

Council Plan

2024 - 2027



WORKING TOGETHER FOR SANDWELL

As Leader of Sandwell Council, I am proud to represent the vibrant and diverse communities of Sandwell. This plan embodies our collective vision for the future of our Borough and outlines our commitment to delivering positive change for the citizens of Sandwell.

Central to this plan is our dedication to fostering a thriving economy, providing opportunities for growth, innovation and prosperity, improving the health of our residents, making Sandwell a great place to grow up in for our children and young people and creating and maintaining a cleaner, greener, safer environment. To this end we are committed to making Sandwell a child friendly borough.

Our ambitions are bold, driven by a desire to build a future where every individual can fulfil their potential. From enhancing infrastructure and promoting environmental sustainability to improving access to quality education, healthcare and housing.

Sandwell is a place of rich diversity. We celebrate this diversity and are committed to promoting equality, inclusion and social cohesion across the Borough. By championing diversity and embracing contributions from all our residents, we are striving to build stronger, more resilient neighbourhoods and communities.

Of course, we face challenges in realising these ambitions. The cost of living crisis has hit us all, we are also still feeling the after effects from the Covid pandemic and we are set to confront further difficult financial decisions. Nevertheless, we are resolved to work with residents and partners to confront these challenges head on and turn these ambitions into a reality.

Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Leader of the Council



This plan embodies our collective vision for the future of our Borough.

Sandwell has a proud history at the centre of the industrial revolution and today it is the rapidly growing gateway between Birmingham and the Black Country with thriving businesses and fantastic connectivity. But not everyone in Sandwell has the same chances in life and our mission is to create the conditions for everyone in our borough to live the life they want to lead.

We want Sandwell to be a great place for children to grow up in clean, safe and thriving neighbourhoods, where every individual is valued and given access to the tools to succeed.

In Sandwell we are supporting our community through our tackling poverty programme and have ambitious plans to create the good jobs and opportunities that will boost everyone's life chances.

We have been punching below our weight for too long. Our borough is filled with possibilities and resources and now is the time to turn that potential into reality.

As a council, we haven't always got everything right in recent years but are now building on strong foundations. We've had a real focus on becoming brilliant at the basics, and this new Council Plan sets out our priorities, and crucially, the measures by which we will assess our progress.

We have now entered a phase of our journey which is about fully embedding a culture of continuous improvement, embracing transformational change and becoming a modern, efficient and agile organisation that has consistent high customer service standards.

This Council Plan represents our roadmap to delivering excellent services, but we know that what will really make this work is our people and our organisational culture and making sure we're all working together to make a difference to help change people's lives for the better.

There are opportunities for us to really build on these foundations to tell a new story about Sandwell and ensure we re-establish our rightful place in the West Midlands and in the country.

Shokat Lal
Chief Executive



My passion is making Sandwell the best place to live, work and visit.

OUR STORY

In Sandwell, we care about each other and it is our community that makes us proud to call this place our home.

We're down to earth and proud of our heritage as a powerhouse of the industrial revolution, and this history is still evident today in the unique and distinct character of our towns and neighbourhoods.

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Sandwell Council, when our six towns were brought together under our current boundaries.

Sandwell is at the heart of the West Midlands and we have a young and rapidly growing population. We're proud of the diverse communities that bring so much to our borough.

Our borough is full of wonderful green places, like our much-loved Sandwell Valley Country Park. We're the green gateway to the Black Country from Birmingham and have great connections to the rest of the country.

We already have an outstanding track record in bringing funding into our borough and are passionate about supporting businesses to grow in a way that ensures people and communities benefit too.

We are determined to make the most of our peoples' skills, abilities, and resourcefulness to create good jobs and opportunities that will boost everyone's life chances and attract even more investment into Sandwell for the long term.

The Sandwell Aquatics Centre showed what we can do when we get the chance. We played host to visitors from all over the world during the Commonwealth Games and we now have a state-of-the-art community leisure centre for all of our residents to enjoy.

But the thing that really makes Sandwell bostin is our people.

It's not like us to shout about our achievements or put ourselves in the spotlight.

We know that we face some big challenges here. Too many of our residents' have their health and life expectancy impacted by their social circumstances. Child poverty is double the national average and some people's prospects – especially when it comes to health – might not always be as good as they can be.

Times have been hard for many of us in recent years.

But we also know our community is amazing when we come together, and there is so much potential to unlock.

The council hasn't got everything right in recent years, but we've maintained vital services for our residents most in need.

As we mark our 50th anniversary, our focus is on being brilliant at the basics. That means getting things right for our residents – delivering high-quality services that are easy to use and working for the people who need them.

And our ambition doesn't stop there. We want our borough to be a great place for children to grow up. We want to make Sandwell a cleaner, greener and safer place to live and for our residents to live longer in good health. And we want to create the good jobs and opportunities that will help everyone realise their potential.

Together we can deliver a great future for Sandwell and change people's lives for the better.

MEET YOUR CABINET

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Leader of the Council



Councillor Paul Moore
Statutory Deputy Leader, Finance
and Resources



Councillor Suzanne Hartwell
Deputy Leader, Neighbourhoods
and Community



Councillor Sukhbir Gill
Business and Skills



Councillor Vicki Smith
Housing and Sustainable Development



Councillor Keith Allcock
Environment and Highways



Councillor Peter Hughes
Regeneration and Infrastructure



Councillor Jackie Taylor
Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing



Councillor Jalal Uddin
Children and Families



Shokat Lal
Chief Executive

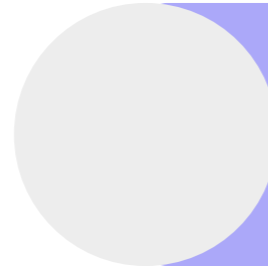


Alan Lunt,
Executive Director
Place

Housing Services

Regeneration & Growth

Environment



Executive Director
People (Vacant)



Liann Brookes Smith
Interim Director Public
Health



Rashpal Bishop
Director Adult
Social Care



Sally Giles
Director
Childrens Services



Alex Thompson,
Executive Director
Finance &
Transformation
(S151)

Finance

Legal & Assurance

Registration Services

Revenues & Benefits

ICT & Transformation

Business Management



James McLaughlin
Assistant Chief
Executive

Communications

HR & Organisational
Development

Service Improvement
(Vacant)

Equality, Diversity, &
Inclusion

Strategic Improvement

Democratic & Member
Services



INTRODUCTION

This Plan has been shaped by the consultations we carried out during 2021 – 2023 inclusive. It reflects the things that people have told us are important to them and it contains clear goals that we will work towards over the next few years. Based on feedback from our stakeholders this plan centres around four strategic themes. These are:

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell

All underpinned by One Council One Team

This Plan will detail how we will deliver on these strategic themes and how we will measure our success.

CONTEXT

Sandwell is a metropolitan borough which was formed in 1974 and is one of seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands. It is made up of six towns - Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. The borough is at the centre of the motorway network, has rail

services and the Midland Metro including direct links to London and the cities of Birmingham and Wolverhampton. It borders Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton and is divided into 24 wards represented by 72 Councillors



Sandwell has
341,835
residents.

8.7%
have a long-term mental
health condition.

52%
are White British.
compared with the England
& Wales average of 74.4%

There are
124,000
jobs in Sandwell.
Manufacturing accounts
for 21,300 jobs



46,691
people come to Sandwell from
neighbouring areas to work



Sandwell is home to
1,033
of the Black Country's
strategic companies



42.8%
are from Black and Minority
Ethnic backgrounds.



Life expectancy in Sandwell is
LOWER
than the national average



Sandwell is the
12TH
most deprived local
authority in the country.



OVER 80%
of schools were rated by Ofsted
as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'



There is higher
youth and adult
unemployment than
nationally.



28.1%
of children live in
low-income families



Sandwell ranked
5TH
highest for Fuel Poverty.



81%
of respondents are satisfied with
their area as a place to live

CHILD FRIENDLY SANDWELL

We take listening to our residents, including our children and young people, very seriously. During the 2023 Budget Consultation, residents told us that supporting children and young people is the most important area for the council to deliver on. In January 2024, we started the journey to become a recognised UNICEF UK Child Friendly Borough.

A child friendly borough is one that respects and promotes the rights of all children and young people as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Developing a child friendly borough involves engaging with children and young people as active citizens, ensuring their safety and well-being, and creating inclusive and accessible spaces and services for them, and with them. This means listening to their voice, valuing their opinion, and enabling them to shape their future, through influencing change in areas that matter most to them.

Our child friendly approach has the potential to unite a range of agendas including health and wellbeing, school readiness, sustainability, resilience, and safety. Collectively we are committed to making our community a place where children and young people can thrive, play, learn, and enjoy happy and healthy childhoods. Working in partnership with UNICEF, our focus is to improve outcomes for children and young people aged zero to 25.

The UNICEF programme will require us to be brave in our aspirations and support a cultural change within the council, as well as among our wider partners and stakeholders, to ensure that children's rights and needs are respected and prioritised.

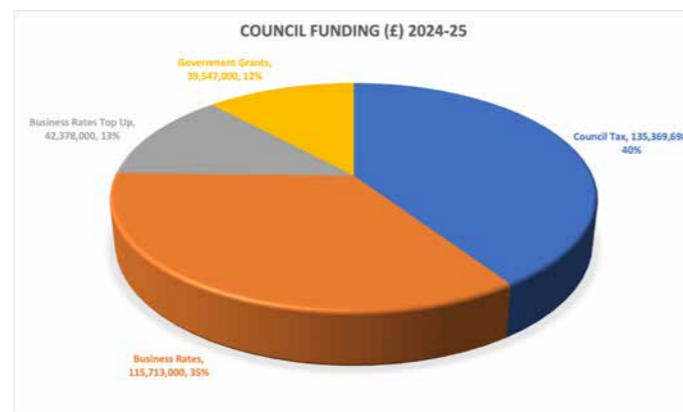
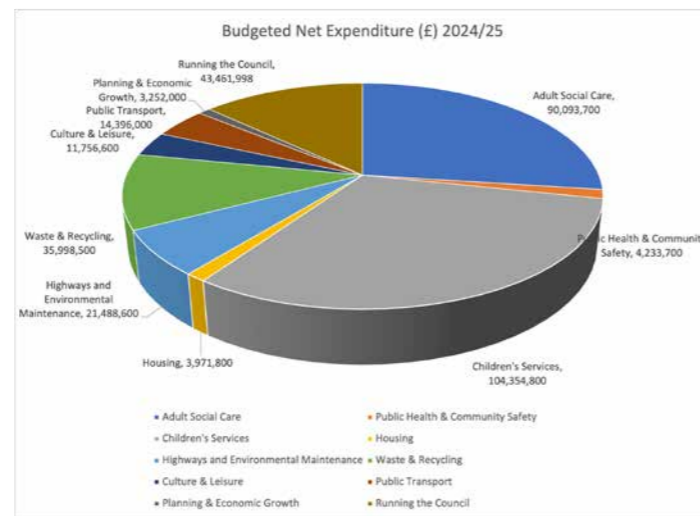
We will work as One Council to deliver this programme of change. We aim to achieve UNICEF UK recognised Child Friendly Status within three years.



OUR RESOURCES

The diagrams, Figures 1 and 2, show where the council's money comes from and where it is going to be spent for the financial year 2024/25. In addition to this, we spend approximately £34m on Public Health which is funded from a separate grant, and a further £151 million is spent from our Housing Revenue Account.. We also distribute £466 million of government money to schools and academies to fund children's education.

For the last 10 years, we have met the financial challenges of austerity and we will continue to manage our resources within the context of uncertain funding in the future; doing our best to deliver the best services we can within the resource limitations placed upon us. To make this plan a reality we shall be aligning our resources to deliver our priorities set out in this plan. We recognise we cannot do this alone, so we will make sure that we are working in tandem with our partners to co-ordinate spending where possible. We will maximise our assets and build community wealth, spending more of the council's money with local businesses. This supports the local economy, it means more jobs and apprenticeships for local people-meaning more people earning, better spending power and more money going back into the local economy. We want to hear from our residents when planning our spending and so we will be continuing to consult the public in budget decision making.



BASING OUR COUNCIL PLAN ON INTELLIGENCE

We have a sound platform for determining our areas of focus within our Council Plan both from our performance reporting and consultation and engagement activity. The list below contains some of the key pieces of intelligence we have used when building our Plan.

- Residents' Survey 2022 and 2023
- Budget Consultations 2022 and 2023
- DLUC survey of Sandwell 2023
- Shape Surveys from 2015 – 2022
- Sandwell Business Growth Plan 2023
- Anchor Network Survey 2023
- Borough of Sanctuary Report 2023
- Housing Strategy Consultation 2023
- Housing Asset Management Consultation 2023
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023



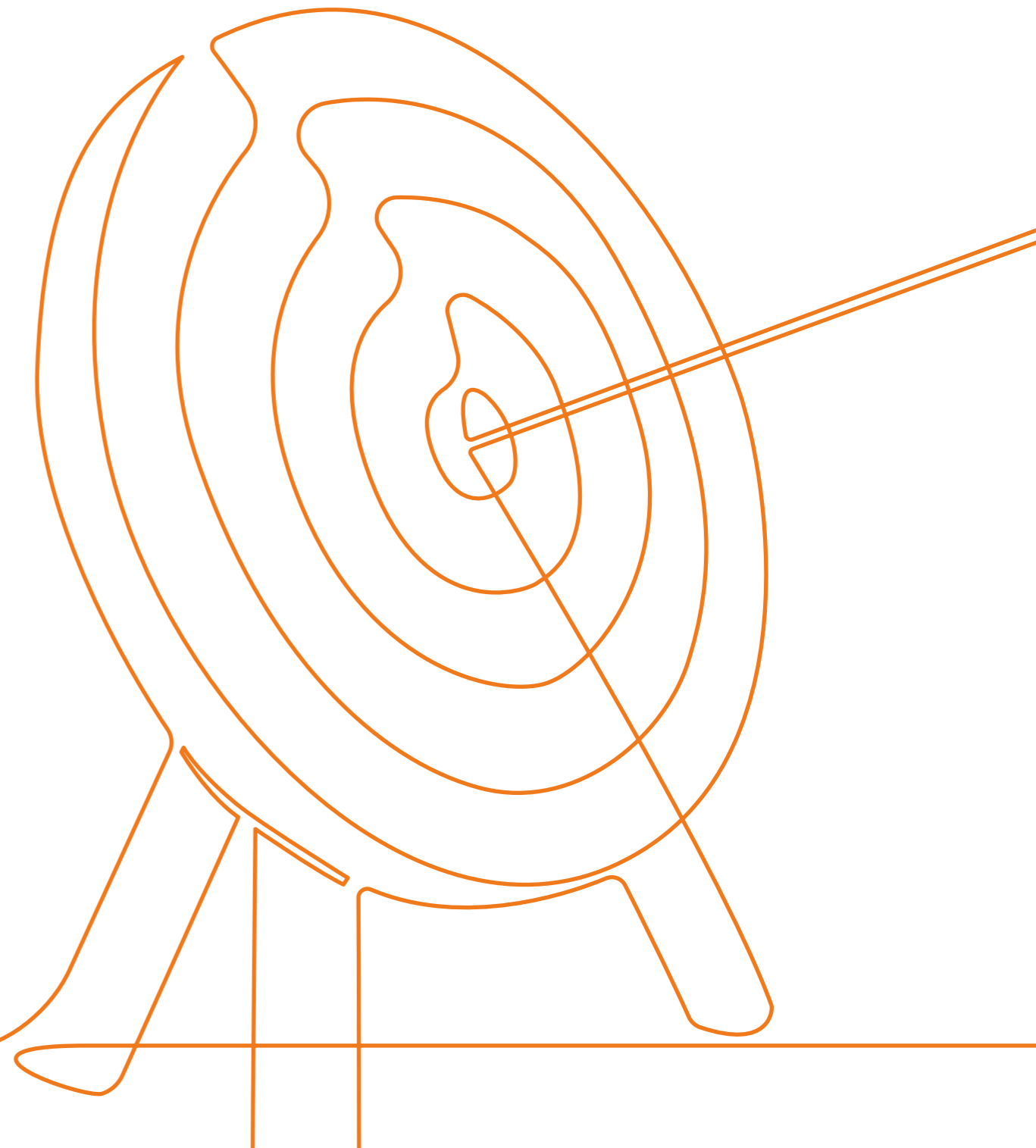
MONITORING DELIVERY OF OUR COUNCIL PLAN

We will monitor delivery of the Council Plan through our Corporate Performance Report, which is compiled quarterly. This central document not only reflects the performance indicators' outcomes but also provides updates on the progress of the Council's Business Plans, ensuring they continue to deliver on the outcomes in the Council Plan.

Each Directorate within the Council takes an active role in overseeing their respective Business Plans and specific performance indicators. The aggregation of this data into the Corporate Performance Report offers a comprehensive view of how the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan are being met, painting a clear picture of the Council's operational effectiveness and strategic direction.

This systematic approach to monitoring and reporting ensures transparency and accountability in the Council's activities.

Full details for how we will monitor performance of each strategic theme can be found in the appended document 'Monitoring Delivery of the Council Plan'.



OUR STRATEGIC THEMES

Growing up in Sandwell

Living in Sandwell

Healthy in Sandwell

Thriving Economy in Sandwell

One Council One Team



GROWING UP IN SANDWELL



WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

In Sandwell, a diverse and youthful population faces unique challenges. Children and young people make up about a quarter of Sandwell's population, and by 2026, the population of 5- to 19-year-olds is projected to grow significantly. Sandwell's children and young people are disproportionately affected by high levels of deprivation, with 35% of our young population living in low-income households significantly impacting on all areas of their lives.

We know that school attainment levels are not on a par with national figures, our young people face barriers to learning, such as low aspiration, lack of motivation, poor attendance, or special educational needs. They may also lack opportunities to access further education, training, or employment.

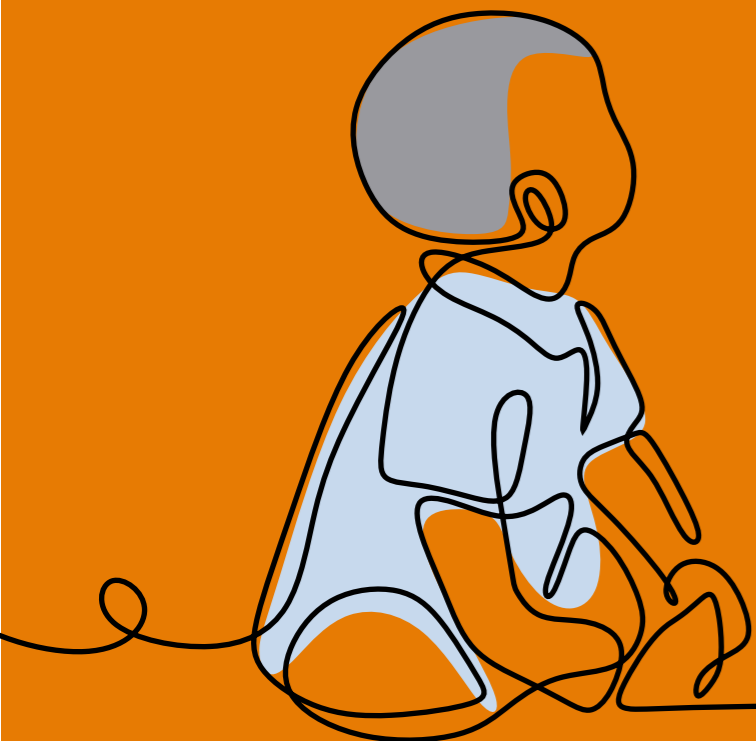
Children with disabilities and other long-term conditions face a range of inequalities. We know that there has been a huge increase in Education, Health and Care Plans. The increase for Sandwell is higher than the situation nationally. Similarly, the percentage of children with SEN support has risen consistently. We also know that we have a higher rate of Looked After Children in Sandwell when compared to the rest of the region and nationally.



Grove Vale School
West Bromwich

Our SHAPE programme, which has been consulting with children and young people since 2014, identifies priority areas that are important to them at a local level. The main findings from the surveys highlight that children and young people are finding life challenging with the pressures of schoolwork, exams and fitting into society in an environment of increasing crime and substance misuse. Children and young people want to be listened to, so they can be supported adequately, and their needs can be met, particularly to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Support to children and young people was identified as the most important area of the Council's Corporate Plan in the 2023 Budget Consultation, so we know that it is important to all our residents that we get it right for our children and young people.



WHAT WE WANT TO DELIVER

We want Sandwell to be a great place for children to grow up and to ensure a brighter future for children and young people, where every individual is valued and given access to the tools to succeed.

Fostering a love for learning where our very youngest children are ready for school, our children and young people enjoy school, attend regularly, and have access to excellent learning opportunities which support them to achieve and equips our young people with the necessary skills and advice to become active, participatory young adults. We want Sandwell to be a place where children feel safe and secure, where they have voice that is listened to. We also want our communities to be places where there are opportunities for children and young people to play, have fun and try new things.

THE OUTCOMES WE WANT TO DELIVER:

1. Children and young people are given the best start in life and are well prepared for school.
2. Children and young people make good progress at school from preschool to when they leave school age 16 – ambition to reach national standard.
3. Children and young people have good levels of attendance at school.
4. Children and young people in Sandwell are able to grow up in a safe, stable loving home.
5. Children and young people are supported to lead happy and healthy lives with access to a range of opportunities for positive activities, play and having fun.
6. Children, young people and their families receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.
7. All children and young people have the same opportunities to achieve their full potential and are supported by adults, including parents and carers, to establish high aspirations.
8. Children and young people have the right skills and support to take the next step in their life and are well prepared for adulthood.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- We have focused on making Sandwell a better place for young people and have won two national awards for supporting child refugees and protecting children from exploitation and county lines.
- We have also launched seven Family Hubs supporting families with children aged 0-19 (or 25 with SEND)
- We will create a new Satellite Education Hub in Cradley Heath. The centre will be operated by Sandwell College and will help those looking for a new career, a career change or for promotion to secure a set of job ready skills. The hub is one of the 16 Sandwell Towns Fund Partnership projects funded by the government's Towns Fund programme to provide opportunities for 16-18-year-olds and residents across Sandwell.
- Creating a child friendly Sandwell - we have commenced the 3-5 year process to obtain UNICEF Child Friendly Status for putting children and young people at the centre of what we do.

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Achieve UNICEF UK Child Friendly status
- Ensure children living in Sandwell are safe and protected from harm.
- Ensure that every child in Sandwell has access to a place in a good or outstanding school.
- Continue to improve home to school transport, providing a cost effective, quality service.
- Support schools to Improve school attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Be a good Corporate Parent for the children we care for, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our 'family', and promoting fostering and adoption.
- Work alongside community partners to ensure that all parents and carers in Sandwell are offered the right support, at the right time in an accessible way, so that problems and difficulties do not escalate.
- Work with all professionals who have contact with our CYP to ensure that they take a strengths-based, trauma informed and relational approach to working with families

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK

We will monitor our performance on the following performance indicators:-

- The percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The number of good quality childcare places for children 0-4 of working parents to take up their 30 hours funded place by September 2025.
- Educational Attainment Sandwell All Pupils – attainment at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2 and KS4 attainment of English and maths at GCSE Grade 5 or above.
- Early Help - Number of Children/Young People receiving intervention.
- Attainment rates for those with EHCP and SEN support at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2, KS4 Attainment 8.



LIVING IN SANDWELL



WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

According to the English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Sandwell was ranked as the 12th most deprived local authority out of 317 in England. The cost-of-living crisis has hit Sandwell hard, ranking it second out of 333 local authorities on the Cost-of-Living Vulnerability Index. Cost of Living is one of the top concerns across a range of surveys, including our annual residents' surveys and the Shape Survey of young people 2023. Digital exclusion compounds these issues, with a significant number of residents unable to engage fully in the digital world, impacting access to services and overall quality of life.

Crime rates in Sandwell have shown a slight decrease recently, although the area still ranks higher than some of the other nearby boroughs. Of recorded crime the highest area relates to violence against a person, of which assault with and without injury is the most common. We know through our annual residents' survey, that people generally feel safe in Sandwell during the day. At night however, less than two thirds of residents feel safe in their local area, this is lower than the Local Government Association benchmark figure with 25% of our residents feeling unsafe after dark. Safety and addressing crime is a key concern for residents, particularly for young people and those who responded to the residents' surveys and the budget consultations – in particular, knife crime was a concern for young people as was gangs, youth violence, drugs and bullying.

The Physical Environment in Sandwell is a common theme across most of our surveys results ; tackling litter and rubbish; cleaning up the streets; maintaining the roads, parks and improving the environment in general is felt to be crucial to our residents. Linked to concerns about the local physical environment is the desire to have access to clean and green spaces, which are also crucial for

many people to maintain good physical and mental health.

Accessible affordable housing and tackling homelessness is a priority for residents, evident through the residents' survey and the Housing Strategy feedback. The Council works hard to secure properties and address housing issues at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness. However, the housing market with increasing prices of the private rented sector means that this is becoming increasingly challenging, which is also a concern amongst partners. The Council also faces several challenges in relation to its housing stock , from ensuring a sufficient number of properties to meet demand to maintaining the existing stock to a decent standard.

We know that the local environment really matters to our residents, and we want to ensure that Sandwell is a place that everyone is proud to call home. Our borough is full of wonderful green places, like our much-loved Sandwell Valley Country Park, and we're proud of our Green Flag parks and open spaces.



WHAT WE WANT TO DELIVER

We are committed to maintaining and improving the local environment with a focus on cleanliness, ensuring that the community takes pride in its surroundings and that Sandwell is a place where green spaces are not just abundant but are also managed in collaboration with residents and community groups, fostering a sense of ownership and community spirit. We also want to make sure that all of our assets support the Council to create a healthier, wealthier and more sustainable borough.

To ensure that the communities of Sandwell, feel safe, protected, and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods, we will take a comprehensive approach to community safety. This means working with a range of stakeholders, including residents and law enforcement agencies to deliver Sandwell's community safety strategy to prevent and reduce crime and ASB across the Borough.

With over 27,300 properties under its management, the council's commitment to maintaining and updating homes is evident, aiming to provide safe and modern living spaces for its tenants, with £30 million capital investment in our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted Sandwell. With a £3.4 million boost, Sandwell Council is supporting residents through various initiatives, such as food vouchers for children

and financial aid for households struggling with energy bills. Additionally, the Tackling Poverty Plan aims to address poverty more holistically, offering support and advice to help residents manage their finances and access benefits. These efforts reflect our commitment to assisting those affected by the rising costs and providing a network of support during these challenging times.

Digital exclusion is a significant challenge in Sandwell, impacting many residents who face barriers to accessing and engaging with the digital world. Initiatives like the Digital Den project are addressing this issue by providing infrastructure, training, and support services to enhance digital literacy and connectivity.

These initiatives demonstrate a comprehensive approach to tackling the issues highlighted in our intelligence, striving to create a safer, cleaner, and more accessible community for all residents.

THE OUTCOMES WE WANT TO DELIVER:

1. Clean, well maintained public spaces and assets.
2. Quality green spaces.
3. Residents feel safe in their communities during the day and at night.
4. Safe and affordable homes.
5. Improve outcomes for local people on local issues.
6. Residents have resilience to achieve real change in financial circumstances.
7. Residents in all parts of the borough have the skills and resources to access digital services.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- We continue to support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis - we had over 100k visitors to Welcome Spaces across Sandwell this winter, many of which are located in our extensive network of libraries, providing support and advice to residents as well as developing a new Tackling Poverty strategy for 2024/25.
- Our welfare rights team and the wider Sandwell Advice Providers Network have helped 39,000 Sandwell people to access £31million in benefits and payments that they would have gone without.
- Also one of the few councils in the country that will cover 100% of the council tax bill for our most vulnerable and lowest income households.
- We are working hard to improve the housing offer in the borough. The Albion Road and Bull Lane Housing Development in West Bromwich, with an investment of £1,100,000, has delivered 5 new council homes which are a mix of two-bedroom bungalows and four-bedroom houses and the Reservoir Road Housing development also delivers 27 new council homes which are a mix of two and four-bedroom houses.
- In 2023 Trading Standards seized or had surrendered over 6000 illegal vapes valued at around £62,000, and through joint inspections with West Midlands Police seized £322,000 of illegal cigarettes seized together with £42,800 in cash.
- In 2023 the Environmental Protection Team handled 1,513 reports of untaxed / burnt out / abandoned vehicles.
- Delivered programme of over 220 partnership community safety events including Safer Six campaign.
- Secured £500,000 for community safety and ASB in Wednesbury and Friar Park as part of wider
- DLUHC Leveling up Partnership
- Accreditation as a Borough of Sanctuary



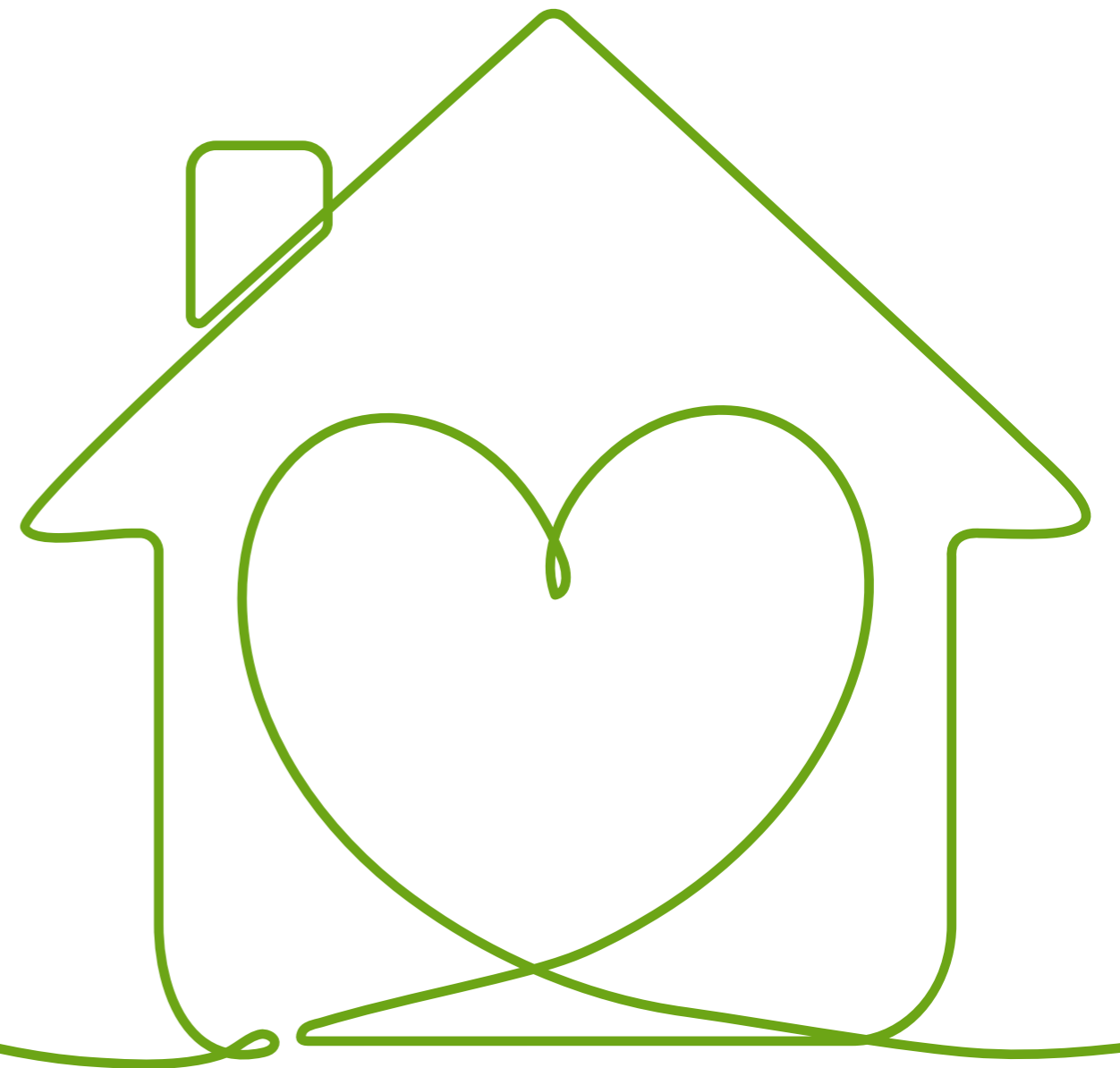
WHAT WE WILL DO

- Implement our new neighbourhoods model of working, making it easier for our residents to access services and improving the service they receive.
- Continue to improve street cleansing and response to fly tipping.
- Work with SERCO to improve performance in waste.
- Continue to invest in and maintain our green spaces.
- Work with the Safer Sandwell Partnership to deliver a co-ordinated approach to make people safer, particularly vulnerable groups and communities.
- We will provide good quality, safe and affordable homes with access to good quality services that support residents to live independently in thriving communities
- Continue to provide financial support for our most deprived households.
- Develop, design and implement a Digital Inclusion Strategy.
- Provide Welcoming Spaces in all our libraries, which includes, offering free computer access and WiFi to support digital inclusion.
- Plant 10,000 trees by 2030.
- Roll out improved recycling offer to high rise blocks.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK

We will monitor our performance on the following performance indicators:-

- Remove fly tips on public (contract maintained) land within 24 hours
- Resident satisfaction with Green spaces
- Total recorded crime in Sandwell
- Housing Compliance Health Check (Over 6 key areas)
- Child Poverty Rate
- Number of people claiming out of work benefits.
- Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented.



HEALTHY IN SANDWELL



WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

Health and Social Care is felt to be important to both residents and partner organisations. The state of the NHS is high on resident's areas of concern, particularly waiting lists (residents' surveys 2022 and 2023). The welfare of older and disabled people and helping them to remain independent is also one of the most valued services and eliminating health inequalities is a priority for our partner organisations.

Sandwell faces a range of health challenges, much like any other area, the interplay between poverty, deprivation, and health is a significant concern. The latest data suggests that while there has been a slight improvement in the overall health of residents, with an increase in those describing their health as "very good," challenges remain. Deprivation can impact health in multifaceted ways, influencing access to healthcare, quality of housing, and employment opportunities. The Index of Multiple Deprivation, which measures various aspects such as income, employment, and living environment, ranked Sandwell as the 12th most deprived local authority, indicating widespread issues across the borough. Efforts to address these concerns are ongoing, with public health initiatives focusing on reducing inequalities and improving the economic conditions that are closely tied to health outcomes. One of the key issues is the high

rate of obesity among adults and children, which leads to other health complications like diabetes and heart disease. Mental health is another growing concern, with many people struggling to access the support they need. Air pollution and smoking also contribute to respiratory problems in the population.

The issue of health inequality in Sandwell is underscored by compelling evidence that indicates a significant disparity in health outcomes among different socioeconomic groups. This evidence highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the underlying factors contributing to these inequities. Tackling these issues requires a community-wide effort, from improving local healthcare services to promoting and supporting healthier lifestyles.

Adult Social Care in Sandwell is facing a unique set of challenges. With an aging population, there's a growing demand for services, but funding is not keeping up. Adult social care is navigating through a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities.



THE OUTCOMES WE WANT TO DELIVER:

1. People to lead healthy lives in their community and live well for longer
2. Peoples needs for care and support are reduced or prevented through early intervention and prevention programmes.
3. People remain as independent as possible for as long as possible and lead fulfilled lives (re-ablement).
4. Carers feel supported in carrying out their caring role.
5. Residents are protected from harms to their health and wellbeing.
6. Health outcomes for Sandwell's most vulnerable groups are improved and health inequalities are reduced.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- We now have the UK's best leisure Centre here in Sandwell, providing opportunities to exercise and socialise.
- We have been successful in gaining up to £5million in a grant from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to fund partnerships with a focus on improving health research.
- We have produced the Healthy Aging App - directed at providing information in multiple languages
- We have run a successful inclusive cycling programme. We will be delivering learn to ride sessions as part of the Cycle More Sandwell Programme.
- We offer physical activity sessions in our parks and green spaces
- We target health checks at those most in need
- We offer the Sandwell Stride programme (volunteer-led walking scheme) and digital App based walking offer
- Being a dementia friendly borough - We have held lots of events and training to raise awareness of dementia in the council and in schools as well as introducing the Dementia Bus.

WHAT WE WANT TO DELIVER

Healthy in Sandwell reflects our commitment to fostering a community where every resident has the opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. Our approach is proactive, focusing on early intervention and prevention programmes designed to reduce or even prevent the need for care and support. By empowering individuals to remain independent and resilient, we aim to ensure that they can lead fulfilled lives for as long as possible.

Integrated services play a pivotal role in this, providing seamless support that adapts to the evolving needs of our residents. Safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our community is paramount; we strive to protect our residents

from any harm that could impact their quality of life. Through targeted efforts, we are dedicated to improving health outcomes for Sandwell's most vulnerable groups, actively working to diminish health disparities and bridge the gap in mental and physical health inequalities.

Our vision is a Sandwell where every resident thrives, supported by a robust framework that upholds their health and wellbeing as a fundamental right.



WHAT WE WILL DO

- Work with our partners to provide support when people need it.
- Keep people safe and supported to enable them to live independently in the community.
- Development of a Co-production Strategy and corporate Co-production charter then deliver into practice.
- To ensure completion and regular update of elements of Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance preparation relevant to this section of Adult Social Care.
- Full review of Preparation for Adulthood Pathways to be undertaken and completed with recommendations for improvement, and implementation of priority recommendations in 2024.
- To develop and implement the Workforce Strategy Action Plan to address recruitment, retention and ensure that staff are competent and confident to deliver high quality services.
- We will continue to invest in community based preventative mental health and wellbeing programmes.
- Recognise and support people suffering from dementia.
- Work with colleagues across the Black Country to explore opportunities for a carers app which will support easy access for carers to advice, information and support services.
- Develop a carers hub which will be the single point of contact for carers to gain information, advice and support.
- Recommission our Community Offer to ensure strong and effective support is available to carers within their own communities.
- Town Based awareness of Public Health, Stronger Sandwell and the current offers and interventions available to communities, stakeholders and partners that can improve healthy lives outcomes.
- We will contribute to improve air quality and climate change through raising public awareness, increasing active travel and supporting organisations to reduce carbon emissions.
- We will embed public health considerations into local planning policies and decisions.
- Everyone can access sexual health provision across Sandwell.
- Maximise the number of people accessing leisure centres.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK

- We will monitor our performance on the following performance indicators:-
- Quality of life of people who use services
- Quality of Life of carers
- The proportion of safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified and the reported outcome was that his risk was reduced or removed
- Number of sites that are non-compliant with the national NO2 air quality objective (40 ug/m3 per annum)
- Healthy life expectancy.



THRIVING ECONOMY IN SANDWELL



WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

We know that employment and training, and the economy are high on residents' and partners' list of priorities – creating jobs for local people is a frequent response across the range of feedback as well as tackling unemployment. Spending locally is also seen as important by partners and residents. Help for businesses not surprisingly came out strongly in feedback from the business community.

Sandwell's business demographics reveal a dynamic economic landscape. The employment rate in the area has seen an increase, with 70.2% of people aged 16 to 64 in employment as of September 2023, marking an increase from the previous year's 64.0%. However, this figure still trails behind the broader West Midlands region's employment rate of 74.8%. Unemployment in Sandwell stands at 5.6%, which, while lower than the previous year, remains higher than the regional average. The Claimant Count, which measures those claiming unemployment-related benefits, has held steady at 6.2%. Economic inactivity, representing individuals not in employment and not seeking work, has decreased, indicating a shift towards a more engaged workforce.

Earnings and skills attainment are critical factors in this equation, influencing the types of jobs available and the ability of the workforce to fill them. Sandwell's commitment to improving skills and training opportunities is essential for sustaining economic growth and ensuring that the benefits of increased employment are felt across the community.

Recently, Sandwell has seen a decline in the number of new businesses, which decreased by 4.6% between 2020 and 2021, albeit the longer-term trend has been one of strong growth. Survival rates for businesses after the first five years were 36.9%, above the Black Country (35.7%) but below national averages (38.4%). This suggests a need for more support for businesses to start up along with

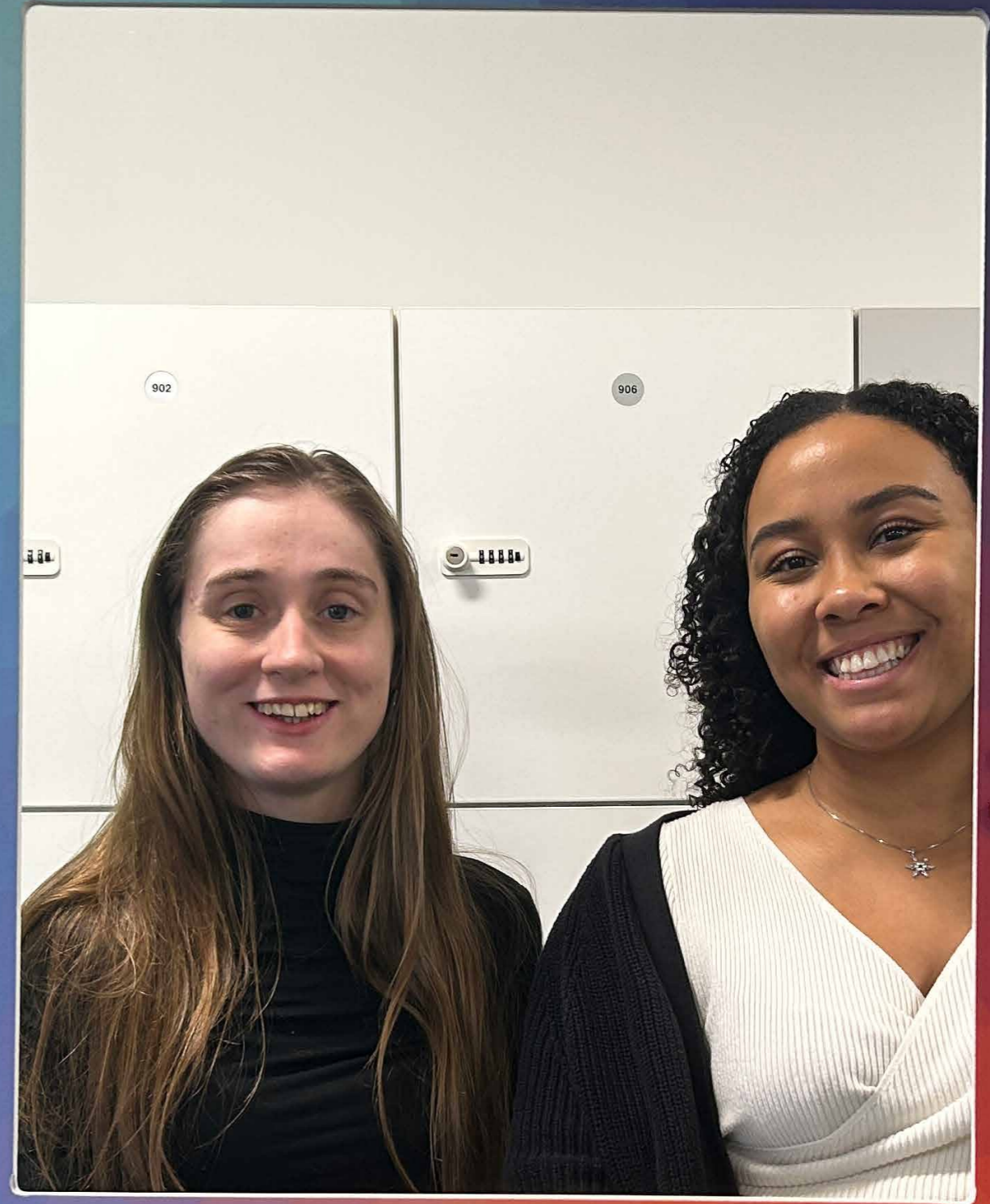
during the first five-year period in operation.

The data shows that housing need continues to grow, however, cumulatively over the last 6 years (up until 2022/23) we have delivered just under 42% of our housing needs across all tenures.

The Council's new Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-30 commits to Vision Zero, the concept where we believe that no death of serious injury on our roads is acceptable. This is in the context of casualty rates per million vehicle km travelled having fallen significantly, by nearly 58%, since 2000; and Sandwell consistently delivers killed and serious injury (KSI) and child casualty reduction levels in excess of those experienced in the West Midlands and Great Britain. However, in 2022, the latest year for which data is available, there were 785 casualties, including 117 KSI and 98 child casualties on Sandwell's roads and so there can be no let-up in our drive to achieve Vision Zero.

Sandwell is a borough-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Nitrogen dioxide concentrations have exceeded legal limits at seven air quality monitoring stations across the borough persistently over many years. There are clear synergies between reducing emissions of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, as although NO2 is not a greenhouse gas, it is produced by the same sources: notably transport, buildings, agriculture and industry.

Sandwell has achieved significant reductions in per person emissions from domestic energy and industrial and commercial sources over the last 15 years. However, transport emissions remain high, with 97.6% of transport emissions produced by road transport.



WE ARE **SANDWELL!**



WHAT WE WANT TO DELIVER

Sandwell is the home of the nuts and bolts of the UK's advanced manufacturing sector. Where the technology is made that makes tomorrow work. By making the machines, that make the machines, manufacturing the future. We want Sandwell to stand as a beacon of progress in the West Midlands, for Sandwell to have thriving economy and a sustainable future. We have a strategic vision that promises a flourishing future for residents and businesses.

Sandwell's vision for a thriving economy is encapsulated in a series of strategic plans and commitments that aim to deliver a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community. The Sandwell Local Plan serves as the blueprint for future development, guiding housing and employment growth while ensuring new infrastructure investments like transport and schools. Complementing this is the Sandwell Business Growth Plan, which outlines the council's strategy to support local businesses over the next two financial years, focusing on innovation and expansion to bolster the economy.

The Levelling Up Partnership further amplifies this growth by injecting £20 million into regeneration projects, addressing educational attainment, and

enhancing health outcomes.

Investment is a cornerstone of Sandwell's economic strategy, with an estimated £3 billion expected to flow into the borough by 2027, driving both economic and social benefits. This includes a focus on social value, where the council leverages its purchasing power to create jobs, support local supply chains, and enhance community well-being.

Environmental sustainability is also at the forefront, with Sandwell Council aiming to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and the entire borough following suit by 2041.

Cultural enrichment rounds out Sandwell's economic vision, with a thriving cultural, heritage, arts and leisure officer that not only enhances the quality of life for residents but also attracts visitors and investment, further stimulating the local economy. Together, these elements weave a tapestry of growth and prosperity for Sandwell, setting a course for a future where everyone can flourish.

THE OUTCOMES WE WANT TO DELIVER:

1. Residents and businesses are well connected and have a good travel experience in the borough.
2. Encourage a positive environment where businesses and our community and voluntary organisations are supported to grow; and investment into the borough is maximised, creating job opportunities for local residents.
3. Sandwell will be a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2041.
4. Good homes that are well connected.
5. A thriving cultural, heritage and leisure offer.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- The Council has continued to invest and access grant funding for highways and we are among the best performers in the West Midlands and the country for the conditions of our highways.
- We have won the Regional Large Employer of the Year at the Apprenticeship Awards recognising our commitment to apprentices and the contribution of apprentices to the organisation. Our offer includes ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers, and we work to ensure that apprenticeships help us to diversify our workforce, so it better reflects the residents we serve.
- In terms of the economy, we have secured £145m from the Government's Town Fund, Levelling up Fund and Levelling Up Partnership, among the largest in the country.
- Over the past two years, we have secured grants of £459million from national and regional bodies to deliver our regeneration pipeline, including ten new schools and education facilities
- The Digital Den project refurbishment in Wood Lane Community Centre has been completed with the support of the Towns Fund grant. This now enables the project to provide access to digital online provision for children, adults and older people including support to get online and improve employment readiness and access to employment opportunities.
- And in Londonderry Lane – we have implemented Traffic calming and a cycle infrastructure.
- Works to improve the A4123 Birchley Island were included in the Government's new 'Network North' strategy for transport investment. We will concentrate on delivering this.
- Successful launch of Sandwell Aquatics Centre
- Secured £20 million of Leveling Up Fund 2 funding for the rebuilding of Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- We designed the West Bromwich Urban Greening in consultation with accessibility groups to ensure we meet their needs.
- We designed the Parklets on the High Street in West Bromwich, ensuring sure that we had wheelchair accessibility



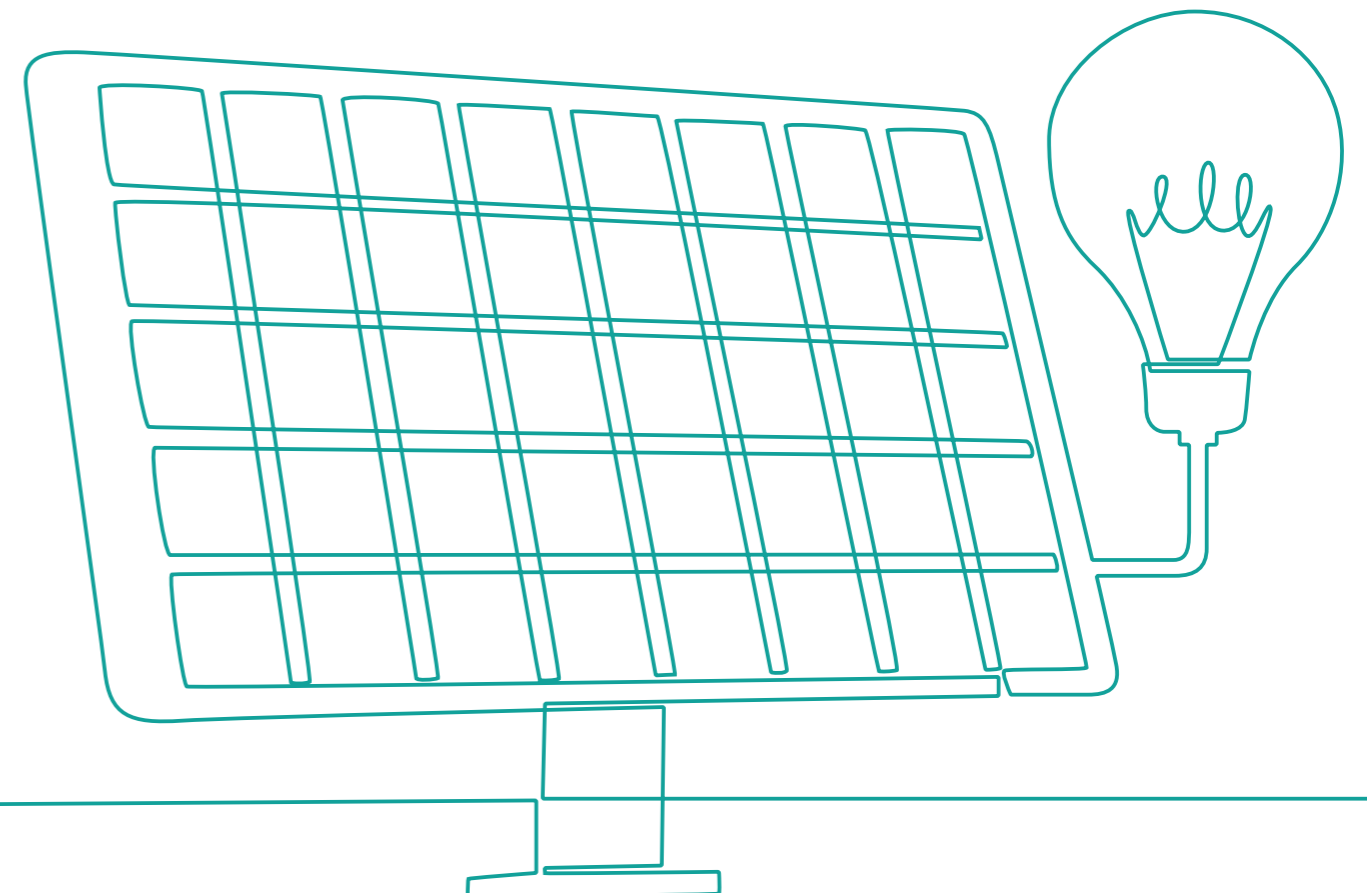
WHAT WE WILL DO

- Lead on the design and construction of the Birchley Island improvement scheme to provide enhanced capacity and better active travel facilities on one of the borough's key strategic junctions
- We will use the Sandwell Strategic Road Safety Plan 2024-2030 approved delivery plan to meet our statutory requirements for road casualty reduction and to maintain Sandwell's excellent performance in reducing child road casualties.
- Progress the delivery of new council homes in line with 5-year (HRA) business plan.
- Work with housebuilder, landowners, investors, developers and registered providers to deliver the Housing Theme of the Regeneration Pipeline.
- Deliver the Tipton Capital Regeneration Project (£20m) which will result in the delivery of new homes alongside public realm improvements.
- Deliver the Business Growth Plan, 2023 which sets out an ambition to accelerate business growth, creating a wealthier Sandwell, gripping investment opportunities, and addressing long term economic challenges.
- Engage with the WMCA to ensure strong partnerships to enable Sandwell to be positioned to access funding which is to be devolved to the region from central government..
- Embed climate change considerations into our decision making when investing in our assets to enable us to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.
- Delivery of Corporate Fleet Strategy and the transition of fleet assets (Council and partners) to EV Programme of on-street EV changing points to be delivered.
- We will produce a 5-year events strategy, focussing on bringing more event providers into a Sandwell as a regional events destination. –
- We will continue to improve our visitor experience across visitor services, and to maximise the commercial and social value benefits of this service.
- Deliver the Strategic Road Safety Plan.
- Deliver the Haden Hill Leisure Centre Project.
- Deliver local, regional and national events at Sandwell Aquatic Centre.
- Develop our Design Code for the Borough in conjunction with protected groups.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK

We will monitor our performance on the following performance indicators:-

- Number of Businesses supported
- A percentage reduction in carbon emissions within our corporate estate and across the wider borough
- Number of Council homes retrofitted
- Satisfaction in place to live – residents survey
- ONS wellbeing measure – satisfaction in place to live



ONE COUNCIL ONE TEAM



WE ARE SANDWELL



WHAT WE WANT TO DELIVER

To deliver our ambitions across our Council Plan we need more than an engine to drive change we need our whole workforce.

Sandwell Council's ethos of 'One Council One Team' reflects a commitment to unity and collaboration, striving for excellence in serving the community. Embracing the principle of being 'brilliant at the basics,' we aim to ensure that core services are delivered with high competence, forming the bedrock of public trust and operational success. This philosophy is a stepping stone towards the broader vision of evolving into an 'outstanding council'—one that not only meets but exceeds the expectations of its citizens, fostering an environment of continuous improvement, innovation, and inclusive growth.

Our values and behaviours emphasise teamwork, customer focus, inclusivity, ambition, and accountability, all of which are integral to achieving great results and driving positive change within the community. Together, these elements form the gears of progress for our Council Plan.

Our Council Plan is not just a document; it's a roadmap that guides us forward towards a better future for all residents.



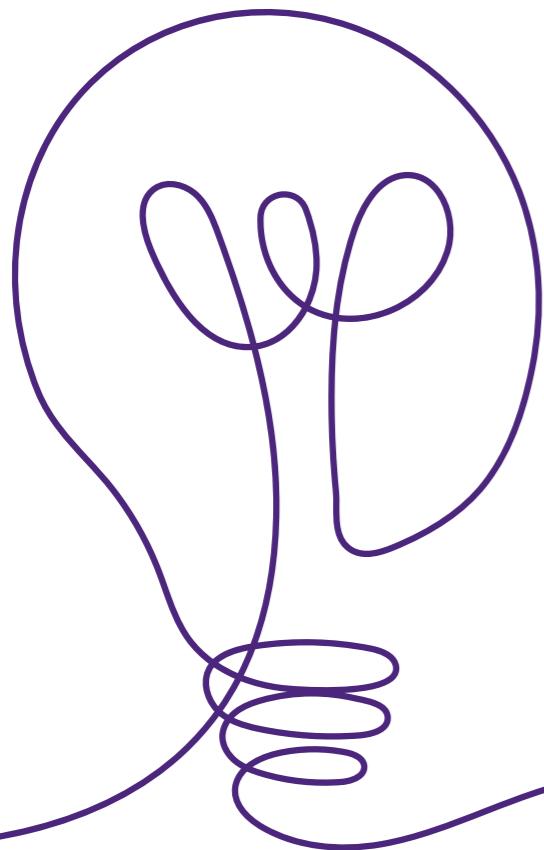
WE ARE **SANDWELL!**

THE OUTCOMES WE WANT TO DELIVER:

1. High quality inclusive services for all of our customers.
2. The Council understands and works with the community and has a diverse and engaged workforce representative of the local community.
3. A sustainable financial strategy and frameworks to enable controlled and coherent delivery of the council's priorities
4. An outstanding corporate parent, with all of the young people in our care reaching their full potential
5. An employer of choice with an engaged and high performing workforce.
6. Clear and transparent decision making and effective governance (data driven)
7. All of our residents, including our children and young people, are active participants in influencing change – through being listened to, their opinions are heard and valued.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- We have approved a new Senior Leadership Team structure, appointed a new Assistant Chief Executive and two new Executive Directors who joined us in May 2024..
- We have continued to focus on our residents' concerns, issues, and opinions. We have developed a consultation hub platform to provide our residents with the opportunity to tell us what they think and help to shape Sandwell. The feedback from our residents consultation has informed our business plans and budget priorities.
- The 2023 State of Sandwell report indicates areas of positive change in outcomes for Sandwell residents since 2017 as well as areas for focus.
- Our new Performance Management Framework is driving improvement across the Council in areas such as school attendance performance, which helped the Council to gain recognition as a priority education investment area.
- A new Neighbourhood model is being piloted and we have taken on 3 Ward Co-ordinators to work with Elected Members on Ward plans and priorities. This cross-council model for neighbourhood working has elected members and communities at the core for delivering outcomes in their areas.
- The new Council website has been launched.
- We have purchased a Navigation Bot that is in User Acceptance Testing phase. This should aid residents in using the website to find information and raise queries.



WHAT WE WILL DO

- Develop an interim Customer Experience Strategy for 2024/27 utilising existing data sources
- Develop new ways of capturing Customer Satisfaction across all access channels to ensure we can highlight where things are working well and where things need improvement.
- Progress and drive our equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government and utilise Council resources to support our equalities agenda. We will achieve excellence against the EFLG framework by 2029.
- Implement our People (Workforce) Strategy for 2024-2027
- Implement Oracle Fusion successfully, delivering Finance functionality across the organisation
- Ensure that Care Leavers have access to a comprehensive 'local offer' and access to quality advice, guidance, support and opportunities so that they are able to access education, employment or training
- Lead a comprehensive review of the Council's constitution, governance and decision-making frameworks to embed best practice and ensure robust, transparent, accountable and agile decision-making
- Review and refresh the Member Development Strategy.
- Develop a narrative about Sandwell as a place that also has buy in from partners and stakeholders that allows us to tell a new story about Sandwell to regional and national audiences
- Continue to consult and engage with key stakeholders, including our residents, to ensure that the decisions we make are evidence based and respond to the views and perceptions of the community.
- Further develop our consultation and engagement opportunities, particularly for our children and young people.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK

We will monitor our performance on the following performance indicators:-

- Variance from budget - General Fund
- Council Tax Paid on time (Collection)
- Business Rates Paid on time (Collection)
- Care experienced young people 19-25 in Employment, Education and Training (EET)
- Number of apprentices (entry level)
- Average working days lost per employee due to sickness absence
- Employee Engagement Score
- % of Council Staff / Members completed child rights training

