Work is now officially under way on New Square in West Bromwich. As well as a Tesco Extra store, the scheme will see a host of popular shops, new restaurants and a cinema open in the town. Primark, Bank, JD Sports and Next are just some of the big name shops signed up to the scheme, with many more expected to be announced in the coming months. But the good news doesn’t end there. The development will also create thousands of jobs while it’s being built and when it’s open for business. Sandwell Council is doing all it can to make sure these opportunities go to local residents.

Continued on Page 2
West Brom housing boost

A flagship £20m housing scheme in the heart of West Bromwich got a £765,000 boost from the Government. Sandwell Council and Accord Housing Association secured the cash for the Eastern Gateway from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The partners are set to build 69 houses and apartments on land bounded by High Street, Overend Street and Bull Street – around the size of three football pitches. Building work is expected to start early next year, with completion in 2014.

Councillor Ian Jones, Sandwell Council’s Cabinet member for jobs and economy, said: “The Eastern Gateway will not only provide first class housing but also new office and retail space which will help make West Bromwich one of the premier towns in the West Midlands.”

The homes will be constructed by Mansell Midlands to high environmental standards.

Councillor Simon Hackett, Cabinet member for housing, said the scheme showed Sandwell is leading the way in providing excellent new and affordable housing for its residents.

Alan Yates, Group Director of Regeneration for the Accord Group, said: “This is a significant element of the regeneration of West Bromwich town centre and will create high quality, affordable housing for local people. We are very proud to be a part of it.”

The HCA made the award through its Affordable Homes programme.

Paul Spooner, executive director for HCA Midlands, said: “We are delighted that HCA investment is supporting Accord and Sandwell Council to push forward on its housing and regeneration priorities, especially at Eastern Gateway, which in turn is consolidating the sustainable regeneration of West Bromwich.”

For more information on the West Bromwich Regeneration Programme visit:

• www.sandwell.gov.uk/westbromwichregeneration
• call into the Regeneration Hub at 13 Bull Street, West Bromwich, B70 6EU
• or phone 0121 500 1450.
Olympic Torch joy

Thousands of Sandwell people will get a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see the Olympic Flame carried through the borough next year on its way to the London 2012 Games.

People will be able to share in the excitement and cheer on torchbearers as they pass through Oldbury, West Bromwich and Smethwick.

Sandwell Council leader Councillor Darren Cooper said it would be “a historic moment” and that the Torch represented “hope and light for all”.

He said: “This fantastic news is a clear sign from the Olympic Committee that the 2012 Games will benefit places like Sandwell.

“Sandwell is already benefiting from two new outdoor gyms – called AdiZones – at Victoria Park, Smethwick, and Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich. These were partly funded by adidas in their role as an official Olympic sponsor.

“We have a real sporting heritage in Sandwell and a wealth of home-grown sporting talent pushing to be Olympians in 2012 and beyond.”

Oldbury, West Bromwich and Smethwick are three of over 1,000 places named by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) through which the Torch will pass on its 70-day, 8,000-mile journey.

The London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay is presented by Coca-Cola, Lloyds TSB and Samsung. Torchbearers and the street-by-street detail of the route will be announced next year.

Sebastian Coe, chair of LOCOG, said: “This is the UK’s moment to shine and I want to encourage people across Sandwell to start planning how they can be part of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and show their support for the inspirational torchbearers chosen to carry the Olympic Flame as we count down to the start of the Olympic Games.”

www.sandwell2012.com
www.london2012.com/olympic-torch-relay

If you want to get involved in activities when the Torch comes to Sandwell, contact Gary Bowman on 0121 569 3447 or email gary_bowman@sandwell.gov.uk.

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Mark our Scorecard Today!  www.sandwell.gov.uk/mycouncil

Green flag Plus

A Sandwell park has been voted England’s number one favourite green space.

Warley Woods in Smethwick took the silver award in the UK-wide annual Green Flag People’s Choice Awards.

And in another major coup for the borough, Tipton Cemetery came in at number 10.

The Sandwell green spaces, which had already won Green Flag recognition, are the only two in the West Midlands to appear in the People’s Choice top 10. Over 13,000 votes were received in the competition this year – with almost 10 per cent going to Warley Woods.

The 100-acre park, run by Warley Woods Community Trust, was only pipped to the top spot by a Victorian railway station in Monmouthshire, Wales.

Tipton Cemetery is the only cemetery in the West Midlands to hold the Green Flag accolade, which is given to well looked after green spaces.

Council leader Councillor Darren Cooper said: “These awards dispel the myth that Sandwell is all about factories and industry. We’ve actually got some wonderful green spaces and the awards show that people love the area and places like Warley Woods and Tipton Cemetery.”

Deputy leader Councillor Steve Eling, chair of the Warley Woods Community Trust, added: “This is a clear indication of the fantastic value that the local community have for the park. We are very pleased for everyone involved, including the hundreds of volunteers that have made Warley Woods the people’s favourite park in England.”

- Sandwell has nine Green Flag Award parks and green spaces in total. The other seven are Sandwell Valley Country Park and Moorlands Allotments, West Bromwich; Barnford Park and Barnford and Farm Road Allotments, Oldbury; Haden Hill Park; Cradley Heath; Victoria Park, Tipton; and Victoria Park, Smethwick.

Green Flag Awards are given to the best free-to-enter green spaces in the country. This year 1,290 sites received the award. To find out more visit www.greenflagaward.org.uk

Win a wedding…..

Getting married? We’re holding a wedding fair at Sandwell Register Office in West Bromwich on February 18, 10am-4pm.

Find out more about a ceremony at the register office on the town’s High Street and meet wedding suppliers including bridalwear and photography.

There’s also the chance to win a free ceremony.

For information go to www.sandwell.gov.uk/registeroffice or call 0121 569 2480.

Office moves

A number of council offices are moving this year to save cash and boost efficiency.

Staff are moving from most of our larger council buildings into the main Council House, Oldbury.

Services involved include school admissions and appeals, education benefits and special educational needs (formerly based at Shaftesbury House, West Bromwich); and planning applications (Development House, West Bromwich).

For more information visit www.sandwell.gov.uk

Does your child attend a school in Sandwell and do you receive either:

- Income Support?
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)?
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (including Child Tax Credit)?
- Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance?
- Support from National Asylum Support Service?
- Child Tax Credit, with an annual income less than £16,190 and not in receipt of Working Tax Credit?

If you have answered Yes, your child may be entitled to free school meals.

For more information or to find out if you are eligible call 0121 569 8186/8189 or 8364 quoting ‘FREE HERALD’.

free school meals

Are you eligible?

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Be a **Snow Champion** this winter

We all know Sandwellians are “salt of the earth”. So we are giving out 2,500 free snow shovels and 12 tonnes of salt to “Snow Champions” – people who are willing to help in their community if the weather gets bad this winter.

If you could help a neighbour by clearing their path or you are willing to help move snow from the pavements in your street, we will give you a shovel, 3kg of grit and a blue vest that will identify you as a Snow Champion.

The council is also offering community organisations in Sandwell the chance to apply for their own grit bin. It means that, overall, Sandwell residents will have an extra 27 tonnes of salt to use where they need it.

We will also:
- Salt 30 of our pay and display car parks
- Fill grit bins up more often
- Have council staff help clear the heavy snow
- Use up to 7,000 tonnes of salt on our roads this year if necessary. We've got 2,000 tonnes more than we used last winter in stock.

Our gritters are on 24-hour call, ready to go out gritting Sandwell’s roads when the temperature drops.

Sandwell Council leader Councillor Darren Cooper said: “We all know that there is a great community spirit alive in Sandwell and if people are willing to help others, we will give them the tools to do it.

“We will give tubs of salt and snow shovels to people who want to keep the pavement outside their home safe or help out elderly neighbours by clearing their paths.

“We also have 50 new grit bins that we want to give to community groups and organisations such as traders associations or Neighbourhood Watch groups.

“We can’t grit every road or pavement and I think people realise that – but if people are willing to help each other then we want to help them to do that.

“The Snow Champion scheme is costing less than a single hip replacement operation costs the NHS – so even if it stops one elderly person falling over and seriously hurting themselves this year, then it’s worth it*.

- If you want to be a Snow Champion or if you are a community group wishing to apply for a grit bin, go to our website [www.sandwell.gov.uk/snowchampion](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/snowchampion) for more details.

Advice on clearing snow or ice from paths and pavements

There’s no law to stop you cleaning your paths, driveways and the pavement outside your home if you are able to.

People are so worried about being sued if someone slips. But as long as you don’t do anything that makes the conditions dangerous - such as using water to melt the ice that then freezes - you have nothing to worry about.

Don’t be put off clearing your drive and paths in bad weather. Help your neighbours and clear the pavement outside your home of ice or snow if you can.
Christmas magic at The Public

Inspirational arts centre, The Public, is bringing the magic of Christmas alive as it welcomes local businesses, families and friends for a celebration like no other.

A whole host of festive activities will be taking place – including carol singing and a visit by Father Christmas himself – as the West Bromwich centre gets into the festive spirit.

Carol singers from local churches across the region are heading to The Public on Saturday 17 December. All the family will be invited to join in the fun-filled sing-a-long as Christmas classics are performed for free between 12.30pm and 1.30pm.

Father Christmas himself will be at The Public on Saturday 17 and Friday 23 December, giving presents to all the good little boys and girls. Children are invited to come and meet him and have their photograph taken against a digital Lapland backdrop for £3.50 per child.

Throughout December visitors to the centre have the opportunity to experience shopping with a creative twist by making their own unique Christmas gifts.

The Public is inviting people to bring along their favourite photo or have their picture taken in the Christmas Photo Studio – and then have it printed onto an item of their choice.

From t-shirts to mousemats, badges to mugs, or even homemade wrapping paper in ‘The Human Photocopier’, people can walk away with a unique present, with that special individual touch.

Linda Saunders, Managing Director of The Public, said: “This Christmas, not only will visitors be able to enjoy the wide range of festive activities on offer, they’ll be inspired with some fascinating gift ideas – from tickets to an event at The Public to unique personalised gifts using our photo studio.”

For more information about events at The Public visit www.thepublic.com or call the box office on 0121 533 7161.

Mayor’s Big Charity Show

Mayor Councillor Joyce Underhill’s two charities are set for a boost from a popular variety show.

The Mayor’s Big Charity Show will return for a fourth year at The Public, West Bromwich, on 17 March next year – St Patrick’s Day.

And once again it will boast a line-up of Sandwell talent; many of them council employees or family members.

Proceeds will go to the two good causes the Mayor is backing in her year of office – the Children’s Diabetic Department at Sandwell Hospital and the Prostate Cancer Charity.

In the St Patrick’s spirit, Irish band the Father Teds will appear the same evening in The Public’s Pink Tank.

Tickets at £6 are available from organiser Phil Challoner on 0121 569 3381, The Public box office on 0121 533 7161 or The Mayor’s office on 0121 569 3041/3076.

New Year... Time to Get Active!

It’s the perfect time to get active in Sandwell. Exercise makes you feel good, promotes good health and is great fun!

Health officials recommend that adults take part in at least 30 minutes of ‘moderate intensity’ physical activity at least five times a week – that’s 5 x 30!

Instead try doing activities that you enjoy and look forward to. There’s no need to think of strenuous workouts that are painful and boring.

There’s no need to think of strenuous workouts that are painful and boring. Instead try doing activities that you enjoy and look forward to.

Why not visit the 5 x 30 website for lots more information on www.sandwell.gov.uk/getactive

Creatures of the deep move to Langley

Langley Swimming Centre’s small pool is now home to some new aquatic residents.

The small pool at the Vicarage Road-based leisure centre was given a makeover during the summer when it was temporarily closed whilst the pool filters were replaced.

Following suggestions from children at the centre’s Swim School, the walls around the small pool now feature bright, colourful images of sea creatures including a huge turtle, shark and a school of fish.

Manager Paul Marshall said: “We’re always looking for ways to improve our facilities.

*As well as installing new filters to ensure the highest level of hygiene and cleanliness, we wanted to make the area around the pool more attractive and exciting for our customers.”

A video of the transformation at Langley can be seen on SLT’s YouTube channel www.youtube.com/SLTChannel.

The popular small pool is used for swimming lessons, parent and toddler sessions, Aqua Fit, family swimming and pool parties.

For more information on swimming, fitness classes, gym sessions and sport at any Sandwell leisure or swimming centre contact SLT on 0845 659 4815 or visit www.slt-leisure.co.uk

How well can you swim?

SWIM FOR LIFE

Swim School

Spaces Available!

Book Now!

Available at

- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- Smethwick Swimming Centre
- Tipton Swimming Centre
- Wednesbury Leisure Centre

SANDWELL LEISURE TRUST

www.slt-leisure.co.uk

Award winning services supporting Sandwell’s scorecard
Council chiefs are taking a new look at services across Sandwell as they grapple with a second round of Government cash cuts. They’re pledging to go all out to find efficiency and maintain quality.

But they’re also warning that the sheer scale of cuts – on top of £31 million in Government cash support for the council lost this year – means an inevitable impact on services.

Council leader, Councillor Darren Cooper, and deputy, Councillor Steve Eling, set out the financial headaches facing the council:

"It’s not a pretty picture. In the current 2011/12 financial year we’ve been able to do lots of things to take the council forward despite the £30 million-plus taken from our budget for day-to-day spending.

"We’re bringing investment into Sandwell, transforming the fortunes of West Bromwich where hundreds of millions of pounds are flowing into new developments in the town centre. That means opportunities for local people. Our contract with BT, for example, means they are recruiting for 450 jobs at their regional business centre at Providence Place.

"We’re investing, too, in roads and parks – and we’re delivering on a boost from new waste collections for households in Sandwell, dramatically increasing recycling to help the environment and chopping what taxpayers have to pay out in soaring landfill taxes.

"We’ve done all we can to protect the frontline services local people rely on despite having to lose around 600 staff. Action we’ve taken to cut costs has helped – £2.5 million saved in top management salaries, for example. There are millions more being saved as we shrink the number of our offices around Sandwell and move staff to the Council House, Oldbury.

"We’re also using new business systems and computer software to increase productivity and looking for savings on transport and mileage costs.

"All of this helps. But we face having to save about £18 million in the 2012/13 financial year which starts on 1 April to balance the books as the law says we have to. There are two elements to that – another expected cut of about £12 million in Government cash support for Sandwell (which would bring our overall budget for day-to-day spending down to about £278 million) and the impact of inflation, especially rising energy costs.

"This comes as we face a range of pressures on council services, in particular a growing elderly population needing care from us. It will be the second year of massive cuts to the council’s budget – and it would be unrealistic to expect that this amount of money can be lost without an impact on services.

"Right now we’re reviewing areas across the council – and consulting with people who use the services involved – to see what savings can be made. Inevitably the scale of the cuts, together with those forced upon us last year, means that once again we’re going to have to reduce our workforce, and some of those who go may be people providing direct services to the public.

"We don’t know by how many exactly at this stage, but the level of cuts we expect – not just next year but the two after that as well – could mean around another 1,000 job losses over that period. We’ll continue to look for voluntary rather than compulsory redundancies.

"We are currently working through the details and will know more in January, when our draft budget will go through the council’s scrutiny process before it’s finalised at the beginning of March. Our overall approach is to seek greater efficiency in delivering services – do things at less cost and make each pound we spend go further.

"There are innovations, for example, in looking after the elderly where an enhanced Telecare system can now do much more than provide an alarm service and can put people into direct contact with a care centre. But inevitably some services face being reduced, although we’ll be doing our level best to maintain their quality.

"It may be that we have to strike a balance and deliver services from fewer venues in order to maintain quality. Our goal is to make sure the things we do, we do well.

"Spreading the jam too thinly could mean a poorer service for everyone, rather than the better service we want to give to those who really need it.

• Plans at the moment are for a further freeze on council tax next year.

Councillors Cooper and Eling say:

“We’re drawing up budget plans on the assumption there won’t be a council tax rise, although we are taking a careful look at strings attached to the Government’s offer of cash to freeze the tax.

“We’re a low tax council and we certainly wouldn’t want any unnecessary rise at a time when families across Sandwell are feeling the pinch.”

Young people in Sandwell can check out youth activities happening throughout the year at www.justyouth.org.uk

Could you be a befriender?

Council worker Adam Richardson has been making a difference to someone else’s life…… by being a friend.

Adam volunteered for the Sandwell Befriending Service.

It involved him giving up a couple of hours each week to visit a young man with health issues who needed someone to offer a friendly face and a listening ear.

“I hope I’ve been able to help make life a bit better for him,” said Adam.

“People who are isolated because they are suffering with things like anxiety and depression can get a lot out of being matched with a befriender. And to be frank I’ve got a lot out of the experience myself.”

Adam, a policy officer in the council’s scrutiny unit, is leaving the authority in the New Year, which means he will no longer be able to give up the time to volunteer.

But he said: “I would thoroughly recommend the work of the Sandwell Befriending Service to anyone with time to spare who wants to put a bit back into society. It really can make a difference to people’s lives.”

The service, which has marked Adam’s work with a certificate, is run by the NHS’s Sandwell Primary Care Trust.

Co-ordinator Tony Kirk said: “Adam’s contribution has made a great difference to another young man’s life.

“Sadly we have a shortage of male volunteers in Sandwell. I’d urge anyone who can to come forward and offer their support. The only requirement is to be able to volunteer for a minimum of four hours per month.

“All befrienders are CRB-checked and given appropriate training to prepare for the role. No previous experience is needed”

For a ‘no commitment’ chat about becoming a befriender please contact Tony Kirk on 0121 612 1403 or email TonyKirk@Sandwell-pct.nhs.uk
Sandwell residents can make recycling one of their New Year Resolutions for 2012 thanks to their new waste and recycling service.

By February 2012, homes in the borough will have received their new household waste bin and food recycling containers.

The new wheeled bins will reduce the amount of rubbish from split black sacks and help make neighbourhoods cleaner. The new service, which includes weekly blue lid recycling collections, can also help you save money by reducing the amount of food you throw away.

People living in flats, apartments, sheltered housing and properties with communal bin stores will receive recycling facilities next year.

### Important Information

**Christmas bin collections**

This Christmas we will be operating a full collection service. However, between Christmas and New Year, all bins will be collected **one day later than normal**.

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<tr>
<th>Normal collection day</th>
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<td>Saturday 31 Dec</td>
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Please note this is for **one week only** between December 26 and 31.

**Household Recycling Centre**

The Household Recycling Centre is open weekdays 8am - 6pm and weekends 8am - 4pm. **PLEASE NOTE**: The Household Recycling Centre will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day.

**Garden waste collections**

Fortnightly garden waste collections now continue throughout the year. However there will be no collections between December 26 and January 6. **PLEASE NOTE**: You can cut up your Christmas tree and put it in your garden waste bin. Please ensure the lid can still be closed.

**Text updates**

Sign up to receive free text updates on services including any bin collection disruptions, bank holiday updates and much more. Text your postcode to 07860 019200.
New Year’s Resolutions 2012
I will...

✓ Recycle more...
  ...Cans, card, paper, plastic and glass packaging in my blue lid recycling each week

✓ Use my food waste container
  This will help show how much food I throw away and help save me money

✓ Use my garden waste bin...
  ...All year round

✓ Use my household waste bin...
  ...For all non-recyclable waste

Add your own New Year Resolutions here…

✓ __________________________

✓ __________________________

✓ __________________________

✓ __________________________

For more information about recycling this winter, or the new services, visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/binday
Sandwell’s Great
Mark Our Scorecard
www.sandwell.gov.uk/mycouncil

Portway Lifestyle Centre will be built on the site of the existing Oldbury Leisure Centre, now closed and due for demolition. It will be a new type of venue, with sport and leisure facilities alongside social care and health services, including a GP surgery – Tividale Family Practice Here’s a quick look at some of the facilities on offer:

Four-court sports hall
Available for a variety of classes and sports, such as bowls, badminton and indoor football, as well as events such as tea dances.

Hydrotherapy pool
Used for rehabilitation and other therapeutic purposes, rather than general swimming.

Sensory Room
A room full of lights, textures and sensitive colours for children and adults with special needs.

Climbing wall
A first for the region, the climbing wall will offer a challenge to climbers of all abilities.

Dance studio
A purpose-built dance studio with a specialist sprung floor

Fitness suite
A gym boasting state-of-the-art weights and aerobic equipment.

Artificial grass pitch
A full-sized, all-weather pitch for senior, junior and 5-a-side football.

Café
Run by a charity or other voluntary organisation, the café will offer a range of healthy snacks and beverages.

Sensory garden/life trail
Designed to be enjoyed by everyone, the garden will boast fragrant plants and flowers and an all-weather path offering a gentle workout.

There will be ample parking on site and every entrance, exit and corridor in the building will be fully accessible to people with a disability.

Sandwell Council’s Cabinet member for leisure services Cllr Linda Horton said: “The lifestyle centre is a new kind of venue, giving equal access to people with disabilities.

“Oldbury Leisure Centre has served the community well but it is at the end of its useful life and Portway will be a superb replacement.”

The council and Sandwell Leisure Trust, which will run the centre, are working on the scheme alongside Sandwell Primary Care Trust and Sandwell Local Improvement Trust (LIFTCo).

To find out more:
www.slt-leisure.co.uk

Best in the country – new centre
An £18m leisure centre due to open in Sandwell in 2013 will boast state-of-the-art facilities which will put it among the best in the country.
A partnership set up by Sandwell Council to rebuild secondary schools in the borough has picked up a top award in a major embarrassment for education secretary Michael Gove.

Sandwell Futures Ltd was named Local Education Partnership of the Year (LEP) at the Education Investor Awards 2011 for its work on Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

Two schools have opened under the scheme, with work under way on another three. However, nine other projects have been left in limbo after the Government halted BSF, sparking fury among parents and pupils and prompting the council to take legal action to win a reprieve.

Hailing the award, council leader Councillor Darren Cooper said: “To be named LEP of the year is a tremendous pat on the back for Sandwell Futures which recognises all the hard work they have done. It is beyond belief the Government would axe a successful scheme which would benefit so many young people in a deprived borough.

"The money is there – it boils down to how the Government wants to spend it. I hope Mr Gove will now do the right thing and let us get on with improving schools for generations of young people.”

Sandwell Futures is made up of private sector partners Interserve, Barclays, Cambridge Education, Amber Infrastructure and Agilisys, along with the council. It beat seven other finalists to claim the top prize.

Judges were impressed it has provided 50 apprenticeships as well as over £35m of work to local businesses. Another £32m has gone to businesses within 50 miles of Sandwell.

Peter Vella, Chief Executive of Sandwell Futures, said: “I am tremendously proud to have won this award. It shows what BSF can achieve.”

My Council roadshows
– headline results!

Thanks to all of you who came to the My Council roadshows over the summer.

We’ve been at shopping centres, supermarkets and the Sandwell Show, talking to more than 6,000 residents about what you think of council services.

You’ve told us what you like, what you think we do well and what you think can be improved…and the results are now in.

Headline findings on council services with the highest ‘net satisfaction’ ratings (the proportion of people satisfied minus the proportion dissatisfied) are:

• bin collections – 52%
• libraries – 50%
• burials and cremations – 42%
• highways and street lighting – 41%
• school education – 40%
• parks and open spaces – 35%.

Services with the lowest ratings are:

• potholes – minus 24%
• dog fouling removal – minus 13%.

We’ll now be using the results to look at how we can improve services for you. We will keep you updated on progress.

Battle for Sandwell
– Key milestones

Summer, 2010
• Education secretary Michael Gove axes BSF. There is uproar after Sandwell is wrongly led to believe its scheme will continue.
• Mr Gove apologises in the House of Commons over the blunder and says he will visit Sandwell in person.
• Council Leader Councillor Darren Cooper holds face-to-face meetings with Mr Gove, who says the borough would be a priority if money was made available in the future for new schools.

Winter, 2010
• Mr Gove approves £60m plans for three BSF secondary schools in Tipton, Wednesbury and Oldbury.
• Sandwell Council and five other local authorities go the High Court over the decision to end BSF – they win their case. Mr Justice Holman rules the Government had not properly consulted and in five of the cases the failure was “so unfair as to amount to an abuse of power”.
• Sandwell submits detailed representations on why its scheme should go-ahead.

Summer 2011
• Mr Gove says he is “not minded” to fund the rebuilding because he has no recent data with which to compare the state of Sandwell’s schools against other schools across the country.

Autumn, 2011
• Mr Gove formally rejects Sandwell’s case. The council considers further legal action after accusing the Government of failing to abide by the court ruling to reconsider the case for each individual school.

Winter, 2011
• Sandwell Futures named Local Education Partnership of the Year at the Education Investor Awards 2011 for its work on Building Schools for the Future.
Seasonal school report
from Sandwell’s Cabinet member for children and families
Councillor Bob Badham

Sandwell is celebrating an excellent year for schools – with record results at GCSE and Key Stage 2 and boosted early years provision.

This year has seen a number of significant achievements.

We are fourth most improved area in the UK at Key Stage 2, early years results are up by 5% and 6% more pupils achieved 5 A*-C grade GCSEs including English and Mathematics.

That means children in Sandwell now enter primary school broadly in line with the national average – a fantastic achievement in the context of our high levels of deprivation.

Those primary schools now perform on a par with the national norms – and have again improved at twice the national rate.

All this is thanks to wonderful work in children’s centres, early learning settings and Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

Following the latest round of Ofsted inspections only one primary and one secondary school in the borough now remain in the Ofsted category ‘causing concern’ – sometimes known as ‘special measures’.

Victoria Park Primary has been labelled outstanding and Timber Tree Primary and Lodge Primary have each had Ofsted intervention notices lifted.

Wodensborought Community Technology College has been evaluated as making outstanding progress with outstanding capacity to improve.

Sandwell pupils continue to beat the national average in learning progress in English and Mathematics.

Three of our schools have been awarded National Teaching School status out of one hundred nationally. These include Corringhavens Primary School in Cradley Heath, Wood Green Academy in Wednesbury and the Orchard Specialist School in Oldbury – one of only very few special schools in the country to gain this coveted status.

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That means children in Sandwell now enter primary school broadly in line with the national average – a fantastic achievement in the context of our high levels of deprivation.

Those primary schools now perform on a par with the national norms – and have again improved at twice the national rate.

All this is thanks to wonderful work in children’s centres, early learning settings and Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

Following the latest round of Ofsted inspections only one primary and one secondary school in the borough now remain in the Ofsted category ‘causing concern’ – sometimes known as ‘special measures’.

Victoria Park Primary has been labelled outstanding and Timber Tree Primary and Lodge Primary have each had Ofsted intervention notices lifted.

Wodensborought Community Technology College has been evaluated as making outstanding progress with outstanding capacity to improve.

Sandwell pupils continue to beat the national average in learning progress in English and Mathematics.

Three of our schools have been awarded National Teaching School status out of one hundred nationally. These include Corringhavens Primary School in Cradley Heath, Wood Green Academy in Wednesbury and the Orchard Specialist School in Oldbury – one of only very few special schools in the country to gain this coveted status.

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Dog fouling crackdown

Council wardens have chalked up a massive increase in dog mess fines in response to residents’ concerns.

They issued more than five times as many fines in the first half of 2011/12 as in the same period last year. And fines were handed out in each of the borough’s six towns. From April to September wardens fined 72 people.

Councillor Derek Rowley, Cabinet member for neighbourhood services, said: “The vast majority of dog owners are responsible.

“Sadly, a small number are not, and they are putting people’s health at risk, particularly children who play in parks and on grass.

“Apart from the health concerns, dog mess is also a real nuisance. It makes the area look untidy and it unfairly gives all those responsible dog owners a bad name.”

• To report dog fouling, call Sandwell Council on 0845 359 7501 or email contact@sandwell.gov.uk

All wardens issue fines for dog fouling. The council has also given one warden the specific task of targeting early morning walkers who don’t clean up their dog’s mess.

For dog fouling offences, wardens issue a £75 fine, which is reduced to £50 if paid within 10 days.
Top Tips
...for Christmas shoppers

Want to take that Christmas gift back? Read on...
If you receive presents you don't want, that don't fit or are just inappropriate this Christmas, you may think you are entitled to an exchange or a refund.

But this isn't an automatic right, say Sandwell's Trading Standards experts.

Bob Charney, Trading Standards Manager, said: "Legally, you are only entitled to a refund if an item is not as described, not fit for purpose or not of satisfactory quality. Normally it is only the gift buyer who can enforce these rights. However, gift receivers may be able to do this as a ‘third party’ if they have a named gift receipt.

"If you have used a product for a period of time, you may lose the right to a full refund but may be entitled to a repair, replacement or a partial refund."

When registering a complaint:
• Stay calm and be clear about how you want the problem to be resolved
• Act quickly. If there is a fault with a product or a service you should report this to the seller as soon as you can, confirm this in writing and keep a copy for your records. If you need to send any paperwork, only send photocopies rather than originals
• Gather together everything you can by way of evidence. If you complain in person, ask to speak to the person in charge who may have the authority to resolve your issue
• Check your legal rights before you confront the trader

When buying online:
• Shop around for deals
• Check the trader's details
• Consider using sites that are members of the Internet Shopping is Safe (ISIS) Trustmark scheme
• Read the terms and conditions
• Keep a record of all your online transactions
• Make sure you use security software
• Consider using a credit card as this will give you additional protection should things go wrong
• Check your goods as soon as they arrive as your rights to refunds, repairs and replacements may depend on how quickly you act

Member for neighbourhood services Councillor Derek Rowley said: "We want the people of Sandwell to have a happy and successful Christmas, but sometimes things do go wrong.

"That's when they need to know their rights and how they can enforce those rights.

"We want consumers in Sandwell to be confident in asserting their rights."

Prize Puzzles

Win £25 in Sainsbury’s vouchers

Send your answers – with your name, address and daytime telephone number – to The Editor, Sandwell Herald, Communications Unit, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury B69 3DE by 13 January 2012. First correct entry for each puzzle out of the hat wins the prize. The editor’s decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Winners

Lucky winners of £25 Sainsbury’s vouchers from puzzles in the last Herald are:
• Crossword, Paul Taylor, Rowley Regis
• Sudoku, Miss Henley, Tipton
• Wordsearch, Miss Elise Harvey, Smethwick

First out of the hat for Readers’ Survey prizes were:
• £100 Sainsbury’s Vouchers, Dana Goodall, Rowley Regis
• Signed WBA shirt, David Bradley, Tipton
• Two tickets for an event at The Public arts centre, Mrs S Parsons, Smethwick

• Apologies to all crossword entrants confused by a missing letter in the correct solution to one of the clues in the last issue’s puzzle. We made a mistake and we’re sorry. We disregarded answers to this clue in drawing the winner of the competition.

Crossword

Across
1. Purchased (6)
2. Wigeon (6)
3. Grasped (6)
4. Tend (6)
5. Enraged (6)
6. Rarelyilden (6)
7. Shriek (6)
8. Bore (6)
9. At ease (6)
10. Most (6)
11. Eyed (6)
12. Feted (6)
13. Disdained (6)
14. Reputed (6)
15. Milled (6)
16. Shent (6)
17. Aged (6)
18. Bred (6)
19. Spent (6)
20. Worn (6)
21. Used (6)
22. Practised (6)
23. Used (6)
24. Used (6)
25. Used (6)
26. Used (6)

Down
1. Sounds like heads (4)
2. Same outfit? (7)
3. Put (6)
4. maken (6)
5. Makem (6)
6. —— Tanner (6)
7. These go into a salad (8)
8. Not very tidy (5)
9. Charts (6)
10. Bank (6)
11. Gits (6)
12. Bank (6)
13. Sit (6)
14. Sit (6)
15. Sit (6)
16. Sit (6)
17. Sit (6)
18. Sit (6)
19. Sit (6)
20. Sit (6)
21. Sit (6)
22. Sit (6)

Sudoku

Fill the grid so that every column, row and 3 X 3 box has the numbers 1 to 9.

Wordsearch

Find the following words concealed in the grid:
Sandwell’s 72 councillors are here to represent you.

They hold regular ‘surgeries’ where you can go to discuss council-related issues. Ring 0121 569 3129 or 0121 569 3044 to get details of exactly when and where.

You can also ring these numbers if you are unsure who your councillors are.

You can also contact councillors through their website: www.councillor.info/sandwell

Abbey Ward

Steve Eling
0121 569 3045

Dr. Ann Jonar
0121 429 9316

Bob Piper
0121 429 4276

Great Barr with Yew Tree Ward

Shirley Hosell
07981 699952

Steve Mela
0121 502 0751

Sadie Smith
0121 358 2484

Oldbury Ward

Susan Downing
07976 042372

Elaine Gask
07770 624102

Mahnoob Hussain
07796 337999

St Paul’s Ward

Zahoor Ahmed
07894 850928

Babu Singh Bawa OBE
07815 567280

Paramjit Kaur Randhawa
07961 861263

Blackheath Ward

Malcolm Bridges
07815 567268

Mary Docker
07971 827089

Bob Price
0121 559 6412

Great Bridge Ward

Pete Allen
07976 958843

Joanne Hadley
0121 559 3014

Derek Rowley
0121 569 4134

Old Warley Ward

Dr. Trevor Crompton
07791 116434

Lee Pawlowski
07966 072713

Steve Trew
07768 610460

Tipton Green Ward

Ahmadul Haque MBE
07786 277567

Ian Jones
07876 131414

Syeda Khatoon MBE
07866 421436

Bristnall Ward

Lucy Cashmore
07984 487962

Steven Frear
07984 212572

Tony Granger
07815 062069

Greets Green & Lyng Ward

Bob Badham MBE
0121 569 3114

John Edwards
0121 531 5062

Gunnar Singh Sidhu
0121 553 3030

Princes End Ward

Suzanne Hartwell
07971 546680

Stephen Jones
07983 682588

Beatrice Owen
07986 072766

Tividale Ward

Lorraine Ashman
07876 504919

Maria Crompton
01384 258609

Jayne Wilkinson
07910 567562

Charlemont with Grove Vale Ward

Anne Hughes
0121 532 6288

Ray Nick
07791 870451

Tony Ward
07810 850569

Hateley Heath Ward

Pat Davies
07771 955605

Paul Moore
07963 138038

Paul Sanders
07711 625074

Rowley Ward

Iris Boucher
01384 859885

Barbara Price
0121 559 6412

Chris Tuner
07853 669171

Wednesbury North Ward

Elaine Costigan
0121 526 2757

Peter Hughes
07866 914849

Maria Hughes
07970 131138

Cradley Heath & Old Hill Ward

Liz Bowler
07966 072196

Ann Shackleton
0121 550 1245

Julie Webb
01384 638588

Langley Ward

Mick Davies
07976 916263

Yvonne Davies
07772 405686

Pauline Hinton
07766 424466

Smethwick Ward

Keith Davies
07836 512941

Linda Horton
0121 569 5551

Vic Silvester
0121 423 3369

Wednesbury South Ward

Elizabeth Gills
07814 212075

Owen Jones
07814 708869

Michael Maddison
07980 954484

Friar Park Ward

Joy Edis
0121 601 8196

Simon Hackett
07813 988422

Geoff Lewis
0121 556 4253

Newton Ward

David Hosell
07986 630012

Joyce Underhill
0121 358 5742

Tony Underhill
0121 358 5742

Soho & Victoria Ward

Darrin Cooper
07887 567744

Roger Horton
0121 558 8719

Mohammed Rouf
07766 421423

West Bromwich Central Ward

Sawinder Singh Chahal
07891 297674

Kim Frazier
07976 056515

Mohinder Singh Taggar
0121 553 1052
Safer 6 Success

Recorded crime dropped 11% and anti-social behaviour reports almost halved during a six-week crackdown in Sandwell.

The Safer 6 campaign also saw nearly 16 tonnes of waste and litter cleared, alcohol confiscated over 230 times from nuisance drinkers and drugs seized over 100 times.

The campaign involved over 10 crime-fighting organisations, led by Sandwell Police and Sandwell Council, joining forces to target their efforts.

During the six weeks (September 26-November 6), compared to the same period in 2010, there were:

- 298 fewer victims of crime (down 11.4%)
- 111 fewer victims of burglary, vehicle crime and robbery (down 14.3%)
- 838 fewer reports of anti-social behaviour to police (down 47.8%)

Two big news stories were trading standards’ snap survey of 74 shops, pubs and restaurants, which showed over a third selling fake and potentially dangerous booze, which was seized and removed from sale.

And a staggering 1.7 million cans of beer and bottles of wine were detained from five factory units at an industrial site in Wednesbury, following a raid by HM Revenue & Customs and Sandwell Police.

The fire service inspected firework retailers, gave firework safety talks in schools and carried out cycle patrols. Trading standards held test purchases at off licences to check on underage sales of alcohol and cigarettes.

Cabinet member for neighbourhood services, Councillor Derek Rowley, said: “The Safer 6 campaign has been a great success. It’s had a good mix of tough enforcement action to catch those committing crime and work out in the community to clean up ‘grot spots’ and provide reassurance and information to local people.”

Sandwell Police commander Chief Superintendent Mark Robinson said: “Organisations here work together day in, day out tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

“These six weeks – with the darker nights and bonfire and firework season – are a period when we have to concentrate our efforts in response to issues that concern people.

“Now we have launched Operation Unite to continue the momentum, with a focus on targeting known offenders of burglary, robbery and vehicle crime.”

Resident David Bisseker, Sandwell’s lead community ambassador, said: “By listening to what the public want, the partnership has responded to issues of concern to local people.”

### Safer 6 totals

Targeted police patrols: 5,216 hours

Arrests: 65

Warrants: 43

Drug seizures: 102

Vehicles stopped: 169

Vehicles seized: 74

Dedicated council warden patrols: 2,990 hours

Alcohol seizures by wardens and police: 231

Abandoned vehicles removed by wardens: 20

Fines issued by wardens for littering and dog fouling: 92

Community Payback by offenders: 2,980 hours

Waste/litter cleared by offenders: 15.8 tonnes

Security checks by council property intervention officers: 1,046 empty private homes

Safer Travel Partnership patrols on buses, trams, trains: 112 hours

### The partners

- Sandwell Police
- Sandwell Council
- West Midlands Fire Service
- Staffordshire & West Midlands Probation Trust - Community Payback
- Sandwell Homes
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Safer Travel Partnership (including Centro and British Transport Police)
- Vosa (Vehicle & Operator Services Agency)
- Agewell
- Sandwell Crime Prevention Panel

### Photographs

- A community reassurance event with older people in Rowley
- On patrol in Wednesbury town centre
- Hundreds of young people visited the Sandwell Youth Bus for fun activities and safety advice from young people’s services, DECCA and police
- An offender on Community Payback carries out clean-up work in Shaftesbury Street, West Bromwich
- Young people learn firefighting in Tipton during half-term
- Operations on the bus routes in Cape Hill, Smethwick
- Hundreds of people received advice at roadshows organised by partners, like this one in Oldbury

### Infographic

- Safer 6 totals
- The partners

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Great people, Great place, Great prospects, Great performance
What’s On in Sandwell

Thursday 15 December 2011
Carols by Candlelight
Oak House Museum, West Bromwich
A chance to enjoy traditional Christmas carols by candlelight with the Salvation Army in the beautiful setting of Oak House Museum, West Bromwich. Limited space so booking essential.
Time: 6pm – 7pm
Price: £3
For info: 0121 553 0759

Friday 16 December 2011
Music Through the Decades with Ian and Lindsey
Manor House Museum, West Bromwich
The Great Hall is a beautiful setting, even more so at Christmas – we welcome back Lindsey and Ian, who this year will be taking us on a nostalgic journey through Christmas’ past and present.
Time: 7pm – 9.30pm
Price: £5 (drinks and mince pies included)
For info: 0121 553 0759

Between Saturday 17 December and Saturday 24 December 2011
Ice Skating Rink and Christmas Festival
Lightwoods Park, Bearwood
For info: 0121 429 1421

Sunday 18 December 2011
Christmas at the Manor House Museum
Manor House Museum, West Bromwich
It was the week before Christmas and all through the Manor House was a buzz of excitement….. but no sign of a mouses! Come along and join in the festival fun – visit Santa, browse the stalls for last minute gifts, meet the real reindeer or the ice queen! Take part in the Christmas theatre production of a Christmas Carol plus much more.
Time: 11am – 3pm
Price: Free admission (there will be a charge for some activities – Santa £4 per child)
For info: 0121 553 0759

Tuesday 20 December 2011
Pantomime Workshop with Performance
West Bromwich Central Library
Drama workshop on pantomime theme for children to be involved in short production to entertain small audience to include parents, carers and library users. Need to book tickets.
Time: workshop 2pm – 3pm; performance 3pm – 4pm
Price: FREE
For info: 0121 569 4911

Saturday 7 January to Sunday 15 January 2012
Smethwick International Exhibition of Photography
The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury
Exhibition of photographic prints and projected digital images from 60 countries. Around 500 prints will be on display along with three separate audio visual presentations (booking essential for 7 January 2012).
Time: 7pm – 10pm
Price: evenings £3; weekends £6
For info: 0121 427 4224; info@spinternationalexhibition.com

Wednesday 11 January 2012
Wednesbury Music Club – Club Night
Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery
Your own selection of recorded music and why it’s your favourite.
Time: 7.45pm – 9.45pm
Price: £3 per visit; concessionary price, couple £40 per season, single £25 per season.
For info: 0121 502 5751

Saturday 28 January 2012
Big Garden Bird Walk
The Pavilion, Smethwick
Come on a walk and find out about the bird life in Warley Woods from Liz Coleman, RSPB, and Warley Woods volunteers. Also an opportunity to take part in the Big Garden Bird Watch survey.
Time: 10am
Price: £2
For info: 0121 420 1061

13 February – 18 February 2012
Pinocchio
The Wesley Centre, Spring Head, Wednesbury
Annual pantomime presented by the Holden Amateur Dramatic Society and Spring Head Methodist Church. Family entertainment suitable for all ages. Most nights sell out so book early
Time: 7.30pm
Price: £4.50; Concessionary prices: £3.50 (family ticket 2 adults, 2 children for £14)
For info: 0121 556 0420

16 February 2012
Tuesday 16 February 2012
Children’s Half Term Craft Workshops
Haden Hill House Museum, Cradley Heath
"Creature Features" with animals from Dudley Zoo, then have your face painted as your favourite animal.
Booking essential.
Time: 2pm – 4pm
Price: £2 per child; a small charge for face painting.
For info: 01384 569 444

THE ART OF NOISE
EXHIBITION
21 October 2011-15 January 2012
Free entry, suitable for all ages

CHRISTMAS AT THE PUBLIC: CAROL SINGING
Saturday 17 December, 12.30pm, free entry, suitable for all ages

CHRISTMAS AT THE PUBLIC: VISIT FATHER CHRISTMAS
Saturday 17 December and Friday 23 December, 11.30am-2pm, £3.50 per child, suitable for children

THE PUBLIC COMEDY SHOWCASE
Friday 3 February 2012, starts 8pm, £8

JOHNNY 2 BAD: UB40 TRIBUTE
Saturday 11 February, 9.30pm, £8 advance, £10 door

FEBRUARY HALF-TERM ACTIVITIES
Monday 13 February-Friday 17 February 2012
Join in the fun-filled activities and workshops for the whole family

MIKE GUNN AND SEAN COLLINS – STILL ON THE ROADSHOW
Friday 2 March, starts 8pm, £12 (£10 concessions), suitable for ages 18+
Following spectacular performances on BBC One’s Michael McIntyre’s Comedy Roadshow, here’s a rare chance to see two top-billing circuit stars.

SATURDAY ART CLUB
Every Saturday, 10am-1pm, £3, Suitable for ages 4+

THE PUBLIC ART CLASS
Saturdays (fortnightly), 11am-2.30pm, £4, suitable for ages 16+
For more information, visit www.thepublic.com or call 0121 533 7161. The Public, New Street, West Bromwich, B70 7PG

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

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