

Scrutiny Board :	Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2025-2026
Date of Meeting	30 July 2025
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Appendices (if any)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board 2. Scrutiny Review – Scoping Document

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Each municipal year the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board will produce a work programme which will set out what items the Board will consider. The Board will also consider what Scrutiny Review to undertake during the same period.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board is recommended to:-
 - 1) Approve the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2025/2026 (attached at appendix 1);
 - 2) Establish a working group to continue work to monitor the production of the Sandwell Local Plan and any associated policies;
 - 3) To adopt the scoping document (attached at appendix 2) as the terms of reference for the scrutiny review and nominate members of the Board to undertake the review.

3. Background and Context

Work Programme

- 3.1 A strong and effective work programme underpins the work and approach of Scrutiny. However, it is good practice for work programmes to remain fluid, to allow for scrutiny of new and emerging issues in a timely manner.
- 3.2 Scrutiny is a member led and driven function, driven by members' commitment to improve services and thereby people's lives.
- 3.3 A work programming event for the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board took place on 18 June 2025.
- 3.4 Scrutiny Procedure Rules allow any member to request that an item is added to a scrutiny board's work programme. Each request should be carefully assessed, using the agreed process, to ensure that resources can be prioritised and that the scrutiny activity will add value.

Scrutiny Review

- 3.5 Following a request from Planning officers, the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board agreed to assist and review the development of the Sandwell Local Plan in the 2024-2025 municipal year. The Local Plan has progressed and further work is required by the Board.
- 3.6 It is a statutory requirement of every Local Planning Authority to have an up-to-date Local Plan. Following the demise of the Black Country Plan in 2022, Sandwell was required to produce its own plan – the Sandwell Local Plan. As part of its reforms to the planning system, the previous Government had expressed a desire to see full Local Plan coverage across England by December 2023 or as soon as practicable after that date, with the last date for submitting a revised local plan under the current system being 30th June 2025. Consequently, officers have been working to a timetable that will enable the Sandwell Local Plan to be submitted prior to that date.
- 3.7 The Local Plan is the key planning document for the Borough. It sets out how the development needs for the Borough will be addressed through site allocations, identifying the infrastructure needed to support this, addressing climate change and protection for green spaces. The Local Plan contains the policies against which all planning applications are assessed as well as being the framework that supports bids for Government funding for regeneration.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 None required

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Scrutiny function is directly supported by the Council's Statutory Scrutiny Officer and Democratic Services Officers within the Council's Assistant Chief Executive directorate. Additional technical expertise and evidence on specific matters will be provided by officers within the various directorates of the authority.
- 5.2 The strategic resource implications of topics selected for scrutiny will be identified and reported to the Board at future meetings.

6. Legal and Governance Implications

- 6.1 Local Government Act 2000 states that Councils operating executive arrangements must also make provision for the appointment of overview and scrutiny committees.
- 6.2 Further powers relating to overview and scrutiny are set out in the Police and Justice Act 2006, the Localism Act 2011, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- 6.3 Any legal and governance implications of topics selected for scrutiny will be identified and reported to the Board at future meetings.
- 11.4 The Board under its terms of reference had the responsibility to scrutinise corporate parenting, including services and support to care leavers.

7. Risks

- 7.1 There are no direct Risks Implications associated with the report.

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

- 8.1 No implications arising from this report.

9. Other Relevant Implications

- 9.1 No implications arising from this report.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 **None**

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

- 11.1 The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by

influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services