

Report to Council

12 December 2023

Subject:	Written Questions
Director:	Brendan Arnold – Interim Director of Finance Mike Jones – Assistant Director Legal and Assurance

The following written questions have been received: -

7(a) From Councillor Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and YMCA

In Sandwell, we have many aspiring young graduates, professionals and entrepreneurs who would like to start-up and run their own businesses but are finding it difficult as they do not know where to start or get help and support from. Can I ask the cabinet member for regeneration what offers of support and empowerment this council can offer so that we have successful start-ups?

7(b) From Councillor Luke Davies to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

The week of 13th to 20th November was anti-bullying week. When I was at school bullying mostly took place on the playground, and home for many kids was a refuge. Now bullying often takes place online and through phones and follows victims home. Not only that, but for too many kids they also get bullied in the home by people who should be keeping them safe, something we saw increase during the pandemic. Both of those forms of bullying take place in silence, often hidden from the rest of the world. Can I therefore ask the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education what the Council has done to advertise anti-bullying week, and to take action against this too-often hidden but horrific problem?



7(c) From Councillor Abid Hussain to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Can I ask the Cabinet Member of Finance why there is always talk about this council being in intervention due to financial problems and mismanagement, when according to the MTFS this does not appear to be the case. What is the truth?

7(d) From Councillor John Giles to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

Adult social care is a large proportion of this councils budget and it is clear that councils are crying out for long term fixes from the government on how they will continue to provide care for the vulnerable in our community. Can I ask the cabinet member for Health how many of our residents who receive care, fully pay for their care compared to the other 6 authorities in the combined authority area?

7(e) From Councillor Maria Crompton to the Leader of the Council

Sandwell's Tackling Poverty plan is obviously needed because of the cost of living crisis. Tividale has recently had a food bank open which is already being used by the residents – some of stats within the report are shocking with the usage of food banks rising across the borough. It is good news that £1.5million has been approved – can I ask how this is being used?

7(f) From Councillor Pam Randhawa to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism

It was great news to hear that Sandwell Council was successful in its bid to get a grant from Historic England to help towards the repair bill of Oak House Museum. Can I congratulate the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism for his hard work and ask him what will be the priority in the priority repairs?



7(g) From Councillor Les Trumpeter to the Leader of the Council

With reports of our residents waiting almost an hour on the phone to this Council's housing department and the Council 'risking the lives' of tenants with damp and mould for years. Is the Leader proud of this Council's record as a social landlord?

7(h) From Councillor Natalie Weston to the Leader of the Council

Our authority was ordered to review its Reasonable Adjustment policy because of its failure to act under the Equality Act of 2010. This led to us having to pay compensation to a resident but more importantly impacted their mental health. This case, unfortunately, is unlikely to be the only one where Sandwell Council's failings impact the well-being of those the Council should be them to serve. Is the leader proud of this Council's record of supporting people's mental health?

7(i) From Councillor David Wilkes to the Leader of the Council

We all know about accidents across Sandwell at locations like Forge Lane in West Bromwich or the Wolverhampton Road in Oldbury. Yet before the Council acts on a road, someone has to be seriously injured or even killed. Therefore, I would like to know whether the leader of the Council is proud of the reactive approach taken by Highways in Sandwell which puts more and more road users in our Borough at risk?

7(j) From Councillor Amrita Dunn to the Leader of the Council

Reports of off-road bikes, drug dealing and fly-tipping remain a constant issue across the Borough, yet Sandwell Council won't use their powers to tackle these issues. They push blame onto others and residents still suffers. Is the leader proud of this Council's record on making our streets safer?



7(k) From Councillor Archer Williams to the Leader of the Council

£20 million of contracts for SEND transport were given to the son of the former deputy leader, and blanket policies being applied to nuanced cases with parents feeling silenced as parents who chose to use social media to raise concerns 'risked their child's transport being suspended'. Mr Mayor this Council's record of supporting SEND children and their families is disgraceful, is the leader proud of it?

7(l) From Councillor William Gill to the Leader of the Council

Across Sandwell, we have seen development companies like Mar City leave our residents with unfinished housing estates which have led to poor drainage, streetlights that don't work and potholes across their roads. The homes of our resident's dreams have turned into their worst nightmares. This Council's answer is it's not our problem, but it is this Council's problem. Sandwell failed to ensure there was a pot of emergency funds in place to account for a situation like this one, therefore I ask is the Leader proud of this Council's record on maintaining the accountability of developments that the authority grants permission for?

7(m) From Councillor Liam Abrahams to the Leader of the Council

This authority has seen in a matter of years, a leader resign his position just 6 months after taking office, two staff members jailed over drug smuggling and an employee who claimed a fake business grant from our own council. Is the Leader proud of the culture that the Labour party has installed on this authority?

7(n) From Councillor Justyna Kordala to the Leader of the Council

Sandwell Council have lots of brownfield sites across the Borough that they could choose to regenerate, yet they focus on a path to destroy greenspaces across the Borough. Lion Farm as well as many other green spaces and green belt land seem to be at risk of Labour's development policy. My question to the Leader is, are you proud of this Council's record on protecting greenspaces and wildlife?



7(o) From Councillor Scott Chapman to the Leader of the Council

This Council has imposed tax hikes on working families across our borough for years. 5% in the last budget. 5% in the budget before that. On top of a garden waste charge of £35 per year and hiking charges for things our residents daily use, like parking in our borough. Is the leader proud of this Council's record on supporting people?

7(p) From Councillor David Fisher to the Leader of the Council

With rubbish covering our streets, litterbins being damaged and not replaced, and household waste not being collected for weeks, earlier this summer – Is the Leader proud of this Council's record on keeping our town's clean?

