

REPORT TO CABINET

12 December 2018

Subject:	Recommendations Arising from Scrutiny Boards
Presenting Members:	Councillor Peter Hughes – Chair of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Councillor Zahoor Ahmed – Chair of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board Councillor Elaine Giles – Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board
Director:	Director - Monitoring Officer - Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Key Decision:	No
Forward Plan (28 day notice) Reference:	No
Cabinet Member Approval and Date:	Reports are from: Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board; Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board.
Director Approval:	26/11/2018
Reason for Urgency:	Urgency provisions do not apply.
Exempt Information Ref:	Exemption provisions do not apply.
Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable):	Ward members have not been consulted.
Scrutiny Consultation Considered?	Recommendations are from: Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board; Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:

That Cabinet:

1. Is recommended to direct a council-wide piece of work to ensure that an appropriate multi-disciplinary response is made and that there is better utilisation of both Council and private sector properties to tackle the increase in homelessness in the Borough;
2. Is recommended to direct an in-depth piece of work to determine where savings can be made on school transport for children with special educational needs, including exploring opportunities for joint working with other local authorities;

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

That Cabinet:

3. Considers the recommendations arising from the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board as follows:
 - (a) That, to help minimise instances of arrears and to assist people on Universal Credit to manage their finances effectively:
 - (i) consideration be given to introducing appropriate incentivisation for new tenants to set up Direct Debits to pay their rent at the time of taking up a Council tenancy;
 - (ii) Council tenants who pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit be encouraged to also pay their rent by the same method;
 - (b) That Sandwell Children's Trust be requested to:-
 - (i) work with the Council's Housing and Communities Directorate to register looked after young people for Council housing at the age of 16 in order to facilitate a smoother transition to becoming care leavers and to secure independent, sustainable tenancies;

- (ii) consider co-locating a social worker within the Housing Solutions Team to allow for joint assessments with housing professionals to take place;
- (c) That a review of all Local Lettings Plans for age-restrictions be carried out to ensure they remain appropriate and necessary in order for Council-owned housing stock to be utilised in the most effective way;
- (d) That the use of some of the Council-owned housing stock as Temporary Accommodation be increased to make effective use of properties and to reduce costs related to securing externally-provided Temporary Accommodation.

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board:

That Cabinet:

- 4. Considers the recommendation of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board to increase the financial limit for minor adaptations currently provided free of charge to residents with an assessed need from the value of £1,000 to £1,500 as part of the current review of the Council's aids and adaptations policies.
- 5. That Cabinet responds to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Boards within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of scrutiny recommendations for the attention of Cabinet made by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board in October 2018 and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board in November 2018.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 The recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Boards contribute to a number of ambitions within Vision 2030:-

Ambition 1 - 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.

Ambition 2 – 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.

Ambition 5 – 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.

Ambition 10 – 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.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Scrutiny is a statutory process, independent of the Council's Executive, which reviews existing policy, develops new options for improving services, holds the executive and partner agencies to account, and monitors the delivery and performance of Council services in line with the 2030 ambitions.
- 3.2 Following the referral by Cabinet of the 2018/19 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 1 the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has considered in detail the monitoring statements across all directorates and identified recommendations as set out above.
- 3.3 Housing allocations and temporary accommodation for the homeless were both included on the work programme for the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board. Officers attended the meeting to provide an overview of current practice and policy and key issues facing the service areas. From the information provided and subsequent discussion the Board identified a number of recommendations that it wished to make to Cabinet; these are set out in this report.
- 3.4 Aids and Adaptations had been the subject of previous scrutiny work of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board during 2016-18, when the Board had looked at the customer journey, including:
 - pathways, roles and responsibilities and expectations;
 - effective use of resources and value for money;
 - sustainability and future proofing of homes.
- 3.5 The Board had focused on the need to keep residents safe whilst balancing their needs against best use of resources and making the best

use of the Council's limited housing stock. The revised policy was recommended to Cabinet, with emphasis on the need to take into account the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 and other policies around spending Disabled Facilities Grants.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The recommendations identified and developed by the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board aim to address matters such as minimising arrears, reducing overcrowding, providing better service and support to care leavers and ensuring best use of the Council's existing housing stock.
- 4.2 The recommendation identified and developed by the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board was initially suggested during earlier scrutiny work and confirmed in the evidence presented by officers at the Scrutiny Board on 19 November 2018 that there was an increase in demand for all aids and adaptation services. The Board found that the need to take the pressure off occupational therapy services was real but there was no resource to grow capacity.
- 4.3 The Board considered the time taken to deal with the number of lower value aids and adaptation assessments and how this would free up some capacity to ease the pressure on occupational therapy services.
- 4.4 Members agreed that there was a need to increase the financial limit for minor adaptations currently provided free of charge to residents with an assessed need from the value of £1,000 to £1,500 as part of the current review of the Council's aids and adaptations policies.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 When considering the recommendations and potential options, directors and Cabinet Members will determine if further consultation will be required.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 If Cabinet does not consider the recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Boards then any improvements, savings and income generation possibilities identified by the Boards may be missed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Some of the recommendations will have resource implications due to associated costs. These will be explored by the relevant directors and will

be the subject of a further report where appropriate.

- 7.2 The aim of the service is to ensure disabled residents are supported to live independently within their own homes. This approach increases the financial limit for minor adaptations currently provided free of charge to residents with an assessed need from the value of £1,000 to £1,500.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The allocation of council housing stock is governed by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This Act was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011.
- 8.2 The main legislation governing homelessness matters includes Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 8.3 Any implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report will be explored by the relevant directors and will be the subject of a further report where appropriate.
- 8.4 The Council is required by the Housing Grants and Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to approve a valid application for Disabled Facilities Grant and to pay the grant. The Council operates an agency service to facilitate the grant aided works and the administration of the grant

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 No equality impact assessment has been carried out at this stage however the recommendations, if accepted, agreed and actioned, would help to address issues that affect all applicants for Council housing.
- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to aids and adaptations. There are no negative or adverse impacts on any protected group.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 As the recommendations do not relate to personal data, no data protection impact assessment is deemed necessary at this stage.
- 10.2 In relation to aids and adaptations applications, service providers will process personal data, including sensitive personal data, in the call off

process and in undertaking the work required under the call off contracts. The service providers will be fully compliant in respect of data protection requirements under the service specification and contracting arrangements with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and/or the service user as the case may be. Suitable clauses have been included in the contract documents.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report, however ensuring best use of the Council's housing stock will ensure the ongoing sustainability of the properties through rent income.

12.2 The services and works within this report are forecasted spend within the Disabled Facilities Grant and Housing Revenue Account.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 Housing is acknowledged as a vital basic need to ensure health and wellbeing.

13.2 The investment of housing adaptations and improvements significantly improves the quality of life of disabled people by preventing avoidable accidents such as falls that may result in potential hospital admissions and the prevention of social care and support that may result in potential residential placement. The investment also has the added value of improving the quality of life for carers and other family members.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 The recommendations of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board were developed to maximise the effective use of the Council's housing stock.

15 **CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 15.1 The Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations and determine what action it wishes to take.
- 15.2 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Cabinet is requested to respond to the recommendations of the scrutiny boards within two months, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented.
- 15.3 Progress against these recommendations will be monitored by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Board.

16 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 16.1 [Minutes of 4 October meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.](#)
- 16.2 [Minutes of 10 October meeting of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.](#)
- 16.3 Minutes of 19 November 2018 meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board.

17 **APPENDICES:**

None

Surjit Tour
Director – Monitoring Officer