

Minutes of The Cabinet

Monday 24 May 2021 at 3.30pm
Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Crompton (Chair);
Councillors Ali, Allcock, Millard, Padda, Shaeen, Singh and Taylor.

Also present: Councillors L Giles and E M Giles

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive), Nicholas Austin (Interim Director – Borough Economy), Neil Cox (Director – Business Strategy & Change), Lisa McNally (Director – Public Health), Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Katharine Willmette (Interim Director – Adult Social Care), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy) and Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager).

88/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moore and Rollins.

89/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Ali and Shaeen declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No 102/21 (Taxi Driver Grant Scheme) and subsequently left the meeting during consideration of the matter.



90/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 and 17 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

91/21 Additional Item of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.

92/21 Authority to Award Contract for Local Area Network (LAN) Switch Refresh Contract – 2021 to 2025

Approval was sought to award a contract for Aruba Local Area Network (LAN) Switch Refresh from 30 June 2021 until 29 June 2026. The products covered included:

- Aruba Core Network Switches
- Aruba Remote Edge Switch
- Aruba Homeworking Solution
- Aruba WIFI Access Points
- Aruba Server Load Balancing Switching
- Aruba Inter-switch connectivity components

The estimated cost of the contract was £3.5m based on £2.5m in years one (1) and two (2) for Phases one and two, with the remaining £1m over the following three (3) years relating to potential Workplace Vision changes at other Council buildings.

The new contract would provide an accredited channel reseller to transition the current HP/Aruba infrastructure and replace with new products and services.

Reason for Decision

Aruba products within the Council's environment and licenses currently end manufacturer support between 31 March 2021 and 29 November 2021. Aruba products were present in all Council buildings and allow connectivity to business applications. The channel reseller's support and maintenance contract for these products ended on 29 November 2021.



Aruba did not deal directly with corporate customers, so the Council needed to procure the Local Area Network (LAN) switches and services contract via a channel reseller.

A procurement exercise would be conducted to appoint a reseller who would renew, manage and support the new products on the Council's behalf in conjunction with the ICT Cyber Security and Connectivity Team, covering the period 30 June 2021 to 29 June 2026.

Alternative Options Considered

A "do nothing" approach was not feasible as it would result in no software updates being available and no channel reseller support from 29 November 2021 which would present a major cyber security risk.

Agreed:-

- (1) that subject to a compliant further competition process under Lot 2 of the YPO Framework – Network Connectivity and Telecommunication Solutions – Lot 2 Local Area Network (LAN) Services, approval be given to authorise the Director of Business Strategy and Change and the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Resources and Core Services, to award a contract for providing Aruba Local Area Network (LAN) Switch Refresh, for the period 30 June 2021 to 29 June 2026;
- (2) that the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the course of action referred to in Resolution (1) above to proceed.



Assertive Outreach for Treatment Resistant Individuals: Continuation of Funding

Approval was sought to a variation of the current Adult Alcohol and Drug Service Contract value to fund an additional 20 months of costs for assertive outreach capacity totalling £179,464. This would ensure the approach could continue for the remainder of the Adult Alcohol and Drug Service contract period.

The Director - Public Health delivered a presentation on the work of Assertive Outreach and how their work goes towards the treatment of those individuals who require support.

Reason for Decision

The impact from drug and alcohol misuse in Sandwell was particularly pronounced compared to regional and national levels of harm.

Sandwell had a higher than national rate of dependent drinkers and opiate/crack users, and the harms associated with this substance misuse were evident from local alcohol specific mortality rate (6th worst in England), and higher than national rate of alcohol related admissions. Besides the more immediate consequences to health and quality of life, there was also a cost to the public purse in terms of health, care, policing, housing and antisocial behaviour.

Alternative Options Considered

Not approving the variation to extend the funding of assertive outreach and coordinator capacity for a further 20 months would impact engagement with individuals who were currently case managed through the Blue Light approach.

Due to the complex needs of the individuals, support was often long-term and ongoing, therefore clients would need to be supported to transfer to other available services and any new referrals to the Project would need to stop immediately and would not be able to capture information from those with complex needs for data purposes.



In order to utilise the money to secure internal Council provision: it is not envisaged as a viable option given the clinical supervision, clinical governance and specific skills and knowledge required. The existing provision via Cranstoun makes use of their close links to their structured treatment provision including a fast track for appropriate pharmacotherapy options.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to a variation to the current Adult Alcohol and Drug Service Contract to fund an additional 20 months of assertive outreach capacity totalling £179,464;
- (2) that the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, be authorised to vary the existing Adult Alcohol and Drug Service contract allowing the assertive outreach provision to be extended until the end of the overarching Drug and Alcohol contract term on the 31 January 2023.

94/21

Procurement of a Domiciliary Care Service

Consideration was given to proposals to award and enter into agreements with all successful bidders, on terms to be agreed with the Director of Adult Social Care, for the provision of a Domiciliary Care Service to commence on 1 March 2022 and the establishment of a longer- term agreement to enable individual packages to remain with contractors at the end of the period would allow the mitigation of risk when service users are compelled to either change care provider or forced to take a direct payment to stay with them.

The Council was statutorily required under the Care Act 2014 to carry out an assessment of anyone who appeared to require care and support. The Local Authority's role was seen as critical, and under section 5 of the Care Act 2014, the duty to shape and maintain an efficient and effective market of services for meeting care and support needs in the local area is firmly placed with them.



The duty applied in relation to services that the Local Authority commissions directly, but also to other non-commissioned services in its area (including those used by self-funders), universal services and services provided by partners (such as health or charitable services) that together create the marketplace.

Reason for Decision

There was no further extension option available in the existing framework contract and therefore the authorisation to commence the procurement process and award contracts to successful bidders would ensure there were appropriate agreements in place from 1 March 2022.

The term of the agreements would afford additional security for providers in the market, consistency for service users, as well as for internal teams in Social Work and Brokerage.

The proposal would create more providers to enable greater availability and increased choice for service users.

Domiciliary care was one of the services that the Council commissioned to ensure that people with assessed needs under the Care Act 2014 had provision to support them to continue to live independently in the community, and thereby delaying or preventing the need to access residential care.

Alternative Options Considered

Re-procuring like for like would result in a short-term agreement that would result in instability and service user distress when having to change care and support providers. The new proposal sought to establish a new process for greater stability.

Not to re-procure was not an option as the existing framework contract would end on 28 February 2022 and the Approved List was not a viable alternative.

If the Council was not to re-procure and allow the existing framework contract to end, it would compel all Service Users to commission their own care packages via a direct payment would not be without significant risk.



This action would be detrimental to people who do not want the complexities of managing their own care and support even though for some people, it increases their choice and control. In addition, a market that the Council was not overseeing was a safeguarding risk as there would be no direct contractual relationship between the Council and the care provider, resulting in service users potentially being exposed to harm that was harder to detect.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to complete a procurement exercise for the delivery of Domiciliary Care to secure alternative contracting arrangements for when the existing framework contracts end on 28 February 2022;
- (2) that the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to award and enter into Agreements with all successful bidders for the provision of a Domiciliary Care service to commence on 1 March 2022 with the term of the Agreements being for as long as the successful contractors remain as an approved provider on the proposed new Domiciliary Care list;
- (3) that the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or their designated representative, execute any documents necessary within a reasonable time to give effect to the proposals in Resolution (2) above for the provision of a Domiciliary Care Service;
- (4) that the application of the costing model used in the existing Community Care framework contract (Appendix 1) for use in the proposed Agreement, which will be subject to review during the lifetime of the Agreement, be approved;
- (5) that the new Domiciliary Care model be approved.



Award of Contracts for Enhanced Assessment Beds

It was reported that The Care Act 2014 updated and re-enacted the provisions of the Community Care (Delayed Discharges) Act 2003, which set out how the NHS and local authorities should work together to minimise delayed discharges of NHS hospital patients from acute care. The NHS was required to notify relevant local authorities of a patient's likely need for care and support where the patient is unlikely to be safely discharged from hospital without arrangements.

Approval was now sought to complete a procurement exercise to secure provision of 60 enhanced assessment beds across a number of locations to secure continuity of provision to replace existing contracts until such time that the integrated Social Care and Health Centre was fully operational and to award contracts to successful bidders to commence on 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 with an option to extend for a further year.

The contracts proposed within the report supported the Council in securing optimum use of hospital provision by supporting timely discharges for individuals for whom the Council had a statutory duty.

Reason for Decision

There was no further extension option available in the contracts ending on 30 September 2021 and therefore the authorisation to commence the procurement process and award contracts to successful bidders would ensure there were appropriate agreements in place from 1 October 2021.

Approval of the contracts would ensure that Adult Social Care (ASC) could assist people to be discharged from hospital to the most appropriate setting as soon as they are medically optimised thereby relieving pressure on acute beds. In addition, the contracts would also allow admission avoidance by providing care and support to individuals thereby eliminating the need for a hospital admission.



Alternative Options Considered

Cabinet considered two alternative options; one was to not re-procure and allow contracts to lapse. This was not seen as a viable option as there would be increased delays in hospital and people not benefiting from admission avoidance leading to system pressure.

Secondly allowing contracts to lapse and procure beds on a spot basis. This was not considered a viable option as spot provision does not have any terms that require care homes to expedite assessment and admission, leading to intolerable delays.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director - Adult Social Care be authorised to complete a procurement exercise to secure provision of 60 enhanced assessment beds across a number of locations to secure continuity of provision to replace existing contracts until such time that the integrated Social Care and Health Centre is fully operational;
- (2) That the Director – Adult Social Care be authorised award and enter into Contracts with all successful bidders for the provision of Enhanced Assessment Beds to commence on 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 with an option to extend for a further year;
- (3) that the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or their designated representative, execute any documents necessary within a reasonable time to give effect to the proposals in Resolution (2) above for the provision of Enhanced Assessment Beds;
- (4) An exemption to rule 8.7 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules 2018-19, or subsequent amendment, be authorised to allow the Director - Adult Social Care to award contracts to the successful tenderers in the event that the required minimum number of tenders are not received;



- (5) that variations to the Contracts up to a maximum of 10% of the contract value be approved, should they be necessitated, and that authority to approve such variations be delegated to the appropriate Chief Officer in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, with a decision notice being published should a variation need to be enacted;
- (6) that an uplift to the weekly bed rate for Enhanced Assessment Beds to be implemented from 1 April 2022 (and April 2023 if required) be approved subject to the Joint Partnership Board agreeing the rates and funding.

96/21

Care Home Fees – Standard Rate 2021/2022

It was reported that on 19 April 2017 Residential Care Home Fees model and rates 2017-18 for the use of a proposed costing model to form the basis of discussion and fee setting for Care Home Fees for Older People in future years (see Minute No. 87/17).

The model had been used since 2017 to calculate the increase of Care Home Fees and had been used to calculate the proposed Care Homes Fees for 2021-22. Approval was now sought for the Director of Adult Social Care to communicate the resultant fees to the relevant providers and implement the revised fees from 1 April 2021.

As a result of the continuation of the global pandemic, Cabinet recognised that adult social care providers continued to encounter an unprecedented impact on their fees and in some cases, a high level of voids. The council was separately supporting the sector on those additional costs through a Provider Offer and distributing funds provided by the Department of Health and Social Care.



Reason for Decision

The council was responsible for the commissioning, contracting and payment of residential care home placements (residential and nursing) for older people who met the access criteria and did not have assets in excess of the limits set by the Government. Individuals had been charged for their care depending on their individual financial circumstances in accordance with the rules set out by the Government.

The Council purchased placements in care homes for older people and these placements were purchased at standard rates set by the council. There were four categories of standard rate, Residential, Residential Dementia, Nursing Homes and Dementia Nursing.

Alternative Options Considered

It was considered by Cabinet that if the recommendations to increase fees for 2021/22 were not approved, that there was a risk that care home providers, and therefore the supply chain may become less resilient particularly because of the challenges that the sector had faced due to the pandemic.

If the recommendations were not approved, there may be an adverse impact on the elderly and vulnerable care home residents if care home providers were not able to maintain good quality standards of provision, or if fewer of them agree to contract with the council, or if some were unable to continue in business. Officers had assessed the impact of these risks as being high and would monitor any impact. Monitoring would be conducted via regular communication with staff in relation to placement availability and quality would be assessed and ongoing contact both with care home providers and residents.



Agreed:-

- (1) that the proposed Care Home fees as set out in Resolution (2) below that are calculated in accordance with the agreed model, be effective from 1 April 2021 and that the Director of Adult Social Care be authorised to communicate this to the relevant providers and implement the fee increase accordingly;
- (2) that approval be given to the amended Care Home fees for 2021/22 as set out below:

	Residential	Dementia Residential	Nursing	Dementia Nursing
	£ /week	£ /week	£ /week	£ /week
2020/21 Fees	455.90	513.10	633.90	641.88
Increase in SMBC Fees	4.57	5.15	5.14	5.24
Change in 2021/22 NHS RNC	N/A	N/A	Not announced based on 2020/21 rates*	
Notional 2021/22 fee including FNC contribution*	460.47	518.25	639.04	647.12

* The NHS Registered Nursing Care (FNC) contribution towards the costs of a place in a care home are set nationally by NHS England, this figure is included in the stated fee level at the 2020 -21 rate, any changes will be passported to Nursing Home providers once known.

- (3) that the Director of Adult Social Care review the proposed rates in 6 months once the position on additional government funding has been ascertained, and if necessary, submit a further report to Cabinet recommending revisions to the rates in year should they be necessitated.

97/21

Procurement of School Health Nursing and Child Vision Screening Services

Approval was sought to commence a procurement process for the provision of School Health Nursing and Child Vision Screening Services to commence on 1 April 2022 for a period of three years to 31 March 2025 with the option to extend up to a further two years.



On the 13 December 2017, Cabinet gave approval to award a contract to Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust for 2 +1 years.

The option to extend period was utilised and this contract was due to end on the 31 March 2022. A procurement exercise was now required to ensure that there was no gap in service beyond this date.

Reason for Decision

In Sandwell, the Clinical Commissioning Group(CCG) had continued to commission the service, however they had now confirmed their intention to transfer the commissioning responsibility to the Local Authority from 1 September 2021. A direct award for a seven-month contract would be made to the current provider, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust to ensure there was no gap in service while this proposed procurement took place.

It was anticipated that there would be increased demand on the School Health Nursing Service over the lifetime of the new contract due to an increase in the number of secondary school sites and expansion of existing sites. There are two new Free School Academies due to open in September 2022 (offering (1,650 places between them) and expansions of 3 other existing sites (670 places) A further 900 secondary places were required between 2023 and 2026.

Alternative Options Considered

The Cabinet noted a number of options. One option consisted of removing the 0-5 Services from the Co-operative Working Agreement in order to conduct a large, single 0-19 procurement was also considered, however there was a risk that this would disrupt our high-performing Health Visiting Service during this pandemic/recovery period time when stability and continuity will be even more important.



The School Nursing Service was a key Public Health priority any change to the delivery of this would have a detrimental impact on the school population. Cabinet therefore, due to the high value and nature of the service was minded to competitively procure it.

Cabinet also considered undertaking a separate procurement exercise for the Child Vision Screening Service. This was a feasible option, but it was felt that by aggregating with School Nursing, it may benefit from the economies of scale from a multi-million-pound service.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director of Public Health be authorised to commence a procurement process for the provision of School Health Nursing and Child Vision Screening Services to commence on 1 April 2022 for a period of three years to 31 March 2025 with the option to extend up to a further two years;
- (2) that the Director of Public Health be authorised to award and enter into a contract and licence agreement with the successful bidder, on terms to be agreed with the Director of Public Health for the provision of School Health Nursing and Child Vision Screening Services to commence on 1 April 2022 for a period of three years to 21 March 2025 with the option to extend up to a further two years;
- (3) that variations to the Contract up to a maximum of 10% of the Contract value be approved, should they be necessitated, and that authority to approve such Variations be delegated to the appropriate Chief Officer in consultation with the relevant cabinet member;
- (4) that the Director- Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documents necessary to give effect to the proposals in Resolution (1) and (2) above for the provision of School Health Nursing and Child Vision Screening Services;



- (5) that an exemption be made to rule 8.7 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules 2018-2019 to allow a contract to be awarded to the successful tenderer in the event that the required number of tenders are not received.

98/21

Grant Agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority - Traffic Signal Upgrades on the Key Route Network

It was reported that a lifecycle review of all of the Council's traffic signal installations on the Key Route Network had been completed and the four-traffic signal-controlled intersections detailed within the report had been identified as a priority for refurbishment.

The proposed traffic signals were located at strategic junctions and were considered pivotal to both the Local and Key Route Network performance.

The key benefits of the new traffic signal equipment stemmed from the: -

- Adaptive traffic control system for efficiency, maximising capacity and reducing delays.
- Improvements in journey times and reliability for all road users including public transport and commercial vehicles.
- Improved business competitiveness.
- Improved traffic signal operational reliability.
- Energy savings (LED equipment and latest technology, including extra low voltage supply (ELV)).
- Reduced maintenance costs.
- Reduction in carbon footprint.
- Remote Monitoring System – would increase awareness and reactivity to operational issues and traffic signal faults.
- Safety benefits generally acknowledged from the type of operational
- system for all users, including pedestrians.
- Puffin crossing facilities.
- The installation of low level access poles and LED signal equipment will reduce working at height risks for maintenance engineers.



- ELV power supply will provide enhanced safety for all users, including pedestrians.

Strategic Finance had undertaken an appraisal of the funding application, which had been evaluated against HM Treasury Green Book guidance. The appraisal process confirmed satisfactory assurance was provided regarding the proposed funding.

Reason for Decision

There was a statutory duty imposed on highway authorities to maintain the highway at public expense is set out in Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 imposes a network management duty on the Council to manage day-to-day operational use of its highways to 'keep traffic moving'.

Alternative Options Considered

The proposed sites considered by Cabinet had been carefully reviewed between Sandwell officers and those of the West Midlands Combined Authority and were considered by joint agreement to be the most appropriate for refurbishment. Therefore, there was no alternative options to recommend.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to enter into a grant agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority for traffic signal infrastructure improvements at the following four highway network locations: -
 - Bearwood Road/Waterloo Road, Smethwick.
 - Bearwood Road/Church Road/Grange Road, Smethwick.
 - Black Country New Road/Cliff Drive, Tipton.
 - Dudley Road/High Street/Castle Road, Tipton.



- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Head of Finance and the Director – Law and Governance be authorised to enter into and sign a grant agreement for £355,164.22 with the West Midlands Combined Authority for traffic signal upgrade work.

99/21

Approval of Home Office Safer Streets funding

It was reported that in February 2021, following an initial Expression of Interest submission to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Sandwell was selected as one of three West Midland areas to bid for Safer Streets Funding. A sum of £20m was being made available for areas with persistent and disproportional neighbourhood crime to provide concentrated investment into ‘hotspot’ areas.

All bids had been subject to strict criteria as outlined below:

- that areas have a defined, but not necessarily adjoined geography,
- that the intervention area is a suitable size to enable effective targeting, 500 to 3,500 households (or 1,000 to 9,000 residents),
- that the areas are persistently and disproportionately affected by one or more neighbourhood crime types.
- focus on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA)
- targeted focus on four neighbourhood crime types; domestic burglary; vehicle theft (theft of and from vehicles); theft from the person and robbery which meet the required benchmarks

Crime Type	Benchmark crime rate using police.uk data (crimes per 1000 population per year)
All Neighbourhood Crime (Burglary, Robbery, Theft from Person & Vehicle Crime)	18.30
Vehicle Crime	8.74
Burglary	7.91
Robbery	1.16



Based on the criteria in respect of LSOAs and data provided by the Police in respect of crime rates over an average of the last three years, West Bromwich Central and Abbey wards were selected for the purpose of the bid.

Reason for Decision

The objectives of the fund were to:

- Reduce neighbourhood crime (burglary, vehicle related theft, theft from the person, robbery) in areas that receive funding – making local areas safer and reducing demand on the police to focus on higher harm crimes.
- Continue to build evidence about the impact of targeted investment in situational prevention in high crime areas to strengthen the case for future investment, both at local and national level.
- Grow local capability to undertake data driven problem solving and capture evidence and practical learning about how best to implement situational interventions to prevent crime.

Both West Bromwich and Abbey areas had high levels of income deprivation, unemployment, long term unemployment, child poverty, older people living alone and older people deprivation. All of which had been intensified by Covid and both are persistently and disproportionately affected by one or more neighbourhood crime types.

Both areas also have a number of similarities including: an older high street with areas requiring investment; some empty stores; offices and flats above; alleyways between stores and behind and graffiti and litter. Commercial premises form the main central shopping and business area arterial routes with genuine businesses working to attract customers to the area.

The total cost of the project would be £331,250, of which £66,250 was in kind, utilising existing staff time and expertise across teams and agencies. £265,000 in additional funding will be brought into SMBC and administered by the Community Safety Team to deliver the project if the bid was successful. All successful bids would be part of a central project evaluation process which would also provide Sandwell with a local project evaluation.



Alternative Options Considered

The only alternative presented was for Cabinet to not accept the funding, and subsequently not make the improvements in the two ward areas.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to enter into a Safer Streets grant agreement with the Home Office, in the event that Sandwell Council is successful with the bid submitted on 25 March 2021 with the total cost of the project set at £331,250, of which £66,250 is in kind, with £265,000 in additional funding applied for;
- (2) that in connection with resolution (1) above, the Head of Finance be authorised to sign the Grant Agreement;
- (3) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Interim Director – Housing be authorised to implement and monitor the projects outlined in relation to this funding.

100/21

Supply of Gas Appliance Parts and Heating Spares

Approval was sought to award a contract for the supply of gas appliance parts and heating spares to Roway lane Supplies Section to PHC Parts, for the sum of £3,400,000, for a period of three years, from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024.

Reason for Decision

There was no option to further extend existing contractual arrangements as the current framework arrangement expired on 30 June 2021.

In accordance with Procurement and Contract procedure Rules, PHC Parts submitted the best value tender.

The anticipated value of the contract was £3,400,000, (£1.133,333 per annum) for a period of three years.



Alternative Options Considered

There had been no other options available and Cabinet had been informed that the contract was required in order for Sandwell MBC to be able to maintain its current housing stock.

Agreed:-

- (1) that approval be given to award a contract for the supply of gas appliance parts and heating spares to PHC Parts, for the sum of £3,400,000, for a period of 3 years, from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024;
- (2) that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into appropriate contracts for Supply of Gas Appliance Parts and Heating Spares with PHC Parts.

101/21

Governance and Tenant Engagement Arrangements

Consideration was given to the review of Tenant Engagement and Participation which reflected good practice, but additionally an increase in expectations due to changes in the following:

- Regulator of Social Housing
- Housing Ombudsman
- National Housing Federation's Code of Governance
- Build & Fire Safety Bill
- Regulatory Standards

The Regulatory Standards outlined specific expectations and outcomes that providers would be expected to achieve. Providers' boards and local authorities had been responsible for meeting the relevant standards and determining how this was done. The Regulatory Framework encompassed a tenant involvement standard.

The proposed new tenant scrutiny model would reflect good practice outlined in Successful Scrutiny of Council Tenant and the National Tenant Engagement Standards, as outlined by Tpas (Tenant Participation Advisory Services).



Reason for Decision

Following engagement with a working group, a draft Resident and Leaseholder Involvement Model had been drafted. The Model provided an outline as to the different levels of involvement and types of potential activities, some of which were in existence, but some remained suggestions for going forward. It was anticipated that the model of involvement would evolve over time.

The involvement model also looked to encompass a set of underlying principles that would be developed by those involved from officers to residents. In addition, the model acknowledged the different levels of involvement and recognised that different approaches had been relevant dependent on the purpose of the involvement and therefore would require varying levels of involvement.

Cabinet was made aware of an Implementation Group (made up of officers and tenants) that would replace the Tenant Engagement and Participation Working Group and would work to agree the recruitment process, undertake the recruitment and support the development of the Scrutiny Panel. In addition, the group would develop further detail behind the Involvement Model.

Alternative Options Considered

The decision it was heard could be made to do nothing and maintain the current Structure. However, this would not support the changes in legislation and the Regulation Standards.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the current Tenant Review Panel be disestablished;
- (2) that a new Resident & Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel be established, and approval be given to the associated governance arrangements and terms of reference (attached at Appendices 2 & 4);
- (3) that the new Resident and Leaseholder Involvement Model (as attached at Appendix 1) be approved;



- (4) that the Interim Director – Housing be authorised to confirm the Council Representative to the Resident and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel as either Cabinet Advisor for Homes or Chair of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.

102/21

Taxi Driver Grant Scheme

Consideration was given to the Taxi Driver Grant scheme. The scheme required a departure from the approved ARG Policy which stated that all grants were to be paid by BACS transfer to Business Bank Accounts. However, this sector of the economy did not necessarily operate using Business Bank Accounts, and the scheme would be more inclusive and accessible if grants could be administered to personal accounts.

Current ARG policy was that grants were paid only to those who hold Business Bank Accounts, however the Council was aware that some self-employed drivers did not operate using business bank accounts, and therefore an exemption to this element of the policy was considered.

Payments would be made into the authorised bank account of the taxi drivers. The licence types proposed to be eligible for the grant were: Private Hire Operators, Private Hire Drivers, Dual license holders and Hackney Carriage drivers.

The scheme would be opened and launched online via the grant approval website 'Ascendant' which was being used by officers to administer current grants.

Reason for Decision

Sandwell Council's Business Growth team had already administered over £6million of Government discretionary funding to small and micro businesses through Additional Restrictions Grants. However, certain sectors of the economy such as self-employed taxi drivers had lobbied for a specific grant offer to be made available for them through a targeted grant scheme.



Neighbouring councils - Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Solihull had been administering taxi driver grant schemes, paying resident taxi-drivers under varying criteria.

There was £1.8m remaining within the ARG budget, and it was proposed that circa £700,000 was allocated to fund the Sandwell taxi driver grant support scheme. The remainder being used for additional business support activity.

It was also proposed that circa £400,000 of Covid-1 support funding was used, thereby providing an overall budget of £1.1m for the taxi driver support scheme.

The proposed Taxi Driver Grant Support Scheme would enable any taxi driver that lived in Sandwell to apply for a one-off grant payment of £1000. It was noted that based on a £1.1m funding allocation to this scheme, 1100 taxi drives could be supported. The number of taxi-drivers living in Sandwell was unknown and therefore the allocated funding would be issued on a first come first served basis.

The scheme would require applicants to complete an application via the grant approval website. Applicants would need to make a declaration that they have not received grant support from elsewhere, if they were self-employed, provide evidence that they were Sandwell residents and provide relevant identification. Applicants would need to demonstrate that they had been licenced taxi drivers either in Sandwell or with another local authority. Necessary due diligence checks would be undertaken on the information submitted to limit fraudulent applications.

The grant would be open for a set time period, initially two weeks from 24 May 2021 closing on 7 June 2021. If the 1100 applicant cap was not reached, the grant application process would re-open for a further two weeks until the cap was reached, and the application process would be closed.

Alternative Options Considered

There were two alternative options for consideration. The first being that only taxi drivers who were living and licenced in Sandwell were eligible for the scheme.



This would support approximately 786 resident licensees. This model was very similar to that offered by Birmingham City Council and Wolverhampton City Council. However, this would not support any Sandwell resident taxi drivers who were licenced with other local authorities.

The second alternative option was that all taxi drivers licenced in Sandwell regardless of whether they lived in Sandwell would be eligible for the scheme. It was estimated that this would support around 1400 taxi drivers around half of which would live in Sandwell. However, this option would exclude Sandwell residents that are licenced with other local authorities.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Interim Director of Regeneration and Growth deliver the preferred option for Taxi Drivers Grant Support Scheme;
- (2) that up to £1.1m of funding is allocated from the Additional Restrictions Grant and Covid-19 support funding to deliver the preferred option;
- (3) that an exemption be made to current ARG policy to enable the administration of the Taxi Driver Grant Support Scheme to Taxi Drivers that do not have a Business Bank Account.

103/21

Recommendations from Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in response to Climate Change Implementation

The Cabinet considered the recommendations received from the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board. Cabinet were presented with a report specifying the significant risks that climate change presented to Sandwell residents and the Council's responsibility to address the issue through its decision-making to ensure that the impacts were mitigated, and carbon neutrality targets are achieved.



Reason for Decision

Sandwell Council adopted the Climate Change Strategy in October 2020. The strategy outlined the targets and action plans in place for the Council to become carbon neutral by 2030, and the borough by 2041. The strategy covered six areas, including:

- Council Estate and Operations
- The Built Environment
- Transport
- Waste & Recycling
- Adaptation and Resilience
- Natural Capital

During 2020-21, the Economy Transport Skills and Environment Scrutiny Board considered several climate change matters.

At the Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board meeting held on the 25 March 2021, the Board considered the discussions of the Scrutiny Working Group. The Board received a presentation on Climate Change Implementation from the Climate Change Programme Manager. The challenges of developing a strong corporate focus on climate change were recognised. The Board suggested that requiring the Council to explicitly consider climate change in the decision-making process would ensure it remains a priority and would encourage the Council to make sufficient progress with the 2030 target. In turn, this would allow the Council to advocate for behavioural change in the borough.

Alternative Options Considered

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Cabinet was requested to respond to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they would be implemented.

The Cabinet welcomed the findings of the Board and would submit a response to the Scrutiny Board within two months' time.



104/21 **Cabinet Petitions**

The minutes of the Cabinet Petitions Committee held on 24 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and noted.

105/21 **Vote of Thanks**

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Crompton, thanked members of the Cabinet and officers for all of their help and support over the preceding year working tirelessly during the pandemic.

Councillor Taylor, on behalf of the Cabinet, placed on record her thanks Councillor Crompton for her hard work and dedication over what had been a very difficult year.

Meeting ended at 4.26pm

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