

## Minutes of Cabinet

**Wednesday, 14 January 2026 at 3.30 pm at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury, B69 3DB**

**Present:** Councillor Carmichael (Chair)

Councillors: Bhullar Hartwell Hughes Khatun	Councillors: Moore Smith Taylor Uddin
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**In attendance:** Councillor Jeffcoat.

**Officers:** Shokat Lal (Chief Executive), Alex Thompson (Executive Director – Finance and Transformation), Alan Lunt (Executive Director – Place), Sally Giles (Executive Director – Children and Education), Frances Howie (Interim Director of Public Health), Mike Jones (Monitoring Officer, Service Director – Governance), Colin Marsh (Assistant Director: Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing), Matt More (Head of Communications), Maria Jardine (Policy Adviser), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic and Member Services Manager) and Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer).

### **1/26 Apologies for Absence**

An apology was received from Councillor K Allcock.

### **2/26 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **3/26 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 are approved as a correct record.

### **4/26 Urgent Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider as a matter of urgency.

## Corporate Performance Report Quarter 2

Consideration was given to the progress on the Corporate Performance Management Framework and the proposed changes to the Corporate Performance Indicators.

The Council's Performance Management Framework enabled the Council 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;
- the efficient use of resources.

Through enabling the Council to identify opportunities for continuous improvement, the Performance Management Framework was also a key component in the Council's journey to becoming an outstanding organisation.

Cabinet Members emphasised the positive outcomes that had been delivered across services such as the opening of the West Bromwich indoor market which would benefit the local economy and add a vibrant destination for the town and wider borough. In education, attainment had improved and there had been a record in the take up of apprenticeships across Sandwell. Building on partnership working, the Sandwell Children's Trust had attained a 'good' rating by Ofsted and demonstrated how services had improved and were delivering for children and families across Sandwell.

### Reason for Decision

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

Performance of key contracts was 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.

The information collected was 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.

### Alternative Options Considered

There were no alternative options to consider.

### Resolved:-

- (1) that progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework is received and approval is given to the 2025/26 Quarter 2 monitoring report;

- (2) that approval is given to the changes to the Corporate Performance Indicators outlined, including changes to two performance indicator targets: 'Average working days lost per employee due to sickness absence (FTE)' and 'A percentage reduction in carbon emissions within our corporate estate and across the wider borough'.

6/26

## **Communications Strategy**

Approval was sought to the Communications Strategy which set out a whole Council approach to communicating with residents, staff, partners and stakeholders to deliver the best possible outcomes for Sandwell.

Effective communication was central to achieving the authority's ambition to become an outstanding Council. Good communications connected services to the residents that used and relied on them in their daily lives. It was crucial in building trust in the Council so that it could deliver on aspirations for Sandwell; bringing together residents, the workforce, businesses and partners around a shared vision. A healthy local democracy was built upon local councillors who were kept informed to fulfil their role as community leaders, and through transparently communicated decision-making.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Strategy and emphasised how important it was to communicate with residents clearly and utilise modern technology to increase reach and visibility.

### **Reason for Decision**

Ensuring residents were kept informed was key to maintaining trust and satisfaction, and the proportion of residents feeling that the Council had kept them well informed had increased from 55% in 2024 to 65% in 2025.

The Communications Strategy set out the Council's approach to effective communications. It was a strategy for the whole Council and set out how the authority wanted to deliver its communications activity so that it was fully focused on its agreed priorities and presents consistently as a confident and coordinated organisation.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

The Council could choose to continue without a Communications Strategy. However, this was not recommended as the benefits of taking a strategic approach to communications would not be realised. It was intended to ensure that the resources dedicated to communications were focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, supporting the authority's best value duty.

**Resolved** that approval is given to the Communications Strategy.

7/26

## **Sandwell Aspirations**

Approval was sought to the delivery of a two-tier delivery model to tackle deprivation in Sandwell following an analytical and evidence led approach. In

December 2024, Sandwell received a sum of £11.784m from the national Recovery Grant, allocated to council areas with greater need and demand for public services based on the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). In approving the 2025/26 budget in February 2025, it was agreed that £11.5m of this funding would be directed toward approaches capable of producing visible improvements for residents while contributing to longer-term change. Over the past year, significant preparatory work had taken place and the proposed programme, entitled Sandwell Aspirations, was now ready to move into delivery, and approval was sought to proceed. The proposed approach reflected this evidence and was designed to balance member expectations for visible activity with a robust, long-term framework for systemic change.

The proposed two-tier approach comprised:

Tier 1: Local Engagement and Visibility (Dec 2025-Mar 2026). A short-term programme which enabled councillors to nominate specific neighbourhood areas requiring focused attention. Activities included mini-audits, local consultation, and commissioning of targeted environmental and community improvements.

Tier 2: 5-Year Strategic Programme (2026-2031). A borough-wide programme structured around IMD domains, developed through Sandwell Together Partnership workshops covering employment, economy, education, skills, housing, environment, crime and health. A full Theory of Change and outcomes-based programme would underpin delivery.

Cabinet Members emphasised that collaboration across towns and with local communities was key to successfully delivering outcomes for Sandwell residents.

### **Reason for Decision**

The sum of £11.5m Recovery Fund allocation would be used to:

- demonstrate visible progress for residents;
- support long-term improvement in deprivation indicators; and
- ensure transparent, well-governed decisions and shaped with councillors.

Sandwell remained one of the most deprived areas nationally, with 56% of neighbourhoods amongst the 20% of most deprived in 2025, and 16% in the most deprived 10%. The programme designed therefore emphasised both visible local improvements and coordinated work across the seven IMD domains, informed by case studies and national deprivation evidence.

Analysis in 2025 showed that Sandwell had slightly improved its overall relative deprivation, but it was still the 19<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority area in England. Case studies from other local authorities and internal discussions confirmed that coordinated action across all seven IMD domains, rather than isolated initiatives, was required to “move the dial”.

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: Single-domain focus. This option was rejected due to evidence that IMD domains were interdependent, and improvements required cross-cutting action.

Option 2 - Distribution of funds through discrete departmental bids. This option was rejected due to risk of fragmentation, duplication, and minimal long-term impact.

Option 3 - Local grants programme only. This option was rejected because while popular, it would not meaningfully shift deprivation indicators.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that the analysis and evidence-led approach undertaken over the last year to design the two tier approach to tackling deprivation in Sandwell is endorsed;
- (2) that approval is given to the two-tier delivery model for Sandwell Aspirations, comprising:
  - a) Tier 1 - Local Engagement and Visibility (Dec 2025–Mar 2026): member-nominated local audits leading to rapid environmental and community improvements;
  - b) Tier 2 - 5-Year Strategic Programme (2026–2031): a coordinated, borough-wide programme addressing all IMD domains alongside partners;
- (3) that approval is given to the proposed governance arrangements including the establishment of the Sandwell Aspirations Board reporting to the Corporate Transformation Board, Strategic Leadership Team, and the Sandwell Together Partnership;
- (4) that the discovery timeline is endorsed, including Tier 1 audits commencing December 2025 and the launch of Tier 2 workstreams from April 2026;
- (5) that delegated authority is given to the Assistant Chief Executive and the Executive Director for Finance and Transformation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to take decisions authorising the expenditure for individual projects with a value exceeding £1million, subject to compliance with the Council's constitution, financial regulations, contract procedure rules, and any relevant statutory requirements.
- (6) that continued engagement is endorsed with partners, including Public Health, West Midlands Combined Authority, NHS, Police, Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise organisations, schools, further and higher education providers, and housing providers, to shape and deliver the programme;
- (7) that a progress update is received, including emerging findings from Tier 1 and proposed initial investments, in March 2026.

## **Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 and Mid-Year review 2025/26**

Consideration was given to the Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 and Mid-Year review 2025/26.

### **Reason for Decision**

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Code of Practice on Treasury Management required Council to receive reports on Treasury Management including the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement before the start of each financial year, as well as a Mid-Year Review and an Annual Outturn Report detailing activities during the previous year.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

There were no alternative options to consider.

**Resolved** that Full Council be recommended to approve the Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 and Mid-Year review 2025/26 in line with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Prudential Code, including approval of -

- a) the 2024/25 Outturn position;
- b) the mid-year review for 2025/26:
  - the revised Authorised Limit of £1,017.75m and Operational Boundary of £685.00m (indicator 3);
  - all other revisions to the projected indicators.

## **Smethwick Heritage Centre, Victoria Park Lodge, High Street, Smethwick**

Approval was sought to the community asset transfer of Smethwick Heritage Centre, Victoria Park Lodge, High Street, Smethwick. The proposed asset transfer accorded with the Council's principle of proactively advertising community properties for potential community asset transfers as a priority.

Transfers would be undertaken in accordance with the Council's policy on Community Asset Transfer's and would only happen if officers were satisfied that a clear, sustainable plan was in place to maintain the asset and that further calls on the Council for support were unlikely.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposal, it was understood that the Smethwick Heritage Centre had become a hub for local residents and provided not only a facility to understand Smethwick's history but also enable the community to get together and provide a place for people to meet and socialise.

### **Reason for Decision**

In 2006, the Centre became a company limited by guarantee and attained accreditation as a museum. Throughout its existence, it had maintained a

strong connection with the people of Smethwick, both locally and across the world.

The applicant, the Trustees of the Smethwick Heritage Centre, actively worked to encourage and promote community cohesion and support the isolated, lonely and vulnerable members in society through the activities of the community hub. They were currently leasing the property from the Council having commenced on 9 October 2003 for a term of 25 years. The lease was due to expire on 8 October 2028. The Centre preserved and promoted Smethwick's rich industrial and civic heritage for present and future generations, engaging with schools to support their history curriculum and encourage youngsters to be proud of their town.

As part of the application process, the applicant had also provided a full set of accounts for the period 2024 which demonstrated a sustainable approach to finances and the future management of the asset. However, to ensure that they could access relevant grants to support the development of the asset and delivery of their business plan, a longer lease term demonstrating security of tenure was required.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Option 1 – Not to progress the community asset transfer lease with the incumbent and on expiry of the lease take the property back into Council control. This would not be considered viable, as no operational use had been identified and would result in the loss of this vital community organisation and facility. It would also not support delivery of the Asset Management budgets savings targets 2023-2026, due to ongoing liability of repairs and maintenance, security, and other holding costs, with additional revenue budgets needing to be identified for the Council to manage the site. This option was dismissed.

Option 2 – Not to progress the community asset transfer lease with the incumbent and on expiry of the lease look to let the property on commercial terms at market rent. This would not be considered viable, as this would result in the loss of this vital voluntary organisation and the extensive range of community outputs. This option was dismissed.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given to the community asset transfer of Smethwick Heritage Centre, Victoria Park Lodge, Smethwick as detailed in the site plan in Appendix 1, to the Trustees of the Smethwick Heritage Centre Trust for a term of 25 years based on a full repairing lease with a rental of £1 per annum;
- (2) that delegated authority is given to the Monitoring Officer, Service Director - Governance to dispose of the property, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Service Director – Property and Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community;
- (3) that delegated authority is given to the to the Monitoring Officer, Service Director - Governance to execute any documents necessary to give effect to the proposal in Resolution (1) and (2) above.

Approval was sought to progress a community asset transfer of Whiteheath Community Centre, Oldbury Road, Oldbury B65 0QJ subject to a marketing exercise. The proposed asset transfer accorded with the Council's principle of proactively advertising community properties for potential community asset transfers as a priority. Transfers would be undertaken in accordance with the Council's policy on community asset transfers and would only happen if officers were satisfied that a clear, sustainable plan was in place to maintain the asset and that further calls on the Council for support were unlikely.

**Reason for Decision**

The Corporate Asset Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2022. It acknowledged that the Council was committed to maintaining an effective and efficient property portfolio which supported the delivery of services to residents, provided value for money, reduced environmental impact, and maximises opportunities to generate value.

The recommendations supported the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and assisted in ensuring that the Council had a balanced budget moving forward alongside an efficiently operating estate to deliver Council services.

Should the council proceed with the community asset transfers, this would be on a full repairing basis whereby all maintenance and associated financial liability would remain with tenant for the duration of the lease term.

**Alternative Options Considered**

Option 1 – not to progress the community asset transfer. However, this would not be considered viable, as no operational use has been identified and would result in this facility remaining vacant. It would also not support delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy due to ongoing liability of repairs and maintenance, security, and other holding costs required to manage the site. This option was therefore dismissed.

Option 2 – let the property on commercial terms for market rent without seeking expression of interest for a community asset transfer first. However, this would not be in keeping with a previous Cabinet decision to market community properties for community uses in the first instance. This option was therefore dismissed.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given to the marketing of Whiteheath Community Centre, Oldbury as detailed in the site plan at Appendix 1, to accept expressions of interest in relation to the potential for Community Asset Transfer;
- (2) that subject to suitable expressions of interest being received and receipt of a suitable business plan:
  - a) delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer and Service Director - Governance to take all actions necessary to



dispose of the property, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Executive Director - Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community;

- (3) that subject to no suitable expression of interest or subsequent business plan being received following a defined advertising period, approval is given for the open market disposal (leasehold) of Whiteheath Community Centre, Oldbury via the most appropriate mechanism;
- (4) that subject to Resolution (3) above being approved:
- a) approval be given to negotiate and agree a disposal of the leasehold to the preferred bidder from those bids received;
  - b) delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer and Service Director - Governance to take all actions necessary to dispose of the property, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Executive Director - Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community.

**11/26**

### **Pride in Place Programme**

Approval was sought to the proposed governance model and arrangements for the delivery of the Pride in Place Programme.

In late September 2025, the Prime Minister had launched the Pride In Place Strategy and Programme aimed at empowering local communities, particularly in more deprived areas, to take control of local regeneration, high streets, public spaces and community assets. It was part of a broader ambition of the government to shift more power from central money spent and what interventions were prioritised.

As a result, there were two new funding strands Sandwell would benefit from:-

- Pride in Place Programme: longer term investment (up to £20 million per place over 10 years) in selected deprived neighbourhoods. Friar Park in Wednesbury had been selected;
- Pride in Place Impact Fund: a shorter-term capital fund which provided £1.5 million per area over two years to selected places for visible, immediate works such as improving high streets, public spaces etc. Sandwell was listed as one of the 95 places identified for the Pride in Place Impact Fund. This fund would be subject to a future report to Cabinet.

### **Reason for Decision**

Friar Park had been selected in the Pride in Place Programme by the Government. The selection of locations had been based on areas that were 'doubly disadvantaged' by both the highest deprivation levels and weakest

social infrastructure. Selection of places had been based on need: metrics of deprivation and community need/local pride.

These newly announced areas were referred to as Pride in Place, Phase 2 with Plan for Neighbourhoods areas (Smethwick) now referred to as Pride in Place, Phase 1. The Pride in Place programmes were not currently incorporated in the Local Regeneration Fund requirements which aimed to simplify monitoring and reporting arrangements on existing government grant funded regeneration programmes

The government set out that the Pride in Place Programme relied on the power of local people and partnerships, bringing together residents, the local MP, councils, businesses and community organisations to produce a clear vision for their area. A Neighbourhood Board would be responsible for producing a 10 year vision for a place, supported by interventions which were set out in the Regeneration Plan, to achieve the strategic objectives of the programme.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Consideration had been given to whether the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board could act as the Neighbourhood Board for the Pride in Place Programme. This option was discounted as the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board's membership did not reflect people with a deep-rooted connection with the Friar Park area.

The proposed delegations would enable final details for the establishment of the Neighbourhood Board to be agreed in a timely way to support the deadline for the submission of the Regeneration Plan.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that delegated authority is given to the Service Director for Economy and Regeneration in consultation with Service Director Governance (Monitoring Officer) and the Leader to establish a Friar Park Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board through undertaking necessary selection processes to make appointments to the Board and Independent Chair position;
- (2) that delegated authority is given to the Service Director Governance (Monitoring Officer) in consultation with Service Director for Economy and Regeneration, the Leader, MP and the Chair of the Board (once appointed) to finalise the Friar Park Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board Terms of Reference and Board Membership and to make any changes to respond to Government guidance or requirements, and in accordance with guidance to make arrangements for the reasonable expenses of board members to be met;
- (3) that delegated authority is given to the newly appointed board as referred to in Resolution (2) above, once constituted to develop a Regeneration Plan for Friar Park, to include public consultation, and to submit to Government subject to Executive Director - Finance and Transformation authorisation;

- (4) that approval is given for the Council to act as Accountable Body for the Pride in Place Programme and adopt programme governance arrangements, receive the geographical boundary for the Pride in Place Programme as determined and delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place in consultation with the Leader, MP and Chair of the Board to make any necessary representation to Government to amend the boundary in consultation with the new Board;
- (5) that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director - Place to undertake a public consultation in relation to the Pride in Place programme;
- (6) that delegated authority is given to the Service Director Governance (Monitoring Officer) in consultation with the Executive Director - Place, the Executive Director - Finance and Transformation and the Leader, to review and formally accept the Pride in Place offer/grant conditions from Government including any capacity funding;
- (7) that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director - Place to authorise spend of any capacity funding for the purposes of establishing the Neighbourhood Board, developing the Regeneration Plan, programme management, technical expertise for project development and other activities in accordance with government guidance.

**12/26**

### **Consolidated Grant to Brushstrokes Community Project**

Approval was sought to the Consolidated Grant to Brushstrokes Community Project.

Brushstrokes was a valued partner, the sole provider of joined up holistic support to asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants and people at risk of destitution and homelessness and lead provider of immigration advice since 2000. Brushstrokes offered a wide range of services, which focused on supporting vulnerable groups through key transition points in their lives. Services included advice and information services; resources; English for speakers of other languages; social and community activities; inclusion health and wellbeing support; digital and employment support; and specific support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and families. This crucial support aided the improvement of health outcomes and a reduction in the health inequalities that vulnerable population experience.

#### **Reason for Decision**

The Council had consolidated the various individual grants awarded over the last six years to Brushstrokes by different Council Directorates to make efficiencies through the reduction of administration for Brushstrokes and the Council. The Council sought to do the same again for the next grant term starting from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2029. However, the landscape had changed over the current grant term, and as such, additional funding streams

being awarded to Brushstrokes from other Directorates were now being brought into this grant to ensure greater efficiencies could be realised.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Cease Grant-Funding. An alternative option would be to not provide any funding to Brushstrokes Community Project to support their holistic service offer to vulnerable migrant communities. This was deemed not to be a viable option due to the vulnerability of this population and the risk of worsening health outcomes and exacerbating health inequalities.

**Resolved** that delegated authority is given to the Director of Public Health to grant fund Brushstrokes Community Project for 3 years from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 to provide a consolidated arrangement of services spanning Public Health, Housing Management, Voluntary Sector Support, Family Hubs and Sandwell Children's Trust using a Direct Award process with a total value of the grant funded support across the 3 years set at £610,995 (excluding VAT).

13/26

### **Extension of contract for a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Board**

Approval was sought to extend the contract for a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Board. The Council had written to the Secretary of State to request consent to extend the appointment of Jane Bleach to the remaining period of the current contract with Sandwell Childrens Trust, which runs until up to 31 March 2028. The Department for Education (DfE) officials had confirmed by email that the Secretary of State for Education had not raised any objections to the extension.

### **Reason for Decision**

The appointment of the non-Executive Director Jane Bleach took effect from 1 March 2023 and was for an initial term of 3 years. The board wished to secure the continuity of a non-executive director who provided experience and expertise.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

The alternative option would be to reject the proposal. However, in line with the Governance Side Agreement with the DfE and the Trust's Articles of Association there would be a vacancy on the Board that would still need to be filled. An alternative candidate would need to be identified via a competitive process and the process of consulting with the Secretary of State would need to be undertaken again. This would leave a potential gap in the governance arrangements of the Trust for a period.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that on behalf of the Council as the sole owner of Sandwell Children's Trust:
  - a) the completed sequence of events that are contractually required to extend the contract of a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Board is noted;

- b) the response response from the Secretary of State for Education is noted;
- c) approve the extension of contract of Jane Bleach as a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust Board until 31 March 2028.

**14/26**

### **Proposed relocation of Causeway Green Primary School to New Build**

Approval was sought to allocate resources from the Council's School Condition and High Needs Provision Capital Allocation grant funding balances to support funding of the capital project and instruct the contractor to complete delivery of the new build of the Causeway Green Primary School at Brandhall Village.

At its meeting on 13 November 2024 (see Minute No.118/24), Cabinet resolved to implement its decision of 20 July 2022 (Minute No.148/22) which included amongst other things:

(1) that approval is given to the delivery of the Brandhall Village scheme which incorporated the following:

- a circa 27-hectare Eco-Park;
- a replacement school for Causeway Green Primary School which achieved a carbon zero / carbon neutral accreditation (e.g. PassivHaus) accreditation;
- the provision of 190 new homes delivered to a minimum of Energy Performance Certificate – Grade A, of which a minimum of 25% would be for affordable provision.

The Climate Change Strategy 2020-2041 had the overall objective of the Council being a Net Zero Council by 2031, and a Net Zero Borough by 2041. Specifically, the associated Action Plan identified the need for all schools to be Net Zero by 2030.

At the inception of the scheme, market research determined that a design such as PassivHaus, as opposed to a more traditional build, would deliver against the Council's sustainability targets. Current designs for the replacement school were being developed on PassivHaus principles, as the concept was seen as a sustainable build solution without excessive use and dependency on high-specification elements to achieve carbon neutrality. Given the nature of the design, they required very little heating/cooling, and result in significantly reduced energy requirements, and thus reduce the costs of operation of the building.

The provision of a net zero/carbon neutral ready design like a PassivHaus standard would ensure the new school contributed towards the Climate Change Strategy and would be complementary to the Eco-Park objectives in the wider scheme. However, the principle of delivering a net zero /carbon neutral (e.g. PassivHaus) accredited school was recommended as a key objective.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposal and emphasised how the school would provide a new state of the art facility for pupils as well as having a design

that would set the standard for carbon neutral developments and demonstrated how Sandwell was working towards net zero targets.

### **Reason for Decision**

The proposal was to relocate Causeway Green Primary School, a 2 form entry school, to the north west corner of the Brandhall Village, fronting Grafton Road and Ferndale Road, Oldbury.

Due to the poor state of disrepair of the existing school buildings located at Pennycrickett Lane, Oldbury B68 8LX, Causeway Green Primary School had remained as the Council's top priority school for replacement. Following exclusion of the school from the government's previous Priority Schools Building Programme, School Condition grant allocation had been held back each year to fund replacement of the school. The buildings identified for replacement were now beyond their economic life expectancy, in poor condition and significant recurring flooding issues had been experienced with the site.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

Option One – Rectify defects on existing building. This option was dismissed based upon the continued risk of flooding and the age and construction of the building. Refurbishment of the building would not resolve the structural integrity failings that already existed, and that had been experienced with other school buildings in Sandwell which had been replaced.

Option Two A – Reconstruct new school on existing school site – traditional construction. This option was dismissed as it did not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option.

Option Two B – Reconstruct new school on existing school site – Passivhaus construction. This option was dismissed as it did not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option.

Option Three A - Construct new school on existing school playing fields – traditional construction. This option was dismissed as it did not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option

Option Three B - Construct new school on existing school playing fields – Passivhaus construction. This option was dismissed as it did not offer the Council value for money when compared with the preferred option.

Option – Four A - Construct new school on Brandhall site – Traditional construction. This option was dismissed as it did not offer the Council value for money or meet net zero targets when compared with the preferred option.

Option Five - Close existing school and accommodate pupils in alternative schools. This option was dismissed on the basis of the need to ensure sufficient school places were provided in the future.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that approval is given for the allocation of £15.76m from School Condition grant funding and £1.64m from the High Needs

Provision Capital Allocation to support funding of the replacement school for Causeway Green Primary School, at Brandhall Village, Oldbury as part of the Schools Capital Programme 2025-28;

- (2) that subject to Resolution (1) above, delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place and the Executive Director – Finance and Transformation to allocate an additional £0.5m of Community Infrastructure Levy Funding from the 80% Main CIL fund towards the capital cost of the replacement of Causeway Green Primary School;
- (3) that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director - Children and Education to award a contract to deliver the construction works in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules – July 2022, following a compliant procurement exercise, in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Families;
- (4) that subject to Resolution (1), (2) and (3) above, delegated authority is given to the Service Director Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into any legal agreements on terms agreed by the Executive Director – Children and Education to complete the replacement school;
- (5) that in connection with Resolution (1), (2) and (3) above, ensure compliance with any recommendations from the full capital appraisal undertaken for the project.

Meeting ended at 4.04 pm