

Report to Cabinet

6 December 2023

Subject:	Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways, Councillor Danny Millard
Director:	Director of Borough Economy, Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Highway Network Development and Road Safety Manager, Simon Chadwick simon_chadwick@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 to inform and prioritise the delivery of road safety projects, initiatives and campaigns within the Borough until 2030.
- 1.2 That approval be given to the continued use of the Safe System approach to improving road safety and reducing road casualties, and adoption of the Vision Zero principle.
- 1.3 That the new road casualty reduction targets included within the new Road Safety Plan for the Borough be endorsed.
- 1.4 That approval be given to the publication of the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 on the Council website.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Every Highway Authority in England and Wales has a Statutory Duty under 'Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to carry out studies into road casualties arising from the use of vehicles on their road network and in light of those studies puts together and adopts a programme of works and initiatives to help prevent such incidents in the future. Therefore, the adoption of the new Strategic Road Safety Strategy 2024-2030 helps the Council discharge this Statutory duty.
- 2.2 Approval of the new Road Safety Plan as a strategic policy will also help to sustain Sandwell's excellent record in the reduction of road casualties over the period to the end of this decade. Over the past 22 years, total road casualties have halved on Sandwell's road network, including those resulting in fatalities or serious injuries. More encouragingly child casualties have reduced by two thirds in Sandwell in that time period.
- 2.3 On 18 January 2022 (Minute No. 22/22(a)), the Council requested that the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board conduct a review into the Strategic Road Safety Plan. The Strategic Road Safety Plan covered the period 2017-2022 and was therefore due for renewal.
- 2.4 Several meetings occurred throughout the 2022/23 municipal year between members of the Scrutiny working group established and Highway Services officers to discuss the contents of the existing Road Safety Plan which had, for the first time, been based on the Safe Systems Approach, and to debate the way in which schemes and initiatives had been determined and selected for action. Following a change in membership of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board in May 2023, a final working group was established in July 2023 to complete the review.
- 2.5 On 23 October 2023, members of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board working group, alongside officers from the Council's Highway Services department, met for a final time to consider the contents of the new proposed Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030.



- 2.6 Members received a detailed presentation of the proposed New Road Safety Plan which expanded on the principles of the successful Safe System approach where the five pillars of the road environment work together to minimise risk. The new plan also introduces the concept of Vision Zero for the first time, based on the belief that no death or serious injury is acceptable on the roads in Sandwell
- 2.7 The working group noted the importance of ensuring the safety of roads and how enabling sustainable mobility played an important role in providing for basic humans needs as well as helping mitigate the impact of climate change.
- 2.8 The Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment working group supported the adoption of the proposed Sandwell Strategic Road Safety 2024-2030 plan and the contents and local delivery plan included within.
- 2.9 The adoption of the Safe System approach to road safety, based on the principle of Vision Zero, will help to focus resources on reducing the most serious of collisions and reducing injuries to the most vulnerable and susceptible of road user groups through evidence-based studies and investigations.
- 2.10 Consequently, the new Local Road Safety Delivery Plan will be based on the 5 key pillars of Safe Roads and Roadsides, Safe Road Use, Safe Speeds, Safe Vehicles and Effective Post Crash Response. The new plan will consider that road safety is therefore a responsibility shared by all those that use the road, those that design, manage, construct and maintain the network, those that enforce highway laws and those who provide post-crash care.
- 2.11 The new Road Safety Plan will align the target for the reduction of those killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualties with that of the newly refreshed West Midlands Regional Road Safety Plan approved in September 2023, and the United Nations decade of Action for Road Safety, namely a 50% reduction in KSI casualties by 2030, against a baseline of the average 2015-2017.



2.12 The new plan will also introduce new local Sandwell targets for the reduction of total road casualties and child road casualties by 20% by 2030 based on the average 2015-2017 baseline. This will further help officers to prioritise projects, campaigns and initiatives in areas where risk analysis suggests the greatest road casualty benefit will be achieved, especially to the most vulnerable of road user groups.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people: The new strategic road safety plan will help ensure good, well maintained and safe highway infrastructure to encourage more walking and cycling among our younger people increasing their wellbeing and health, improving road safety, reducing road casualties and promoting cleaner air quality.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well: A safe and well-maintained highway environment plays an important role in the life of the community, particularly the positive opportunities that they can bring from health, independence, social inclusion and interaction.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities: A safe highway infrastructure will make our communities feel safe, more protected and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods.</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods: The new strategic road safety plan will ensure all new housing estates are designed and construed with the community's safety in built from the start.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy: Our local highways are the arteries of our communities. They connect our residents to employment, education, local services and the wider world. They enable economic growth, social mobility and are vital in ensuring good health and economy.</p>
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell: Our residents will have excellent public transport that connects them to jobs and opportunities not only in the West Midlands region but across the nation and safe sustainable links to allow them to access these public transport services.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Mobility is integral to nearly every aspect of daily lives. People step from their homes into a road network that takes them to work, school, shopping, and recreation or to family, health and social needs. Therefore, ensuring the safety of roads and enabling sustainable mobility plays an important role in providing for basic humans needs as well as helping mitigate the impact of climate change.
- 4.2 Globally, road traffic crashes cause nearly 1.3 million preventable deaths per annum, making it the leading cause of death for children and young people worldwide. Recognising the importance of the problem the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations (UN) have declared a Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030. The new Global Plan calls on all stakeholders to implement a Safe System to prevent serious and fatal road collisions.
- 4.3 A Safe System approach is built on the principle of Vision Zero whereby the belief is that no one should be killed or seriously injured whilst using the road network. It also recognises that human bodies are fragile, and minds are prone to making mistakes. Consequently, a Safe System considers road safety to be a responsibility shared by all those that use the road, those that design, manage, construct and maintain the network, those that enforce highway laws and those who provide post-crash care.
- 4.4 A Safe System approach considers 5 elements must work together as one to minimise risk; Safe Road Use, Safe Speeds, Safe Vehicles, Safe Roads and Roadsides, Post-Crash Response
- 4.5 The West Midlands Regional Refreshed Road Safety Strategy 2023-2030 integrated Vision Zero as the region's long-term mission, supported by the Safe Systems approach. The strategy also stretched the previous KSI casualty reduction target from 40% to 50% by 2030, to align with the UN General Assembly latest target.
- 4.6 Sandwell has traditionally had a good record of reducing road casualties in the Borough. Over the past 22 years, total road casualties in Sandwell have halved, including those resulting in fatalities or serious injuries. More encouragingly child casualties in Sandwell have reduced by two thirds.



4.7 However progress has begun to plateau and even rise between 2012 and 2016. Hence the previous Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2017-2022 introduced the concept of the Safe Systems approach to Sandwell and consequently between 2017 and 2019 Sandwell recorded some of the best casualty reduction rates in the West Midlands.

	Casualty Reduction % 2017-2019		
	Total	KSI	Child
Great Britain	-10.4	-2.0	-13.7
West Midlands	-4.6	-3.8	-5.3
Sandwell	-16.1	-15.0	-33.9

4.8 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 should be noted as it has resulted in any casualty figures during the intervening time being unrepresentative of 'normal' traffic conditions and it is only now in 2023 that the road network and casualty records are normalising once more. The unprecedented COVID lock down periods and travel restrictions resulted in decreases in traffic flows, increased vehicle speeds, adoption of risky driving behaviours and changes in travel modes.

4.9 On the request of the Council the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment (ESTE) Scrutiny Board conducted a review into the current Strategic Road Safety Plan, based for the first time on the Safe Systems approach, which covered the period 2017-2022 and was therefore due for renewal.

4.10 Several meetings occurred between members of the working group and Highway Services officers to discuss the contents of the existing Road Safety Plan and to debate the way in which future schemes and initiatives should be determined and selected for action. The working group noted the importance of ensuring safety on the road network and its important role in helping mitigate the impact of climate change.

4.11 Consequently the ESTE working group supported the adoption of the proposed new Sandwell Strategic Road Safety 2024-2030 plan and in recommending the new plan to Cabinet.

4.12 The new Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 will continue to utilise and build on the previously successful Sandwell Safe System approach to support and compliment the refreshed West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy at a local level.



- 4.13 The new Plan publishes the findings of an in-depth road traffic casualty analysis for Sandwell to identify the Authority's road safety priority groups and inform the development of the Council's new road safety Local Action Plan for 2024-2030.
- 4.14 It is proposed that Sandwell's new Strategic Road Safety Plan will stretch its casualty reduction target for killed and seriously injured casualties to compliment the regional and UN aspiration, as well as embracing Vision Zero. It is unrealistic to expect Vision Zero can be achieved within the timeframe of this new strategy, but it is vital that the right building blocks are put in place for the future to ensure that in time people will be able to use Sandwell's road network without the risk of death and serious injury.
- 4.15 In addition Sandwell proposes to introduce its own local targets for total road casualties and child road casualty reductions. Therefore, based on a baseline figure of average of 2015-2017, to compliment the WM Regional target, the new local Sandwell casualty reduction targets are;
- Reduce the number of Killed and Serious Injured casualties by at least 50% by 2030.
 - Reduce the number of All road traffic casualties by at least 20% by 2030,
 - Reduce the number of all Child casualties by at least 20% by 2030.
- 4.16 The findings of the road casualty analysis showed that Sandwell Council has an excellent track record in reducing road casualties, achieving a fall in total casualties from 1639 to 785 (52% reduction) between 2000 and 2022. KSI reductions were equally welcoming, with a reduction from 207 to 117 (44%) in the same period. Most noteworthy is the recorded 67% reduction in child casualties since 2000, with totals now just a third of those initially recorded (278 to 97). Further information regarding casualty reduction over time can be seen in Appendix A - New Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 - Section 4 Sandwell Road Casualty Summary.
- 4.17 However analysis has shown that the trend for road casualty reduction in Sandwell had slowed across all user groups by 2013 and plateaued until 2017. In 2017 Sandwell introduced its 2017-2023 Strategic Road Safety Plan which introduced a significant shift change towards the new Safe System approach to road casualty reduction. Between 2017 and 2019 casualty numbers began to significantly reduce once more.



However, the impact of the COVID-19 in 2020 resulted in any casualty figures recorded post pandemic being considered unrepresentative and only in 2022 are figures normalising once more.

4.18 Between the baseline and 2019, Sandwell had a very good record of reducing KSI casualties, performing almost 3 times better than nationally and the West Midlands as a region. This was even more pronounced between 2017 to 2019 (see 4.6). Importantly Sandwell had an excellent record in the reduction of child casualties in the same period, almost double national rates and 4 times better than the West Midlands as a region.

	Casualty Reduction % Baseline to 2019		
	Total	KSI	Child
Great Britain	-14.7	-5.4	-14.8
West Midlands	-8.4	-6.5	-5.7
Sandwell	-12.1	-16.8	-22.7

4.19 The significant casualty reductions recorded between 2017 and 2019 substantiated the decision to introduce the Safe System approach to road safety in Sandwell's previous Strategic Road Safety Policy and to continue and expand on this approach in the new 2024-2030 Strategy.

4.20 When comparing Sandwell to its local West Midlands neighbours, between the baseline and 2019 Sandwell had the best reduction rate for child casualties and was the second best performing West Midlands Council for the rate of reduction of Total casualties and KSI. Between 2017 and 2019 the reduction rates for Total and Child casualties was extremely encouraging and Sandwell ranked first across the region in reducing casualties in these particular groups during that time.

	Casualty Reduction 2019 to Baseline			Casualty Reduction 2017 to 2019		
	Total	KSI	Child	Total	KSI	Child
Great Britain	-14.7%	-5.4%	-14.8%	-10.4%	-2.0%	-13.7%
West Midlands	-8.4%	-6.5%	-5.7%	-4.6%	-3.8%	-5.3%
Birmingham	-8.0%	+0.4%	-9.0%	-3.1%	+5.3%	-0.5%
Coventry	-13.2%	-14.9%	-8.1%	-9.4%	-12.1%	-5.4%
Solihull	-8.1%	-21.3%	+9.7%	-1.9%	-26.3%	-5.8%
Black Country	-7.5%	-10.1%	-2.7%	-5.6%	-8.3%	-10.5%



Dudley	-8.8%	-15.5%	-3.7%	+1.3%	-1.2%	-15.9%
Sandwell	-12.1%	-16.8%	-22.7%	-16.1%	-15.0%	-33.9%
Walsall	-3.8%	-10.0%	+5.1%	-2.3%	-19.2%	+1.1%
Wolverhampton	-4.2%	+6.6%	+17.7%	-0.3%	+8.9%	+21.3%

Further detailed analysis can be seen in Appendix A - New Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 - Section 5 National and Regional trends.

- 4.21 Sandwell also had the best rate of reduction for casualties per Km travelled in the region. Significantly Sandwell also had the most 100 million vehicle Km travelled through its Borough within the Black Country region during that same period.
- 4.22 The new Strategic Road Safety Plan delved deep into the analysis of 7 different road users groups including Total Road Casualties, Killed and Seriously Injured Casualties, Child Casualties (0-15 year olds), Pedestrian Casualties, Pedal Cyclist Casualties, Car Occupant Casualties and Powered Two Wheeled Casualties. The analysis helped identify trends, and those groups most susceptible, most vulnerable and those most exposed to the risk of injury. Further detailed user group analysis can be found in Appendix A - New Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 - Section 6 Sandwell Road Casualty Analysis.
- 4.23 The analysis demonstrated the vulnerability of certain user groups, as half of all KSI casualties were either pedestrians (38%) or cyclists (11%). Children are particularly vulnerable road users making up a third of all pedestrian injuries, with secondary school age children being the most at risk age group. 27% of all child casualties occurred on school journeys, but not necessarily outside of schools.
- 4.24 16 to 29-year olds were identified as the most at risk age group in Sandwell, accounting for a third of all road casualties. This highlights their in-experience as road users, making them more susceptible to mistakes and poor judgement, a key element to be considered when designing infrastructure as part of a Safe System approach.
- 4.25 Motorcyclists account for only 1% of all traffic but account for 18% of all KSI casualties in Sandwell. This is a strong indicator of this group's higher susceptibility to injury for every Km travelled.



- 4.26 2 in every 3 road casualties in Sandwell were car occupants. Particularly at risk are the 17-30-year-old group. This confirms that through continued high exposure to risk (as a result of the high number of Km travelled), car occupants are still the most likely group to become road casualties in Sandwell.
- 4.27 The results of the in-depth analysis over the period 2017-2022 have identified a number of key priority groups to be investigated and targeted during the new 2024-2030 Plan. These key priority groups are;
- Killed and Seriously Injured Casualties
 - Children
 - Pedestrians
 - Cyclists
 - Motorcyclists
 - 17-30-Year-Old Drivers
- 4.28 It is important that to help achieve the casualty reduction targets proposed by 2030 and to focus those reductions towards the identified key priority groups, then a robust but challenging 2024-2030 Local Action Plan will have a Safe Systems approach and Vision Zero at its core. The Safe System approach recognises that road transport is a complex system and that humans, vehicles and the road infrastructure must interact in a way that ensures a high level of safety for all concerned whenever possible.
- 4.29 The Safe System considers road safety to be a responsibility shared by all those that use the road network, those that design, manage, construct and maintain the network, those that enforce highway laws and those who provide emergency and post-crash care.
- 4.30 The proposed road safety projects and initiatives in Sandwell for the next 7 years in the new Local Action Plan are based mainly on the pillars of Safe Road Use, Safe Speeds and Safe Roads and Roadsides. The authority will have little influence on the design of safe vehicles and post-crash response and emergency care but it is important that all 5 elements need to work together in partnership to ensure that if, and when, crashes do continue to occur, then no-one is killed or seriously injured.



- 4.31 As Sandwell shares its borders and road users with the three other Black Country authorities and Birmingham City Council, collaborative and joint working on cross boundary issues is essential to help drive down casualties in the wider region. The latest Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan will require a full partnership approach from all stakeholders to help support the future West Midland Regional Road Safety Action Plan and assist in tackling road casualties across the Black Country.
- 4.32 Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and modification will be key to ensuring the success of any Safe System Approach and in achieving any long term casualty reduction and Vision Zero goals.
- 4.33 Importantly the new 2024-30 Strategic Road Safety Plan will also discharge Sandwell's Statutory Duty under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.
- 4.34 Over the past three years Sandwell has received on average an annual capital grant of £860,000 from the Department for Transport City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement to invest in evidenced road safety interventions. Moving forward it is proposed that the capital funding continues to be prioritised as in the previous strategy, by using a robust proactive and evidenced risk-based approach. Funding will be targeted at locations in the Borough where there are regular, treatable road injuries being recorded year on year which would likely continue to be recorded without intervention. Particular relevance will be placed on incidents involving the key priority groups identified in 4.26 above.
- 4.35 Consideration will be given to 'treatable' incidents and those locations where clusters of incidents of a similar nature have been identified which can be tackled through road safety improvements. Interventions can be through engineering improvements, road safety education or enforcement and more commonly a mixture of all three.
- 4.36 The Council also commits £92,000 of reactive revenue expenditure a year to help tackle community and elected member road safety concerns with cost effective safety measures where appropriate. It should be noted that only West Midlands Police have the statutory power to tackle speeding vehicles and as such the reactive budget can be utilised to gather traffic speed and volume data, which can then assist the police in developing a localised speed enforcement programme.



4.37 The new strategy also proposes for Local Area Budgets to be used, when suitable, to match fund Road Safety revenue allocations to expand the delivery of localised road safety measures, which will help tackle a greater number of community concern sites.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Alternatively the Council could have no strategic vision and long-term plan to reduce identified road casualty problems in the Borough. Basing decisions on community concern and perceived problematic areas only would have a detrimental effect on the success in reducing road casualties in Sandwell since 2000, with the risk of road traffic injuries increasing significantly over the next few years.

6 Implications

Resources:	Road safety and infrastructure improvements are funded through various approved Capital Budgets, Grants and revenue allocations, with spend being prioritised through evidence led campaigns and interventions. Interventions identified as part of the Local Action will be fully funded within existing Revenue and Capital budgets. Additional funds will also be available through utilising other one off grants and developer contributions and hence there will be no new resource pressures within the service as a result.
Legal and Governance:	<p>The principal legal statutory duties and processes required to implement the highway improvement and traffic management requirements are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Highways Act 1980. • The Road Traffic Act 1988 • The Traffic Management Act 2004 • The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 <p>Road Casualty Reduction Safety targets match those published by the United Nations and World Health Organisation and those required in the regional West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy.</p>
Risk:	Without a Strategic Road Safety Strategy, Policy and Action Plan the risk is that the Council will not meet its statutory duties in relation to road casualty reduction.



Equality:	The introduction of a targeted road safety policy will benefit the most vulnerable user groups on the highway network and will help balance the needs of all road users.
Health and Wellbeing:	Improvements to the road safety environment will ensure all users of the highway network are protected and managed safely to reduce the risk of conflict and injury. Greater encouragement of sustainable travel choice will inevitably improve the health and wellbeing of the neighbourhood. Adoption of Vision Zero will aim to reduce all serious and fatal casualties to zero in the future.
Social Value:	Social Value benefits are derived from the important role a well-maintained and safe highway environment plays in the life of the community, particularly the positive opportunities that they can bring from social inclusion, sustainable travel choice and social interaction.
Climate Change:	A well maintained and safe highway infrastructure will encourage more walking and cycling, reducing car borne trips and improving air quality.
Corporate Parenting:	No specific implications.

7. Appendices

Appendix A - Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030

8. Background Papers

West Midlands Refreshed Road Safety Strategy October 2023
World Health Organisation and United Nations Global Plan – Decade of Action 2021-2030

