of Conduct, to provide clarity:-

- a. detailing set times for fishing to take place at waterbodies;
 - b. allowing angling at Swan Pool on Saturdays and Sundays;
- (2) that the Assistant Director Borough Economy (Green Spaces, Green Services, Events) considers the following in relation to the draft Sandwell Angling Code of Conduct:-
- a. explores options to sell animal feed at sites where angling is permitted;
 - b. works with schools in the locality of Council waterbodies to inform residents of approved angling practices;
 - c. undertakes to improve access to waterbodies for those with mobility and access issues;

20/24

Housing Regulatory Framework

Resolved that consideration of the Housing Regulatory Framework is deferred to a future meeting of the Board.

21/24

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Action Tracker

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made.

22/24

Cabinet Forward Plan and Work Programme

The Board noted its Work Programme for 2023 - 24 and received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

The Vice- Chair reported that Leadership Meetings of the Board had taken place in conjunction with Cabinet Members and Chief Officers to promote the scrutiny function in Sandwell.

Meeting ended at 6.51pm

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk