

Minutes of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

1 May 2025 at 6.00pm at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Davies

Councillors: Hackett Hemingway Jeffcoat	Councillors: Rahman A Singh
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Apologies: Councillors Johston, Kaur and Weston

Also present: Councillor Keith Allcock – Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways
Mervyn Bartlett - , Barry Ridgway -, Susan - , Anthony Lloyd – Democratic Services Officer

Meeting ended at 7.42pm.

17/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

18/25 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 are confirmed as a correct record.

19/25 Cabinet Forward Plan and Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme

The Board received the Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme.

20/25 Additional Items of Business

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

The Council had a number of statutory duties related to Sandwell's highway network.

The principal statutory duty imposed on the Council, as the Local Highway Authority, was to maintain the highway at public expense as was set out in Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 also imposed a Network Management Duty on the Council to manage the authority's road network to facilitate as far as reasonably practicable the expeditious movement of traffic.

The Sandwell Council Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) set out the Council's approach to the asset management of the highway network and the delivery of a risk-based approach in accordance with best practice guidance. The first iteration of the HIAMP was approved by Cabinet in March 2018.

The policies, strategies and plans that define how Sandwell delivers these duties were set down within the HIAMP. The HIAMP had been developed in a way that was aligned and consistent with national best practice and the relevant supporting policies and strategies.

A key aspect of the HIAMP was the development of lifecycle plans. These lifecycle plans confirmed the funding requirement to maintain highway assets against a range of different scenarios that ensured better supported decision making; one which is data led, process driven and customer focused, providing the opportunity to balance affordability and the best use of resources against the funding available, especially when considering the risk or likelihood of the public being injured by a defect.

The HIAMP demonstrated long term maintenance of highway infrastructure to facilitate the Council's strategic ambitions, covering

- 880km of carriageways
- 1,440km footways and cycleways
- 30,850 street/lights, signals, illuminated signs, traffic signals
- 172 bridges as well as many other structures
- 3500km drainage and culverts including nearly 42,000 gullies
- A wide range of other street furniture.

It was highlighted that the gross replacement cost for all Sandwell highway assets combined was £3.9bn.

Following questions and answers from members, it was confirmed that:-

- The cost of a Street-Light Column replacement was between £2000-£2500;
- Discussions were in place in relation to the possibility of part-night lighting to assist in achieving sustainability and carbon objectives;
- In the event of a claim against the Council due to injury, the claimant would be required to demonstrate that the Council had been negligent in order to achieve a successful claim;

- Areas of concern that held a significant risk for claims were prioritised for remedial works;
- High-resolution cameras were utilised to take pictures of the road network within the Borough which were then stitched together to form a complete map;
- Additional parking bays that provided electrical charging were in construction across the borough.
- Arrangements were in place with neighbouring local authorities to sensibly share maintenance of roads that may spanned across two boroughs; and
- The Council had been lobbying to central government to obtain additional funding as only £13.5m had been available in 2024/2025 which was in deep contrast to the £3.9bn required.

Members were satisfied with the contents of the management plan however, it was highlighted that significant work was still required to address the condition of footways in the Borough.

21/25

Parking Review

The Council had several statutory duties related to undertaking parking enforcement in accordance with a number of pieces of legislation; mainly the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The principal statutory duty imposed on Sandwell was to keep traffic flowing. In this regard, parking enforcement activities were widely dispersed across the borough but with a focus on key locations, such as outside schools and in the six town centres – Oldbury, West Bromwich, Tipton, Wednesbury, Rowley Regis and Smethwick

Given the importance of the income from Parking Services to support the overall highway network and the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community, it was vital that Sandwell's parking services and facilities were well managed, equipment was well maintained and that fees and charges were appropriately set and efficiently enforced.

It was highlighted that increases in parking charges had been approved by Cabinet in 2023 and 2024. Although an increase in parking charges had occurred, the increase in revenue was not significant when considering the amount that parking charges had been increased by. As such, officers were looking at ways to obtain data to evaluate the situation more effectively.

It was noted that the Council's system was unable to capture data around transaction times, dates, occupancy levels or durations of stay provided by Pay and Display Machines. In order to capture this data, a survey of all of the Council's pay and display machines was required to determine the level of upgrades that each machine needed.

The Council's back-office systems provider for parking enforcement arrangements, Chipside, had software at their disposal to obtain and analyse occupancy levels, cashless payments, cash payments, heat

maps as well as the ability to monitor trends. Additionally, the introduction of the software would enable users to utilise the MiPermit App without registering as well as providing the opportunity to take advantage of several of the app features currently unavailable such as the ability to auto renew permits.

Officers explained that a business case would need to be produced and approved in order to explore the options of upgrading the Council's pay and display machines. In total, a capital investment of £4,750 would be required to facilitate the implementation and deployment to establish data links and upgrades totalling between £44k and £88k would be required to enable the Council's machines to utilise the software. Additionally, officers were considering the replacement of all pay and display machines to provide various enhancements at a capital investment cost of around £400k.