

Cabinet

Report Title	Quarter 2 - 2025/26 Corporate Performance Report
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 14 January 2026
Report Author	Kayleigh Walker Senior Lead - Service Improvement
Lead Officer	James McLaughlin - Assistant Chief Executive
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Leader, Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Why is this a key decision?	NA
Wards Affected	NA
Identify exempt information and exemption category	NA
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	NA
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 – Corporate Performance Indicators Q2 2025/26 Appendix 2 - Directorate Business Plan Actions Q2 2025/26 by exception Appendix 3 - Amended or deleted Performance Indicators

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents the Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Report 2025/26, setting out the Council's progress in delivering the Council Plan 2024-2027.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

2.1 Note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the 2025/26 Quarter 2 monitoring reports.

2.2 Approve the changes to the Corporate Performance Indicators outlined in **Appendix 3**, 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'.

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 168 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 198 Corporate Performance indicators. Of these, 75 are annual measures and 123 are quarterly measures.

3.6 This report sets out the Council's performance against the Corporate Performance Indicators for Q2 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 2**).

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 Q2, the number of Quarterly PIs with a RAG rating was 78. Below is a summary of the RAG ratings is as follows:

- o 37 PIs (47%) are RAG rated 'GREEN'
- o 11 (14%) PIs are RAG rated 'AMBER'
- o 30 (39%) PIs are RAG rated 'RED'

4.2 The highest number of 'red' PIs are under the 'Living in Sandwell' strategic theme (12 out of 26), and under the 'One Council One Team' strategic theme (10 out of 33).

4.3 Of all the red quarterly PIs, 22 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	16	3	2	6	4	1
Living	26	12	2	8	4	0
Healthy	10	3	3	3	0	1
Thriving	15	2	0	6	6	1
One Council One Team	33	10	4	14	3	2
Total	100	30	11	37	17	5

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	2	5	17	0
Living in Sandwell	1	0	4	8	0
Healthy in Sandwell	6	2	2	20	0
Thriving in Sandwell	0	1	3	2	0
One Council One Team	3	2	12	27	2
Total	12	7	26	74	2

5.3 In total;

- 9.92% of actions are now complete in comparison to 6.61% in Quarter 1.
- 61.16% of actions are on track (70.25% in Quarter 1).
- 21.49% of actions are mainly on track (16.53% in Quarter 1) with some minor issues.
- 1.65% of actions have not yet started and are due to commence in the forthcoming quarters (4.96% in Quarter 1)

There are seven 'red' actions (5.79%) which are delayed – not on track with major issues - in comparison to two 'red' actions (1.65%) in Quarter 1. These are as follows:

- Two in Public Health (Directorate Reference: PH 6, NHS health checks service to be delivered by GP practices, also Red in Quarter 1; and PH 13, Making Every Contact Count e learning)
- Two in Children and Education (Directorate Reference: CE 21, Education, Health and Care Recovery Plan; and CE 23, Preparation for Adulthood outcomes)
- Two in Finance and Transformation (Directorate Reference: FT 18, optimising Oracle Fusion Platform; and FT 7, implement Searchlight IT benefits system)
- One in Place (Directorate Reference: Place 6, secure development partner for delivery of West Bromwich Town Centre masterplan)

5.4 Full commentaries from respective service leads can be found in Appendix 2.

5.5 Please note the Finance and Transformation (Directorate Reference FT 14) action to publish a draft Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 by the statutory deadline set by the government has been marked as complete, however the

deadline was not achieved as this was published in August rather than by 30 June deadline. There is no impact on the external audit timetable, however, the delay does impact on the findings and RAG ratings within Grant Thornton's Value For Money assessment for 2024/25.

6. Growing Up in Sandwell - Key messages

- 6.1 There are three 'red' quarterly PIs in Quarter 2 for this Strategic theme out of sixteen quarterly PIs in total. All 3 were also 'red' last quarter. Provisional data also became available for 8 PIs in Education. Of these, four were 'green', one was 'amber' and three were 'red'. The key messages are summarised below
- 6.2 At the end of Quarter 2, the target for 'Ensuring there are good quality childcare places for children 0-4 of working parents to take up their 30 hours funded place by September 2025 - Number of places' has been achieved. In total, 283 non-grant funded places that have been created and are open and 190 Department for Education DfE grant funded places have also been created. We are awaiting a further 131 places which have been delayed due to Council commissioning of sites, Ofsted registrations not yet being received and also contractors being allocated to building work, so the total figure will increase.
- 6.3 At the end of Quarter 2 (September) we had 311 new wraparound care places with 57 extended places (where a setting has extended the existing provision), to ensure that all working parents of children aged 4-11 have access to wraparound childcare during term if they require it. There was an initial target set of 1,444. However, since the target was set, funding from the DfE has been scaled back because of the lower than predicted demand for wraparound care places in the borough. The figure for Quarter 1 has also been revised, as this was based on incorrect information from some schools who provided the total number of places instead of new places. There are still 100 new wraparound places to be operational, so the 311 figure will increase over the next few months. Given the target set is not what we were working towards, no RAG rating has been provided for this measure.
- 6.4 Provisional data in Education shows improved performance for KS2 for 2024/25 (Academic Year) across a number of measures, including 'Attainment at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2' (61% against a target of 60%, in line with national benchmarks), 'Percentage LA disadvantaged pupils Nationally at KS2, achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths' (50% against a target of 49%, above the national benchmark of 47%) and 'Attainment rates for those with SEN Support at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2' (24% against a target of 22%, an improvement towards the national benchmark of 28%).
- 6.5 'Attainment rates for those with EHCP at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2' is worse than target (5% against a target of 8%). However, 'Attainment rates for those with EHCP attainment 8 (KS4)' is above target (15.4 against a target of 14).
- 6.6 Performance against other measures for KS4 are below target based on provisional data. This includes 'KS4 attainment of English and maths at Grade

5 or above' (34% against a target of 36%, a reduction from last year at 35% and below the national benchmark of 45%), 'Percentage LA disadvantaged pupils Nationally at KS4 attainment of English and maths at Grade 5' (23% against a target of 24%, against a national benchmark of 26%) and 'Attainment rates for those with SEN Support attainment 8 (KS4)' (28.2 against a target of 31, against a national benchmark of 33.7).

- 6.7 To address performance (subject to funding being approved), the service is putting a number of measures in place. This included peer to peer support for schools with a specific strand for maths and additional 121 peer support for Headteachers which will continue in 2025/26. There will also be continuation of the Teaching and Learning Network and support for vocational subjects at KS4, which is also recognised as an area that needs to be improved.
- 6.8 In addition, outcomes for children with an Education Health and Care Plan remain a priority. The below target attainment levels for those with EHCPs at KS2 and those with SEN support at KS4 reflects long standing variation in practice across schools and the uneven availability of inclusion support in previous years. Over the past year the service has strengthened inclusion work so that schools receive consistent support and challenge. The new inclusion team is now working directly with schools to understand their needs and to build a clearer picture of strengths and gaps in provision. Schools are completing the new inclusion audit, which is based on the national Whole School SEND framework. This provides reliable information about what support each school needs and where more targeted help will have the greatest impact. Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) sessions have continued and the service are starting with SENCO triage groups and peer to peer support sessions.
- 6.9 Alongside this, there is preparation to launch the traded model from April 2026. This will give schools access to higher level and specialist teaching support and will allow practice to shift from a child-by-child focus to a wider whole school SEND approach. By building school capacity and strengthening universal provision, the service expects to see improved consistency in identification and support, which in turn should lead to better outcomes for children with an EHC plan and for those receiving SEN Support.
- 6.10 The Number of Children/Young People receiving intervention as part of Early Help is below the target range (900-1200) at 798 for the second quarter running. The Additional Family Help Operational Group continues to review data and work collaboratively to understand the reasons behind the downward trend, taking into account the regional average. Initial evidence from the school safeguarding audit introduced in Spring 2025, mandatory as of autumn 2025, highlights that whilst 67 schools have yet to responded to the question about the number of Early Help Assessments, they have completed those that have show an increase in single agency interventions. Where outstanding responses have not been received, some of these will have completed an EHA but have not yet reported this. For some schools changes to their DSL's have led to delays in providing the information. Further data collection is needed to understand the wider partnership trends.

6.11 The group remains committed to promoting the benefits of a multi-agency approach, particularly its positive impact on babies, children, and young people. Notably, 75% of families supported through multi-agency EHAs have not required further support within a 12-month period. Partner representatives have been reminded of their responsibility to champion multi-agency support within their service areas. To reinforce this message and encourage greater use of EHAs, three promotional events are scheduled for November. These events aim to raise awareness and are expected to drive an increase in the number of EHAs being completed. Aligning this work with the Families First reform will help partners understand how multi-agency support is vital to our Family Help offer—ensuring families receive the right support sooner, preventing needs from escalating, and ultimately achieving better outcomes for children.

6.12 The performance indicator ‘% EHCP 20-week completion rate, including exceptions’ is below the target of 50.3% at 15.65%, and has also reduced since last quarter when the rate was 41.57%. This has impacted the ‘Average number of weeks taken for statutory assessment’ which is 57.82 weeks in quarter 2, up from 41.11 weeks in quarter 1 (the target is 20 weeks).

6.13 There are various reasons for this dip in performance. The service assessment and planning pathways for children aged 0 to 5 were previously very poor and placed Sandwell as a regional and national outlier. Only 0.08% of children under five were receiving an Education Health and Care Plan, which meant that many children started school with unmet needs. Almost all children who had worked with early years teams aged 0 to 5 went on to receive an EHC plan later in primary school, which resulted in years of missed support. In response, the service has redesigned the 0 to 5 pathway to make it easier and more appropriate for very young children with significant needs to receive an EHC plan earlier. This has led to a double spike in assessment activity and applications, both from the early years age group and the usual volume from primary age children.

6.14 In addition, the historic backlog was cleared in August. Staff who had been working on backlog clearance were then redirected into the main statutory team. This was positive and necessary, but it involved reallocating cases and changing working systems, which slowed some assessments during the transition period. Timeliness has also been affected by the rate at which statutory advice is returned. Health and social care partners are returning advice in around 90 per cent of cases, while the current return rate for education advice is approximately 18 per cent. We have now changed the advice pathway so that education advice is tracked in the same way, and we have streamlined expectations and processes. Additional locum educational psychology capacity is also in place so that any delays in psychological advice can be addressed with urgency.

6.15 The improvement in data quality and reporting is allowing the Service to identify pressure points quickly, make immediate changes to pathways, and tackle the causes of delay at an early stage. This is helping protect against future backlogs while responding to the increased demand, particularly for our youngest children.

7. Living in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

7.1 In October 2024, the Regulator for Social Housing rated the organisation's housing services as C3, a rating that requires major improvements in repairs, safety, and quality. Since then, substantial progress has been made, including full asbestos compliance, 43% of homes surveyed for stock condition (aiming for 100% by December 2026), better electrical safety systems, a new repairs contractor, full fire risk assessments completed by March 2025, new smoke detector testing from August 2025, and comprehensive checks on flat entrance doors (70% fully inspected). These are significant improvements with further improvement forecast over the next 12 months.

7.2 A network of nine Football Foundation PlayZones have been launched in 9 local parks across the borough, made possible through 1.7 million funding from the Premier League, the FA and Government's Football Foundation as well as funding from the Council, marking a major milestone in Sandwell's commitment to creating vibrant, active communities and delivering on Child Friendly Sandwell principles. These new facilities are designed to bring people together through recreational football and a variety of other sports for all ages, with a strong focus on inclusion and community ownership.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

7.3 There are twelve 'red' quarterly PIs under this strategic theme in Quarter 2 out of twenty six quarterly PIs in total. Of these, ten were 'red' last quarter. The two PIs that are newly 'red' this quarter are:

- 'The number of new trees planted': The target was not achieved for this quarter as a decision was made to pause more planting due to the extremely dry summer and a high risk of the trees dying. Planting will be increased in the forthcoming quarters to achieve year-end target.
- 'Total households in Temporary Accommodation (TA)': The service has fallen slightly behind target due to increased demand and a reduced supply of available housing, driven by fewer private rented sector offers and delays in returning council properties to use. Despite this, changes in the use and profile of temporary accommodation have reduced spending by nearly £300,000, freeing up funds for securing more long-term housing and investing in prevention. The service will continue to prioritise managing temporary accommodation for the rest of 2025/26.

7.4 There were also five annual PIs that became available this quarter from the Resident's Survey results. The Resident's Survey was carried out July 2025. The survey interviewed a sample of 1,129 Sandwell residents face to face. The focus of the survey is to understand how they feel about their local area and the services Sandwell Council provides. Of the five annual PIs, three are 'green', one is 'red' and one has no RAG rating. The PI that was 'red' is 'Resident satisfaction with Green spaces' which was 73% against a target of 78%. However, we are still in line with the LGA benchmark of 73%.

7.5 Other key messages in relation to performance for this strategic theme include plans for a more proactive approach to enforcement across services, particularly in response to littering (below the target of 2.5% at 4.5% in Quarter 2) and fly tipping (the removal of fly tips is well above the target of 90% at 98.36%). With regards to fly tipping the Council is training SERCO staff on how to sift through fly tips to find evidence in order to make a prosecution. The Council is also working with another Local Authority understand best practice and how this can be applied to Sandwell to improve enforcement activity.

7.6 The number of missed bins (not remedied within 24 hours) per 100,000 collections' is 489, above the target of 80 (a challenging target). The Council is addressing this through rigorous contract management with SERCO, a robust client function and improved processes and procedures. This is leading to improvement, a recent example being new 'Zone and task and Finish Rounds' that ensure Serco teams are available in any given area if issues arise, rather than finishing work once a round is completed).

7.7 Some measures remain 'red' but are showing improved performance. The '% of PRS disrepair cases processed to formal notice, civil action/prosecution or closed with positive outcome within processing times' is 100% for Stage 1, but below the target of 75% for Stage 2 (50%). However, this measure is showing quarter on quarter improvement (last quarter figures were 66.67% for stage 1 and 0% for stage 2). There are 5 trainee officers in the service who are progressing very quickly in their training and development with all officers now able to inspect and case hold without continuous oversight.

7.8 The 'percentage of responsive repairs completed in timescale' is now better than target (95%) for emergency repairs at 95.62%. Non-emergency remain below target (77.36%) but a contractor is now in place to clear the backlog. In addition, 20 multi-trade positions have been advertised and 12 have been filled so far. Performance is therefore forecast to improve further in the next 6-12 months.

8. Healthy in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

8.1 The 'You ok, mate?' men's mental health awareness campaign was launched in September with daily posts on social media and a 4-week roadside physical poster campaign. As of 10th October 2025, the social media content (posts and videos) has received 523, 933 views. The Healthy Sandwell 'You ok, mate?' webpage has received 1000 web hits.

8.2 The HDRC "One Year On" event took place on 20th October. The event served as a showcase to highlight the progress made in building a research and an evidence-based culture within the council.

8.3 Rashpal Bishop, Executive Director Executive Director Adult Social Care & Health has been appointed as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Vice President. This role puts Rashpal at the heart of policymaking and discussions with Government about the future of adult social care. Rashpal will be sharing insights from Sandwell and representing Sandwell on a national platform

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

8.4 There are three quarterly PIs rated as 'red' in Quarter 2 under this strategic theme out of ten quarterly PIs in total. Of these, three were 'red' last quarter. The key messages are summarised below.

8.5 The 'Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, and those receiving direct payments' is below the target of 18% at 15% in quarter 2. Currently, 412 people in Sandwell receive support through Direct Payments. This number has remained stable since mid-2025. Since April 2025, significant work has been undertaken to strengthen and improve DP arrangements, including:

- Guidance: New Direct Payment Practice Guidance produced and awaiting approval.
- Training: Around 180 social workers have been trained across six sessions.
- Direct Payments Practice Panel: This panel meets fortnightly (and as needed) to resolve suspended Direct Payments, improve request quality, and streamline collaboration between social work and finance. So far, about 220 cases have been reviewed.
- Process improvement: New Direct Payment forms and processes for the Liquid Logic Adult System (LAS) are being designed with input from finance and systems teams.

8.6 After a period of decline, Direct Payment numbers have stabilised as new working practices have been embedded. The workforce is now trained, processes are more robust, and oversight has improved. Next steps include improving public information to help increase uptake of Direct Payments.

8.7 The '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 56% in quarter 2 against a target of 60% and has improved by 8% compared to this time last year. This demonstrates the positive impact of our ongoing collaboration with transformation partner ARCC to enhance both our internal and externally commissioned reablement services. These short-term, intensive support services are designed to help individuals regain independence and confidence following illness, injury, or periods of reduced mobility.

8.8 As part of this work, we have reviewed the entire intermediate care pathway — including the Short-Term Assessment and Reablement (STAR) service, Home-Based Intermediate Care, and the hospital discharge hub — to ensure people receive effective support as they transition from hospital back into the community. Insights from this review have informed the development of our future operating model and service design, which went live in November 2025. A key feature of the new model is the introduction of more informal advice and support at the first point of contact. We are also embedding a strengths-based approach in our conversations with customers — focusing on what individuals can do for themselves, with the help of their families or communities, and identifying where additional support is genuinely needed.

This approach ensures we deliver tailored services and interventions that help people stay healthy and independent in their own homes.

- 8.9 The new model has been developed in close alignment with the NHS service redesign, ensuring that both the council and the NHS share knowledge, best practice, and a common vision. Together, we aim to provide the highest-quality services to residents, helping them remain healthy, independent, and connected within their own homes and communities.
- 8.10 Average wait times (3 minutes against a target of 30 seconds) and call abandonment rates (9.16% against a target of 6%) have increased since the last quarter in the Adult Contact Centre. One of the main contributors to longer wait times has been the inclusion of trusted triage calls which are now part of the service model. These calls typically take between 20 and 30 minutes, and mean staff spend more time with the customer to ensure issues are fully resolved at the point of contact. The introduction of Trusted Triage calls are part of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme, and targets for these measures will be reviewed when the programme has been implemented
- 8.11 In addition, from November, customers will be able to apply for a Blue Badge online, which is expected to significantly reduce call volumes. Digital solutions for enquiries related to safeguarding, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), and Carers are being explored and the service is working with the Science and Technology Facilities Council to identify and prototype potential options to improve efficiency and accessibility.
- 8.12 The start of the new NHS Health Checks service has been delayed; service delivery is due to begin early in quarter 3. The new model delivered through GPs has required contractual arrangements with 44 GP surgeries, rather than a sole provider, which has taken more time to set up. Around 40 of the GPs now have contracts and are starting health checks. The risk to the population is minimal as this is a five-year programme and the late start does not impact on the ability to deliver a health check to residents aged 40-74 once every 5 years.
- 8.13 Performance is below target for the 'Number of adults completing a tier 2 weight management programme' (28% completions from referrals against a target of 75%). The current Sandwell Tier 2 Adult Weight Management Programme will end on 31 January 2026 and a redesigned service will be in place from the end of January. All current residents on the programme will be able to complete and there will be no interruption to new referrals. A redesigned hybrid model with inhouse and external delivery incorporating new NICE guidance, will be tightly managed by a Public Health consultant and is scheduled for a February start.
- 8.14 The number of 'Non-English speaking residents who complete an English Language community programme/course' as part of Sandwell Language Network has exceeded the target of 325 at 522 (2024/25 Academic Year). The successful programme has been grant-funded for another 3 years so a new grant term started on the 1st of September 2025 and will run to 31st Aug 2028. The new annual target set is 400.

8.15 The percentage of pregnant women who were 'Smoking at time of delivery' decreased to 7.1% for 2024/25 from 8.9% in 2023/24. While this remains higher than the England average of 6.1%, the performance gap has been reduced from 1.5% to 1.0%. Monies from the Local Stop Smoking Services and Support Grant (LSSSG) have been allocated to support Sandwell's Healthy Pregnancy Team to deliver bespoke cessation support to pregnant smokers.

9. Thriving Economy in Sandwell - Performance Spotlights

9.1 West Bromwich Indoor Market opened in August and is located on the High Street. The new market features a blend of traditional stalls and a modern food court, replacing the former Kings Square venue. It is one of the centrepieces of Sandwell Council's West Bromwich Masterplan, creating a modern and vibrant destination in the town.

9.2 Work is under way to build 55 new affordable homes in Tipton as part of a regeneration project set to bring wide-ranging benefits to the town centre. A further 15 new homes are planned as part of a refurbishment and extension of the former Conservative Club in Union Street. The overall regeneration project, supported by £20million of government funding alongside council investment, includes improvements along Owen Street and to public spaces in the town.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

9.3 There are two quarterly PIs rated as 'red' in Quarter 2 under this strategic theme, out of fifteen quarterly PIs in total. Of these 'red' PIs, none were 'red' in Quarter 1. There were also three annual PIs that became available this quarter, one 'red', one 'amber' and one 'green'. The PI that is 'red' is 'Reductions in killed and seriously injured by 50% by 2030'. The key messages are summarised below.

9.4 There has been an increase of 12% (150 people) in those killed and seriously injured in road traffic collisions against a target of a reduction of 5%. The Council has a dedicated team focused on reducing road casualties through a combination of road safety engineering schemes, education initiatives, and close partnership working with enforcement agencies, neighbouring authorities, and regional partners across the West Midlands. The recent rise in casualties reflects a trend seen both regionally and nationally, and significant work is underway to understand the factors driving this increase. Targeted interventions over the past 12 months have already contributed to an indicative reduction in serious casualties during the first eight months of this year compared with the same period last year, and it is hoped this positive trend will continue.

9.5 West Midlands Police have also noted that changes allowing people to self-register road casualties online may have artificially inflated reported numbers in recent years. A regional investigation is ongoing to determine the true causes of the increase, and further clarity will be available once this work is complete.

9.6 Latest figures for the percentage of ‘carbon emissions within our corporate estate and across the wider borough’ has shown a decrease since the previous year (8.8% for reduction in corporate emissions (2023/24) and a 6.8% reduction in the wider borough (2023)). Whilst this is a significant year on year reduction, for corporate emissions it is below the required 2,691 tonnes CO₂e emissions required to meet the overall reduction against the 2016 benchmark of 37,683 tonnes CO₂e by 2030. Overall, we are behind the line to meet the 2030 net zero target by 10.2%. For the wider borough, a reduction of 64.7 kilo tonnes CO₂e emissions are required to meet the 4% reduction against the 2016 benchmark of 1,617 kilo tonnes CO₂e by 2041. Overall we are behind the line to meet the 2041 net zero target by 5.6%. Borough emissions are heavily influenced by central government strategy, and we continue to work with partner agencies in areas such as business and transport, to continue reducing emissions. The Service is proposing to reduce the % target for Corporate Emissions, although there will be no change to the net zero target (please see paragraph 11.1).

Please note: CO₂e stands for carbon dioxide equivalent, a unit of measurement used to compare the climate impact of different greenhouse gases.

10. One Council One Team - Performance Spotlights

10.1 Senior managers across the council attended the Leading with Purpose conference, featuring an inspiring keynote from Dame Stella Manzie. The day was an opportunity for staff to come together to discuss the context the Council is operating in, the challenges this presents, and then share bold ideas, quick wins and practical actions to strengthen leadership, to put the Council in the best position to tackle these challenges.

10.2 The Council has been chosen to form part of the Local Government Association (LGA) national campaign highlighting the positive impact apprentices are having across local government. This builds on the huge success of our ‘Make It Apprenticeships’ campaign, which drew 1,300 applications.

10.3 The new ICT ‘Drop In Hub’ provides a modern, walk-in support facility at Sandwell Council House, offering face-to-face ICT assistance for staff across the council. It enhances customer satisfaction and digital inclusion by enabling quick resolutions, onboarding support, and guidance on digital services. The Hub has received positive feedback and is backed by a dedicated team, with staffing, furniture, and promotional materials aligned to deliver a welcoming, consistent, and accessible experience.

10.4 Sandwell’s internet bandwidth has been increased to 5Gbps, removing bottlenecks and enabling faster, more resilient connectivity. These enhancements support critical services like Oracle Fusion, Liquid Logic, and Microsoft 365, while future-proofing our infrastructure for cloud adoption and live-streaming capabilities. The upgrades also improve corporate resilience, reducing risk from outages and ensuring continuity across council operations.

10.5 Over the past year, the Council has prosecuted 25 people for Blue Badge fraud, recognising that the misuse of Blue Badges makes it more difficult for people with disabilities and mobility issues to find a parking space. This has seen the Council and our parking partner APCOA UK shortlisted for a British Parking Award. This nomination recognises the collaborative effort between APCOA and teams across the council, Counter Fraud Unit, Parking Enforcement Team, Adult Social Care and Legal Services.

10.6 The Council through its Registration Service performed well for the Tell Us Once in 2024/25, which notifies government and local authority departments when someone passes away. Following the opening of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in 2024, an additional 6000 registration events now take place in Sandwell. Our Tell Us Once performance take up was 87.35% of all deaths registered, against a figure of 80.85% nationally and 80.28% regionally. Performance is 90.05% as of September for 2025/26.

Performance Monitoring - Key messages

10.7 There are fifteen quarterly PIs rated as 'red' in Quarter 2 under this strategic theme out of forty two quarterly PIs in total, nine of which were 'red' last quarter. Data also became available for two annual PIs, one of which was green and one had not RAG rating. The key messages are summarised below.

10.8 Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre telephone performance is above target (7 Minutes 42 seconds against a target of 7 minutes 30 seconds for the average wait time 10.5% against a target of 9% for the abandonment rate). Call demand has increased at 10,189 calls this quarter compared to 9,271 calls in Quarter 2 last year. Call handling times are also longer with an average of 9 minutes, 11 seconds this quarter. This is because many calls relate to the changes in the Council Tax reduction scheme. Some customers have never paid Council Tax before, so additional time is needed to set up new payment arrangements which adds to the length of the call. There are also vacancies and staff off on long term sickness and whilst agents are in training, it is taking time for them to be sufficiently trained to deliver a full service. Despite these challenges, there has been no impact on the Council Tax Collection Rate.

10.9 There has been an increase in electronic contact in Revenues and Benefits (email/Mysandwell/Live chat) and face to face contact which is diverting from call handling. However, all of the customers who contacted us by these alternative methods were dealt with either on the day or within the recognised service level agreement timeframes. The service is commencing a project in Quarter 3 to understand demand in the contact centre, where increased digital channel migration can be achieved and where resources could be allocated differently in the future to help manage and mitigate demand. An update will be provided as part of the Quarter 3 report.

10.10 The Corporate Contact Centre Abandonment rate is 9.64%, above target of 8%. Comparing the number of calls from Quarter 2 from this year to the previous year, calls have increased by 13.36%. The main two areas for the increase are Waste (in September when calls increased by 81.16% due to the introduction of the Alternative Weekly Collections) and Repairs (where calls increased by 15.70% due to customers calling about gas and heating issues). Staff resource was also allocated to support the repairs back office for two weeks as they had resource issues. Whilst a high volume of calls with regards to waste continued into Quarter 3, this has started to reduce so performance is expected to improve.

10.11 The response times remain below the 90% target for Subject Access Requests (SARs) (61%) and Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) (67%). The Governance Team is applying additional diagnostics to SARs and FOI figures to understand areas of poor performance so that interventions can target these specifically and exploring what resource can be allocated to resolve SARs and FOIs across the organisation. There is also work taking place to mobilise digital solutions, with a pilot anticipated to take place within 90 days, the outcome of which can be included in the Quarter 4 report.

10.12 The 'Average working days for Stage 1 complaints (excl. ASC) to be responded to' was 10.8 days in Quarter 2, above the target of 10 days and an increase from last quarter at 8.91 days. In relation to Children and Education, where there is an outturn of 18.88 days for this measure, SEND continues to receive a high volume of complaints, which are often require an increased level of investigation, involving more than one officer. Timeliness of responding has been further impacted by delays in the approval process for responses. Two Assistant Directors have stepped in to support with the approval process which has eased the pressure on staff and supported a significant catch up over the last 6 weeks, which should improve performance for Quarter 3. Further improvements will be made over the next month to ensure that Inclusive Learning Services are able to better manage the volume.

10.13 Whilst still above the 10-day target, the 'Average working days to respond to MP enquiries' has reduced from Quarter 1 at 11.41 days to 10.51 days in Quarter 2. This is largely due to the improvement in the Housing Solutions team, where additional staff support has helped with responding to and closing enquiries on time. This is a positive step forward and shows good progress in managing workload efficiently.

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

11.2 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.

11.3 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.

11.4 Following negotiations between SCT and SMBC over Quarter 2, a contract sum agreement has been reached, subject to formal governance procedures. The provisionally agreed figure for 2025/26 financial year is £93.9 million, with agreed sums for the following two years. There is further provision within the sums to address the current deficit and resolve any outstanding cashflow challenges. This was presented to full Council on 4 November 2025.

11.5 With regards to Performance, at the last Operational Partnership Board in November 2025, SCT met 10 of their KPI targets (green) and a further 5 are within the contract tolerance (amber).

11.6 Between July and September 2025, the number of Children We Care For has reduced from 816 to 808. During this period, 53 children entered care, while 49 ceased to be looked after. This continues the balanced of entries and exits, with 5 children being adopted, and young people ceasing care due to turning 18 and transitioning to adulthood, including returning home to live with family.

11.7 In relation to Finance, as of the end of September 2025, the Trust reported a projected overspend of £0.74m. The full year forecast remains on track to break even at £101m, in line with the agreed contract sum.

11.8 The Trust has achieved £1.1m of its £2.7m savings target and continues to identify further efficiencies. Work to strengthened financial controls have been implemented and the Trust expects to remain in a positive cash position through to yearend.

11.9 In addition to the £3.55 million Social Care and Prevention Grant, the Department for Education announced a further £18 million in September 2025 to support early help and statutory social work services through the Families First Partnership Programme. Sandwell received an additional one-off grant of £127,742, ringfenced for direct investment in transformation activity to help local areas to implement reforms in Family Help, multi-agency child protection and family group decision making.

11.10 The Trust is working in close partnership with Sandwell MBC to deliver the Families First programme of reforms, utilising the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, with a focus on strengthening early intervention and improving outcomes for children and families. Funding is supporting transformation activity, including leadership, programme management and infrastructure development. Additional work is underway to expand preventative services such as thriving families' initiatives, school supervision, kinship care and safeguarding.

11.11 Sandwell's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 was presented to Council Cabinet on 10 September 2025. It sets out a clear vision for improving outcomes for children we care for (CWCF) and care experienced young people (CEYP). Informed by the statutory Corporate Parenting Principles, the strategy outlines how the Corporate Parenting Board and its partners will deliver on key priorities including emotional wellbeing, education, housing, employment and transition to adulthood.

11.12 Our commitment to recognising care experience as a protected characteristic continues to be embedded across the organisation. In September 2025, Human Resources introduced a new question on job application forms to identify candidates with care experience and September also saw, the joint delivery of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training by SMBC and SCT leads, with over 140 attendees engaging with the training that had a focus on care experience. In addition, Council wide Equality Impact Assessment templates now include care experience, making sure that new policies and services consider how decision might affect this group.

Serco

11.13 The council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value in the region of £38m per annum. The contract covers services including waste and recycling collection, household recycling centre management, street cleansing and service fleet management and renewal.

11.14 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.

- 11.15 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.
- 11.16 Overall service performance in Q4 has been good. Penalty points over a certain threshold result in a deduction from the contract payment. In Quarter 2 (July and August) this was £12,909. September figures are yet to be submitted.
- 11.17 On 15th September alternate weekly collections of refuse and dual stream recycling commenced in Sandwell for 120,000 properties. At the same time approximately 40% of properties were subject to a day change to improve the efficiency of collections.
- 11.18 A project team consisting of officers from both Sandwell and Serco oversaw the change in service. The project had a significant number of key outputs including the delivery of blue bags for the recycling of paper and card, the commissioning of new trucks and collection rounds together with an extensive communications campaign to educate residents on how to use the new service.
- 11.19 From an operational point of view both the refuse and recycling services are managing to complete collections daily with the odd exception which is usually the result of a truck breaking down. In contrast the food waste service has experienced some problems in completing rounds, but this is due to a higher-than-expected demand from residents for the service. Serco are currently rolling out additional collection infrastructure to meet this demand.
- 11.20 Residents have responded well to the changes and there is high participation and compliance for all services and significant volumes of good quality cardboard being presented for recycling.

Places Leisure

- 11.21 The Council has a 25-year contract 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, – 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:

- Club Live all-inclusive memberships have decreased by 8.9%, compared to FY25. In response, Places Leisure is continuing to implement 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
- Overall visits have declined by 13%, however some of this is a result of an issue with the data reporting system during July. Gym/Sports Hall and Group Exercise data from the 24th to the 31st did not pull through to the reports, resulting in a low total footfall figure.
- Learn to Swim has seen another overall increase of 6.2%, attributed to a revision of the lesson structure that now incorporates 'Aquatic Helpers' and in-water volunteers in place of parents.

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
July	28,836*	39,749	39,078
August	34,258	35,678	37,606
September	33,034	35,261	31,373
October		37,036	37,736
November		33,710	33,948
December		27,617	30,060
January		30,812	37,513
February		30,811	31,034
March		29,894	36,580
Total		413,216	423,905

*There was an issue with the data reporting system during July. Gym/Sports Hall and Group Exercise data from the 24th to the 31st did not pull through to the reports, resulting in a low total footfall figure.

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 £29,374 for 2024/25 and was invoiced during Quarter 2 2025/26.

11.25 There is also a utility benchmarking arrangement included in the contract, whereby Places Leisure 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 2024/25 the utility benchmark resulted in a payment from the Council to Places Leisure of £63,596 and was paid during Quarter 2 2025/26.

Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT)

11.26 Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) manages the following leisure centres in Sandwell:
- Haden Hill Leisure Centre (Closed with effect from 28 March 2024)

- 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.

- 624,944 attendances July to September 2025 compared to 624,840 Quarter 2 FY25.
- From September 2024 to September 2025, total memberships increased by **14.2%**
- 6,476 enrolled on Learn to Swim – **3.6%** up from Quarter 2 FY25 (6,250)
- Free swimming for under 18s shows an increase of **36.6%** from FY25, but casual junior swim visits have decreased by **27%**
- Free Swimming for over 60s has also decreased by **28%**.

11.28 There has been a noted 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				
	Jul	Aug	Sept	Q2 Total
Haden Hill Leisure Centre	Closed with effect from 28 March 2024			
Hadley Stadium	21,665	10,928	30,063	62,656
Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre	69	60	66	195
Portway Lifestyle Centre	38,773	37,512	39,721	116,006
Sandwell Aquatics Centre	80,275	62,241	72,046	214,562
Tipton Leisure Centre	27,808	23,055	23,558	74,421
Tipton Sports Academy	16,745	14,477	16,407	47,629
Wednesbury Leisure Centre	39,173	35,122	35,180	109,475
Total Visits	224,508	183,395	217,041	624,944

Current Year to Date Participation vs FY25		
	FY26	FY25
Q1	671,073	628,857
Q2	624,944	624,840

11.29 Following the reconciliation of Quarter 1 accounts, early indications are projecting a surplus of circa £100-200k for 2025/26.

- 11.30 Officers from across the Council continue to work with SLT's Leadership Team to further develop the Strategic Leisure Review. This work looks at the future options for 2 of the SLT run leisure facilities: Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre and Hadley Stadium.
- 11.31 Following significant investment by SLT, Tipton Sports Academy has undergone substantial improvements and is therefore no longer included in the current review. The investment programme has delivered the installation of three new padel courts, alongside the refurbishment of both the gym and reception areas. These enhancements have considerably strengthened the facilities, improved the customer experience, and increased its appeal to the local community. As a direct result of these developments, both visitor numbers and income have shown a marked increase, demonstrating the positive impact of the investment.
- 11.32 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. While a range of options remain under consideration, no definitive position has yet been reached. The Council will continue to assess the available options, considering operational requirements, financial sustainability, along with wellbeing and community outcomes, before determining the most appropriate course of action.
- 11.33 With regards to HR, SLT welcomed a new cohort of 4 apprentices in September following receipt of over 55 applications. This year, the course is Community Activator Coach L2. Apprentices will rotate around the sites and gain skills and experience in all areas of the business. They will also gain qualifications in swimming teaching and to be a trained lifeguard.

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 will be updated for the Audit and Risk Committee in January 2026. As of October 2025, it included the following risks

Risk	Current risk score
Community Cohesion	Amber
Pandemic	Amber
SEND Placements and Transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="287 428 1251 473">Increasing trajectory of demand <li data-bbox="287 473 1251 518">Both demand and cost 	Amber Red
Climate Change	Amber
Housing Transformation	Amber
Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation	Amber
Cyber Security	Amber
Adults - Strategic Workforce Development 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	Amber
Medium Term Financial Strategy	Amber
Workforce Recruitment	Green
Customer Experience	Green
Organisational Culture	Green
Continuous Improvement	Green
Regeneration Fund Programme	Green
Sandwell Local Plan	Green

13. Alternative Options Considered

13.1 There are no alternative options to consider for this report.

14. Consultation

14.1 There was no consultation required for this report

15. Financial Implications

15.1 There are no direct financial implications for this report.

16. Legal and Governance Implications

16.1 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.

17. Risks

17.1 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.

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

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

19. Other Relevant Implications

19.1 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.

19.2 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.

19.3 Social Value:

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

19.4 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'.

19.5 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.

19.6 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 provider oversight on the impact of the Council's crime reduction work.

20. Background Documents

- a. Performance Management Framework – Q1 Monitoring - The report is available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s29737/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q1%2020202526.pdf>

The appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=7283>

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

[Performance Management Framework for the Council](#)

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

21.1 The corporate PMF includes measures under all strategic themes in the Council Plan to monitor progress in these key areas. The PMF also includes elements that measure the council's use of its resources to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives.

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.