

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Regeneration Project Pipeline sets out the major investment projects that the Council, its partners, and the private sector intend to deliver between 2022 and 2027. It is a live, evolving document with progress monitored and reported to Cabinet every six months.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to: -

- 2.1 Note the performance of the Regeneration Pipeline Programme;
- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure to make the recommended additions to the Regeneration Pipeline: -
- Update the Project Title 'Smethwick Long-Term Plan' to 'Smethwick Plan for Neighbourhoods' following receipt of Programme Prospectus on 4 March 2025.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendation

- 3.1 On the 23 March 2022, Cabinet approved the Regeneration Strategy, Regeneration Project Pipeline, setting out the corporate regeneration priorities for the period 2022 to 2027. The pipeline is a live document, and Cabinet resolved for it to be monitored via a report submitted to Cabinet every 6 months. The last report was considered on the 4 December 2024.
- 3.2 In addition, Cabinet resolved that approval be sought to make additions to the project pipeline and for updated pipelines to be published on the council website and the Regenerating Sandwell website.
- 3.3 On 15 November 2023 Cabinet approved the Sandwell Business Growth Plan, setting out the priorities for supporting Sandwell's economy and business community over 23/24 & 24/25, and resolved performance for it to be monitored via a report to Cabinet every 6 months. The last report was considered on 4 December 2024.

4. Context

- 4.1 The Regeneration project pipeline now comprises 68 live projects, in addition to the 18 projects that are now complete, bringing the estimated total investment value to £3bn by 2027 and total number of projects to 86 (see figure 1). Detail on all projects is provided in the Pipeline Performance Report (Appendix A).
- 4.2 Detail on the Social Value commitments of the 68 live projects, including social value achieved to date is provided in the Regeneration Pipeline Social Value Report (Appendix B).



Figure 1 - Summary of Regeneration Pipeline Projects by category.

- 4.3 Out of the 68 live projects, 22 currently have planning permission in place.
- 4.4 Of note, since the last performance update to Cabinet in December 2024, two projects have completed: -

- Town Hall Quarter, West Bromwich
- Midland Met Canal Gateway, Smethwick

- 4.5 The report to Cabinet also includes more detailed commentary, covering Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership, Grove Lane LUF Round 3, Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme and the Towns Fund Programme.

Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership (Capital Programme)

- 4.6 The Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership has entered its second year and consists of the following projects: -
- Wednesbury Community Safety Scheme (On-site)
 - Wednesbury Town Centre Improvements (On-site)
 - Friar Park Urban Village Remediation (Procurement)
 - Wednesbury Green spaces Improvements (Phase 1 on site and Phase 2 in procurement)
 - Friar Park Millennium Centre expansion (Procurement)
- 4.7 A full update on programme delivery was provided to Cabinet in March 2025 and is provided to the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board at every meeting.
- 4.8 The programme spend as of 31 March 2025 is £3.314m Capital and £0.306m revenue.

- 4.9 There is one programme red risk relating to the delivery of the Friar Park Urban Village project. Since the report to Cabinet in March 2025, the likelihood of risks relating to the Environment Agency permitting process have decreased. The estimated completion date for the remediation works is on track for December 2027.

Grove Lane, Smethwick Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 3

- 1.1. Since the previous report to Cabinet, the Memorandum of Understanding between MHCLG and the council has been signed by both parties. The first payment from MHCLG was received in March 2025. Work is now underway to progress the project, commencing with valuations being undertaken for the properties subject to this project.
- 1.2. Following receipt of the valuations, surveyors will be instructed to commence negotiations with the landowners. Should acquisition by agreement not be successful, the council will need to consider whether to exercise its Compulsory Purchase Powers to acquire the site.

Plan for Neighbourhoods (Smethwick)

- 1.3. In October 2023, Smethwick was selected as one of 75 towns across the UK to receive up to £20 million in funding over a 10-year period through the former Long-Term Plan for Towns Programme. The funding was intended to support investment in local priorities identified by communities. However, with a change in Government, the submission of Long-Term Plans was paused, and local authorities were awaiting further direction.
- 1.4. On 4 March 2025, the Government launched a new programme, the Plan for Neighbourhoods, which replaces the Long-Term Plan for Towns. The new programme retains the same funding commitment of up to £20 million per town and focuses on long-term regeneration through local Neighbourhood Boards, working in partnership with local authorities. Each board is tasked with producing a 10-year Regeneration Plan and a more detailed 4-year Investment Plan, both shaped by local priorities and community engagement.
- 1.5. Funding will be split 75% capital and 25% revenue, supporting both infrastructure and service-based projects. In addition, each local authority will receive £200,000 in capacity funding during 2025/26 to support the formation and functioning of Neighbourhood Boards, including activities such as community engagement, technical support, and plan development. The first phase of delivery funding is scheduled to begin in the 2026/27 financial year, giving towns time to prepare governance structures and build local capacity.
- 1.6. The Government has outlined three strategic objectives for the programme: -
- **Thriving Places** aims to regenerate high streets, town centres and improve access to local public services such as healthcare, education, and social care.
 - **Stronger Communities** focuses on strengthening social ties, rebuilding trust, and creating pride in place through improved safety, connection, and civic participation.

- **Taking Back Control** is about levelling the playing field, ensuring everyone has equal opportunity, supporting people into work, helping businesses grow and giving residents a stronger voice in shaping their communities.
- 1.7. Local Neighbourhood Boards, in consultation with their communities and local authorities, are responsible for developing the Regeneration Plan. This plan should reflect a long-term vision aligned with the programme's objectives and include a detailed investment strategy for the initial four years. Boards are also encouraged to seek additional investment from both public and private sources to enhance the programme's impact. Detailed technical guidance on funding rules is yet to be issued by Government.
- 1.8. The Smethwick Partnership Board was confirmed in April 2024 to function as the Neighbourhood Board for the programme, in addition to overseeing the Smethwick Town Deal Programme (£23.5m Towns Fund Programme).
- 1.9. Key dates outlined in the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods Prospectus include the confirmation of board membership and area boundaries by 22 April 2024, submission of Regeneration Plans between spring and winter 2025 and release of the first delivery funding from April 2026.
- 1.10. The Accountable Body confirmed the structure and membership of the Smethwick Partnership Board to Government on 22 April, confirming vacancies of the Board will be recruited to over the next six months, as agreed by the Smethwick Partnership Board on 18 March 2025.
- 1.11. In 2024, a revised area boundary for Smethwick was approved by the former Government. The Accountable Body submitted this previously agreed revised area boundary to Government on 22 April, following agreement by the Smethwick Partnership Board.
- 1.12. Since the submission to Government, a further review of the Smethwick investment boundary area was requested by the local MP, to ensure alignment between the programme boundary and parliamentary constituency. The Smethwick MP's constituency includes Bristnall, Langley and Blackheath - areas outside of Smethwick which have not been identified by Government as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme.
- 1.13. In addition to this, Sandwell Full Council approved a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), proposing a new council size of 72 councillors. This includes changes to Ward boundaries with a first phase of public consultation that took place during Summer 2024. A second consultation on the draft ward recommendations occurred between 4 February and 14 April 2025.
- 1.14. The LGBCE Board is scheduled to agree final recommendations on 15 July 2025 and is subject to Parliamentary approval through an Order. This will take place between the summer and autumn of 2025. The new ward pattern and boundaries will be implemented through all-out elections for all wards and seats to be held on Thursday 7 May 2026.

- 1.15. On 22 May 2025, the Smethwick Partnership Board agreed to align the Plan for Neighbourhoods boundary area with the Smethwick ward changes, made under the LGBCE review. Engagement will commence based on the current agreed boundary, except for the areas that may be excluded following parliamentary approval of ward changes.
- 1.16. Following Parliamentary approval of the ward changes, a revised boundary request will be submitted to Government.
- 1.17. On 30 May 2025, Sandwell Council received correspondence from Government, approving the Plan for Neighbourhoods Board and revised boundary submissions. A grant determination letter was received confirming capacity funding would be released in due course. The letter also requested Sandwell Council confirm the details of board members currently listed as 'vacancy' by 30 July 2025.
- 1.18. The identified resources currently sit within the Programme Management Office (PMO), which operates as the accountable body for the programme. The PMO works in collaboration with relevant departments across Sandwell Council, including Finance and Legal, to ensure robust governance, assurance, and compliance. To strengthen capacity further, the Smethwick Partnership Board approved a proposal on 22 May for a Ward Coordinator and Development Officer within the Council's Neighbourhoods Team to support the delivery of programme activities. A budget is ringfenced to fund these roles from the programme budget, ensuring dedicated resource is in place to meet the programme's needs.

Towns Fund Programme (Capital Programme)

- 1.19. The Towns Fund Programme is in its final year of financial delivery, aiming to spend £20.68m by March 2026, with the exception for the Grove Lane Regeneration and Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration projects that have received an addition 12-months delivery period and are aiming to spend £3.287m in 2026/27. Details of the rationale for this is included in paragraph 4.32 and 4.33.
- 1.20. The programme has recently passed a Government Audit, which has now been concluded. The audit report highlighted that there are strong governance structures in place to manage the programme effectively. There were two recommendations from the audit including the creation of a Counter Fraud Risk Register for the programme and the introduction of a process for publishing notices for framework contracts. Both recommendations have since been implemented.
- 1.21. All projects are now either on site or have been completed. A summary of project progress for each town is provided below and financial profiles within Appendix C.
- 1.22. West Bromwich Town Deal
 - **Number of projects:** 6
 - **Forecasted Spend as of 31 March 2025** (As per MHCLG return in November 2024): £22,832,799

- **Actual Spend as of 31 March 2025:** £22,435,999
- **Slippage (%):** 1.74%

1.23. The **Retail Diversification Programme** Project has successfully acquired all sites identified, as per the revised acquisition strategy agreed by Government in October 2024.

1.24. The construction of the new indoor market is underway with an anticipated completion of July 2025. The new indoor market will be open for public use in August 2025.

1.25. The demolition programme has commenced, with demolition of former Wilkinsons Site underway and due to complete June 2025.

1.26. The **Town Hall Quarter** project is complete. Notably, the project was recognised with the prestigious Victorian Society's Conservation Award (2025), further highlighting its positive impact and commitment to heritage preservation.

1.27. There are no red risk projects in the West Bromwich Town Deal Programme.

1.28. Smethwick Town Deal

- **Number of projects:** 5
- **Forecasted Spend as of 31 March 2025** (As per MHCLG return in November 2024): £12,757,030
- **Actual Spend as of 31 March 2025:** £13,347,828
- **Slippage (%):** -4.63%

1.29. On 16 December, Sandwell Council received correspondence from Government confirming that in exceptional cases, and where properly evidenced, Government can offer an extra delivery year for some Town Deal projects. In light of this, Sandwell Council as the accountable body reviewed all projects across the three towns and identified two projects that would benefit from the delivery period extension and had evidence of need to request additional time to deliver. The two projects identified were the Grove Lane Regeneration Project and Rolfe Street Canalside Project.

1.30. On 13 February, correspondence was received from Government confirming the approval to the extension requests, resulting in project delivery and spend to be achieved by March 2027.

1.31. The **Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration** Project has received the results from a Heritage Impact Assessment and Feasibility Study, which recommend three of nine buildings are retained in addition to some of the facades fronting Rolfe Street. This could have an impact on the deliverables. High-level costings for the retention of these have been received. An additional structural survey is underway to determine the viability to retain a fourth building, as requested by a key stakeholder. At the time of writing this report, the results have not been received.

- 1.32. The **Grove Lane Regeneration** Project will submit the Statement of Reasons to the Secretary of State in April 2025. A planning application has been produced and will be submitted in April 2025 for a residential development of 100 homes and 1 commercial unit.
- 1.33. The **Midland Met Learning Campus** construction is underway, with a celebratory event planned for 22 May 2025. Construction is due to complete November 2025 with the learning campus welcoming students from January 2026.
- 1.34. The **Smethwick Connected** Project will deliver an additional scheme (Phase 6) to link the Birmingham Canal to Windsor Olympus Academy via Black Patch Park. This is following Smethwick Partnership Board approval to allocate the project underspend of circa £420,000 to this scheme.
- 1.35. Project red risk in the Smethwick Town Deal Programme relate to: -
- **Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration:** This project is subject to planning permission for demolition. The project is working with statutory consultees to identify issues and resolve these prior to submitting a planning application.
 - **Grove Lane Regeneration:** This project is subject to successfully acquiring the identified site. Negotiations are ongoing with the landowner, in parallel to proceeding with the Compulsory Purchase Order.
- 1.36. Rowley Regis Town Deal
- **Number of projects:** 5
 - **Forecasted Spend as of 31 March 2025** (As per MHCLG return in November 2024): £9,785,930
 - **Actual Spend as of 31 March 2025:** £7,727,588
 - **Slippage (%):** 21.03%
- 1.37. The **Blackheath Bus Interchange** Project commenced on-site March 2025 and due to complete in November 2025. The first phase will be night works only to minimise disruption to the town centre business and traders. The project team have shared monthly newsletters (December to March) with the local business traders to keep them up to date on the progress of the project. Moving forward, the contractor will share regular newsletters with town centre businesses, traders, and residents.
- 1.38. The **Cradley Heath Skills Campus** topping out ceremony was held in February 2025. The construction is due to complete November 2025 with the learning campus welcoming students from January 2026. The project has secured an additional £300,000 Towns Fund grant from the Blackheath Bus Interchange Project underspend, which will contribute to fixtures, fittings and equipment in the teaching/ simulation and community cafe area.
- 1.39. The **Rowley Regis Parks Improvements** (formerly known as the Britannia Park Greenspace Improvements Project) has secured an additional £414,000

Towns Fund Grant from the Blackheath Bus Interchange Project underspend, to further enhance improvements at Britannia Park and replace the steel play area at Haden Hill Park.

1.40. Project red risk in the Rowley Regis Town Deal Programme relate to: -

- **Rowley Regis Parks Improvements:** Procurement for a specialist contractor is needed for elements of improvement works, should a less suitable contractor be appointed this could compromise the quality or timeline of the works. The project is working closely with procurement team to form a specification and evaluation criteria.
- **Blackheath Bus Interchange:** Red risks relate to programme delivery, stakeholder management and costs. Should construction delays occur, this may extend the disruption to the town businesses and residents and increase project costs. This is being managed through regular meetings with the contractor, reviewing milestones and budget.

Sandwell Business Growth Plan for 2024/25 Quarter 4 Update

1.41. Overall, the Business Growth team are demonstrating strong performance and successfully meeting their established targets. Their efforts have been instrumental in driving progress across various initiatives, ensuring sustainable growth and positive outcomes. The team's commitment to excellence and adaptability in navigating challenges further reinforces their ability to support business development and economic growth effectively. Key highlights are detailed below.

1.42. Start-Up Businesses

By the end of Quarter 3, 60% of the entrepreneur cohort completed their business school training. The full target for Business School attendees was met, with 100% being assisted to become enterprise ready. A total of £48,330.53 was paid out in support of 17 start-up businesses.

1.43. Business Growth Assistance

By the end of Quarter 3, 595 businesses had been supported with enquiries. Capital grants totalling £1,061,079.50 were provided, along with an additional £129,722 in revenue grants.

1.44. Social Value in Council Contracts

By the end of Quarter 3, council contracts contributed to the creation of 47 apprenticeships and 66 jobs. Additionally, 416 community support hours were delivered, and local schools received 157 hours of support.

1.45. Further detail on the Sandwell Business Growth Plan outputs is detailed in Appendix D.

2. Alternative Options Considered

2.1. Not Applicable.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. Consultation will not occur for the entire Regeneration Pipeline at once, however each individual project within the Regeneration Pipeline will have its own consultation process. Sandwell residents will be invited to engage in these consultations, which may include surveys, discussions, and other forms of communication, allowing them to learn more about the specific proposals and decisions related to each project. This approach ensures that residents can actively participate in shaping decisions that directly impact their community, while keeping them informed throughout the process.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The Regeneration Pipeline, which has a collective estimated investment value of approximately £3 billion, represents a significant opportunity for economic growth, place-making and long-term community benefit. Whilst some projects within the pipeline have already secured funding for initial stages such as feasibility studies, site surveys, remediation works, and in some cases delivery, a number of projects remain at an earlier stage without committed financial backing.
- 4.2. To support the progression of the overall Regeneration Pipeline, it is essential for the council to identify and allocate funding towards key projects, particularly those that have not yet secured financial backing. Demonstrating a clear financial commitment will provide confidence to developers and investors, reinforcing the council's role as a proactive and reliable partner.
- 4.3. Of the 68 live Pipeline projects, 26 are in the council's capital programme, totalling approximately £219.7 million. Of this, around £81.5 million is funded directly by the council, with the remaining £138.2 million being co-funded through external sources such as government grants, private sector investment and strategic partnerships. The expenditure as of 31 March 2025 in the capital programme is £49.8 million.
- 4.4. While there are 68 live Pipeline projects, the total number referenced in the breakdown below is higher, as some projects have been divided into multiple elements or phases based on their stage of development, funding status and required approvals.

Category	# of projects	Pipeline Investment	SMBC contribution	Grant/ co-funding contribution	Expenditure as of 31 March 2025
Capital Programme	23	£114.5m	£8.2m	£106.3m	£37.335m
Pipeline	10	£99.4m	£5.8m	£93.6m	£ 0
In Development	17	£571.1m	£0	£571.1	£ 0
HRA	4	£105.1m	£73.3m	£31.8m	£12.466m
External	24	£1.263bn	£0	£1.263bn	-
Total	78	£2.153bn	£87.343m	£2.066bn	£49.801m

5. Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.1. At present, there are no immediate legal or governance implications arising from the Regeneration Pipeline.

- 5.2. Each project within the pipeline may involve complex legal agreements, including land assembly, development agreements, procurement processes and funding contracts.
- 5.3. From a governance perspective, clear structures and decision-making processes are required to manage the pipeline effectively and transparently. As some projects involve partnerships with private developers and external funding bodies, strong governance arrangements are also critical in maintaining trust, managing risk, and ensuring alignment with strategic objectives.

6. Risks

- 6.1. No project risks were escalated to the Regeneration Programme Board on 29 April 2025.
- 6.2. The Regeneration Pipeline naturally carries a variety of risks, including potential issues around acquisition, where delays or negotiations could impact timelines, and site survey results, which may uncover environmental or structural challenges. There is also delivery partner risk, where performance or capacity issues could affect delivery, as well as exposure to cost inflation across materials, labour, and services. Whilst these are standard considerations for projects, no immediate risks have been identified at this stage.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will not be conducted for the entire Regeneration Pipeline as a whole. Instead, each individual project within the Regeneration Pipeline will follow its own process for EIA screening and assessment. This ensures that the specific impacts of each project on equality and diversity are carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis. By assessing each project separately, the process can address the unique potential effects on different communities, ensuring that any issues related to equality are identified and appropriately managed.

8. Other Relevant Implications

- 8.1. Not Applicable.

9. Background Documents

- Sandwell Regeneration Pipeline Tracker
- Plan for Neighbourhoods Prospectus

10. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

- 10.1. The Regeneration Pipeline supports the delivery of the following Strategic Themes: -

Growing up in Sandwell

The diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline and Sandwell Business Growth Plan stand to contribute the best start in life for children and young people in Sandwell.

Living in Sandwell

This diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline and Sandwell Business Growth Plan stand to contribute towards people living well and ageing well in Sandwell.

The diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline and Sandwell Business Growth Plan stand to contribute towards strong resilient communities in Sandwell.

The diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline stand to contribute towards quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods in Sandwell.

Thriving Economy in Sandwell

The diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline and Sandwell Business Growth Plan stand to contribute towards a strong and inclusive economy.

The diverse nature of the projects within the Regeneration Project Pipeline stand to contribute towards a connected and accessible Sandwell.

Relevance Check

Budget Reduction/Service Area:

Service Lead:

Date:

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service that you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed? No