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‘The Celebration’
A tribute statue to three players who changed football

Plans to immortalise iconic West Bromwich Albion stars Laurie Cunningham, Brendon Batson MBE and Cyrille Regis MBE have been announced by Sandwell Council.

A 10ft bronze statue is to be erected in West Bromwich town centre to celebrate the achievements of the trio who pioneered the way for black footballers in this country. The statue, called ‘The Celebration’, will be unveiled on July 14 2014, the 25th anniversary of Laurie Cunningham’s death in a car crash in Spain.

The initiative is being led by Black Country businessman Jim Cadman with the help of the council.

Renowned sculptor Graham Ibbeson, who has created world famous statues including those of Eric Morecambe, William Webb-Ellis and Don Revie, will make the statue, which will show the three players celebrating after a winning goal has been scored.

Money for the statue will be raised via a number of projects and

Brendon Batson, Laurie Cunningham’s cousin Claudette Samuel and Cyrille Regis, with Jim Cadman, Ron Atkinson and council leader Councillor Darren Cooper

The dramatic increase in recycling rates follows Sandwell’s appointment of Serco as its waste partner in November 2010. The partnership has overseen a wide range of improvements to waste and recycling services. All homes in the borough with kerbside collections now have weekly domestic, recycling and food waste collections, while fortnightly garden waste collections now run throughout the year.

So a big thank you to everyone for recycling – keep up the good work!
Universal Credit – benefit cap

The Department of Work and Pensions is introducing Universal Credit from April 2013. It brings together all existing benefits and sets a limit on the amount of some benefits that working-age households can get.

This limit (or cap) will mainly affect larger families and people in high-rent areas – a maximum of £350 a week for a single person or £500 for a single parent or couple.

Benefits that count towards the cap include:
- child benefit
- working tax credit and child tax credit
- housing benefit
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment Support Allowance
- income support
- carers allowance.

In effect, this means that some people will lose benefit they’re currently getting over and above the cap.

Universal Credit will also mean getting all your benefits in a single monthly payment. You will need to know how to make your claim online because the system will be mainly computer-based, although help will be available for you.

At the moment some tenants have rent payments made for them, Under Universal Credit tenants will be responsible for doing this themselves.

People who won’t be affected

The cap won’t apply to you if at least one person in your household (parent or disabled dependent child) gets one of:
- Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance (or the new replacement for DLA, personal independence payment)
- Employment Support Allowance (in the support group)
- war widow or widower’s pension
- working tax credit.

If you’ve been in work for 12 months and lose your job through no fault of your own, the cap won’t apply to you for the first nine months of your claim. If you’re likely to be affected by the cap, you should have had a letter about it from the Government.

Housing benefit changes on the way

Social housing tenants – are you ‘under-occupying’ your property?

From April next year a major change to housing benefits will affect you if you are:
- a council (Sandwell Homes) or housing association tenant
- of working age
- and are ‘under-occupying’ your home (that is, live somewhere the Government thinks is larger than your household needs).

How will these changes affect me?

If your home is thought to be larger than you need for your household size, your housing benefit will be cut and you will have to pay towards your rent.

What does working age mean?

Basically, working age is defined as below the qualifying age for Pension Credit (in April 2013 this will be 61 years 6 months, but will increase in line with the rise in pension age). The situation will be more complicated, though, for some couples, and if you are unsure whether you are of working age, you should ask for further advice.

How will they decide if my home is larger than my household needs?

The Government’s rules will allow one bedroom for each of:
- a couple
- over-65s
- two children of the same sex
- two children under 10
- any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
- a carer (or group of carers) providing overnight care.

What will happen if I am ‘under-occupying’?

Your housing benefit will be cut by 14% if you are thought to have one extra bedroom (according to the Government’s rules) and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms. This means you will have to pay towards your rent.

How will I make up any shortfall in rent?

Options you can consider:
- move to a smaller council or housing association home
- move to a smaller, privately-rented home
- apply for a home swap (mutual exchange)
- stay where you are and pay the shortfall yourself.

You may be able to rent out a room to help pay the shortfall, and you may qualify for special help (called Discretionary Housing Payment) but this is not guaranteed.

You can get more guidance on the new ‘under-occupancy’ measures and potential housing benefit cuts by contacting your local housing service centre or visiting www.sandwellhomes.org.uk if you are a council (Sandwell Homes) tenant.

If you rent your home from a housing association, contact the association. People who won’t be affected

- people over working age (see above)
- pensioners (anyone getting a State Retirement Pension or Pension Credit)
- disabled people in supported accommodation
- homeless people in temporary accommodation
- People ‘under-occupying’ because of a death in the family will be protected for up to 12 months. People who could previously afford to pay their rent and have not claimed housing benefit in the previous 52 weeks will be exempt for the first 13 weeks of their claim.
**Exams joy for young people**

Pupils in Sandwell chalked up record GCSE results this year.

Many schools smashed through the national average level for five or more A* to C passes, including English and Maths, as the borough continued its year-on-year upward trend.

Cabinet member for children and families, Councillor Bob Badham, said: “These are really pleasing and, in some cases, excellent results, and clearly reflect the hard work being put in by our schools, pupils and education staff at the council.”

‘It should be remembered that 10 years ago we had schools that were only getting single figures for the number of pupils achieving five or more passes at A to C grades. No school in the borough was achieving anything near the national average figure. But now we have schools that for the last few years have regularly been breaking through it’

School successes for the proportion of pupils scoring five or more passes, including English and Maths, at A* to C include:

- Q3 Academy, Great Barr – up 10 points to 76%.
- Wood Green Academy, Wednesbury – 70%, up from 59% last year, when the national average was 58%.
- Perryfields High, Oldbury – 65%.
- Ormiston Forge Academy, Cradley Heath – 57%, up nine points.

GCSE successes follow a bumper crop of A-level passes this year – and, according to provisional figures, Sandwell’s best ever results in Key Stage 2 tests for 11-year-olds. This in turn follows Sandwell’s rating as the fourth most improved authority at KS2 last year.

Provisional figures show more Sandwell children than ever reaching expected levels in English and Maths, more than five points up on last year and the biggest year-on-year improvement ever recorded by Sandwell primary schools.

Education chiefs expect results published by the Government in September will show Sandwell is more than four points above last year’s national average.

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**Fostering boost**

A drive to improve children’s services in Sandwell has received a boost after a Government watchdog judged fostering for hundreds of young people in the borough is getting better.

Council chiefs have welcomed Ofsted’s verdict - and pledged further progress to give young people the best start in life.

In their report, Ofsted said children and young people who have been fostered feel safe, secure and experience positive care.

It added the council has a clear plan to recruit and increase the number and expertise of foster carers. And it quoted a professional who works with the fostering service, who said: “Overall, it is an improving picture compared to about 18 months ago.”

The verdict comes shortly after the council’s children’s safeguarding service also scored an improved Ofsted rating.

Cabinet member for children and families Councillor Bob Badham said: “We took action after a poor report on fostering 18 months ago and the service is now rated adequate. There has been progress but our goal is to offer excellent children’s services so clearly there is much more to do. We will remain focused on improvements and have already made a number of changes to build on the momentum we have.”

The council is on track to appoint an external partner to supply an interim director of children’s services and a full package of support. The partnership is expected to last up to 30 months and will largely be paid for by savings in top management costs at the council.

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**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’.
HOW TO BECOME A SNOW CHAMPION:
You can apply for a Snow Champion kit between Monday 29 October and Friday 9 November, 2012. Please do not apply before 29 October. Only one Snow Champion kit per Sandwell household.

It’s quick and easy to apply on our website or by email:
- Go to the council website and fill in an online form at www.sandwell.gov.uk/snowchampion, or email snow_champion@sandwell.gov.uk with your name, address and phone number.
- Applications to become a Snow Champion will CLOSE at 5pm on Friday 9 November 2012

DELIVERY:
We will deliver Snow Champion kits during November.

TOP TIPS!
- If you don’t have access to the internet, please text or call us:
  - If you live in Smethwick, Oldbury or Rowley Regis text or call 07824 409020 with your name, full address and phone number.
  - If you live in Tipton, Wednesbury or West Bromwich text or call 07891 559152 with your name, full address and phone number.

IMPORANT NOTE TO PEOPLE WHO APPLIED LAST YEAR:
For those who were Snow Champions last winter – thank you for everything you did. We’ll be delivering an extra tub of salt for you to use this winter - you should still have your vest and shovel.
The demand for kits was incredible last winter and we know that some people who applied were disappointed when we ran out of stock.
So this year we will be delivering Snow Champion kits to the 1,000 people who were too late last year. Please don’t apply again – we have kept your details.

Refurb for crematorium
Rowley Regis Crematorium in Powke Lane will undergo a £1.36million refurbishment next year.
Work is expected to start later this year and should be completed in late 2013.
The refurbishment will create a larger chapel with more space for mourners, a new waiting room, better parking facilities and a covered area for families to view floral tributes.
Sandwell Council’s deputy leader and cabinet member for service improvement Councillor Mahboob Hussain said: “The staff do a great job and look after bereaved families and loved ones in a sensitive way in their time of need.
“We want to provide the families who use Rowley Regis Crematorium with a facility that is just as good as the new Sandwell Valley Crematorium.”
Sandwell Valley Crematorium, previously called West Bromwich Crematorium, was completely rebuilt in 2010. It now includes plenty of parking spaces and an area for coaches, a café and a large, bright chapel.
Visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/rowleyregiscrem for more details.

Open longer
The opening hours of Sandwell’s cemeteries and crematoria have been extended – meaning burials and cremations can now be held on any day of the week.
The seven-day opening of Sandwell Valley Crematorium and Rowley Regis Crematorium is aimed at making it easier for people to make funeral arrangements.
Services can be organised for any day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Year’s Day.
Couples can also book a wedding or civil partnership service at Sandwell Register Office in West Bromwich on any day of the week.

Councillors’ allowances
Find out how much Sandwell councillors got in allowances in the financial year ending 31 March 2012 by going to: www.sandwell.gov.uk/councillorsallowances
The payments are in line with a Members’ Allowances scheme adopted by the council in May 2011. For a paper copy contact Members’ Services on 0121 569 3044.
Sandwell has notched up a record number of Green Flag parks and green spaces this year – including the first crematorium in the Midlands to receive the status. There is now a council-run park in each of the six towns that boasts the prestigious award – the first time this has happened. They are:
• Barnford Park, Oldbury
• Brunswick Park, Wednesbury
• Haden Hill Park, Cradley Heath
• Sandwell Valley, West Bromwich
• Victoria Park, Smethwick
• Victoria Park, Tipton

Community-run Warley Woods, which was voted top Green Flag park in England in a public poll last year, has retained its Green Flag. Council-run Tipton Cemetery keeps its status and Sandwell Valley Crematorium, West Bromwich, has gained a Green Flag for the first time after a major £3.25 million refurbishment. This is the first crematorium to achieve the award in the Midlands. Moorlands Allotments, West Bromwich, and Barnford Park & Farm Road Allotments, Oldbury, have kept their status, with Dingley Road Allotments, Wednesbury, earning its first Green Flag.

The Green Flag is the national standard for parks and green spaces that are welcoming, safe and well-maintained with strong community involvement.

Cabinet member for neighbourhood services Councillor Ian Jones said: “I am tremendously proud to have a Green Flag in each of the six towns, with 12 flags in total now across Sandwell. I thank all the council and Serco staff, Friends groups and volunteers who have helped make this happen.”

Meanwhile, Sandwell’s Mayor Councillor Keith Davies has planted an oak tree in a park in each of the six towns to commemorate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. The trees have been planted at Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich; Brunswick Park, Wednesbury; Victoria Park, Tipton; Haden Hill Park, Cradley Heath; Barnford Park, Oldbury; and Victoria Park, Smethwick. Left: Mayor Councillor Keith Davies plants an oak tree at Green Flag-awarded Victoria Park, Tipton, for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, with Friends and councillors.
Portway progress

Work is on track on an £18m leisure, health and social care centre in Sandwell despite the downpours over the summer. Portway Lifestyle Centre is taking shape at the site of the old Oldbury Leisure Centre. Contractor Thomas Vale has started work on the building’s steel frame and was expected to start the brickwork at the time the Herald went to press. The firm expects to hand over the completed building by late summer 2013. The lifestyle centre is a joint scheme between Sandwell Council, Sandwell Leisure Trust, Sandwell Primary Care Trust and Sandwell Liftco. Sport England has provided £1.5m for the centre, which will serve disabled and able-bodied people equally.

Councillor Steve Eling, deputy leader, said: “Thomas Vale has faced some difficult weather conditions since work began but it’s on schedule to deliver what will be one of the most modern leisure centres in the country.”

www.slt-leisure.co.uk

Stepping up social work

Former primary school teacher Kate Edmonds is part way through an intensive course in social work in Sandwell.

She and four others beat thousands of other candidates to win a place on Step Up To Social Work, which mixes frontline work and academic study and takes 18 months instead of the usual two years. The Herald caught up with her to ask her how she’s found the last six months.

What have you done since starting the course?
My life has completely changed over the past six months! It has felt like six weeks as time really has flown! University has been very busy with four assignments completed so far and we are coming to the end of our first placement which has been in family support teams in a Children’s Centre. There have been lots of things to learn, lots of people to get to know, and lots of policies and procedures to abide by, but my mentor Anna Kudryl has taught me a lot and encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone to develop professionally and enhance my skills to use in social work.

What’s the best thing about the course?
The best thing for me is being out in the community with people. I feel I have learnt how to engage with families and listen to people which helps me support them properly. I am a ‘people person’ and being a social work student means I get to meet lots of new people, both at work and in the community.

And the hardest?
The hardest part so far was actually the application and interview stages. It was a gruelling process but I think it prepared me well for the course. Going from full-time work as a teacher back into lectures at university is still strange for me.

What’s next?
We finish our first placement in November and start the second placement in the local authority children’s services offices in February. I am really looking forward to the fast pace of frontline social work and developing myself professionally. I see social work as my vocation, not my job.

Your home town is Coventry. What do you think of the Black Country?
Sandwell is a large borough but there is a great sense of community and pride here. At the moment I am working in Tipton, and I can see Sandwell Council is making positive changes to move together in the right direction as a borough.

Any advice for people thinking of applying for the next course?
Do it! No, honestly, if you think or know that you want to be a social worker, I would highly recommend applying for Step Up To Social Work course. Sandwell has been a fantastic borough to work in and the university has supported me along the way, allowing me to embark upon my social work career positively and successfully.

Factfile
Step Up To Social Work is run by Sandwell and four other local authorities. Recruits have at least a 2.1 degree in a subject other than social work, A*-C grades in English and maths and 12 months’ experience working with children and families. Currently recruits receive a £22,000 bursary.
A new course is due to start next September, depending on Government funding. For further information email pam_pulsford@sandwell.gov.uk

Are you flu safe?
Get the jab!

“Flu can be a serious illness... are you at risk?”

Getting a flu jab can protect you all winter. It’s free if you are pregnant, over 65, or have a health condition such as severe asthma, diabetes, a chest, heart, liver or kidney complaint, or lowered immunity.

It’s quick, safe and free. To book your jab, speak to your GP practice today.

www.nhs.uk/flu

Flu fact
The flu jab can’t give you flu

NHS
Safer 6 is back – six weeks of intensive action across Sandwell’s six towns to help keep the borough safe and clean.

The campaign will run from October 15 until November 25. It follows the success of Safer 6 campaigns in 2010 and 2011. Joining forces are the council, police, fire service, probation, health, housing and transport services, schools and many more. They will work with the community to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, clean up ‘grot spots’ and promote crime prevention.

The campaign ties in with Alcohol Awareness Week (19 to 25 November). Organisations work closely together day in, day out throughout the year to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Safer 6 is all about organisations targeting their efforts and providing extra reassurance during the darker nights, fireworks and bonfire season, a time when crime and anti-social behaviour can often rise.

For the latest on the Safer Sandwell Partnership’s Safer 6 campaign, visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/safer6 and www.sandwellpolice.org.uk. Follow updates on Twitter @sandwellcouncil and @sandwellpolice with the #Safer6 hashtag.

Beware of scams!

Sandwell Council’s trading standards team is warning residents to be wary after an increase in scams involving phone calls or emails from people falsely claiming to be from legitimate organisations.

Scammers trick members of the public by suggesting they could be owed money – often for repayment of bank charges, payment protection insurance (PPI) or a court settlement. Then they ask for an ‘up front’ payment from the consumer so they can get the money.

Mark Beesley, area trading standards officer, said: “Genuine organisations would never contact consumers asking them for personal bank details, or request an ‘up front’ payment by money transfer.”

He advised anyone who has given personal bank details to contact their bank immediately to stop or check any unauthorised transactions.

He said: “Do not transfer money unless you are absolutely confident the company is legitimate.”

Cabinet member for neighbourhood services Councillor Ian Jones said: “I would urge anyone receiving cold calls purporting to come from legitimate organisations to think very carefully before handing over money or sharing personal details.”

Anyone who believes they have been a scam victim should report the matter to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040, who will pass on reports to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau.
Safety success

Keeping people safe and the borough clean and tidy are key priorities.

The Safer Sandwell Partnership includes Sandwell Council, Sandwell Police, West Midlands Fire Service, health, probation and housing services and other local organisations. The Herald reviews some key Sandwell successes of the past year.

Crime down
There were 3,500 fewer victims of crime during the past year, a 15% fall. Most serious violence has fallen 18%, representing 62 fewer victims. Recorded crime levels here are half what they were 10 years ago. Partners are working hard to build on these results.

Big Spring Clean
More than 2,500 volunteers, including 46 schools, took part in this year’s campaign. They cleared 12 tonnes of litter and green waste and planted 60 trees and 500 plants.

Operation Unite
Targeting known offenders, Unite helped cut burglary by 26% (555 fewer victims) and robbery by 27% (286 fewer victims). The police, council and partners set up a metal theft team to tackle offenders and work with scrap metal dealers, cutting metal thefts by more than half.

A new ‘trusted trader’ scheme involves businesses looking out for offenders selling on stolen goods.

Reoffending rates
Sandwell is the eighth best performing area in England and Wales at reducing reoffending. The reoffending rate is 17% lower than the government prediction.

Six hundred offenders sentenced to Community Payback did 55,000 hours of unpaid work in Sandwell over the past year, including cleaning up ‘grot spots’ and community buildings. This equates to £334,000 worth of free labour.

Domestic violence
Over 1,200 domestic abuse victims were supported between April 2011 and June 2012 by independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) from Sandwell Women’s Aid, Sandwell Council and Sandwell Primary Care Trust.

One client, who was helped into a safe house, said: “Without his help I don’t know what would have happened to me.” Sandwell Women’s Aid supported 282 adult victims and 59 child victims of sexual violence during the same period. Reoffending by offenders who successfully completed Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation’s Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme was half the rate predicted.

Tackling problems
Around 2,000 people attended forum meetings and ‘face the people’ sessions in 2011/12 with councillors, council neighbourhood managers, police and others.

More than 2,000 community issues – ranging from fly tipping and litter hotspots to groups hanging around – were tackled. The council’s anti-social behaviour team have secured 43 court injunctions and 41 anti-social behaviour orders over the past 18 months to curb people’s bad behaviour.

Clean Sweep
The council and waste partner Serco ran an intensive spring campaign to target grime hot spots and clear away litter, fly tipped rubbish, graffiti and dog mess.

The council has also stepped up its dog fouling crackdown, with wardens issuing more fines to the small minority of irresponsible owners and raising awareness through posters, letters and giving out dog mess bags.

Youth activities
Over 5,800 young people got involved in targeted youth activities in 2011/12, ranging from sports to music activities. And 2,000 took part in the summer 2012 youth activities programme.
New Square latest

More shops and restaurants have been announced for the New Square development in West Bromwich town centre.

Deichmann, Harvester and Phones 4u are the three latest names to sign up for the development. They are to join those already announced for when New Square opens in summer 2013:

- Tesco Extra
- JD Sports
- Primark
- Bank
- Arcadia

The development will have a leisure quarter with an Odeon cinema, restaurants and bars, including Nandos and Prezzo, and will create around 2,000 jobs.

You can view the New Square development as it’s built at www.sandwell.gov.uk/westbromwebcam.

Surgeries for council tenants

Special drop-in surgeries have been introduced in libraries and community centres in Sandwell to improve links with tenants across the borough.

Norman Fletcher, Sandwell Homes’ general manager for housing services, said: “This is an excellent scheme where people can seek advice and information when they pop in to the local library or attend activities or meetings at community centres.”

Pool plans making a splash!

Sandwell is making a splash with plans for several new swimming pools over the next few years.

Here the Herald catches up with the pool projects for Tipton and West Bromwich.

Tipton Swimming Centre

Work on the new 25-metre, six-lane Tipton Swimming Centre is now well under way. The centre, which is being built on land between Alexandra Road and Thursfield Road, is set to open in spring 2013. It will also feature a learner pool, dance studio and 50 gym fitness stations. The centre will be run by Sandwell Leisure Trust.

West Bromwich Leisure Centre

Plans for a new swimming pool and leisure centre in West Bromwich took a major step forward in the summer after Sandwell Council appointed DC Leisure to deliver the scheme.

The award-winning company has been chosen to design, build and run the £11m town centre complex which is due to open in summer 2014.

The centre, being built on the corner of Moor Street and Barton Street, will feature a 25-metre pool, learner pool, sauna and steam room, four-court sports hall and fitness suite. There will also be two dance studios and activity rooms, an indoor children’s adventure play centre and a café.

Health funding call

Sandwell Council is calling on the Government to rethink proposed funding rules for public health services which could see it lose around £2.4m a year.

The local authority will next year take over improving, protecting and promoting public health from Sandwell Primary Care Trust (PCT).

This includes services such as drug and alcohol treatment and cancer prevention.

But under proposed rules it will have to provide these services with less money from 2014/15.

This is because the amount local authorities receive will mainly depend on age-related factors rather than deprivation levels.

Sandwell Council’s cabinet member for health and commissioning Councillor Paul Moore said: “We are happy to take over public health because we can take a broad view of what is best for Sandwell but there has to be a level playing field.

“The amount we will receive for public health in 2014/15 is set to fall, which will have an impact on what we can do.

“We have written to the Government urging it to ensure areas with high deprivation like Sandwell do not lose out.”

Health funding call

Surgeries for council tenants

Pool plans making a splash!

Health funding call

Surgeries for council tenants

Pool plans making a splash!

Health funding call

Surgeries for council tenants

Pool plans making a splash!
Bright future for council tenants

A bright new future for housing in Sandwell has been revealed to the borough’s 29,000 tenants – a 10-year investment plan with new council homes being built and more than 7,000 properties being improved.

Sandwell Council has drawn up a far-reaching plan to plough almost £500 million into improving the living standards for people in council-owned homes across the six towns.

The council is taking over direct control of housing services from Sandwell Homes on 1 January 2013 and has exciting plans for improvements to homes. This follows Government cuts to the Decent Homes programme of improvements, which were mainly carried out on behalf of the council by Sandwell Homes and its contractors.

Councillor Simon Hackett, cabinet member for housing, said the council believed that money saved by returning the organisation to council control would provide more cash for improving homes and frontline services.

And the savings will form part of a new £490 million housing investment plan for Sandwell over the next 10 years, which will see significant improvements to homes and estates as well as new council houses built. The move follows an independently-led consultation in which two thirds of the 1,500 tenants who responded either supported or were neutral about the council’s proposals. Councillor Hackett said: “Sandwell Homes has done some great work to improve housing over the years for thousands of tenants – and we thank the board, chair, employees, tenants and everyone involved.

Now the time has come for us to find a new way to keep improving homes and services.

“With the Government having cut Decent Homes money, we need to make savings by avoiding duplication of services and management structures between Sandwell Homes and Sandwell Council. This money can then be ploughed back into improvements and frontline services.

“The consultation shows there is no significant opposition – and I can assure tenants we will be involving them throughout and listening to their views on options for the future.

“Our 10-year investment programme is very exciting news for tenants – and will see us working to provide the next generation of good quality, warm and energy efficient homes for the future.

“For the first time in a generation the council will build new council houses year on year starting this current financial year.”

Tenants across the borough have highly praised the big improvements in living standards they now enjoy after huge investments in modernisation schemes on many of the council estates.

Councillor Simon Hackett, cabinet member for housing, said he had been delighted with the response from tenants on estates he had visited in recent weeks.

He said: “Wherever I have been the tenants have been praising the improvements to their homes and the work of Sandwell Council, Sandwell Homes and the contractors.”

Councillor Hackett said the £19 million improvements at Kenrick Park in West Bromwich had made a once run-down estate a place where people were proud to live after getting a range of upgrades.

“There is no doubt the estate is a good advertisement for Sandwell with its brightly-coloured blocks being seen by many thousands of people from the M5 motorway every day,” he said. And tenant Lyn Colley said she was now “very proud to live on the estate”. She said: “It was a wonderful scheme and we now live on a very attractive estate.”

Tenants at Russell House were delighted too with improvements to their Wednesbury block where a £2.8 million scheme improved lifts, communal areas, windows and balconies, and provided new, glazed front and rear entrances as well as colourful external works.

Tenant John Grosvenor said he had nothing but praise for the work that has been done and said the contractors Wates Living Space and Sandwell Homes employees had done a “brilliant job” for them.

Councillor Hackett said: “This was another excellent scheme and it was wonderful to hear the tenants’ comments.”

It was the same story at the Manor Road estate in Smethwick where upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms and heating were warmly welcomed by tenants.

One delighted tenant Elsie Statten said she was really delighted with the new kitchens and bathroom. “It is lovely to have all these new things and I have thanked the councillors for the work on our estate,” she said.

Councillor Hackett got a warm welcome on the Cotterills Farm estate in Tipton where homes are being surveyed for a range of major improvements. Most tenants have been surveyed for improvements to kitchens, bathrooms, heating and external works.

Councillor Hackett said: “This is great news for the people at Cotterills Farm and during our discussions with them it was clear that they are delighted.

“We have worked hard to achieve this result and it is further evidence that despite the Government scrapping Decent Homes funding we will continue to do our best for tenants across the borough.”

Don’t miss out on FREE insulation

The race is on for Sandwell households looking to get their home insulated for free during 2012.

Until the end of this year, households in the borough can take advantage of free loft and cavity wall insulation regardless of their income.

The unbeatable deal is being promoted by West Midlands Warm Zone, the only insulation scheme endorsed by Sandwell Council.

The offer features free loft insulation for any private household – owned or rented – subject to existing loft thickness, as well as free cavity wall insulation.

Councillor Simon Hackett, cabinet member for housing, said: “By having loft and cavity wall insulation installed for free, households will also save money on energy bills for years to come.

“Ainsulated home will be easier to heat – and people could save up to £175 a year by installing loft insulation.”

Free insulation is currently possible because of Government subsidies, which are due to end in December.

Offers of the free insulation are subject to a survey.

If you are interested in the office, please call West Midlands Warm Zone before Christmas 2012 on 0800 033 7967.
Sandwell joined international celebrations to mark 50 years of Jamaican independence.

Tens of thousands of people enjoyed the Birmingham & Sandwell Mela at Victoria Park, Smethwick.

Shakespeare and the Sandwell Giant (aka Walter Parsons) featured in a community procession in West Bromwich town centre during the finale of the Sandwell Arts Festival.

Olympic torchbearers from Sandwell met the Mayor Councillor Keith Davies on the opening day of the Olympic Games.

A new world record for bhangra dancing was set in Wednesbury as part of Sant Nirankari Mission’s Oneness celebrations.

Thousands enjoyed the fun of the annual Sandwell Community Show at Sandwell Valley.

The Olympic torch arrives in Oldbury, carried by John Ovis and Kate Lawler. Over 40,000 people lined Sandwell’s streets to welcome the Olympic Flame.

Crowds gathered with civic leaders and servicemen and women past and present for Armed Forces Day in Oldbury Civic Square.

Gymnast Kristian Thomas, who won bronze at London 2012, passes the Olympic torch onto Benjamin Lee in Smethwick High Street.

Sandwell’s Mayor and Mayoress, joined bell-ringers at the Salvation Army, Cradley Heath, as part of a nationwide event on the opening day of the Olympic Games.

The Sandwell Leisure Trust team brought along some life-size ‘Olympic heroes’ to the Sandwell Community Show.

Thousands enjoyed the fun of the annual Sandwell Community Show at Sandwell Valley.

Sandwell’s summer snapshot...
Council pledges help in troubled times

Problems facing families in recession-hit Britain make it even more important for the council to do all it can to help, says a senior councillor.

Deputy leader and cabinet member for service improvement Councillor Mahboob Hussain said: “Things are hard for many people at the moment as the country goes through difficult times.

“The council is affected, too, because we have lost many millions of pounds in cash from the Government.

“But we are all the more determined to make sure the money we have goes as far as it can to help families.

“That’s why, for example, we are looking into following up a public consultation earlier this year and opening the council house at Oldbury on Saturday mornings – and late on Wednesday evenings – so people have more time to get advice and pay bills.”

Councillor Hussain’s pledge follows a series of Help4U events in each of Sandwell’s six towns this year which gave over 1,000 residents a chance to pick up practical information, advice and tips.

The events brought together a range of council and other services from voluntary sector agencies and private sector companies.

Councillor Hussain, said: “Our Help4U events aim to give people practical information and tips on how to save money, and details of benefits they may be entitled to.

“They also give general advice on matters such as housing and employment.

“It’s about helping people to save money or get benefits that they were not aware were available to them. In difficult financial times, this can make a major difference to people.”

- Meanwhile, summer roadshows in Sandwell have given residents a chance to say what they think of council services. Over 2,000 residents have filled in surveys at a series of My Council roadshows at venues across Sandwell’s six towns and the Sandwell Community Show. Now the roadshows will be going out and about to community groups who would like to provide feedback on council services.

If you’re a member of a local group and would like to host or attend an event, email marketing_publicity@sandwell.gov.uk or speak to the marketing team on 0121 569 2367.

Council staff are to take part in fund raising events – including cake sales and raffles – on 28 September for Macmillan Cancer Support’s World’s Biggest Coffee Morning. Councillor Mahboob Hussain, pictured centre, said: “We’re happy to be taking part to help raise money for an important cause.”

The World’s Biggest Coffee Morning will be held at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury. The Macmillan Mobile Information Unit will also be at the council on the day, which will be open to any other passers-by who would like more information about Macmillan and cancer-related issues.

Prize Puzzles

Crossword

Across
1. One of the seasons (6)
4. Bordering (6)
9. Against (7)
10. Girl’s name (5)
11. Not there (4)
12. A country (7)
14. Sibling (6)
16. Avoid (6)
19. Robin Hood was good at this (7)
21. Little person (4)
23. ___ bifida (5)
24. On top of a house (7)
25. Prols gently (6)
26. American inventor (6)

Down
1. Cease (4)
2. Miss Piggy was one of them (7)
3. Follow (5)
5. Floods (7)
6. South Asian country (5)
7. Teams losing one nil are this (4,4)
8. On top of (5)
13. Kiler (8)
15. Lift up (7)
17. Tolkien’s little people (7)
18. Greek monster (5)
20. Wept (5)
21. Fair haired (5)
22. Short for against (4)

Wordsearch

Find the following words concealed in the grid:

- Three
- Degrees
- Welfare
- Reform
- School
- Successes
- Foster
- Turnaround
- Police
- Elections

Sudoku

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

Find the following words concealed in the grid:

- D N U O R A N R T U
- D E G R E E S X W S
- O J T R E T S O F U
- S N O I T C E L E C
- K V Z F D M C B R C
- X Q U B R N Y P A E
- Y L O O H C S D F S
- Z Q F J I V J I L S
- G E W P Y T H R E E
- R E C I L O P L W S

Win £25 in Sainsbury’s vouchers

Send your answers to The Editor, Sandwell Herald, Communications Unit, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury B69 3DE by 3 November 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.

Lucky voucher winners from puzzles in the last Herald are:
- Crossword, Mrs Page, West Bromwich
- Sudoku, Mrs Warren, Great Barr
- Wordsearch, Mrs Purslow, West Bromwich
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

Contact your councillor

Abby Ward
Steve Eling
0121 569 3045
Dr. Ann Jaron
0121 429 9216
Bob Piper
0121 429 4276

Great Barr with Yew Tree Ward
Shirley Hosell
07961 699995
Steve Melia
0121 502 9751
Christopher Worsey
07772 896004

Oldbury Ward
Susan Downing
07976 042372
Elena Gills
07779 624102
Mahmoud Hussain
07756 337799

St Paul’s Ward
Zahoor Ahmed
07964 850928
Babu Singh Bawa OBE
07815 567280
Paul Kaur Gill
07891 169501

Blackheath Ward
Malcolm Bridges
07815 567268
Kerrie Camschiel
07905 274227
Bob Price
0121 559 6412

Great Bridge Ward
Peter Allen
07976 958843
Joanne Hadley
07976 567413
Derek Rowley
0121 569 4134

Old Warley Ward
Dr. Trevor Crompton
07714 116434
Susan Crompton
07554 374585
Steve Trow
07768 617716

Tipton Green Ward
Ahmadul Haque MBE
07786 277767
Ian Jones
07878 131414
Syeda Khatoon MBE
07786 421436

Bristnall Ward
Lucy Cauchmore
07854 487962
Steven Fearn
07814 212572
Ann Jarvis
07891 162762

Greets Green & Lyng Ward
Bob Badham MBE
0121 569 3114
John Edwards
0121 531 5060
Gurcharan Singh Sidhu
0121 553 3090

Princes End Ward
Suzanne Hartwell
07791 546690
Stephen Jones
07833 682588
Bill Charrington
07786 236066

Tividale Ward
Lorraine Asman
07976 504818
Maria Groompton
01384 258607
Jayne Wilkinson
07891 567562

Charlemont with Grove Vale Ward
Anne Hughes
0121 532 6288
Liam Pearce
07794 088243
Tony Ward
07810 850959

Hateley Heath Ward
Pat Johnson
07771 955505
Paul Moon
07969 138038
Paul Sandars
07711 625074

Rowley Ward
Susan Edwards
07970 088247
Barbara Price
0121 559 6412
Chris Tarrant
07856 360171

Wednesbury North Ward
Elaine Costigan
0121 526 2757
Peter Hughes
07896 914849
Maria Hughes
07970 131138

Cradley Heath & Old Hill Ward
John Tipper
07501 066202
Ann Shuckleton
0121 550 1245
Julie Webb
01384 638588

Langley Ward
Mick Davies
07976 916263
Yvonne Davies
07772 405686
Sharon Davies
07735 619794

Smethwick Ward
Keith Davies
07836 512941
Linda Horton
0121 569 5551
Vic Sinha
021214 3303

Wednesbury South Ward
Elizabeth Giles
07814 212575
Liz Jones
07814 708869
Pam Hughes
0121 556 5005

Friar Park Ward
Joy Edia
0121 601 8196
Simon Hackett
07813 985422
Geoff Lewis
0121 556 4253

Newton Ward
David Hosell
07986 600512
Joyce Underhill
0121 358 5742
Tony Underhill
0121 358 5742

Soho & Victoria Ward
Damien Cooper
07887 56744
Roger Horton
0121 568 8719
Mohammed Rob
07766 421423

West Bromwich Central Ward
Bawa Singh Bawa
07891 297574
Kim Frazer
07976 056215
Mohinder Singh Taggar
0121 556 1052
Great autumn at The Public

Alexei Sayle returns to the stand-up stage after 16 years as The Public hosts a mix of nationally and internationally known artists in coming months.

Audiences at the West Bromwich venue will be treated to a choice of music, comedy, dance and theatre. Highlights of a star-studded comedy programme include:

- the charismatic Patrick Monahan, who returns on 28 September (after a sell-out show in 2011) to compere The Public Comedy Showcase, headlined by the unmissable Ray Peacock with support from Kabir Singh and Lovdev Barpaga;
- Liverpudlian Sayle on 17 October;
- intelligent, straight-talking social commentary from inimitable Australian and ex-heavy metal drummer Steve Hughes (3 November);
- the beautifully insane Bridget Christie (26 October) and her brand of baffling stand-up with a brilliant political bite;
- and Piff the Magic Dragon (16 November), dubbed 'a stunningly good magician' on ITV’s ‘Penn and Teller: Fool Us’.


The best of Birmingham’s ‘Be Festival’ (31 October) will showcase daring and delightful theatre from across Europe, and there will be a fun-packed week of half-term activities from 22 – 26 October including a drama workshop, Diwali art workshop, family arts and crafts day and the captivating children’s theatre production ‘The Frog Who Wouldn’t Hop.’

The exciting ‘Light Up Digital’ exhibition (a celebration of light and dark by cutting-edge digital artists) launches on 7 November.

Don’t miss The Public’s celebration of Black History Month and Diwali including SALUTE – A Black History Month Cultural Extravaganza on 6 October and Diwali celebrations on 10 November.

Managing director Linda Saunders said: ‘We have a great programme of entertainment, community and family activities this autumn.

“Some of the finest upcoming and established comics will grace the stage along with a whole host of talented artists and performers, guaranteed to keep you entertained.”

For more information visit www.thepublic.com or call 0121 533 7161

Young people’s focus

Sandwell Shadow Youth Cabinet Chair Wasim Ali reflects on summer 2012.

It’s been a very busy summer for the Shadow Youth Cabinet, with lots of events and meetings to make sure the voice of young people in the borough is clearly heard.

One of the most enjoyable was the Alternative Olympics at Coneygre Arts Centre in Tipton.

Some 250 plus young people aged 11-19 joined in the Games, which was a fantastic turnout.

The sun shone and there were lots of sports and other things to do – from electronic games to riding a rodeo bull (it should definitely be an Olympic sport if fun is the deciding factor). There were lots of gold medal performances!

Our members have also tackled a busy media schedule, beginning with an interview on West Brom-based community station Raaj FM to promote youth activities.

This was followed by a debate on BBC WM and an interview on BBC Midlands Today on the anniversary of the summer riots last year.

We have also been working closely with transport organisations and will be visiting the bus depot in West Bromwich with Councillor Roger Horton. Another forthcoming engagement is a West Midlands Police consultation event in September.

Two of our United Kingdom Youth Parliament representatives, Abu Syddek and Jugan Sahota, attended the weekend UKYP annual residential at Nottingham University, where they met people including Jon Bercow MP, the House of Commons Speaker. Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) also took part in fringe meetings, workshops, question time, and a vote on issues of concern to young people.

Our MYPs will be consulting with young people to find out the top five issues of concern to young people.

Finally, we have kickstarted our campaign on youth unemployment. In the coming weeks we will be meeting with people to find out about the services and support available then consulting with young people to find out their views.
What’s On in Sandwell

From Aircr disposable to Anchors – Tipton’s Workshop to the World
Saturday 29 September
Tipton Library
Celebrate a local history day of all the manufacturers that made Tipton great. Bring a photo to share a memory. Open to all ages. Refreshments available. Time: 10.30am – 3pm Price: FREE
For info: 0121 557 1796

History tour at Sandwell Valley
Sunday 30 September
Sandwell Park Farm, Sandwell Valley
Come along for a guided tour looking at the history of the Sandwell Valley. Booking essential. Time: 2pm – 3.30pm Price: adults £3; over 60s £2.50
For info: 0121 553 0220

A Dickens’s of a afternoon
Sunday 7 October
Haden Hill House Museum, Dudley
Come and join us for an afternoon of music and readings and other activities to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. Time: 2pm – 4.30pm Price: FREE
For info: 01384 569444

World War II afternoon
Sunday 14 October
Haden Hill House Museum, Dudley
A nostalgic look back at life during World War II. Join with activities and sample afternoon tea 1940s style. Time: 2pm – 4.30pm Price: FREE but there may be a small charge for some activities. For info: 01384 569444

Manor House ‘Ghoul School’
Sunday 21 October
Manor House Museum, West Bromwich
Take part in dancing, sports, and creepy crafts. Admission free, with a small charge for some activities. Time: 11am – 3pm Price: FREE
For info: 0121 588 2985

Autumn crafts
Wednesday 24 October
Central Library, West Bromwich
Decorating plant pots and growing seeds. Suitable for children age five and above. Time: 2.30pm – 3.30pm Price: FREE
For info: 0121 569 4904

Halloween creepy kids crafts
Wednesday 24 October
Oak House Museum, West Bromwich
Just drop in. Time: 1pm – 3pm Price: £1 per item made
For info: 0121 553 0759

Children’s Halloween disco
Thursday 25 October
Manor House Museum, West Bromwich
Come dressed as your favourite spooky character. Maximum of two adults per child. Refreshments available. Booking essential. Time: 6.30pm – 8.30pm Price: FREE
For info: 0121 588 2985

Warley Woods forest play
Thursday 25 October
The Pavilion, Warley Woods, 101 Lightwoods Hill, Smethwick
Come and join the Out to Play team building dens, cooking over a campfire, climbing trees and much more. Booking essential. Suitable for children aged 5 to 13. Time: 10am – 2.30pm Price: FREE
For info: 0845 352 7854 for a registration form

Senior Ghostbusters
Friday 26 October
Manor House Museum, West Bromwich
Are you brave enough to help with the investigation? Booking is essential. This event may be too scary for small children. Time: 4pm
Price: adults £1.50; children £4
For info: 0121 588 2985

Don’t Go into the Cellar – Theatre Company
Tuesday 30 October
Haden Hill House Museum, Dudley
Lurking in the shadow of Dracula lies some of the Edwardian era’s most blood curdling horror – take a bite out of the past and sink your teeth into Bram Stoker’s classic gothic novel. Time: first show at 6pm; second show at 8pm Price: £6
For info: 01384 569444

FREE EXHIBITIONS
Open Wednesday – Sunday and everyday during half-term.
20 October - 4 November
Two exhibitions celebrating Black History Month:
Out of Africa
Jamaican Olympic and Anniversary Legacy Project

LIGHT UP DIGITAL
7 November 2012 – 3 February 2013
SALUTE - A Black History Month Cultural Extravaganza
Saturday 6 October
Free event from 10am

ALEXEI SAYLE
Wednesday 17 October
Starts 8pm (bar open with food at 6pm) £12 advance, £14 door

FRED ZEPPELIN (LED
ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE)
Friday 2 November
Starts 9pm, £6 advance, £8 door

DIWALI CELEBRATIONS
Saturday 3 October 11am – 4pm, free entry

KABADDI KABADDI KABADDI – BY SATINDER CHOHAN
Wednesday 21 November
Starts 7.45pm, £10 (£8 concession)

For more information on the latest events, exhibitions and activities, visit www.thepublic.com or call 0121 533 7161

The Public

www.facebook.com/the_publicwestbromwich
www.twitter.com/_the_public

Details correct at time of going to print

Bonfire night
Sandwell Council’s annual bonfire and fireworks display will be held on Saturday 3 November at Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich. Spectators will be treated to two fireworks displays set to music with a contemporary theme to include a firework show for children at 7pm with the main display at 7.45pm. Gates open at 3.30pm. The bonfire will be lit by Mayor Counsellor Keith Davies at 8.30pm. Admission: 26 adults; 23 children/over 60s; £15 family ticket to include one adult and three children, or, two adults and two children; under-fives free. Parking is free after 6pm.

Christmas and Diwali lights

Details of celebration events are being finalised and you will be able to find all the latest information at www.sandwell.gov.uk/lights or by calling 0121 589 3121.