

Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

6 February 2025

Subject:	Outcome of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Spotlight Session on the New Neighbourhood Model for Sandwell
Director:	Assistant Chief Executive James McLaughlin
Contact Officer:	John Swann, Democratic Services Officer

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To consider and comment upon the findings of the Scrutiny Spotlight Session in relation to the New Neighbourhood Model for Sandwell and approve the tabled recommendations as follows:
 - a) that the Assistant Chief Executive ensures that ward boundary changes are considered as part of the creation of the new Neighbourhood Services Team;
 - b) that the Assistant Chief Executive ensures that robust and demonstratable key performance indicators are used to assess the effectiveness of the new model, with clear deliverables within set timescales identified;
 - c) that the Assistant Chief Executive consults Sandwell's Members of Parliament and elected representatives when preparing ward plans;
 - d) that the Board receives a further update on the impact of the new Neighbourhood Services Team within six months of the vacancies being filled.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. The implementation of a new model of neighbourhood working is a key strategic priority for the Council in how it better responds to the needs of the communities it serves.
- 2.2. The input of the scrutiny function in overseeing the implementation of the new model provides appropriate accountability and transparency, as well as providing valued feedback to strengthen the delivery of neighbourhood working.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

One Council One Team	The new model of neighbourhood working should directly assist in the delivery of high-quality inclusive services for all our customers. It will also contribute towards the objective of all our residents, including our children and young people, being active participants in influencing change – through being listened to and their opinions are heard and valued – within Ward Plans and Ward Priorities.
Living in Sandwell	The new model of neighbourhood working will contribute significantly to this objective through enhanced community engagement and the establishment of plans and priorities that will be focused on improving access to local services

4. Context and Key Issues

- 4.1. At the Board's meeting on 10 September 2024, it was agreed that it is to receive updates in relation to the new Neighbourhood Model for Sandwell.
- 4.2. On 17 December 2024, Board members attended a spotlight session to discuss the new Neighbourhood Model for Sandwell and made a number of recommendations to the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 4.3. In addition to the recommendations (above), Members present also requested a briefing note to be compiled in relation to the dedicated

communications support that will be part of the new Neighbourhood Working arrangements.

- 4.4. The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community has oversight of and political accountability for the implementation of the new model of neighbourhood working. This remains one of the key strategic priorities for the authority and will continue to be a matter of interest to Cabinet and Scrutiny Members, as well as all Members in their ward councillor roles.

5 Implications

Resources:	There will be significant implications for relevant services that are within scope of the restructuring required in implementing the new Neighbourhoods Services. There will also be implications for support services, such as HR and Communications, which are contributing to the development and implementation of the new structure and neighbourhood working model.
Legal and Governance:	There will be changes required to the Council's Constitution arising from the reporting of Ward Updates to future meetings of the Council following implementation of the new model in April 2025. The budget report to be considered by the Council in February 2025 will detail arrangements for new ward budgets and the decision-making processes and the discharge of delegated authority associated with those budgets.
Risk:	A clear project plan and critical path has been established for the implementation of the new model of neighbourhood working. At the time of preparing this report there are no specific risks to draw to Members' attention.
Equality:	The decision by Cabinet to implement a new model of neighbourhood working should improve the Council's ability to respond to the specific needs and expectations of Sandwell's diverse communities. The needs and requirements of citizens, businesses and communities in each ward are different and the new model will allow flexibility to respond to these needs by making the ward the building block for community engagement. Additionally, the production of Ward Plans will enable a targeted response to community concerns and priorities.

Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct Health and Wellbeing implications from this report.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications from this report.
Climate Change	There are no direct climate change implications in relation to this report.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific implications, but indirectly the strengthening of neighbourhood working arrangements should better enable the voice of children and young people to be heard in responding to community issues and priorities for wards.

6 Appendices

6.1 None.

7 Background Papers

7.1 Report to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board on 10 September 2024 entitled Neighbourhood Working – Implementation of the New Model.

7.2 Report to Cabinet on 17 July 2024 entitled The Future of Neighbourhood Working in Sandwell.