

Scrutiny Board:	Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
Report Title	Corporate Performance Report for Quarter 1 2025/26
Date of Meeting	Thursday 6 November 2025
Report Author	Kayleigh Walker
Lead Officer	Assistant Chief Executive
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	NA
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 – Corporate Performance Indicators Q1 2025/26 Appendix 2 - Corporate Performance Indicator 2025/26 targets Appendix 3 – Directorate Business Plan Actions Q1 2025/26 by exception

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Quarter 1 Corporate Performance Report 2025/26, setting out the Council's progress in delivering the Council Plan 2024-2027.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the 2025/26 Quarter 1 monitoring reports.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

3.1 The Council's Performance Management Framework enables us to track progress in delivering the strategic outcomes in the Council Plan, improve services through identifying poor performance and sharing good practice, celebrate our achievements and provide a strong evidence base for improved decision making and the efficient use of resources. Through enabling us to identify opportunities for continuous improvement, the Performance Management Framework is also a key component in our journey to becoming an outstanding organisation.

3.2 The Council Plan 2024-2027 was approved by Council on 23 July 2024.

The strategic themes in the Council Plan are: -

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

All underpinned by One Council One Team

3.3 Performance measures for 2025/26 were reviewed and amended where appropriate and are aligned against the outcomes under each strategic theme, which, along with the updates to the business plan actions, will allow the Council to understand how it is delivering against the Council Plan. Progress is reported on a quarterly and annual basis through the Corporate Performance Report.

3.4 A two-tiered approach to performance measures has also been developed:

1. Performance measures that are within the gift of the Council to influence. There are 170 of these measures.
2. Contextual measures that are important for the Council to monitor to track outcomes for residents but are not solely influenced by the Council and that we cannot set a target for. There are 30 of these measures.

- 3.5 In total there are 200 Corporate Performance indicators. Of these, 76 are annual measures and 124 are quarterly measures.
- 3.6 This report sets out the Council's performance against the Corporate Performance Indicators for Q1 for 2025/26 (attached in **Appendix 1**), and a summary of progress in delivery of Directorate Business Plan actions that contribute towards achieving the priorities set out in the Council Plan by exception (where there are minor and major issues and where an action has not started - attached as **Appendix 3**).
- 3.7 Performance of key contracts is included in the quarterly performance reports to provide oversight of the performance of these services and assurance that contract management mechanisms continue to be in place and effective (Please see paragraph 11).
- 3.8 The information collected is used to enable the authority to better understand the impact of its work on local people, and where necessary, target actions and resources to improve progress in achieving the Council's strategic objectives.

4. Quarter 4 and Annual Performance Report – key messages

Corporate Performance Indicators

- 4.1 In Q1, the number of Quarterly PIs with a RAG rating was 83. Below is a summary of the RAG ratings and a comparison to last quarter, however these are not directly comparable because the Corporate PI set has been amended and slightly reduced from 2024/25.
- o 44 PIs (53%) are RAG rated 'GREEN' compared to 51 PIs (57%) in Q4
 - o 12 (14%) PIs are RAG rated 'AMBER' compared to 7 PIs (8%) in Q4
 - o 27 (33%) PIs are RAG rated 'RED' compared to 32 PIs (36%) in Q4

- 4.2 The highest number of 'red' PIs are under the 'Living in Sandwell' strategic theme (10 out of 26), and under the 'One Council One Team' strategic theme (11 out of 43).
- 4.3 Of the 27 red quarterly PIs, 17 were also red last quarter. These have been highlighted in the paragraphs below.

Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available
Growing Up in Sandwell	16	3	2	5	5	1
Living in Sandwell	26	10	0	11	4	1
Healthy in Sandwell	10	3	2	4	0	1
Thriving in Sandwell	15	0	0	7	7	1
One Council One Team	43	11	8	17	2	5
Total	110	27	12	44	18	9

5. Directorate Business Plans

- 5.1 Directorate level business plans were approved by Cabinet in July 2025. In total, one hundred and twenty-one priority actions have been set, with each action aligned to the Council Plan strategic themes.
- 5.2 Lead Officers from each Directorate have provided a BRAGG status and progress commentary update for their actions, whereby:

Blue	Complete
Red	Delayed - Not on track, with major issues
Amber	Mainly on track, with some minor issues
Green	On Track
Grey	Not started

The table below provides an overview of performance by strategic theme:

	Complete	Delayed – Not on track, with major issues	Mainly on track, with some minor issues	On Track	Not started
Growing up in Sandwell	2	0	1	23	0
Living in Sandwell	0	0	1	11	0
Healthy in Sandwell	6	1	3	20	0
Thriving in Sandwell	0	0	3	3	0
One Council One Team	0	1	12	30	4
Total	8	2	20	87	4

5.3 In total, 71.9% of actions are on track and 6.61% are complete. 16.53% of actions are mainly on track, with some minor issues. 3.31% of actions have not yet started and are due to commence in the forthcoming quarters.

5.4 There are two red actions, 1.65% delayed – not on track with major issues, one in the Assistant Chief Executive’s Business Plan and one in Public Health’s Business Plan:

- The first relates to the adoption and implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – a draft has been developed, and further work was required relating to the delivery plan, therefore the strategy will now go to Cabinet in November.
- The second relates to the roll out of a new NHS Health Checks service to be delivered by GP practices starting from 1 April 2025. No NHS Health Checks were completed in Q1 due to the service mobilisation taking longer than expected. Colleagues expect performance to increase as the new contract is embedded and are progressing work to add two practices to the delivery programme.

5.5 Commentaries for Directorate Business Plan actions that are ‘amber’, ‘red’ in addition to actions that have not been started can be found in **Appendix 3**.

6. Growing Up in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

- 6.1 Sandwell has been named a pilot area under the Government's Test, Learn and Grow program. It will focus on improving the support for young people with SEND when they reach 16 and finish school. The program will draw on the expertise of our local Connexions, Employment and Skills team, and Sandwell College. Sandwell will receive expertise, support, and funding from the government to try new methods to enhance these services, with the goal of sharing learnings with other regions.
- 6.2 The Council will continue supporting families of 46,000 children with vouchers during school holidays through £6million of Household Support Fund funding over the next financial year. Amongst other things, this will include:
- £3 million for vouchers to pupils on benefits-related Free School Meals (£130 per child/year)
 - £1.2 million to support council and private tenants with rent arrears and housing costs
 - £300,000 for Local Welfare Provision, offering help with essentials like food, fuel, travel, furniture, and disability equipment
- 6.3 The Department for Education has invited Sandwell to become a pilot Local Authority Partner for Severe Absence. This project will help us collectively to grow our understanding of what works in tackling severe absence. The programme will work closely with a small number of partner LAs (across the country) to understand the barriers to service delivery for severe absentees, work through solutions and test what works with a view to scaling up nationally. Further clarification on how this project will contribute to capacity and funding is in progress.
- 6.4 The Youth Service team has been shortlisted for The Workforce Development Award at the Children and Young People Now Awards 2025 which showcases innovation and outstanding practice across the children's services sector. This nomination recognises the work the Youth Service does to support, protect,

and empower children and care experienced young people. It focuses on the work to develop volunteers and create a workforce development strategy called 'Grow Our Own' youth workers, addressing the national shortage in the profession. The awards ceremony will take place later in November.

Performance Monitoring – Key messages

- 6.4 There are 3 'red' quarterly PIs in Q1 for this Strategic theme out of 16 quarterly PIs in total. The PI '% Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) 20-week completion rate, including exceptions' was also 'red' last quarter. The key messages in relation to this strategic theme are summarised below.
- 6.5 The backlog of work for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) has been reduced and will be cleared by September. The figure for '% EHCP 20-week completion rate, including exceptions' is 36.94% for Q1 (against a target of 50.3), but with the backlog removed the figure is 74.92%. A reduction in the backlog will also improve the average number of weeks taken for statutory assessment for an EHCP Plan, which is currently 21.21 weeks (target of 20 weeks). Performance is expected to continue to improve for both measures for Q2 and Q3 2025/26. Also, a focus on assessments for children aged 0-5 will mean that more children will start school with the right support already in place, and we can avoid a backlog of assessment requests once schools identify unmet needs.
- 6.6 Educational attainment is an area of focus for the Council. The School Improvement Strategy is under development, which sets out how the Council will raise standards in all key stages and close the gaps with national benchmarking. The draft strategy will be shared with schools throughout the Autumn term for comment. The Strategy includes a focus on improvement at KS4 as a priority for the borough.

- 6.7 As part of Sandwell's Family Help system, the Additional Family Help Board supports families who require extra assistance but do not yet meet the threshold for formal social care. Monthly data reviews have highlighted a significant reduction in the number Early Help assessments being completed (798 for Q1 against a 900-1200 target). This is being investigated to understand if this is a concern, or an anomaly in the data. The board will also work with MASH to assess any recent initiatives influencing current patterns, and present findings across education and health forums to support a joined-up response. An update will be provided as part of the Q2 report.

7. Living in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

- 7.1 A West Bromwich shop which sold vapes to children, illegal cigarettes and counterfeit goods has been closed down by Trading Standards. Council officers, supported by West Midlands Police, raided the shop as part of the Safer 6 2025 campaign (9th June – 20 July), where they discovered a hydraulic platform under a toilet floor containing approximately 21,000 illegal cigarettes and 120 illegal vapes. Counterfeit items including suspected fake Labubu dolls were also found.
- 7.2 Sandwell received a C3 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing in November 2024 due to its performance against housing compliance indicators. Since then, overall performance has improved, with lift safety, water safety and fire safety all achieving 100% compliance. However, we have not yet reached full compliance in every area, with gas safety at 99.7%, asbestos safety checks at 93.8% and domestic electrical installation condition checks at 98.1%.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

- 7.3 There are 10 'red' quarterly PIs under this strategic theme in Q1 out of 26 quarterly PIs in total. Of these, 6 were red last quarter and are as follows:

- Make safe hazardous waste on public (contract maintained) land within 4 hours and remove within 24 hours.
- % of Private Rented Sector (PRS) disrepair cases processed to formal notice, civil action/prosecution or closed with positive outcome within processing times
- % of responsive repairs completed in timescale
- Housing Compliance Health Check (Over 6 key areas): Gas safety checks
- Housing Compliance Health Check (Over 6 key areas) Asbestos safety checks
- Housing Compliance Health Check (Over 6 key areas): The percentage of properties with a domestic electrical installation condition report (DEICR) under 5 years old (or in legal resolution)
-

7.4 The key messages in relation to this strategic theme are summarised below.

7.5 The number of missed bins (not remedied within 24 hours) per 100,000 collections' is above target at 372 (against at target of 80). Whilst the target for this PI is extremely challenging (requiring more than 99.9% service accuracy), the target was set and agreed with the contractor Serco in recognition of the importance of service reliability for residents. Performance has significantly improved compared to the same period last year (900) and quarter 4 2024/25 (427). Additional resources have had a positive impact in performance, as well as a reduction in staff sickness. Investment in a new fleet has reduced turnaround times at Waterfall Lane, which should drive better performance going forward.

7.6 The '% of PRS disrepair cases processed to formal notice, civil action/prosecution or closed with positive outcome within processing times' is still below target (66.67% for stage 1) but there has been significant improvements since this time last year when the outturn was 40%. The service envisages that the target should be met by Quarter 3 this year. This has been possible through creating career graded roles that has meant the

service now has 5 trainee officers who are progressing very quickly in their training and development with all officers now able to inspect and case hold without continuous oversight. The Stage 2 outturn for Q1 was impacted by a low number of cases at this stage (three), all of which exceeded timescales due to complications from both tenant delays and some staffing capacity issues. This will be rectified over the coming quarter to help the service to return to its previous gradual improvement journey.

- 7.7 The ‘% of responsive repairs completed in timescale’ is below the 95% target but is almost on target for emergency repairs (94.4%). Non-Emergency repairs remain the area for improvement at 77.37%. Contractor completions are a cause for concern, with jobs often completed on time but the system is not updated correctly. Weekly outstanding job reports are being sent to contractors to highlight non completions and monthly performance meetings are being held.
- 7.8 The Q1 figure for ‘Housing Compliance Asbestos safety checks’ is 93.8%, but since the end of the quarter has reached 100%. There has also been an improvement for Domestic electrical installation condition report (DEICR) under 5 years old (or in legal resolution) at 98.1% compared to 97.5% last quarter.
- 7.9 The total number of people assisted by the Welfare Rights Service to claim additional benefits’ and ‘The total monetary value of benefits awarded assisted by the Welfare Rights Service’ are below target in Q1. This is because of Department of Work and Pension backlogs which is resulting in benefit awards being extended and therefore, there is no requirement for review forms to be completed. The core team have commenced mandatory training which will continue into Q3 to ensure we are delivering a comprehensive service to our residents around money management and the prevention of debt.

8. Healthy in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

8.1 The Sandwell Language Network are on track to significantly exceed the number of learners enrolled on an English Language community programme/course for this academic year. They currently have 525 active learners, exceeding their target of 325. The Sandwell Language Network (SLN) contract has been extended which provides a programme of free, community-based English language learning support across the borough. The programme aims to tackle health and economic inequalities, reduce isolation and promote community cohesion through basic language skills learning across Sandwell. The contract includes requirements to:

- deliver pre-entry and entry-level ESOL classes in community hubs, to meet a need and plug the gap in basic language skills provision
- deliver 'IELTS' courses for people to prepare for the International English Language Test to enable them to study or work
- support language learners to access health and wellbeing support and improve health literacy.

8.2 Stop for Life Sandwell, a new community stop smoking service has been launched and is designed to help people quit and live healthier lives. Run by behaviour change specialists ICE, the service is free and available to anyone living, working or registered with a GP in Sandwell.

Support includes:

- One-to-one behavioural support
- Tailored quit plans
- Advice on Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and vapes, plus 12 weeks of free products
- The Best-You healthy lifestyles app

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

- 8.3 There are 3 quarterly PIs rated as 'red' in Q1 under this strategic theme out of 10 quarterly PIs in total. All 3 were 'red' last quarter. These are as follows:
- Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, and those receiving direct payments (ASCOF 3D)
 - NHS Health Checks
 - Number of adults completing a tier 2 weight management programme
- The key messages in relation to this Strategic Theme are summarised below.
- 8.4 A comprehensive Adult Social Care Transformation Programme is underway which will positively impact on performance and outcome measures. Evidence of this is being seen in Q1. Whilst 'The proportion of people who received short-term services during the year - who previously were not receiving services - where no further request was made for ongoing support' is below target of 60% and RAG rated 'amber', performance has improved by 6% from 51% in Q4 2024/25 to 57% in Q1 2025/26.
- 8.5 This illustrates the impact of the work being undertaken with our transformation partner ARCC to improve our internal and externally commissioned reablement services (short-term, intensive support designed to help individuals regain their independence and confidence after an illness, injury, or period of reduced mobility). This includes reviewing the intermediate care pathway (such as the Short-Term Assessment and Reablement (STAR) service, Home-Based Intermediate Care, the hospital discharge hub and how we help people coming out of hospital and into the community). This work will inform the future operating model and service design, setting out what services will be delivered and where we will signpost customers for information and support. Part of this is having more informal advice and support at the front door and have a strength based approach in our conversations with customers (which means working with customers to understand what they can do themselves or with the support of others (e.g. family) and what they need support with) so that we provide the services and interventions they need to remain healthy and independent.

- 8.6 Direct Payments enable social care service users to maintain independence over their care and contributes to people leading healthy lives in the community and living well for longer. The percentage of social care service users who receive Direct Payments in Sandwell in Q1 is 15%, below the national average for 2023/24 of 25.5%. There are 140 staff now trained in the new approach for Direct Payments across Finance and Social Work teams. There have been 3 panels to assist applications for Direct Payments have already been held, and further panels are scheduled throughout the year. We therefore expect to see improvements in performance for those receiving Direct Payments in the next 6 months.
- 8.7 The mobilisation for the new contract for NHS Health Checks has taken longer than expected, with no checks delivered in Q1. Delivery is expected to start in September. The target for this financial year is 4,280 which is still achievable despite the delay.
- 8.8 The Adult Weight Management Programme is still seeing a large number of referrals but low levels of completions (495 referred in Q1 with 10 completing the 12 week programme (2%)). Public Health are developing new plans for Adult Weight Management that align with recently released NICE guidelines in preparation for undertaking this service in-house when the current contract ends.
- 8.9 No data was available for the Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey because of low response rates this year. While the Active Lives Survey remains the nationally recognised reporting tool for local authorities, there are additional indicators that could more accurately reflect current activity levels in Sandwell. Moving forwards, the Children and Young People Active Lives Survey, completed internally as a measure of physical activity will also be used for an outturn. We are also reviewing other data sources, including the SHAPE survey.

9. Thriving Economy in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

- 9.1 Sandwell has achieved a record-breaking 15 Green Flag Awards for 2025/26. The ceremony for the West Midlands, East of England and East Midlands, was held in Sandwell for the first time in July 2025. This year West Smethwick Park has achieved the prestigious standard following a £5.1million restoration and improvement project, supported by the National Lottery Fund's Parks for People programme and Sandwell Council.
- 9.2 The Council continues to lead the way in maintaining roads and tackling potholes according to the Sandwell Council Residents' Survey 2024, which showed that 61% of Sandwell residents were satisfied with road maintenance in 2024 compared to a local government benchmark of 27% (Local Government Association 2024). 65% of Sandwell residents were satisfied with pavement maintenance compared to a local government benchmark of 41% (Local Government Association 2024).
- 9.3 The West Bromwich Masterplan was launched at UKREiiF in May. It received a fantastic response from the sector with feedback showing it was one of the three big highlights from the West Midlands Pavillion, an indication that Sandwell is being recognised as an area for investment at regional and national levels. The West Bromwich Masterplan forms part of the Council's regeneration pipeline. The pipeline aims at delivering a £3 billion investment programme across the Borough's six towns between 2022 and 2027.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

- 9.4 All quarterly PIs reported in Quarter 1 were 'green'. It was anticipated that the quarterly figure for the number of 'businesses receiving Financial Assistance or Grants' from the UKSPF 2025/26 programme would be zero (and therefore no RAG rating applied) due to the delayed start of activity for funding this year. The grant application process will commence in the second quarter of the year, with funding being awarded during this period.

10. One Council One Team - Performance Spotlights

- 10.1 Approximately 200 people from businesses, community groups and other local organisations attended the launch of the Sandwell Story on Wednesday 25 June; a project to celebrate, champion and bring people together in making Sandwell a great place to live, learn, work and visit. The launch follows work over the past year to set up the partnership across the borough to promote what Sandwell has to offer, tackle the area's challenges together and raise aspirations and improve outcomes for people living in the area.
- 10.2 The new Neighbourhood Services model has been launched, with a dedicated team, marking an important milestone in how the Council serves communities. The model focuses on a more localised approach, building on existing town-based leadership roles and aiming to embed community leadership at the ward level. It emphasises multi-agency collaboration, a single point of referral, and a person-centred approach to problem-solving.
- 10.3 Sandwell has committed to recruiting 100 new apprentices. The first wave of council apprenticeship vacancies was launched at a Careers in Sandwell event in August at the Operations and Development Centre at Roway Lane, and the Council Chamber in the Council House.
- 10.4 The 100 apprenticeships commitment builds on the council's apprenticeship programmes' previous successes which have seen Sandwell council ranked 64th in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer list 2025 and finalists in the Large Employer of the Year (West Midlands) at the National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards 2024 (having won the regional round in 2023).
- 10.5 There was a £3.363m underspend for the General Fund in 2024/25, which is an underspend of 1.0% when compared with the Council's net budget of £333.008m. This is a significant achievement given the wider local government context with many authorities facing severe financial difficulties.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) also achieved an underspend this quarter, however there was an overspend for this period for the Dedicated Schools Grant, due to increasing numbers of children with education health care plans resulting in costs for the High Needs Block being greater than the budget available.

- 10.6 The Oracle Fusion implementation project team has been selected as a finalist for the CIPP Annual Excellence Awards 2025 in the category of Project of the Year. The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) hosts these prestigious awards to recognise outstanding achievements in payroll, pensions and reward.
- 10.7 The new constitutional model and content were adopted at the Annual Council meeting held in May 2025. Remaining sections of the Constitution are scheduled for adoption by Council in October. The new model Constitution now has a simple four-part structure making it much easier to use and more accessible.
- 10.8 The Redwood update for Oracle has been successfully implemented, which will enhance efficiency, improve navigation, and provide a more user-friendly experience. There have also been improved processes for recruitment and timesheets. Enterprise Performance Management, which will help the Council model and plan across finance and HR, will be explored moving forwards.
- 10.9 Corporate Parenting Week took place during 9 to 15 June with the theme of 'It takes a community to raise a child'. It includes a full programme of activities to highlight what it means to be a good corporate parent. The Corporate Parenting e-Learning module was also launched and first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training session took place that included care experience as a protected characteristic.
- 10.10 There are 5 apprenticeships ringfenced for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) in 2025/26, as part of the commitment to Corporate Parenting and providing more Apprenticeship opportunities. However, the aim is to see a

higher number of CEYP in apprenticeships across the borough, with a target set of 10 by the end of the financial year.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

10.11 There are 11 quarterly PIs rated as 'red' in Q4 under this strategic theme out of 43 quarterly PIs in total, 7 of which were 'red' last quarter. These include:

- Revs and Bens Contact Centre Average Wait Measure
- Adult Contact Centre Average Wait Measure
- Adult Contact Centre Abandonment Rate
- SARs compliance with timescales
- FOI compliance with timescales
- Average working days to respond to MP enquiries
- Average working days lost per employee due to sickness absence (FTE)

The key messages in relation to this strategic theme are summarised below.

10.12 As part of our continued work to improve customer contact channels, we are introducing a new telephony system for use across the council's contact centres. The system will support a better customer experience and greater self-service options, helping to reduce waiting times. Development is now underway, guided by a project plan with key milestones, although a 'go live' date has not yet been confirmed.

10.13 Our Adult Social Care Contact Centre Average wait measure is 1 minute 41 seconds and has increased by 6 seconds from our last quarter (against a target of 30 seconds) and the abandonment rate was 7.28%, which remains above the target of 6%. Performance has been impacted this quarter by staff shortages i.e. vacancies, sickness and leave. Agency staff have been recruited to support the service however it has taken time to get agency staff trained on all call options.

10.14 As part of the Adult Social Care Transformation programme, a deep dive has been completed using March 2025 information to analyse what informs the calls and emails received. We are now exploring the digital opportunities that

may assist in reducing the volumes. An AI option for Blue Badges queries will go live in October. The Transformation Board continues to meet monthly to review data and identify opportunities for demand mitigation.

- 10.15 Performance for the Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre was above target for the average wait measure (6 minutes and 4 seconds against a target of 3 minutes 30 seconds) and abandonment rate 11.5% against a target of 8%). This was because staff were assisting customers with queries about the major change in the local Council Tax reduction scheme and more Benefit customers being transferred to Universal Credit, resulting in more enquiries for overpayments and how this affects the Council Tax reduction scheme.
- 10.16 In total there were 12,597 calls to the Revenues and Benefits Call Centre this quarter compared to 11,108 last year (13.4% increase). Despite the increase in the number of calls regarding Council Tax, the collection rate has remained stable compared to the same period last year (see O27). We are continuing to explore Digital Options to reduce demand on the contact centre and are looking at a October go live for SMS reminders to encourage customers to make timely payments before bill date. This will reduce the number of accounts in default, decrease footfall at front office and reduce calls received in the customer contact centre. It will also reduce the requirement for paper mail and postage. This will generate a cost saving and increased speed of income.
- 10.17 The average working days to respond to MP enquiries is 11.41 working days in Q1 against a target of 10 working days. The directorates where performance was above target are Children and Education, Adult Social Care and Housing within the Place Directorate. There has been an 11% increase in volume of MP Enquiries compared to the same period last year (when performance was 10.21 days) and this has meant responses are taking longer. Within Housing Solutions, response times were particularly affected due to staffing shortages, leading to significant delays. This issue was resolved earlier this month, and as a result we are now seeing improvements. However, more work is needed to improve performance in this area.

- 10.18 The most recent report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) illustrated several areas for improvement for the Council. The Council is carefully considering the findings of the report. For areas of improvement identified in relation to policy, procedure or practice, arrangements and resources will be allocated to undertake the required actions. Reporting on progress will be made to relevant internal boards and governance structures and to member bodies for oversight on implementation and progress.
- 10.19 SARs compliance with timescales and FOI compliance with timescales are both below the target of 90% (58% and 71% respectively). The lowest performing areas were Adult Social Care, Children and Education, Revenues and Benefits and Housing for FOIs, and for SARs, Children and Education, Revenues and Benefits and Housing and Environment. The Council is exploring Digital options and a workshop will be held in October to progress this.

11. Contract Governance

- 11.1 Reports on contract governance have been provided for Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT), Serco, Places Leisure and Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) and assurance of governance arrangements has been provided through these reports. A summary for each one is detailed below.

Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT)

- 11.2 Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust on behalf of the Council. The Trust delivers the following range of services:
- Children's Social Care
 - Fostering
 - Targeted Early Help

- 11.3 The contract with Sandwell Children's Trust has a comprehensive programme of governance arrangements. The contract requires that the Director of Children and Education, together with council senior officers from finance and legal services, and the Chief Executive of the Trust meet on at least a monthly basis to consider performance and operational matters. In addition, each quarter, the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive of the council meet with the Chair of the SCT Board and the Chief Executive of SCT, at a Strategic Partnership Board.
- 11.4 The contract requires SCT to provide regular performance updates for consideration by the Operational Partnership Board, the Strategic Partnership Board and then by the Cabinet. Progress against the performance indicators, together with information about financial, workforce, and other performance areas is reported.
- 11.5 The contract sum negotiation process began in September 2024 and continued into the new financial year. Work continues to finalise a contract sum for 2025/26 as well as agree a settlement for the remainder of the contract period. Until a contract sum is agreed SCT will continue to receive financial payments based on the 2024/25 contract value of £80.8m with the Council providing cash advances to allow SCT to meet ongoing financial commitments.
- 11.6 In April 2025, SCT was subject to an Ofsted focused visit. There were several key highlights, which included the strengthened early interventions which have led to reduced court proceedings and more planned care arrangements, the effective use of the intervention hub which has supported a reduction in family breakdowns preventing children coming in to care and the use of regular core groups and conferences where joint risk assessments ensure that children were appropriately safeguarded.
- 11.7 However, opportunities for further improvement were identified. The varying quality of supervision and management oversight were highlighted, with some teams having limited guidance, which impacted on staff effectiveness and case outcomes. In some cases, the step-down process from child protection

to child in need intervention highlighted a lack of robustness with decisions not always supported by comprehensive assessments or partnership input.

- 11.8 Whilst there has been significant work to develop SCT's audit process at present it was highlighted that it does not consistently provide clear insight due to variability in quality and the limited scope for targeted improvements in service delivery.
- 11.9 With regards to Performance, at the last Operational Performance Board in August 2025, SCT met 10 of their KPI targets and a further 5 are within the contract tolerance.
- 11.10 Regarding the financial position, at the end of the financial year, the outturn figure was £89.6m, resulting in an in-year overspend of £8.788m. This is £2.965m higher than the projected outturn reported in October 2024. The main factors contributing to the budget overspend include increased costs for external residential placements, PA support and under-18 supported accommodation.
- 11.11 SCT's Transformation Programme has been implemented with a strong focus on reducing budget pressures. One of its key initiatives, the Step Aside Programme was designed to help lower placement costs and promote more sustainable care arrangements. As a result of this project, the team supported over 30 young people and achieved in-year savings of £2.0 million, exceeding the programme's original cost reduction target of £1.7 million.
- 11.12 With regards to Partnerships, Sandwell has received £3.55 million Social Care and Prevention Grant to enhance prevention support for children and families. As part of the June 2025 Spending Review, the government confirmed ongoing annual funding of £523 million for the Families First Partnership Programme through to 2028–29. This will rise by at least £300 million over 2026–27 and 2027–28.
- 11.13 As set out in paragraph 9.9, Corporate Parenting Week took place during 9 to 15 June. Partners across our community delivered variety of sessions which

highlighted the positive impact we can make when we work together to support and guide our children we care for and care experienced young people. Over 500 people joined the live launch session on Monday 9 June, marking the start of the week. One of the standout events was the engagement activities session that brought young people and professionals together in a positive and meaningful way.

Serco

- 11.14 The council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value in the region of £34m per annum. The contract covers services including waste and recycling collection, household recycling centre management, street cleansing and service fleet management and renewal.
- 11.15 The contract has a set of regular meetings in place with standard agendas relating to the contractual requirements from key outcome targets (KOTs) to operational issues. These meetings are supported by regular cross channel communications between the SMB and Serco teams. Leadership Team also receive regular contract reports that provide oversight, and issues are raised as appropriate.
- 11.16 The contract contains the requirement for the provision of regular data from the contractor to be provided, there is also an associated requirement for SMBC to provide information to Serco, relating to Council priorities annually and fleet maintenance through a set of KPIs. In addition, there is an integration with the Council's My Sandwell reporting tool.
- 11.17 Overall service performance in Q1 has been good, with fewer penalty points awarded than most quarters last year. Penalty points over a certain threshold result in a deduction from the contract payment. In Q1 there are no deductions to be made, although the June report is yet to be fully audited.
- 11.18 Weed management across public areas in the borough forms part of Serco's contractual responsibilities. Historically, this service was delivered via a third-party subcontractor. However, due to concerns over service quality, the

decision was made last year to bring the operation in-house. The transition has presented some initial challenges and delays during Q1 including:

- Delivery of the two dedicated weed-spraying vehicles was delayed until April, despite being scheduled for March.
- Operative training was completed, and it has taken time in them gaining momentum and developing their skillset through experience to complete the task.

11.19 The following actions have been taken by Serco to address the challenges:

- A dedicated task force, led by their Cleansing Supervisors, has been deployed to remove existing dead weeds throughout the borough.
- Additional operatives have been recruited and will undergo training to boost capacity.

11.20 Serco has completed the first round of weed spraying across the borough at the end of July. The second round of spraying has commenced in August. The Waste Client Team will continue to monitor progress to ensure that the works are carried out in accordance with the agreed programme.

Places Leisure

11.21 The Council has a 25-year contract (2012 – 2037) with Places Leisure to operate West Bromwich Leisure centre. The contract is a Design, Build, Operate and Maintain contract which ensured value for money by reducing design and build costs as well as ongoing maintenance liabilities.

11.22 Monthly operational reports are provided to update on performance, both operational and technical. Quarterly contract management meetings are held to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the contract and performance. These cover Operational Performance, Health and Wellbeing outputs, Customer Feedback and Community Outreach.

11.23 In terms of participation, the headline figures are below.

- Memberships have decreased by 8%, and overall visits have declined by 16% compared to FY25. In response, Places Leisure is implementing a 'back to basics' strategy, focusing on enhanced outreach efforts, follow-up calls to lapsed members, and elevated cleanliness standards to retain existing customers and attract new ones.
- The use of different software during FY25 may have led to an inflated membership count. With new software now being implemented, this year's figures are expected to offer a more accurate reflection of actual membership levels.
- Learn to Swim has seen an overall increase of nearly 5%, attributed to a revision of the lesson structure that now incorporates 'Aquatic Helpers' and in-water volunteers in place of parents.

Visits to WBLC				
	April	May	June	Q1 Total
Swim Visits	11,286	11,632	11,890	34,808
Gym Visits	10,975	12,347	12,287	35,609
Group Exercise Visits	2,809	3,158	3,038	9,005
Sports hall Visits	5,499	5,802	4,838	16,139
Total Visits	30,569	32,940	32,053	95,562

Current Year to Date Participation vs FY25 and FY24			
	<i>FY26</i>	<i>FY25</i>	<i>FY24</i>
April	30,569	36,477	34,239
May	32,940	38,667	36,923
June	32,053	37,504	37,815
Q1 Total	95,562	112,648	108,977

- 11.24 Based upon projected operational, and therefore financial performance a business plan was agreed for the duration of the contract. The business plan results in an annual management fee payment to the Council of circa £28k.
- 11.25 There is also a utility benchmarking arrangement included in the contract, whereby PL own the risk on consumption and the Council are liable for the risk on tariff. Pre-pandemic operations resulted in a net gain for the Council – Management Fee minus Utility Benchmarking Payment. This is calculated and paid at the end of each financial year. In 2023/24 the utility benchmark

resulted in a payment from the Council to PL of £131,785k. Modelling for 2024/25 indicates that the utility benchmarking will require a payment from the Council to PL of circa £64k.

Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT)

11.26 Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) manages the following leisure centres in Sandwell:

- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- Hadley Stadium
- Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre
- Portway Lifestyle Centre
- Sandwell Aquatics Centre
- Tipton Leisure Centre
- Tipton Sports Academy
- Wednesbury Leisure Centre

11.27 In terms of participation, the headline figures are below.

- 671,073 attendances April to June 2025. **6.5%** up on Q1 FY25 (628,857)
- From June 2024 to June 2025, total memberships increased by **16.6%**
- 16,196 enrolled on Learn to Swim – **3.9%** up from Q1 FY26 (5,962)
- Free swimming for under 18s shows an increase of **8.6%** from FY25, but casual junior swim visits have decreased by **19.6%**
- Free Swimming for over 60s has also decreased by almost **21%**.

11.28 SLT have noted the decline in participation in free swimming sessions among the over-60s. Casual junior swim visits have also decreased, which may be attributed to the increased uptake of the junior free swimming offer. SLT colleagues are currently undertaking a review of participation data to identify emerging trends and to determine whether the recent transition to the Perfect Gym system has impacted the recording of these visits

Visits by Site				
	Apr	May	Jun	Q1 Total
Haden Hill Leisure Centre	Closed with effect from 28 March 2024			
Hadley Stadium	22,110	27,077	33,077	82,264
Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre	1,335	1,329	105	2,769
Portway Lifestyle Centre	41,776	41,512	39,100	122,388
Sandwell Aquatics Centre	77,294	77,121	85,260	239,675
Tipton Leisure Centre	22,229	22,492	25,158	69,879
Tipton Sports Academy	14,603	15,360	14,552	44,515
Wednesbury Leisure Centre	35,204	36,760	37,619	109,583
Total Visits	214,551	221,651	234,871	671,073

Current Year to Date Participation vs FY25		
	<i>FY26</i>	<i>FY25</i>
Q1	671,073	628,857

- 11.29 Following the reconciliation of Q1, early indications are projecting a surplus of circa £100-200k for 25/26.
- 11.30 Council Officers are working with SLT's Leadership Team to further develop the Strategic Leisure Review. This work looks at the future options for 3 of the SLT run leisure facilities:
- Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre
 - Hadley Stadium
 - Tipton Sports Academy.
- The Strategic Leisure Review work also explores options for the settlement of leisure management after the expiry of the current agreement with SLT on 31st March 2027.
- 11.31 Following recent investments at Tipton Sports Academy, including the addition of three Padel courts, the facility has seen a significant uplift in both profit and user engagement.
- 11.32 An Officer Working Group has been established, with two meetings held during Q1. Council officers have provided feedback on their expectations from 1 April

2027 onwards, both in the context of a potential new contract with SLT or if services are tendered to the wider leisure market.

- 11.33 The next step in this work is the establishment of a Scrutiny Ward Member Group to ensure continued oversight and engagement in the development of future leisure management arrangements.

12. Strategic Risk Register

- 12.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its council plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively, and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.
- 12.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) on a regular basis for review and comment. The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making.
- 12.3 The SRR does not include all the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council's risk management framework.
- 12.4 The SRR has recently been updated and was presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 18 September. It included the following risks:

Risk	Current risk score
Community Cohesion (NEW)	Amber
Pandemic (NEW)	Amber
SEND Placements and Transport:	

- Increasing trajectory of demand - Both demand and cost	Amber Red
Climate Change	Amber
Housing Transformation	Amber
Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation (reduced from red)	Amber
Cyber Security	Amber
Adults - Strategic Workforce Development (risk now focussed on sickness levels)	Amber
Compliance with DPA/GDPR	Amber
Children's Social Care	Amber
Business Continuity Management	Amber
Equalities	Amber
Borough Archives	Amber
Elections Act	Amber
Budget Monitoring and Management (temporarily increased from green to reflect the early stage of the year)	Amber
Medium Term Financial Strategy (as above)	Amber
Workforce Recruitment	Green
Customer Experience	Green
Organisational Culture	Green
Continuous Improvement	Green
Regeneration Fund Programme	Green
Sandwell Local Plan	Green

13. Amended or deleted PIs

13.1 In Q1, the Corporate PI set has been amended as set out in the table below. A justification for the change is included.

PI	Council Plan Strategic Theme	Directorate	Action	Justification
Meters of new cycle network	Thriving in Sandwell	Place	Remove	We are unable to properly estimate this PI
Percentage of vacancies filled	One Council One Team	ACE	Remove and replace	It is proposed that this performance measure is removed and replaced by more meaningful measure to monitor recruitment activity.
Apprentices as a percentage of FTE employees (entry level)	One Council One Team	ACE	Remove and replace	To be replaced with 'Number of entry level apprentice new starts'

14. Alternative Options Considered

There are no alternative options to consider for this report.

15. Consultation

There was no consultation required for this report

16. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for this report.

17. Legal and Governance Implications

- 17.1 A corporate performance management framework was identified as a key gap in the council's governance arrangements by Grant Thornton in 2021. The establishment of the corporate performance management framework was a key action in the council's Improvement Plan agreed by Council in January 2022 and

updated in June 2022. The PMF enables officer and political leadership to improve oversight and corporate grip of the council's performance.

18. Risks

- 18.1 Should the council not implement a robust performance management framework, then it will not have the corporate oversight and intelligence to inform decision making and effectively manage risks, which is key to service delivery and the achieving strategic objectives identified in the Council Plan. The risk is noted under the Continuous Improvement Risk in the SRR.

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

- 19.1 Equality measures are included in the PMF, under the One Council One Team Strategic Theme.

20. Other Relevant Implications

20.1 Workforce and Human Resources (HR):

There are a number of measures in the PMF that track key HR measures, these are aligned to the delivery of the Council's People Strategy.

20.2 Health and Wellbeing:

The measures to track progress of the Council Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.

20.3 Social Value:

There are some social value measures are included in the PMF that provide oversight of the Councils Performance in this area.

20.4 **Climate Change:**

There are measures related to Climate Change in the PMF, including Air Quality (Number of sites that are non-compliant with the National NO2 air quality objective) and a number of measures under the outcome 'Sandwell will be a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2041'.

20.5 **Corporate Parenting:**

There is an outcome in the Council Plan under 'One Council One Team' for Corporate Parenting: 'An outstanding corporate parent, with all of the young people in our care reaching their full potential' and there are a number of Performance Indicators to measure this. There are also performance measures under 'Growing Up in Sandwell' that cover educational attainment of Children in care.

20.6 **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

There are three contextual measures in the PMF that relate to crime and a further 2 measures around how safe people feel. These provide oversight on the impact of the Council's crime reduction work.

21. **Background Documents**

21.1 Performance Management Framework – Q4 Monitoring - The report is available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s27921/Q4%20and%20Annual%20202425%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report.pdf>

The appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=7265>

21.2 Report to Council 21 April 2022 on the Performance Framework:

Performance Management Framework for the Council