

Council – 17th September 2018

Progress Report of Councillor Andrew, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

The activities covered in this portfolio are diverse and are key to achieving economic growth for all people, communities and businesses together with supporting the communities focus of our Corporate Plan, in particular that all housing needs are met. The Walsall Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets our economic development priorities to 'Create Local Jobs' and 'Support Local People into Work' and is aligned with the key themes of our new Corporate Plan. I have summarised the activities of this portfolio based on these themes, which are:

- **People**
- **Business**
- **Place**

Key highlights include:

People - we have focused on expanding our award winning Walsall Works and gaining national exposure through the coveted Municipal Journal Awards 2018, having secured Finalist status in the 'Best Council Service' category. Our performance through Walsall Works continues to exceed expectations with the programme having delivered 3218 positive outcomes for Walsall residents in apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeships, skills training and employment; of which 761 were achieved since April 2017. At our latest Walsall Works EXPO, held just last week, over 1,100 people attended. Walsall Works has attracted significant interest from partners and funding streams, having delivered outcomes for the VIEW funded programme, Walsall Economic Growth Programme and being an instrumental delivery vehicle and matched into the BC IMPACT programme (which Cabinet extended further at its meeting on September 5th 2018). The team actively contributes to the West Midlands Combined Authority in relation to devolution of additional resources, powers and flexibilities on adult skills and employment support for the benefit of the borough and its people.

Business - we had a successful Walsall Business Week with over 200 businesses reached during the week long programme. The Walsall Economic Board goes from strength to strength and continues to bring together some of the key employers in Walsall to actively assist our aims around job creation, skills and work security.

Place - we have seen the commencement of the £9million Wisemore Central scheme adjacent to Tesco that where a Travelodge hotel is being constructed alongside restaurant/commercial uses, and the £14million 'The Quarter' retail scheme is now open with lettings to Poundland and The Entertainer and B&M. The Council in its work as part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (see separate report on its Council agenda) and alongside City of Wolverhampton Council has also made the case for a £100m 'Land Fund', part of which will be focused for the Walsall to Wolverhampton Corridor to facilitate and enable housing development, targeting opportunities to assemble land, undertake remediation and deliver local

infrastructure. The fund will operate alongside other funds and programmes operational in the same geography, including the Black Country Enterprise Zone, Black Country Growth Deal and Land & Property Investment Fund and the Walsall to Wolverhampton Railway-new stations project and M6 Junction 10. The Town Centre will also benefit from the Council investing in the delivery of a new Town Centre Masterplan: a procurement exercise is due to be completed this month with the chosen partner preparing their initial proposals by the end of the calendar year. The masterplan will build on the work of the Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan. We are also exploring with the West Midlands Mayoral team how a new town centre taskforce might benefit Walsall's town and district centres through an expression of interest process Mayor Andy Street has called.

Transport - works are continuing on the electrification of the Chase Line and the scheduled improvements at M6 Junction 10, as well as the introduction of the new West Midland Rail Franchise and efforts to link Walsall and Wolverhampton with a rail service. By the mid-2020s the borough of Walsall will be a place that is very well connected to the wider region and central London and able to connect the impact of Hs2 to our borough; providing economic opportunity in terms of jobs and investment.

The Council's Award winning highways department continues to develop and implement best practice wherever practicable. It is so important to ensure that we provide a safe and efficient highway system for the benefit of the travelling public whether they be pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, or public transport users.

I am proud of the effort our officers put in to help us achieve for the people, businesses and places of our borough.

PEOPLE

The Employment and Skills Team work towards the aspirations and targets set out in a number of different strategic documents; nationally, sub-regionally, locally and corporately. This relies on working closely with our strategic partners and the private sector to address a range of difficult and complex challenges within the employment and skills agenda. This includes ensuring that new developments and planning applications, housing or commercially led, consider how schemes will help to raise the skill levels or support residents to overcome barriers to accessing employment. There is a need to better utilise public resources, including existing European funding, to ensure our vulnerable residents are identified early through the smart use of data and intelligence, targeting outreach and community initiatives in order to support those in need with their employability. By taking advantage of local schemes such as Walsall Works, it will enable residents to secure employment opportunities in the public or private sector across all business sectors.

Walsall Works – Performance

The Walsall Works programme continues to grow and develop with the volume of local people accessing services growing year on year. The table shows our achievements since the project inception in 2012 highlighting the delivery of 3218

positive outcomes for local people, and of these 761 outcomes were achieved since April 2017.

| Outcome Type | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | Total |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Walsall Works Apprenticeships (funded) | 104 | 262 | 113 | 73 | 92 | 22 | 6 | 672 |
| Walsall Works Apprenticeships (LACs) | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| People into Apprenticeships (non-funded) | - | 86 | 91 | 31 | 19 | 33 | 13 | 273 |
| People into employment | - | 159 | 180 | 166 | 160 | 363 | 89 | 1117 |
| People into accredited training | - | 75 | 103 | 40 | 56 | 126 | 15 | 415 |
| People in traineeships | 191 | 159 | 99 | 40 | 100 | 44 | 2 | 635 |
| People into work placements | - | - | 24 | 14 | 13 | 25 | 5 | 81 |
| People into self-employment | - | - | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 16 |
| People supported with employability skills | 295 | 741 | 611 | 368 | 442 | 624 | 137 | 3218 |
| No of Customer Contacts | - | - | 504 | 1058 | 1564 | 1241 | 276 | 4643 |
| No of Recruitment / Information Sessions | - | - | - | - | - | 39 | 8 | 47 |
| No of new employers engaged | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 835 |
| No of job vacancies advertised | - | - | - | - | - | 145 | 78 | 223 |
| | | | | | | | | |

Walsall Works – Job Matching

We continue to promote our free job matching service to drive up the volume of vacancies being taken up by local people registered to Walsall Works. Since April 2017, we have secured 219 vacancies from employers, a vast majority with multiple jobs, with a potential for 821 jobs in total. These vacancies being filled using a range of methods including promotion to suitable clients, shifting through CVs, advice on application completion and interview techniques and through group information sessions and recruitment events. These events and vacancies have enabled us to build relationships with local and national employers such as Fortel, Apcoa, Blakemore, Lidl, One Stop Stores, Holiday Inn, Barons Court Hotel, Lawlor, Whitehouse Cox, Poundland, Park Inn Radisson, National Express, Care UK, Brewers Fayre, KFC, Argos and many more small and medium sized employers.

Working in close partnership with DWP, we have held or participated in 47 recruitment events, predominantly with a focus to match employers with suitable people. During the period, we have held our bi-annual Jobs Expo attracting 1000+ unemployed people who have interfaced with employers and providers promoting a range of jobs and training across all business sectors. Employer exhibitors included HomeServe, Walsall Football Club, Bupa Care, CiTB, Yodel, Ettinger, Launer London, Adecco. Provider exhibitors included Walsall College, Nova Training, Babcock, whg, Nova Training, Fostering Services.

Walsall Works – Communication

We have a comprehensive communication plan, which utilises all media channels, including print, broadcast, internet and social media. Our social media channels on twitter, facebook and instagram are serviced on a weekly basis with regular news

updates on upcoming events, available services and client / employers success stories. We launched our new look www.walsallworks.com website which has since been migrated to the new **walsall.com** webpages and this posts news and job vacancies sourced on a weekly basis. We produce weekly jobs e-bulletins which are sent to over 3000 clients through the mailchimp online portal. We also send out our e-bulletin to our partners such as DWP and Work Programme to promote to their clients as well as producing a quarterly newsletter.

Walsall Works – Partner Awards

We have launched and announced our Walsall Works **Partner Award** winners in the categories of bronze, silver and gold that are issued to employers and organisations in recognition of their contribution to social value and economic growth. This will include the achievement of different levels of award to help stimulate further commitments for taking on local people. Our latest award recipients were announced by Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, at the Walsall Works Expo on 6th September 2018.

Walsall Works – Outreach

We have appointed a new Employment Advisor to provide an outreach service to our clients in community venues to include libraries, multi-faith organisations, leisure centres, and youth clubs. Our **Job Club** was launched in the Walsall Central Library and is now being expanded across all the neighbourhood libraries providing a dedicated employability service at a grassroots level.

Walsall Works – Programme Delivery

The Walsall Works programme has made a significant contribution to the **Walsall Economic Growth (ECG)** programme, which was established to create the conditions to generate new job opportunities within the borough, together with providing the support local people need to secure or remain in employment. Further investment has enabled the Council's Employment and Skills Team to continue the delivery of an apprenticeship wage subsidy as a mechanism to support local businesses to access the finances they need to flourish and create jobs.

We have strengthened our working relationships with Walsall Housing Group (whg) through joint projects, such as the **VIEW programme 'Investing in the Economic Growth Programme'**, and are reporting progress to whg and the VIEW board as part of the quarterly review process against the people, business and place themes. The people theme profiled outcomes have already been exceeded, well within the programme end date of March 2019.

Walsall Works – Social Value

Further to our development of the **Social Value Charter**, approved at Cabinet in July 2016, we have embedded the Targets, Outcomes, Measures (TOMs) in all new and existing contracts over the value of £50,000. We are developing the tendering processes to ensure effective review, monitoring and co-ordination of support to enable contractors to deliver on their obligations. To date contractors demonstrating

social value have included APCOA Parking (Civil Enforcement), Tarmac (Highways Contract), Amey (Lighting Contract), Adult Social Care Providers, Transport (Children's), and the Managed Services tender.

Walsall has played a pivotal role in development and delivery of the **Black Country IMPACT programme**; having been awarded £51 million, including £17 million match funding from the four BC Councils, and leveraging in some £34 million of new external funding to support 16 – 29 year olds classified as NEET into positive outcomes. For Walsall this will draw in £7.4 million of new funding, matched to a potential £2.25 million, to support around 4500 local people, with 1300 entering sustainable work or training outcomes through to July 2021.

To date the programme has achieved (as at 11th August 2017):

| Directorate | Enrolment | Intervention | Outcome |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| Adult Social Care | 237 | 110 | 57 |
| Economy & Environment | 863 | 605 | 273 |
| Children Services | 900 | 402 | 211 |
| Change & Governance | 564 | 196 | 88 |
| Other (Walsall College) | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| Total Participants | 2734 | 1483 | 799 |

Of these, we have enrolled and are actively supporting 903 of our most vulnerable young people from key thematic groups:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Looked After Children Care Leavers | 83 |
| Homeless | 68 |
| Living in a Jobless Household | 463 |
| Lone Parents | 124 |
| Teenage Parents | 62 |
| Ex-Offenders | 103 |

The team continue to provide secretariat support and direction to the **Walsall Employment and Skills Board** whose focus in the past years has been on driving apprenticeships, understanding and addressing health barriers and improving information, advice and guidance in schools. The board has also engaged with the HS2 Programme Board to obtain clear visibility and timelines in relation to the HS2 Growth Strategy and its Employment & Skills Strategy.

On a Black Country Level, we are the financial accountable body for the £2.8m **City Deal Housing Pilot** programme that is being delivered by Accord Housing over 5 years. This has delivered support to 1789 people in receipt of housing benefit with 235 people going into employment and 118 into sustained outcomes across four key ward areas. The reduction to the welfare bill is quantified at £1.1 million. Our role is to actively support delivery in the ward area of Darlaston South.

We actively participate in regional working to ensure Walsall contributes and achieves against the objectives of the **West Midlands Combined Authority** and have inputted into and led on discussions in relation to the Productivity and Skills Commission, new Work and Health Programme, Employment Support pilot and on new propositions for Devolution Deals.

The team work towards the aspirations and targets set out in a number of different strategic documents; nationally, sub-regionally, locally and corporately. This relies on working closely with our strategic partners and the private sector to address a range of difficult and complex challenges within the employment and skills agenda. This includes ensuring that new developments, albeit housing or business led, grow our existing transformational sectors and help raise skill levels or support residents to overcome barriers to employment - hence reducing poverty. There is a need to better utilise public resources, including existing European funding, to ensure our most vulnerable residents are identified through better use of data and intelligence, targeted through outreach and community capacity initiatives, and supported with their employability. This will enable residents to secure employment opportunities in the public sector via the apprenticeships and will encourage the private sector to take advantage of local initiative such as Walsall Works.

The External Funding Team, who deliver services across both Walsall and the Black Country, successfully won approval in 2016 for the **Black Country Community Grants programme**, which secured £990,000 of new funding that runs through to July 2018. The grant aims to fund local community groups (with a turnover of less than £150,000 per year), with up to £15,000 per each successful application, to provide support to local people in their communities to get them closer to securing employment. The programme started in earnest in early 2017 and so far, 12 community groups in Walsall have been awarded funding totalling almost £115,000 that aims to support 428 people. This represents 26% of the £442,000 allocated so far across the Black Country, so Walsall is punching its weight.

The External Funding Team also carry out the **Technical Assistance programme** for both the Black Country ESF and ERDF programmes, which aim to ensure that we retain and spend all of the £156 million approved by the EU through to 2021. To be clear, the UK Government has underwritten the EU allocations so regardless of Brexit, this work can and will continue. Within Walsall, the team have supported whg to secure £1,175,000 of ERDF funding to deliver Smart Electric Heating and Grid Balancing in the Borough and to secure the lead delivery for a £4million ESF Building Better Opportunities programme to deliver Financial and Digital Inclusion activities across the Black Country. The team also supported Steps to Work in Walsall to secure £11million to deliver Employment Support for the over 25's through ESF funding.

Alongside these projects, the Team support local businesses and Third Sector organisations to secure additional funding, including around £1million of **Lottery funding** for a range of charities across the Borough and a successful £3.5 million **Arts Council NPO bid** for the New Art Gallery.

BUSINESS

We continue to provide **support to existing businesses**, as well as **start-up businesses**, helping them to grow and expand.

At the strategic level, the **Walsall Economic Board** brings together some of the key employers in Walsall including: Homeserve plc, Wedge Group, ZF Lemforder,

Maloney Metalcraft, The Midlands Co-operative, Lonestar Group, Jhoots Pharmacy, WHG, Walsall College, Handelsbanken Autobase, Fortel Construction, Accord Housing, Addison O'Hare, Barhale and the University of Wolverhampton. The Board aims to assist us in driving forward the creation of local jobs and businesses, together with ensuring that local people have the skills employers need and the opportunities to secure work. The Board, along with its Employment and Skills Sub-Group, is now playing an increasingly active role in the borough's strategic partnership structure and taking ownership of key partnership priorities, as well as helping to foster strategic links with our larger companies as part of the Board membership.

With our top 6 Walsall-registered **strategic companies** generating a combined turnover of £5 billion, including Poundland, A F Blackmore and One Stop Stores Ltd, and another 13 companies generating more than £100m turnover per annum, establishing links and planned outreach by our team and strategic leads is a key priority, particularly where there is no current active engagement.

The Employment Growth team provides support to businesses, helping them to grow and expand, and promotes Walsall as a location for business and investment. By working closely with internal and external partners, businesses in Walsall are provided with a number of routes to access services and support, and referrals are made back to relevant colleagues, partners and organisations to provide businesses with a portfolio of options and products to choose from. This "menu" of services is articulated to partners and colleagues periodically to help them by complementing their specific offers.

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The Team engages with Walsall-based businesses from a range of sectors, both delivering ERDF and VIEW funded programmes, and works with businesses that are considering expanding or relocating into Walsall to ensure they land and thrive here.

By supporting businesses with growth planning and funding, the team has ensured that the Black Country Transformational GOLD (BCTG) programme has attracted a healthy pipeline of Expressions of Interest. During the current round of BCTG, business grants have been secured for Walsall projects totalling £436,000 against total project values of £1.6m, and resulting in the creation of 82 new jobs. The team has also helped businesses to access support through the **BC Access to Finance** team, **Smart Concept Fund**, **BCRS**, and other local strategic projects/products such as **IPSS**, **BECCI**, **Innovation Networks**, **Manufacturing Growth Programme**, and **Groundworks' Low Carbon project**.

The team has also actively supported business to help them access the **Growing Priority Sectors** grant fund. To date £255,000 worth of grants have been approved against total project values of £850,000. A further £2.4m worth of projects have outline EOI approval.

Premises searches and relocation support continue to form a significant proportion of the teams' reactive engagement; with enquiries serviced through our growing knowledge of local and national agents, property owners and landlords, and data held on our Customer Relationship Management system. These enquiries are providing some indication of a generally positive trend in terms of demand and pipeline and a clear increase in interest in smaller units (<5k sqft).

The team has managed **start-up support**, and has been able to directly support start-up firms as part of the provisions of the VIEW funding, with new businesses typically contacting the team within a few months of beginning trading or in the initial planning stages. Support has also been provided to early stage businesses to access funding through national mechanisms such as the **National Start up Loan fund**. We also have well-developed relationships with local providers of start-up support, partners such **Walsall College, Access 2 Business** and **SWEDA**. We have worked in partnership with local housing provider **Walsall Housing Group** to provide support to all local businesses, but particularly those employing or run by their tenants.

We are also delivering bespoke business support to local businesses through the **AIM for the Black Country project**. This service is being offered to SME's to enhance growth and competitiveness. Through a partnership arrangement between **the Black Country Growth Hub, Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Local Authorities, Black Country Consortium** and the **University of Wolverhampton**, the project businesses have access to a coordinated approach to a range of business support, advice, workshops, and masterclasses covering a wide range of business operations, including HR, finance, business planning, international trade, and sales and marketing.

The team has developed a new approach to inward investment promotion and strategic account management that it intends to roll out across the service area. The team also works with with partners including the **West Midlands Growth Company, Department for International Trade and Midlands Engine** to position Walsall as an investment destination, contributing to high profile projects such as the Midlands UK MIPIM project and Midlands Engine Challenge Fund projects including Drive Midlands.

This year, **Department of International Trade (DIT)** staff have assisted both local exporters and foreign-owned companies in the borough, liaising with the local team to ensure continuity and breadth of coverage. The Employment Growth Team supported DIT in preparing a trade mission to Le Mans and ensuring Walsall companies were able to benefit from the opportunity.

The team continue to sit on boards and groups to support a range of initiatives, including **High Value Manufacturing City, BIMwm, ERDF BCT GOLD, EnTress, BECCI , BC Growth Hub** and the **ERDF AIM** programme. We have also engaged directly with **Aston University**, and **Midlands Engine Investment fund**.

The team supported the Mayor of Walsall to establish the Walsall Leather Forum; using his contacts and engagement, the influence of the worshipful company of

Saddlers and a meeting room at the Business Hub of Walsall College, which was given for free by James Norris for this purpose. The Forum is going to establish a voice for the leather traders and manufacturers of the borough to inform and shape education provision and training opportunities, share best practice, operate as a local trade body and will have a role in informing the economic picture at Economic Board level. The Forum will meet next in November.

The inaugural **Black Country Business Festival** was held in **May 2018**, and planning is already under way for next year's event. Walsall companies delivered 14 events from the full programme of 120 over two weeks, and Walsall was represented at the launch event. Liz Blakemore outlined the commitment of AF Blakemore to engage with its community and to continue employing local people and supporting the local economy. Jat Sharma led the charge as Education and Skills representative with passionate remarks about skills gaps, young people, workforce development and the need of education to partner with industry for their mutual benefit. **Walsall Council holds a seat on the board** of the Business Festival, and has been active in promoting a balance in gender and cultural representation across the festival. A key business involved this year is a leading bakery owned by a Sikh family who were able to lead discussions on international trade, developments in their market and principles of manufacturing.

Looking forward, the Employment Growth team will remain focused on supporting local businesses so that they:

- Create more jobs,
- Invest in their future growth,
- Become more engaged in CSR initiatives,
- Can readily access finance,
- Are well positioned to supply both locally and into new and diverse markets.

Whilst also working to raise the profile of Walsall and its investment opportunities to support the growth of the Walsall business base and the strength and sustainability of the Walsall economy.

PLACE

SITES

Statutory '**Local Plans**' are vital to ensure a sufficient supply of land and premises whilst protecting the environment and they provide the basis for the Council's decisions on Planning Applications. Following extensive consultation, on 7th June the Council submitted Walsall's **Site Allocation Document** (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre **Area Action Plan** (AAP) to the Secretary of State for examination. The Planning Inspectorate will lead an Examination in Public of each plan in September and October respectively. If found 'sound' the plans will be adopted following formal approval from full Council. Covering the period up to 2026, the plans propose sites for about 4,000 new dwellings and seek to safeguard and make available around 650ha of employment land, as well as 7,500 sqm of new retailing and 73,000 sqm of offices in Walsall Town Centre.

Alongside progressing plans for Walsall, together with the Black Country authorities, the **Review of the Black Country Core Strategy** has now commenced with the 'Issues and Options' consultation. The review will plan for the Black Country's future development needs up to 2036; addressing new challenges and opportunities and making sure that investment is attracted to create jobs and wealth across the area. Addressing housing need, whilst sustaining employment opportunities, will be a key issue of the review with additional sites needed to meet growing demand – the proposed **review of the Black Country's Green Belt** will be imperative to this, as will working with authorities in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area to see how we work at a regional level to consider the challenge.

Over the past year, Walsall has seen a number of major development sites come forward including the new Travelodge hotel at Wisemore and the completion of the Norton & Proffit redevelopment in the heart of the town. The year has also seen the issuing of the planning approval for the redevelopment of the former McKechnie Brass works in Aldridge to deliver 22,703 sq. of new employment floorspace, approval for the reconstruction of the Junction 10 roundabout on the M6, the granting of planning permission for 18,500sqm of employment space at Reedswood Way, 207 dwellings approved at Heathfield Lane, Darlaston and the completion of the mineral extraction application at Bliss Quarry, Aldridge.

Walsall continues to attract significant levels of development interest and has received 1,194 planning applications and prior notifications since September 2017, a slight rise on the 1,187 applications received in the 12 months leading up to August 2017.

Utilising the Government's performance markers, the **Development Management** service has achieved the following performance in terms of planning applications delivered within the targeted timeframes over the last 12 months; Majors 89.19%, Minors 83.33% and Others 74.65%, these figures represent improvements in all three categories in 2017-18. For 2016-17, the figures were as follows; Majors 86.84%, Minors 71.43% and Others 66.58%. Through the issuing of decision this service continues to enable new housing, industrial and retail developments to come forward across the Borough.

Over the period September 2016 to August 2017, the service processed and concluded 138 **Enforcement Cases**. With the team now up to full strength, this **Performance** more than doubled in the past year to August 2018 with 416 cases closed.

Improvement within the service though is an on-going process and whilst the last 12 months have seen improvements in all areas of work undertaken, further improvements are sought. To support the delivery of these improvements, the **Governments Planning Advisory Service (PAS)** has engaged with the service to review working practices and processes. These changes affect both back office systems optimising the use of the planning ICT software APAS, and face-to-face engagement with applicants, agents and the public. Opportunities to optimise the use of technology will be explored over the year ahead to try to deliver the greatest service benefits to the public at the lowest cost.

The forthcoming 12 months will also see the implementation of new national and local planning policies and guidance through the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in July by the Government and the emerging Walsall Site Allocation Document (SAD) and Area Action Plan (AAP) by the Council. These new policy documents will result in new sites coming forward and a fresh outlook on how development is approached in the Borough. The **Development Management** service though will continue to support new proposals for sustainable development, which help to enhance the environment, secure social improvements and deliver increased economic growth to Walsall.

The **Development Team** has enabled many development projects to commence and complete

Waterfront, the former **LEX** site, has benefitted from Local Growth funding with £150,000 of site remediation works having recently been completed. Interest in the land has been expressed and the Council is looking to transact its land interest to support proposals of a new commercial development-I hope to be able to announce more on this later this year. The Council also continues to work with WMCA, Transport for West Midlands, Homes England and land owners to explore redevelopment proposals for land at **Station Street**, which will seek to improve the sites connectivity and gateway location next to Walsall Rail Station and the Waterfront area. The acquisition of the **Saddlers Centre** provides the Council with a real point of control to proactively support regeneration in the town centre and enhance the key gateways at Station Street, Park Street and Bradford Place. While the loss of M&S was sad to see in August, the opportunity to consider our options for their former space will be explored further by the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan.

The Quarter redevelopment by developer Norton & Proffit is now complete in the **St Matthews** area of the town centre. The £14m retail scheme has over 8,000sqm of new floorspace, with the first units now occupied and operated by Poundland, The Entertainer and B&M. In total, the scheme is estimated to bring in an excess of 300 new jobs to this part of the town centre, which has already benefited from the major investment in the **Old Square Development-Phase 1**.

Work continues to bring development sites forward within **Gigaport**; building on strong developer interest in sites such as the former Jabez Cliff site, the Challenge Block in Hatherton Street, and the remaining plots within the Jhoots site. A residential scheme at **Teddesley Street** is under construction, a partnership between Walsall Housing Group and Lovells. Construction is also well underway to deliver **Wisemore Central** – a £9million scheme that is delivering a 60-bed hotel, restaurant, and retail/commercial uses, and would create more than 100 jobs when complete. The Council is also exploring with interested developers the future uses of the Challenge Building and the wider ‘Challenge Block’, which will see proposal, emerge in the coming months.

Delivery of sites within the Darlaston element of **the Black Country Enterprise Zone** in and around Junction 10 of the M6 continues, building on established partnerships with landowners to secure delivery. A developer procurement process has been run in partnership with the Homes England to appoint a preferred private sector partner for the **Phoenix 10** site, the largest employment site in the borough.

The partners have identified Henry Boot Developments Limited as a preferred bidder for the 18-hectare site for circa 600,000sqft of employment uses. Later this year pre-application planning consultation will take place and the final approvals obtained via Cabinet to formalise the partnership.

Significant investment decisions have also been taken to acquire strategic sites within the Enterprise Zone in order to accelerate delivery of employment uses and economic growth –this includes land at Darlaston Road. Remediation works at the **Tempus 10** site to provide development platforms have been completed with discussions on-going with potential end-user and developer interests to bring development forward.

Work continues to progress at pace at the Borough's largest housing development project that will deliver 867 new homes – **Goscote Lane Regeneration Corridor** - with planning consent granted for the final phase of redevelopment at the former Goscote Estate. To date 376 new homes (including 200 affordable and 176 private sale units) have been completed as part of the scheme, working in partnership with Walsall Housing Group, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes and Communities Agency and developer Keepmoat. The £85m investment also includes the £1m invested into open space improvements at the Lea and Swannies Field, with existing and new communities benefitting from these works. 2018 has also seen consent awarded for the remediation of the former Goscote IMI site for the development of 264 new homes, remediation works are now underway with the land owner having secured a grant from the Black County Land and Property Investment Programme of £3.6m.

Supporting the delivery of development across the Borough and within our neighbourhoods continues to be a priority. As well as works currently on-site, a pipeline of development opportunities for **housing, employment and commercial** continues to be worked on. This is being facilitated by effective partnerships with land owners, developer partners and investors- both private and public sector, and opportunities to maximise income from funding available through the Black Country LEP and West Midlands Combined Authority as a priority. These **pipeline projects** are helping to support the delivery of 1500 new homes, 252,000 sqm of employment and 100,000 of mixed-use floorspace, alongside side up to 9700 new or sustained jobs within the borough. Facilitating development in this way will be essential in supporting the Council's revenue income base derived from Business Rate and Council Tax income.

New opportunities to fully utilise the resources available at the sub and regional level are being taken to deliver the housing pipeline with the Council prioritising sites that may benefit from the WMCA Land Fund (announced as part of the West Midlands Housing Deal) and Black Country Land & Property Investment Fund (form the WMCA Land Remediation Fund). Sites that the Council has identified as potential investment locations include:

- Station Street area of the Town Centre, extending to Walsall Waterfront
- Former Caparo Site at Birchills
- Willenhall Garden City; sites in and around the District Centre
- Walsall Gateway; sites including the former Harvestime Bakery
- Birch Street, including the former Metal Casements factory

Delivery options are also being considered for these various strategic housing sites alongside active due diligence and project feasibility studies.

Working with private sector partners, Local Growth and Land and Property Investment funding has been approved to advance delivery of Walsall's employment sites; including an in principle decisions to fund the **former McKechnie Brass** site at Middlemore Lane; and initial proposal to fund **Moxley Business Park**; a grant award to **Airfield 55** at Airfield Drive; and site investigation funding at the **former Willenhall Sewage Works**. Airfield 55 in Aldridge is now occupied by Accord Group who are expanding their modular housing factory here in the Borough.

The **Asset Management** function is key to supporting the Walsall development pipeline as well as continuing to manage the Council's operation estate and supporting our partners to deliver services from our wider portfolio. The important role that the Council's land and property portfolio plays has therefore been recognised by the Council's Transformation Programme. A review has commenced to ensure that the continued management and rationalisation of the Council's property estate meets our **operational needs** now and in the future, and that the property **investment portfolio** is enhanced to maximise revenue income generation. Significant investment decisions have been taken to acquire strategic retail property within Walsall Town Centre and other opportunities to add to a wider portfolio of property types is currently being explored.

TRANSPORT

Transportation makes a vital contribution to the local economy and is an important component to enable continued growth. Through the Walsall Transport Plan 2017-2022, we have a clear, ambitious and forward thinking vision to improve and develop the network. My job is to ensure we sustain this positive contribution and deliver transport schemes where funding has been identified to support local connectivity for residents and businesses and unlock development potential.

A major improvement to **M6 Junction 10** is being developed in conjunction with Department for Transport and Highways England. Funding of £64m has been secured for this scheme through the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Highways England together with local contributions from Walsall Council. An innovative governance model between the funding partners has been established to deliver the project. A Planning Application has been approved for the project, marking a major milestone in the programme, which sees works start in 2019. Statutory Orders were published in early September 2018, and a delivery Agreement has been entered into between Highways England and the Council. Highways England's selection of a contractor to undertake the work also started this month.

Since December 2017, West Midlands Trains Ltd (a joint venture between Abellio, East Japan Railway Company and Mitsui & Co Ltd), have been operating the **West Midlands Rail** network. The new rail franchise (ending in 2026) will bring much needed improvements in terms of extra capacity, more frequent services and station enhancements across the network. This includes commitments to operate an hourly

direct service between Walsall and London and to increase Sunday services to the same frequency currently available on Saturdays. These improvements will open up economic and leisure based opportunities for Walsall residents. Together with Transport for West Midlands, we will also work closely with the new rail operator towards the reopening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton, including new stations in Willenhall and Darlaston to generate better connections for our district centres. We continue to work with Transport for West Midlands and the West Midlands Combined Authority to make the case for investment in a new rail station in Aldridge.

Street Lighting in Walsall is currently provided by Walsall Public Lighting Limited (Amey LG) as part of the PFI Project, which commenced in 2002 for 26 years. Adequate lighting is a necessity in assisting with road safety and addressing anti-social behaviour. You will recall that the Council has introduced trials of upgrading the street lighting to LED in four areas of the borough. LED improves lighting with colour rendition and reductions in energy costs. Officers are currently working with our partners to develop a major scheme for the full upgrade of all lighting to LED, some 26,000 lighting columns, and if this develops as anticipated, it will be considered by Cabinet later in the year.

The highway network is by far the single most valuable asset maintained by Walsall Council having an estimated replacement value of £3.3 Billion. Be it walking, cycling, using public transport or accessing businesses, everybody will at some point rely on this vital asset. Having an efficient and well-maintained highway network is essential to support the growth, health and prosperity of our community. Not only does it allow us to travel safely and comfortably around our neighbourhood but also it supports economic development and regeneration across the Borough.

The 2015 - 2018 **Highway Maintenance Strategy** replaces the previous document for the period 2012 - 2015. During the previous strategy period Walsall successfully delivered £12 million worth of highway maintenance schemes, more than 26 miles (42km) of carriageways were treated together with 24 miles (39km) of footways. The benefit of this investment brings about a real improvement for road users in the borough.

However, despite the investment it is estimated that significantly more funding is required to maintain the current condition of the highway network let alone improve it but the Council is using innovative techniques to maximise the life of the road surfacing. The Highways Maintenance Strategy details all aspects including the inspection regimes for road safety and highway condition, and how the funding is prioritised and utilised for best value.

The Council currently spends some £1 million per year on pothole repairs using various techniques. In 2017/18, the Department for Transport allocated an additional sum of £188,000 to deal with this continuing problem and the Council used the money to support its programme of Velocity Patching and machine laid highway patching. Full details of all locations treated can be seen on our website. For 2018/19, the DfT has allocated this Council a sum of £261,690.

I am pleased to advise that the Council has committed an additional contribution of £261k, matching the DfT resource, a sum which will significantly assist in improving the road condition and safety for the travelling public'

Since 2008, our partner Tarmac has delivered our highways maintenance and new schemes and during the last year, the team has been preparing for the necessary re-procurement of the service. We issued the Invitation to Tender for the new **Highways Infrastructure Services Contract** on 17 August, which went live on the IN-TEND system. The Proposal is for a 6 plus 2 plus 2-year period at some approximate total value of £150m works. Tenders will be returned on 12 October for cabinet consideration in December 2018.

Since August 2017, the Council has spent over £3m implementing 40-highway **maintenance resurfacing schemes** covering a total length of 12km of carriageway and 6km of footway. In addition, we have carried out 36 preventative treatments to carriageways over a total length of 6km at a cost of some £300,000, and 76 preventative treatments to footways over a total length of 28km at a cost of £225k.

The final year of the **West Midlands Challenge Fund** has been delivered. This was a 3-year programme that brought in around £40m of investment in maintaining the regions classified road network. For 2017/18 Walsall had an allocation of £2m and in October 2017 the Highways team delivered their final scheme at Foley Road West which involved resurfacing 1.6km of carriageway at a cost of £300k . The grant conditions were that all expenditure must be used on the classified road network with the aim of assisting regeneration and the local economy.

We have continued to be at the forefront of innovation utilising new techniques and products to ensure that we get the best quality and value for our residents. As an example we have used the velocity patcher again this year, addressing over 7000 defects at an average cost of less than half that quoted by DfT as the typical cost of a pothole repair.

A number of **key highway projects** have been delivered, including the major junction improvement along the A461 at Shire Oak and the commencements of works at Salters Road, which is progressing well. (NPIF and the Black Country Growth Deal)

We have worked closely with Network Rail and delivered a package of mitigation work to accommodate the closure of the level crossing at Bloxwich, which included enhancements to the junction of Sneyd Lane / Sneyd Hall Road, Elmore Green Road / Croxdene Avenue and along Sneyd Hall Road.

As part of the works to improve road safety, improvements were made to the Keyway which also had the added benefit of increasing the capacity with the additional lane added In order to assist cycling and walking measures have been undertaken across the borough with a number of footpath improvements and dropped kerbs for pedestrians.

We have recently started a **package of works within the Town and District Centres** with an investment of over £4 million to replace worn road surfaces and footpaths as part of a project to brighten up key sites across the borough. The scheme is part of the Council's plans to invest money to improve the commercial centres of communities. Work has already started on Darlaston, Willenhall and Bloxwich, with Brownhills, Aldridge and Walsall Town Centre to follow later in the year.

We are working very closely with Severn Trent and the Environment Agency to look at a number of locations which were identified following the May Bank holiday flooding and there is much work that is being done to address locations of **flooding** and whilst these are in the main small scale schemes, other larger schemes introduced this year included work on a culvert along Bentley Mill way which included the need for major ground stabilisation and clearing of a number of brooks. We have also been successfully attracted funding for the investigation of the Tower Street culvert from the EA with the possibility of a further £200,000 to introduce the scheme in future years.

Looking forward we have a number of sites earmarked for delivery including a further two major junction improvements along the A461 (NPIF)

Keeping the public safe on our roads, ensuring the roads operate efficiently and supporting the needs of the local economy has remained a priority over the last 12 months.

In support of this, my officers have implemented over 100 Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders across the borough whilst working hard to remove instances of unnecessary traffic congestion created by the 4000 individual roadworks they have coordinated. Particular success has been achieved with the development of a new methodology used to successfully implement [the Virgin Media Project](#) Lightening scheme in Streetly enabling over 6000 properties to receive superfast broadband with minimal disruption and inconvenience to residents, motorists and pedestrians. The new methodology has been so well received by Virgin Media that they are now looking to use this template through the UK. To further reduce the impact of roadworks, officers have developed a permit scheme that will improve their coordination and management whilst meeting **Department for Transport requirements for a permit scheme to be operational in 2019.**

The management of our traffic signal network has continued to benefit from improved cross boundary coordination as a result of our **successful shared service with Wolverhampton and the wider Black Country.** Ongoing investment has allowed for the replacement 5 obsolete traffic signal installations all designed to improve road safety and reduce traffic congestion. Improved cooperation with Transport for The West Midlands and Highways England has minimised the impact to the travelling public when incidents occur on the Motorway and local road networks, all helping to support growth in the local and regional economy.

With ongoing support from our schools and **Public Health colleagues, The A*STARS (Active Sustainable Travel and Road Safety)** programme continues to deliver road safety and health benefits for our children, their parents and guardians. Over 20,000 children participated in a campaign to 'Be Bright, Be Seen' in the winter

months and 18,000 children participated in October Walk to School Month, May Walk to School Week and June's Bike Week. Dedicated pedestrian training was delivered by the Road Safety team to 5000 children and 1000 parents to complement the Department for Transport approved cycle training delivered through our Bikeability programme. Generating the ongoing enthusiasm with our children for a more active and safe home to school journey has been supported through the **annual A*STARS Sheriff training event and the A*STARS quiz where over 30 schools participated, with awards presented by the Mayor Cllr Longhi.**

Providing road safety advice and guidance to young, new drivers has been equally important and delivered through our annual **Multi Agency Drive2Arrive** event for prospective new young drivers and further supported by the Valentine 'For My Girlfriend' campaign held at Walsall College to raise awareness about being responsible young drivers and passengers.

Enforcement of parking restrictions introduced to maintain road safety and reduce traffic congestion has remained a priority, particularly at the school gate where our children feel particularly vulnerable. Revisions to enforcement patrolling patterns have provided the opportunity for more frequent school gate enforcement and joint enforcement campaigns with the Police whilst also reducing the cost of delivering the enforcement service.

To make it easier for car park users to pay their parking charge, chip and pin payment is being rolled out to supplement the existing pay by cash or pay by phone options.

Compliance with bus lane restrictions continues to improve as a result of fair, but consistent levels of enforcement and a review of new legislation designed to cut down on instances of littering from vehicles is ongoing and benefitting from Walsall's representation at the national level through the Department for Transport.

In November 2018, we commemorate the centenary of the Armistice that ended the First World War (1914-18). My officers have been working with **Remembrance Day Parade** organisers to assist them in making the necessary Temporary Traffic Management arrangements that will allow this year's important events to take place safely and in line with community expectations. We have identified £35,000 of funding to enable these necessary traffic management arrangements to be put in place.

Our **Public Rights of Way** Team, in conjunction with Walsall Ramblers Volunteers, carried out improvements to Heyhead Wood and Brownhills Common and as part of the Capital Programme Schemes completed included Remington Road, Broadmeadows Road, Manor Farm Drive and NewQuay Close and others stopped up or diverted in conjunction with major developments across the borough.

Community drop kerbs were installed for improvements for disabled members of the public at King Hayes Road, Cameron Road, Margam Terrace and Hope Street.

Naming and Numbering, since September 2017 to now the team has allocated numbers to 327 properties, named 7 properties and 2 new roads, total income £17943. **Section 38 /S278 Adoption during this period** we've taken on £1.6 million worth of highway assets (both new highway and improvements to existing), which includes over 1km of new highway

Highways Development Control team has during the period responded to 350 Planning Applications, and commented on all of the 45 Major Applications that were granted permission including M6 J10, Vacant land opposite Tesco Wisemore for hotel, leisure and retail, Reedswood Way for major distribution, Goscote Lodge Crescent for Residential, and Box Pool Site Darlaston .

PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING PROGRAMMES

We continue to develop our partnerships and relations at regional and sub-regional level and contribute positively and successfully to guide, inform these strategic agendas, and deliver resultant programmes at the local level in support of our people, business and place.

We are actively involved in the development and delivery of **West Midlands Combined Authority** (WMCA). A second devolution deal was agreed in 2018, which proposed an alternate approach of continuous negotiation, with Initiatives and agreements announced throughout the working relationship. The agreement looks to commit government and the WMCA to work towards the establishment of a local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands, based upon the Strategic Economic Plan, which provides a programme of delivery to maximise the social and economic ambitions for industrial growth.

At the sub-regional level, the four Black Country councils have successfully worked in partnership for many years and, together with the Black Country Consortium, have and will continue to achieve significant success. As part of this Walsall Council played a key role in the formation, and is now acting as secretariat and supporting the Governance arrangements, of the **Black Country Joint Committee**. The Joint Committee brings together the four Black Country Leaders to enable that joint discussions and decision-making. The remit has also now been widened to include all funding received from the Combined Authority.

Securing external resources is essential if we are to realise our people, business and place ambitions. One key programme of funding that was created as part of the Devolution process is the **Local Growth Deal (LGF)**. The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership has been allocated £211 million LGF funding through to 2021 to aid the creation of new quality jobs, develop / improve our infrastructure and increase housing numbers. Walsall Council was appointed by the Joint Committee as Accountable Body for the programme and continues to administer the governance, contracting and payment arrangements for the programme.

Walsall borough is and will continue to benefit significantly from the LGF programme. To date £9.3 million of the total LGF claimed has been invested in Walsall projects and in total we have secured circa £49.57 million LGF funding for our projects, including £8.8 million for the Goscote Lane Corridor housing delivery, £39.29 million

towards Junction 10 of the M6, together with £9.48 million of Local Growth Funds for a range of local projects. Outcomes from this work will include: 741 new homes, 257 businesses assisted, 2847 people supported into learning and 906 people supported into apprenticeships and sustainable employment.

Understanding the scale and the nature of the economic challenge, we face, and developing robust and evidence-based solutions is vital to moving forward with our partners. We have continued to gather evidence through an ongoing **Walsall Local Economic Assessment** process, which continues to inform the Walsall Economic Framework and the key Economic Development priorities – Creating Local Jobs and Supporting Local People into Work – that are set out the **Walsall Strategic Economic Plan** (SEP, 2015).

Our local SEP articulates the key priorities for the development of a flourishing Walsall economy, but recognises that these are set within the context of the wider economic ambitions of the Black Country and the West Midlands Combined Authority. This administration continues to recognise the importance of the **Walsall SEP** for the Borough, which clearly sets out our ambitions and priorities for the future, which have been accepted by key partners, including the private sector, through the Walsall Economic Board. . The priorities in the SEP are directly linked to and aligned with all the themes in our new Corporate Plan. We also recognise that many economic issues cannot be tackled in isolation, examples being the cross-cutting priorities of skills development, quality apprenticeships for all, and building a healthy workforce. Many of these shared priorities are identified and addressed within the **Walsall Plan: Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy** – which was adopted by local strategic partners in 2017.

We continue to pursue our **Economic Growth Programme**. The programme aims to create the conditions, environments and infrastructure capable of sustaining existing and attracting new businesses that create new job opportunities within the borough, together with providing the support that local people need to secure or remain in employment. The programme demonstrates our long-term strategy and commitment to sustaining the growth of Walsall's economy by the achieving the following outcomes through to March 2021.

| Key Outcomes/Outputs | Outcomes Anticipated (Up to March 2021) |
|--|--|
| Apprenticeships (16 – 24 year olds) (Pre & Full Apprenticeships) | 477 |
| Jobs Created or Safeguarded | 8797 |
| People Placed/Supported into Employment | 1,246 |
| Businesses Assisted | 1,298 |
| External Funding Secured to Support People & Businesses | £20 million |
| New Public & Private Sector Investment Secured | £700 million |
| Combined Authority / Local Growth Funding Secured | £50 million |
| New Business Secured by local companies (e.g. 'Meet the Buyer' etc.) | £14 million |
| New Council Tax and Business Rates revenue income generated. | £12 million |

MONEY, HOME, JOB

From November 2017 until February 2018, the Money, Home, Job team, in partnership with colleagues in Public Health, commissioned the delivery of a Winter Night Shelter to help reduce the likelihood of winter deaths amongst the homeless population of Walsall. A total of 150 rough sleepers accessed the service during the period it was open (112 males and 38 females). This initiative was only made possible due to the hard work and commitment, of a great many local people who gave up their own time to volunteer and help to run the Shelter during this period. It is truly an example of what can be achieved when a whole community comes together to help others and is something Walsall Council and its residents should be very proud of.

Building on this success, new grant funding of £354,000, has recently been secured from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for 2018-19. This new money has already been used to commission the services of the Black Country YMCA to help run the Winter Night Shelter for another year, this time from October 2018 through to February 2019. We are hopeful that the community will come to our assistance in the same way they did this year and information about how you can get involved will be on our website and that of the Black Country YMCA imminently. This additional funding has also allowed us to appoint a new team of out-reach workers who will be available throughout the year to help support local rough sleepers to access appropriate health care and find suitable accommodation. Another local charity Street Teams has also been appointed, to offer tailored specialist support to a group of entrenched female rough sleepers, most of whom are either actively involved in the street sex trade or have been formerly.

Walsall's local Housing First pilot has been in operation since 27th November 2017, and will continue until 31st March 2019. Through this scheme, we have commissioned Accord Housing Group to house and support 20 complex rough sleepers, and whg to take an additional 5, giving a total of 25. 22 of our most complex rough sleepers have been housed and supported through this project, with a further 3 being supported in our Temporary Accommodation whilst a property is readied for them. The first rough sleeper to be housed on 27th November 2017 is still in his property (albeit significant support is required to help him sustain his tenancy). Only 1 individual has left the Housing First project, which was through choice (rather than eviction). There is a multi-agency operational group in place including Accord, whg, Street Teams and the Police to ensure a joined up approach with this cohort. We are the only LA currently operating a self-funded Housing First pilot in the region, and it was put in place prior to the announcement of the West Midlands Combined Authority Regional pilot funding in the November 2017 budget to ensure that no rough sleepers were forced back onto the streets when the 2017/18 Night Shelter closed.

Councillor A Andrew
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
7 September 2018