

Strong and Resilient Neighbourhoods

The Sandwell Neighbourhoods Strategy 2024 – 2027





Contents

Foreword	4
Our borough	5
Our vision	6
What is a neighbourhood in the Sandwell context	7
Our approach	8
The model in action	10
Roles of our councillors	11
Our towns and ward councillors	12
Budget package	14
Measuring impact and success	15
Getting involved and feedback on our strategy	16

Foreword

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Sandwell Council, when our six towns were brought together under our current boundaries. As we celebrate this milestone, we are delighted to introduce this new three-year Strategy which sets out what we want to achieve to make the neighbourhoods that make up our borough thrive and flourish.

We're down to earth in Sandwell, and proud of our diverse communities and heritage as a powerhouse of the industrial revolution. This history is still evident today in the unique and distinct character and sense of belonging of our towns and neighbourhoods.

This Strategy builds on that solid platform and stretches our ambition to deliver both at ward level while not undoing the distinct communities that make up our towns.

To achieve this, the Strategy sets out the model we will adopt. It will ensure we target our resources based on needs and that our services and those of our local partners have meaningful and demonstrably positive impact on the lives of our residents and tenants in their communities.

The Strategy is unashamedly focussed on the needs of all residents, including tenants as that is the primary reason for working in neighbourhoods where people rightly expect safe, clean, green, and thriving places. Residents and community groups need to feel they can voice their opinions and tackle local issues and make their neighbourhoods places where people want to live.

We know our Councillors want to make the most of their local knowledge and our aspiration is to strengthen the roles of ward Councillors as community leaders and effect short- and longer-term positive change and problem solve where required.

The Council has come a long way in the last few years and is focused on being brilliant at the basics. That means getting things right for our residents – making our services easy to use and working for the people who need them. Central to our approach is mobilising more of our front-line services to deliver at a neighbourhood level.

We trust that you will support our aspirations and ambitions for all our communities in the Borough. Together we can deliver a great future for Sandwell.



Councillor Kerrie Carmichel
Leader of the Council



Shokat Lal
Chief Executive

Our borough

Sandwell is a metropolitan borough in the Black Country that brought together six boroughs: Oldbury, Rowley Regis and Smethwick in the south, and Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich in the north. It has a population of just under 330,000 and is the 34th biggest local authority in England. It is projected to grow further and faster than the West Midlands and national average. It borders Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton and is divided into 24 wards represented by 72 Councillors.

The borough has a relatively young population with more than 40% of residents under 30 years of age in 2019 and nearly 40% of residents are from an ethnic minority. Some 28,600 homes were still managed by the council in 2019 accounting for 21.6% of the borough housing stock.

The borough has its challenges. The number of localities in the worst 1% nationally has noticeably dropped but overall Sandwell remains the eighth most deprived English district. This reflects place-based issues but most seriously, people-based outcomes: low skills and educational attainment leading to labour market exclusion; child and family poverty; and poor health and life expectancy.

According to our 2023 Residents Survey, 81% of respondents are satisfied with their area as a place to live and 83% feel strongly about belonging to their local area which reflects the self-evident strong local community attachments that our residents have.



Our vision

The Sandwell Plan 2021- 2025 sets out the Council’s strategic vision, ambitions and strategic outcomes and is the bedrock of the focus of the Council’s activities and resources. The vision for Sandwell in 2030 is:

a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. It’s where we call home and where we’re proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

This strategy reflects the ambition No 8 which states ... Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families. The strategy also supports the Strategic outcomes in the Sandwell Plan including - strong resilient communities.

<p>Ambition 1</p>  <p>Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.</p>	<p>Ambition 6</p>  <p>We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.</p>
<p>Ambition 2</p>  <p>Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.</p>	<p>Ambition 7</p>  <p>We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.</p>
<p>Ambition 3</p>  <p>Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.</p>	<p>Ambition 8</p>  <p>Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.</p>
<p>Ambition 4</p>  <p>Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.</p>	<p>Ambition 9</p>  <p>Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.</p>
<p>Ambition 5</p>  <p>Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Ambition 10</p>  <p>Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people’s lives and communities.</p>



What is a neighbourhood in the Sandwell context

What is a neighbourhood in the Sandwell context?

The definition of a neighbourhood or locality can be, in many aspects less important than ensuring that residents feel they have a sense of belonging to their local area and can influence the quality of life locally.

Nonetheless, in the context of Sandwell, comprising six distinct and proud towns and divided into 24 electoral wards, the approach to neighbourhood working needs to have regard to both. Residents and the Council are very clear about maintaining the individual identity of each of the 6 towns.

This strategy which supports the model for neighbourhood working therefore uses the building blocks of both the wards and towns to allow for a coherent and easily understandable approach.

While a dual level approach is readily achievable, to allow for a coherent and easily understandable approach, the model will provide clarity on expectations and responsibilities for community leadership and operational matters.



Our approach

What we want to achieve through the new model

In developing the model, it was clear that the following are very important factors to have regard to:

- Be resident, tenant and member centric.
- Allow for better and more consistent governance.
- Include clarity over member and officer roles (such as Town Leads and ward members)
- Have consistent local engagement.
- Be realistic about financial constraints.
- Be set up to be outcome focussed.
- Be adaptable to change.
- Be implemented as soon as practicable.

The Sandwell Plan and it's Vision 2030 informs and is the driver for a new model and is the catalyst for the Council to be equipped to work in and help our communities achieve better outcomes. The model builds on existing knowledge and skill bases and work already undertaken in neighbourhoods and derives learning from models operating in other local authority areas.

The model relies on organisational cultural and structural changes to achieve:

- More effective joint working across the Council focussed on the needs of residents and localities.**
- More use of data, insight and evidence at a neighbourhood level to build a better understanding of needs and opportunities, inform strategy development, local investment and service design and partner interventions where appropriate.**
- An inclusive approach to empower and engage residents and build community capacity for decision making and issues affecting their neighbourhoods.**
- A more efficient and more responsive but less dependent and less complex customer journey that can resolve local issues.**



The 4 elements of our approach are:

A 'place' based approach	A 'people' based approach	A 'strengths' based approach	An 'opportunities' based approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That has neighbourhoods that are safe and where residents are proud to belong • That has clean streets and welcoming green spaces • That has vibrant local town centres • That have warm and secure homes and welcoming neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where residents are happy and healthy • That is inclusive and allows people to interact and meets the needs of diverse communities • Where people are less lonely and isolated • That offers the best start in life for our young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where we harness the skills and knowledge in communities • That effectively uses the community leadership role of all our Councillors • Where we work with communities collaboratively and with partners to problem solve • Where we listen and build community capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where data and insight informs decision making at town and ward levels • That enables involvement and influence by residents in setting local priorities • That allows for healthy lifestyles and prevention. • Where local assets are harnessed • Where the focus can be on seizing tangible improvements to localities

The model seeks positive collaborative and priority driven action in our neighbourhoods as follows:

Theme	Action	How
Prioritise	Identify needs, priorities and issues in our wards and towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce ward profiles • Produce evidence based annual ward plans • Schedule ward meetings • Walkabouts and ward audits with action plans/ trackers • Intelligent tracking of complaints and enquiries • Publish service work programmes • Analyse residents surveys and seek resident and tenants views. • Collaborate with partners priorities • Utilise collective knowledge and resources at Town meetings
Collaborate	Bring residents, community groups, partners and voluntary sector together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and influence community led events • Organise ward based meetings and events • Collaborate and convene partner events on cross cutting issues • Inform residents and share issues using localised communications • Tackle long standing, hard to solve matters collaboratively
Lead	Problem solve and action planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Councillors, Town Leads intervening as appropriate • Utilise Council neighbourhood team resources • Utilise ward budgets and grant funding as appropriate
Evaluate	Review outcomes, and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Leads oversight on ward priority issues • Annual ward reports • Good news stories in wards

The model in action

We recognised that our officer structure needed to change, and our refreshed team arrangements relies on collaboration, reducing duplication and ensuring consistency of approach.

Teams feeding in neighbourhood working at Sandwell include:

- PUBLIC HEALTH
- HOUSING
- HIGHWAYS
- FAMILY HUBS
- GREEN SPACES
- COMMUNICATIONS



Outcomes:

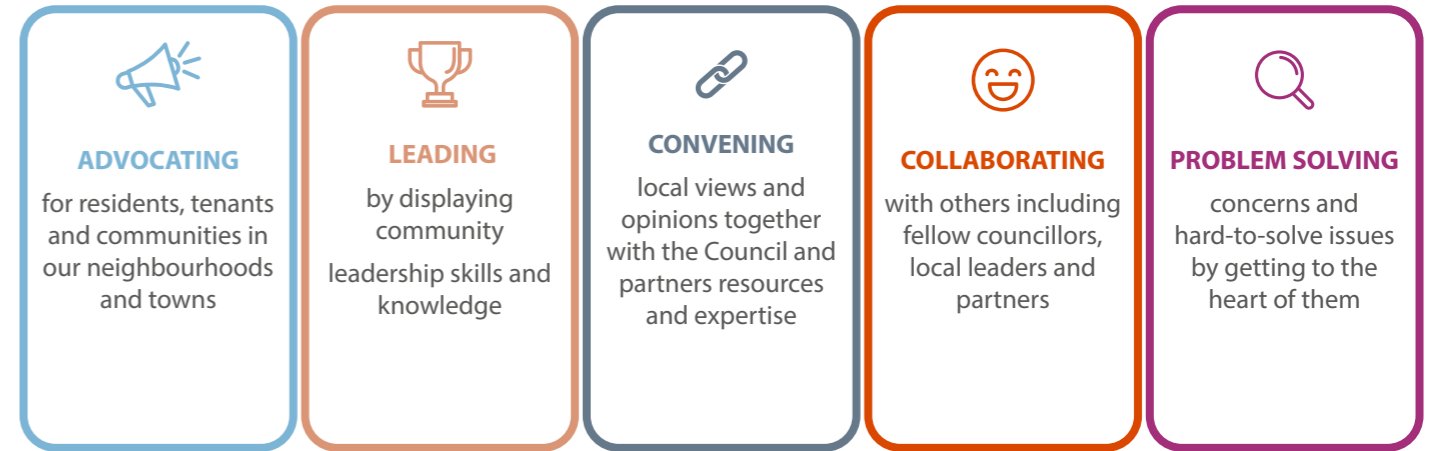
- More effective joint working across the Council focussed on the needs of residents and localities
- More use of data, insight and evidence at a neighbourhood level to build a better understanding of needs and opportunities, inform strategy development, local investment and service design and partner interventions where appropriate
- An inclusive approach to empower and engage residents and build community capacity for decision making and issues
- A more efficient and more responsive but less dependent and less complex customer journey that can resolve local issues

- PRIORITISE**
Identify needs, priorities and issues in our wards and towns
- COLLABORATE**
Bring residents, community groups, partners and voluntary sector together
- LEAD**
Problem solve and action planning
- EVALUATE**
Review outcomes, and report

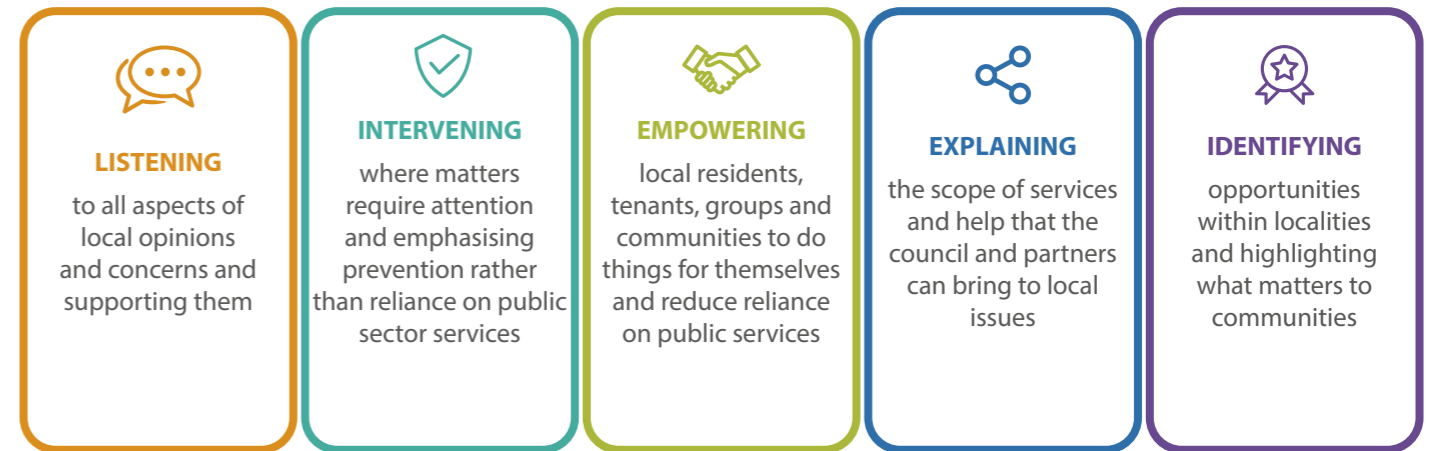
Roles of our councillors

To deliver this strategy, we are confident that our One Council – One Team ethos will be the driver for positive change and improvements in our neighbourhoods.

Both the strategy and the model support and bolster the community leadership role for all our Councillors.



Our councillors and their neighbourhoods



Our towns and ward councillors

<p>Oldbury</p> <p>The population of Oldbury has grown by 4.9% since 2012 to 53,734. This is the same as the regional average and like the UK average, but slightly slower than the borough as a whole. Of the six towns, it is mid-rank in terms of population density, close to the borough average. It remains an industrial centre with suburban neighbourhoods in the south. It includes the administrative centre of Sandwell. Oldbury has the second largest amount of jobs (27,500 jobs) and has experienced a 2.7% decrease in jobs over the past five years.</p>	<p>Smethwick</p> <p>Smethwick was marked by heavy post-war population loss after housing clearance in places like Windmill Lane. The town has grown by 9.4% since 2012 to 61,097, far outstripping the borough, regional and national average. It is the most densely populated town in Sandwell. It has a strong travel to work and retail relationship to Birmingham which is adjacent. It is ethnically highly diverse. Smethwick has the youngest population with the highest proportion of young people aged 0 to 15 (25.9%) and lowest proportion of over 65-year-olds (10.8%), making it younger than the region and UK. The amount of businesses in Smethwick has grown by 13.4% in the last five years to 2,165, bringing job numbers to 20,000.</p>	<p>Rowley Regis</p> <p>Rowley Regis includes Rowley Village and settlements ringing the Rowley Hills including the towns of Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill. Its population is growing slowly at 1.9% – far below the borough, regional and UK averages. It has an older age profile than the West Midlands and UK and has the highest proportion of over 65-year-olds and lowest proportion of under 19-year-olds of all the towns. The amount of businesses in Rowley Regis has grown by 3.1% in the last five years to 1,310, bringing job numbers to 14,250.</p>
<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Bristnall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Amolak Singh Dhariwal • Councillor Ellen Fenton • Councillor Thomas Johnston <p>Langley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Bill Gavan MBE • Councillor Caroline Owen • Councillor Jill Tromans <p>Old Warley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Luke Cotterill • Councillor Harnoor Bhullar • Councillor Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo <p>Oldbury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Suzanne Hartwell • Councillor Rizwan Jalil • Councillor Nagi Daya Singh 	<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Abbey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Jennifer Hemingway • Councillor Nicky Hinchliff • Councillor Bob Piper <p>Smethwick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Luke John Davies • Councillor Parbinder Kaur • Councillor Ashley Lewis <p>Soho & Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Ragih Muflihi • Councillor Farut Shaeen • Councillor Mohammed Jalal Uddin <p>St. Paul's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Aqeela Choudhry • Councillor Sukhbir Singh Gill • Councillor Muhammad Loan 	<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Blackheath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Kerrie Carmichael • Councillor Danny Millard • Councillor Jag Singh <p>Rowley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Sohail Iqbal • Councillor Khayam Khan • Councillor Claire Mayo <p>Cradley Heath and Old Hill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Vicki Smith • Councillor John Tipper • Councillor Julie Webb <p>Tividale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Maria Crompton • Councillor Amrita Dunn • Councillor Wakas Younis

<p>Tipton</p> <p>Tipton is the second smallest town by population. It has grown by 5.6% since 2012, slightly under the borough average but higher than the West Midlands and UK. Tipton is the smallest town by area and has a relatively high population density. New build housing has been significant over the past 25 years. Demographically, Tipton is young with a higher than average proportion of young residents and lower than average proportion of older residents. The amount of businesses in Tipton has grown by 11.6% in the last five years to 1,055. Employment has remained constant at 11,500 for the past three years.</p>	<p>Wednesbury</p> <p>Wednesbury is the smallest town by population with 39,499 people, it is growing slower than the regional and national average. Its population is slightly older than the Sandwell average, although it is still younger than the West Midlands and UK overall.</p> <p>Despite being the smallest town by population, Wednesbury has a higher number of jobs than Rowley Regis and Tipton at 17,250. The amount of businesses in Wednesbury has grown by 9.9% in the last five years to 995.</p>	<p>West Bromwich</p> <p>West Bromwich is the largest town with a population of 81,304, giving it the lowest population density in Sandwell. It includes the main commercial and retail centre of Sandwell. Its housing markets include older terraced housing in the town centre, extensive council-built neighbourhoods to the north and the more affluent suburban Great Barr area. It has the second oldest age profile with 16.6% of its population aged over 65. It has the highest number of jobs at 35,000 and the highest amount of business at 2,370, which have grown by 10.7% in past five years.</p>
<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Great Bridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor William Gill • Councillor Sahdaish Kaur Pall BEM • Councillor Soyfur Rahman <p>Princes End</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Justyna Kordala • Councillor David Wilkes • Councillor Archer Williams <p>Tipton Green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Abid Hussain • Councillor Syeda Khatun MBE • Councillor Richard Jeffcoat 	<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Friar Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Elizabeth Giles • Councillor Terry Fitzgerald • Councillor Simon Hackett <p>Wednesbury North</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Luke Giles • Councillor Peter Hughes • Councillor Nicola Maycock <p>Wednesbury South</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Ian Chambers • Councillor Jenny Chidley • Councillor Kulwant Singh Uppal 	<p>Councillors by Ward</p> <p>Charlemont with Grove Vale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Dalel Singh Bhamra • Councillor Les Trumpeter • Councillor Natalie Weston <p>Great Barr with Yew Tree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Connor Horton • Councillor Michaela Allcock • Councillor Steve Melia <p>Greets Green and Lyng</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor John Giles • Councillor Pam Randhawa • Councillor Jackie Taylor <p>Hateley Heath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Amardeep Singh • Councillor Kay Millar • Councillor Paul Moore <p>Newton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Keith Allcock • Councillor Saj Ashraf • Councillor Elaine Giles <p>West Bromwich Central</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Tirath Singh Dhatt • Councillor Liam Preece • Councillor Farzana Haq



Budget package

We also have consolidated and created a budget package to support Councillors in neighbourhood working which can be used to fund local projects, activities and services to tackle identified priority matters in their wards and towns.

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – a proportion of monies from the overall CIL contributions by developers from new developments in localities.
- Ward Budgets – a new budget for each elected member to bid into for ward-based issues and initiatives and delivery of ward plan priorities. Budgets can be combined with fellow ward members if desired.
- Events budget – to support local events and distributed on a six-town basis.
- Neighbourhoods Support Grant – a new fund for local ward or town-based initiatives or supporting community groups relating to priorities in ward plans on a bidding and assessment process.

Measuring impact and success

It is imperative that our approach, and any outcomes in our neighbourhoods are monitored and evaluated. This will ensure we are making the best use of scarce resources and delivering on locally identified priorities and how neighbourhood working is contributing to the delivery of the Sandwell Vision 2030.

We will introduce:

- Annual ward and town reports- to be presented to Council.
- Quarterly updates on ward-based activity to Cabinet
- Publication of a Statement on annual ward budget, Events Budget and Neighbourhood Support Fund detailing spend and how Councillors have invested in their neighbourhoods.
- An annual report to Cabinet and Council including a review of the strategy and annual resource allocation.



Getting involved and feedback on our strategy

We welcome feedback on this strategy and how you would like to see neighbourhood working strengthened as well as what issues are important to you in your local area. Our Councillors are your first point of contact ([LINK](#)) to raise any issues of concern or indeed anything you like in your neighbourhood.

We are intending to publish ward plans for the whole of the borough this year and they will include what the challenges are in your area as well as the priorities for the future – both shorter term and longer term.

You can read more about the strategy and Sandwell's unique approach to neighbourhood working at [WEBSITE LINK](#). We will have a dedicated page for each ward very shortly which will include those priorities, what is planned to do to both improve the area and resolve issues and the latest news and events in your area.

Our aim is to make sure we continue to place neighbourhoods as the focus of all we do and ensure that people can influence the quality of life in their communities.

Notes:



Notes:

Notes:



www.sandwell.gov.uk

