

## **Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel – 22 January 2010**

### **Corporate Plan**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of the Council

**Service:** Corporate Performance Management

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary of report**

- 1.1 This report sets out for comment the council's Corporate Plan for 2010/11, which is attached as an appendix. This plan confirms the council's continued commitment to the shared vision for the borough of Walsall set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, developed through the Walsall Partnership and launched in July 2008, and sets out the key outcomes for local citizens that form the main focus for the council and for all council services for the year ahead.
- 1.2 As a key policy document for the authority, the Corporate Plan will be submitted to Council for its adoption.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel consider the draft Corporate Plan 2010/11 and make any recommendations it feels necessary to Cabinet.

#### **3. Background information**

- 3.1 The council has produced a Corporate Plan each year from 2004/05, as a key component of its performance management framework. The Corporate Plan reflects the council's commitment to overarching partnership plans for the borough, specifically the Sustainable Community Strategy, and provides the focus and direction for directorate, service and team plans, and for all council employees.
- 3.2 For 2010/11, the council has revised its priorities so that they more closely reflect the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy. As a result, the seven citizen outcomes and three internal drivers that together comprised the Walsall Outcomes Framework, and that were set out in the 2009/10 Corporate Plan, have been superseded by a new set of nine priorities, set out below. Eight of these reflect the Sustainable Community Strategy's priority outcomes, whilst the ninth, 'working smarter', is more internally focussed and reflects the council's commitment to make its structures, its processes, procedures and ways of working effective, and fit for the future.

For 2010/11, our nine **priorities** are:

- Improving health
- Reducing crime and feeling safe
- Developing strong and dynamic communities
- Improving education and skills
- Improving housing choice
- Improving the quality of our environment
- Reducing worklessness and creating opportunity and potential
- Increasing enterprise and making Walsall a vibrant borough
- Working smarter.

3.3 Taken together, these nine priorities aim to create **pride in Walsall** as a place to live and work.

#### **4. Resource considerations**

4.1 **Financial:** The priorities and objectives identified within the Corporate Plan have driven the budget setting process and as such are all accounted for within the draft 2010/11 budget.

4.2 **Legal:** There is no legal requirement for Council's to publish a Corporate Plan but it is rooted in best practice.

4.3 **Staffing:** The priorities and objectives contained within the Corporate Plan help inform the Corporate Workforce Plan which aims to ensure that the authority has the right people, with the right skills to deliver effective services. In addition, the development of a forward looking vision for the Council linked to portfolio plans and service delivery actions plan helps provide a focus for all Council employees.

#### **5. Citizen impact**

5.1 The first 8 priorities in the Corporate Plan are outward focussed and are based on the outcomes of the Sustainable Communities Strategy which was itself based on thorough consultation with, and a detailed needs analysis of, Walsall citizens. All nine priorities form an overall vision to improve outcomes for all Walsall citizens and make the people who live and work in Walsall proud of the borough.

#### **6. Community safety**

6.1 Reducing crime and feeling safe is one of the nine priorities contained within the plan and as such it provides a clear commitment by the council to the reduction of crime and of the fear of crime.

#### **7. Environmental impact**

7.1 Improving the quality of our environment is one of the nine priorities contained within the plan as such it provides a clear commitment from the council to making Walsall a cleaner and greener place.

#### **8. Performance and risk management issues**

8.1 **Risk:** The Corporate Plan, and the priorities and objectives contained within it have been risk assessed as an integral part of the Council's planning process.

8.2 **Performance management:** The Corporate Plan provides the top level vision for the delivery of Council services. As set out in the Walsall Performance Framework, these priorities are translated into more detailed portfolio and service plans which are monitored by the Performance Information Management System.

## 9. Equality implications

9.1 The Corporate Plan reiterates the Council's core values, which include respect and equality, and equality is an integral theme running throughout all our planning activity.

## 10. Consultation

10.1 The shared vision for the borough, set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and central to the council's corporate priorities and to the Corporate Plan, was developed by the Walsall Partnership following a detailed consultation programme, Vision 2021. The council's priorities, set out in this plan reflect the needs and priorities of local people, and of our stakeholders, based upon information, including demographic information held by council services, and on customer feedback, including the recent budget consultation programme.

## Background papers

All published

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Rory Borealis

Rory Borealis  
Executive Director  
12 January 2010

Councillor Mike Bird  
Leader of the Council  
January 2010

**DRAFT- FOR CORPORATE SCRUTINY 22/01/10**

**Walsall Council**

**Corporate Plan**

**2010/11**

**[DATE TO BE ADDED]**

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# 1. Introduction

The 2010/11 year, and the years subsequent to this will be extremely challenging for local government across the country. The economic downturn has meant the public purse is being squeezed like never before and this situation is not likely to get any better in the short to medium term. As a Council we have a duty to all our citizens to maintain and improve the quality of our service delivery, whilst at the same time seeking to make efficiency savings to ensure we improve the value for money we get from our diminishing resources. This has already involved us having to make some very tough decisions and yet more will have to be taken over the coming months and years. However by remaining focussed on our priorities as expressed in this plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy we can ensure we use our resources appropriately and **work smarter** to deliver the outcomes the people of Walsall deserve.

One of the key ways in which we can ensure we get better value for money is by working closely with other organisations in the Walsall Partnership to identify areas where we can share resources and work together towards our common aims of making Walsall a great place to live, work and invest.

We must also continue to look outside our boundaries to our Black Country neighbours, the West Midlands Region and beyond. By exploring opportunities for joint working we can help tackle problems on a larger scale and we can also learn from others and allow them to learn from us.

Our first Comprehensive Area Assessment was published in December 2009 and we were pleased to see this reflect many of the positive things we have achieved as a Council and as a Partnership such as our waste collection and recycling service and the support we have provided to businesses in tackling the recession. The Care Quality Commission has also recognised the improvements made in the service we provide to vulnerable adults, judging our adults social care service to be 'performing well.' The report also highlighted where we still need to improve and so we will not be resting on our laurels but working with our partners to close those gaps.

There is a lot to be proud of in the borough, both in our rich heritage and in what we are achieving today, but we want to build a future in which everyone in the community can have **pride in Walsall**; in what we do and how we do it.

Along with my colleagues on the Executive, we are committed to being a **listening cabinet**; we recognise the valuable contribution that all non-executive elected members have to make as representatives of their constituents and want to engage with them fully through the scrutiny process. As well as listening to backbench councillors, we will also seek to engage directly with our citizens wherever possible. Our new neighbourhood management model will allow for more focussed engagement at a ward level to deliver real tangible improvements that people want. We will also continue to consult with people using both traditional and more innovative techniques to ensure we make informed decisions that are in touch with what Walsall needs.

The priorities expressed in this Corporate Plan provide the focus for us to move forward together through these challenging times but we will all have a key role to play in delivering this plan which will require hard work and commitment.

Councillor Mike Bird  
Leader of the Council

## **2. The purpose of this document**

The council publishes a Corporate Plan each year as a key element of our performance framework. The plan sets out the council's vision for the borough, our aims and objectives and our strategic priorities for the year ahead. We recognise that some priorities will take longer to achieve than one year, their inclusion in this plan demonstrates a clear commitment to take these matters forward during the year ahead.

The Corporate Plan is agreed by all elected Members at full Council and informs individual plans for each cabinet portfolio. These portfolio plans set out the objectives of the Members of Cabinet for the areas within their own remit and are supported by service action plans which detail the specific activities that officers will be undertaking within the year to help deliver these objectives.

The plan reflects the council's contribution to the work of the Walsall Partnership, as a reflection of the Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough, and the Local Area Agreement which will take it forward. The Corporate Plan, the budget, and other key plans and strategies of the council, are informed by an understanding of the people, nature and demographics of our borough - from primary statistical and trend data, customer feedback, and other analyses of community needs, all of which support the design and delivery of our services, corporately and at directorate, service and team levels.

“



### 3. Our vision for the borough of Walsall

Through the Walsall Partnership, the council has worked with a range of organisations including the police, the NHS, local businesses and community & voluntary groups to develop a clear vision for the borough of Walsall, looking ahead to the year 2021. This vision is set out in detail in the Sustainable Community Strategy [\[add hyperlink\]](#) for the borough. This is the overarching community plan for the borough, which was launched by the Walsall Partnership in July 2008, and which was informed by, and reflected a wide ranging consultation programme 'Vision 2021' delivered by the Partnership and by individual partner organisations.

The Sustainable Community Strategy includes clear targeted plans to be delivered by local partners, singly and in partnership. It informs, and sits at the heart of the plans of the individual partners, including the council. The council is committed to the strategy, and to the delivery of our own contribution to its implementation, through the Local Area Agreement [\[add hyperlink\]](#) and other partnership working. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides a blueprint for the future of our borough, for local **people**, for the **places** where we live and work, and in terms of **prosperity**, where action to create a more prosperous economy is the key to improved health and well-being, lower levels of crime, and greater educational achievement.

Our vision for the borough is that Walsall will be a great place to live, work and invest, where...

- people get on well with one another
- people can get around easily and safely
- people support and look after one another
- there are more and better jobs for local people
- people can live an independent and healthy life
- there is a wide range of facilities for people to use and enjoy
- people consider the impact of what we do now on future generations
- there exist high-quality and distinctive designs of buildings and spaces
- growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential
- people are our strength and have the skills and attitude required by employers
- everyone has the chance to live in a home fit for their purpose and fit for the future
- people feel proud to live.

This is the shared vision for the borough of Walsall, its communities, and its citizens – it provides us with a clear focus as we plan the council's services, and allocate resources, for the year ahead, and into the future.

## 4. Holding fast to our values

As we move forward, working towards our shared vision for the borough of Walsall, to 2021, we continue to hold fast to our core values of **respect, integrity, equality, listening** and **excellence** to guide us in our day-to-day work. Our values govern our contact with citizens and those who use and rely upon our services, and our relationships with partner organisations. Likewise, these values guide us as we carry out our roles and responsibilities within the council, both council members and employees, and working between and across directorates and services, and with our contractors and suppliers.

Through our commitment to these values, we signal to everyone the beliefs, behaviours and principles that underpin all that we do. These shared and agreed values set out what the council stands for and help us to build pride in Walsall.

### Respect

- We will respect every individual – our citizens, stakeholders and staff – and their differences and diversity
- We will have mutual respect for the professionalism of individuals, teams and partners – communication will be valued and criticism will be constructive
- In respecting everyone we will behave with civility, courtesy, decency, dignity, understanding, consideration and tolerance

### Integrity

- We will be honest, open and consistent in all our dealings with our stakeholders, so that we may earn and maintain their trust
- We will keep our promises, be accountable and take responsibility for our actions
- We will demonstrate decisive, responsive, impartial and fair leadership

### Equality

- We will, through our policies, statements and actions, include, promote and celebrate the great diversity of individuals and cultures across the borough
- We will gear our resources to ensure that our citizens and staff will see and feel real fairness and equality for all
- We will make council services accessible, and tailored to the needs of all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle or disability

### Listening

- We will listen and consult residents, community organisations, voluntary groups and staff – caring about and acting upon their views and concerns
- We will learn from any comments or complaints that local people may have and ensure they are responded to effectively
- We will consult citizens on major changes and involve them in the things that matter in their community, working with them to deliver the vision at local levels

## **Excellence**

- We will strive to become an excellent council – forward-facing, outward-looking and constantly seeking to develop and improve our services in ways most meaningful to citizens
- We will learn, develop and work effectively and efficiently, acting as one council to deliver our vision for the benefit of all Walsall citizens
- We will empower, trust and value our staff by providing the support, training, communication and opportunities to develop the ownership, responsibility and confidence to make decisions, solve problems and fulfil our potential to achieve continuous improvement for the benefit of local people.

## 5. Our priorities – building pride in Walsall

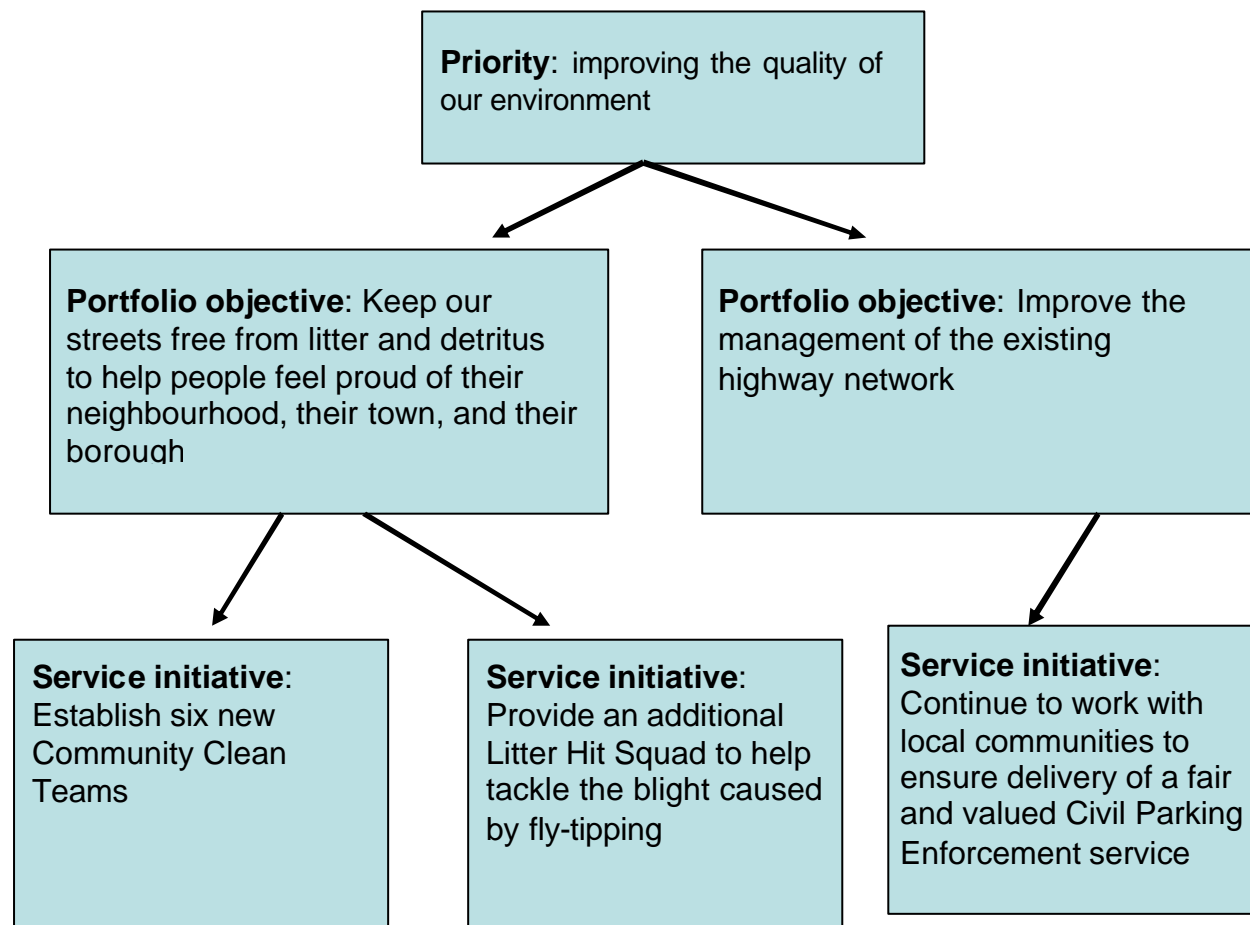
To ensure that we achieve our vision for Walsall, we must maximise the positive impact of our resources – the knowledge, experience and commitment of our employees; the buildings, equipment, the roads and green spaces that the council owns and looks after; and the money that is entrusted to the council from local people, from government and other external funders, and from fees and charges. To do this, we must be clear about our priorities, and confident that our priorities reflect the needs and the aspirations of local people. For 2010/11, the council has revised its priorities so that they more closely reflect the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy. As a result, the seven citizen outcomes and three internal drivers that together comprised the Walsall Outcomes Framework, and that were set out in the 2009/10 Corporate Plan, have been superseded by a new set of nine priorities, set out below. Eight of these reflect the Sustainable Community Strategy's priority outcomes, whilst the tenth 'working smarter' is more internally focussed and reflects the council's commitment to make its structures, its processes, procedures and ways of working effective, and fit for the future. All of these, taken together, successfully delivered whilst holding true to our core values, will build pride in Walsall as a place to live and work. Pride in Walsall relates not just to how the Council is performing, but to the borough's rich heritage and how the people and organisations of the borough work together to make it a better place now and for the future. It is about the pride, not just of the Council Members and staff but of every resident, every business, and everyone who uses our services and facilities.

For 2010/11 our nine **priorities** are:

- Improving health [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Reducing crime and feeling safe [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Developing strong and dynamic communities [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Improving education and skills [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Improving housing choice [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Improving the quality of our environment [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Reducing worklessness and creating opportunity and potential [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Increasing enterprise and making Walsall a vibrant borough [\[add hyperlink\]](#)
- Working smarter [\[add hyperlink\]](#)

These priorities provide a focus for the whole council – the decisions that are taken, and the actions that are taken as a result by each of our directorates, and the services, teams, and individual members of staff working within them. As these priorities are fully in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy, we are confident that we will be focussing our resources, energy and attention on shared goals – on the things that matter most to local people.

Underpinning the nine priorities, cabinet members have each identified their own **portfolio objectives**, and have then worked together and with directorates to develop a number of key actions or **service initiatives** which are set out in detail in the relevant portfolio plan, and in the operational plans of directorates and services. An example is set out below, to demonstrate how the framework operates.



In each case, these service initiatives are supported by specific **action plans**, including measurable targets and **milestones** which will be monitored through the year using the council's performance management framework [\[add hyperlink\]](#) and the performance information management system (PIMS), with regular progress reports to both cabinet and scrutiny and performance boards. This robust framework

extends, and replaces, the previous arrangement where a set of pledges was developed, supportive of the council's priorities, and monitored through the year.

## Our priorities: improving health

### What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:

The Sustainable Community Strategy acknowledges that people have concern over the availability of adequate health care facilities. Within the framework provided by the Walsall Partnership, we will work together to tackle health inequalities and to meet the care needs of all. We will reduce the health inequalities that exist between the east and the west of the borough and also between different disadvantaged minority ethnic groups. The Joint Health Inequalities Strategy will be delivered in partnership and will consider the factors that cause ill-health, including sustained unemployment, educational under-achievement, poor support and bad environment. By working on these factors together we will raise life expectancy and reduce infant mortality. Improving the quality of life and encouraging independence is essential to generating good health and improving general well-being. We will continue to support our vulnerable citizens and their carers; people will be helped to retain their independence for as long as possible. We will ensure that those who receive these services are able to exercise choice and exert control over the form such services take and by whom they are delivered; the carers of our vulnerable adults will continue to be supported through the delivery of high-quality and timely support.

### What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:

People in Walsall are less healthy than the average for England and children face a number of conditions that have an adverse effect on their health. Working with other local organisations the Council and NHS Walsall have set up services to improve people's health. There is a big difference in how healthy people are across Walsall, with people who live in the east being generally healthier than people who live in the west. Walsall Council's adult social care services perform well.

### Council priority: improving health

Recognising that the health of people in Walsall is below the national average and that children face a number of conditions that adversely effect their health we will continue to work with other organisations to provide safe, accessible services that encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce inequalities.

### Portfolio Objectives

- To create and enhance opportunities to improve the health and well being of local people and increase active participation (Leisure & Culture)
- To improve local walking and cycling facilities serving our centres and key areas of activity (Transport)
- To contribute to improving of the health of local people by ensuring safe working places and satisfactory standards of food production, storage and distribution. (Communities & Partnerships)
- To optimise life chances, health and well-being by reducing inequalities, maximising autonomy and prevention, and

minimising dependence (Social Care & Health)

- To ensure safety and protection, while enabling and managing risk (Social Care & Health)
- To ensure a high quality workforce in adults social care and inclusion (Social Care & Health)
- To ensure the availability of accessible services that are empowering, socially inclusive and responsive to user preference (Social Care & Health)
- To encourage healthy lifestyles (Children's Services)
- To promote mental health, well-being and enjoyment of life and school (Children's Services)
- To stimulate and support activities that help address worklessness and improve the skills level of all Walsall people (Regeneration)
- To improve the standard, sustainability, choice and access to housing and helping people live independently (Regeneration)



## **Our priorities: reducing crime and feeling safe**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Sustainable Community Strategy acknowledges that, despite a decrease in recorded crime, fear of crime remains an issue for some local communities. The Safer Walsall Partnership is the key agency tasked with ensuring a multi-agency approach to tackling crime and the fear of crime. We will work through and alongside them to support people who are vulnerable and likely to be drawn into crime, particularly through drug and alcohol abuse. In transforming our town and district centres, and working with our partners, we will create an environment that reduces crime and enables people to feel safe. We will also work in partnership with organisations and businesses to reduce business crime.

Making people feel safe requires more than just dealing with crime and disorder: we will create safe open spaces and parks and encourage physical activity to enable people to relax and enjoy themselves, knowing that more people using these facilities and spaces appropriately makes those areas feel safer. We will also make our streets feel safer by tackling anti-social behaviour.

Safety in the home is also important and we will work to protect people against creating fire hazards and the trading of potentially dangerous counterfeit goods.

### **What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Crime has reduced in Walsall and the Police and partners are working hard to maintain this. They have made a big difference in bringing down the overall volume of crime which is now about the same as in similar areas. Progress in reducing crime levels has been sustained over several years now. Less progress has been made in tackling reports of serious violence including burglary and theft, and hate crime where rates remain higher than in similar areas. Although most residents say they feel safe where they live, the proportion is below the national average. The fall in crime is thus not recognised by people's views on crime and safety. One in five people agree the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime in their local area, this is below average. In Walsall less people than average feel safe after dark or during the day. More people than average think teenagers hanging around, graffiti or people using or dealing drugs are a problem in their local area.

Local public services are taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partners are taking action to reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Partnership working is well established and delivers good results, even if these are to date results the public is not noticing. There is still thus a long way to go to improve public perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour, so that they are more in line with similar areas in the country. Approaches such as the Borough Tasking Group, Walsall Persistent Offender Programme and Bottle Watch are designed to cut crime and help people feel safer in their community.

## **Council priority: reducing crime and feeling safe**

Through valuing and supporting our communities, developing district and local centres and providing stimulating activities that help address worklessness we aim to reduce all crimes and perceptions of crime and create a community focussed public safety service.

### **Portfolio Objectives**

- To improve the actual and perceived safety of our transport networks (Transport)
- To strengthen public enforcement to offer a greater level of reassurance to our communities (Communities & Partnerships)
- To reduce crime, disorder, anti social behaviour, alcohol and substance misuse and environmental crime in the borough (Communities & Partnerships)
- To target early intervention to ensure safety (Children's Services)
- Stimulating and supporting activities that help address worklessness and improve the skills level of all Walsall people (Regeneration)
- To improve the standard, sustainability, choice and access to housing and helping people live independently (Regeneration)
- To support and develop district and local centres and priority housing and employment areas (Regeneration)

## **Our priorities: developing strong and dynamic communities**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Walsall Partnership believes that strong and prosperous communities are created by active citizens who engage with local democracy to help shape places and lives. Local communities have laid the foundation for building a borough where everyone can have a great life and a prosperous future. We will continue to nurture good, dynamic and strong relationships within and between individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods and communities and between them and those who plan and deliver public services.

Working with our partners, we will work more fairly and effectively with those most in need. We will encourage people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and will continue to promote the value of our diverse communities. We will support self-leading communities and will value volunteering for the contribution it makes to economic, social and environmental regeneration. We will enable democratic engagement with individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods and communities in the knowledge that this will improve how services are delivered in neighbourhoods and districts.

We will make sure that local people really can play a part in shaping their future. We will expect service providers to accept this challenge, get engaged with our neighbourhoods and listen and respond to the needs of our communities. We know that people want to live in a high-quality environment. This also encourages well-being and investment. We will promote and celebrate the natural environment as part of building strong communities. We will develop green spaces and ensure that they are accessible to the public.

### **What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Despite good work with local communities the percentage of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together is below the national average. Residents do not feel safe where they live and satisfaction levels are lower than in other similar parts of the country. Although local services are becoming more accessible and improving, people have not noticed improvements.

Walsall has a diverse population and marked differences in health and poverty across the borough. Local public services are encouraging discussion across communities to help tackle problems, including racism and inequalities. Partners are supporting local communities and tackling the inequalities and differences in these communities. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships have provided a good way to reach out and talk to local people and these are currently being looked at make them better.

### **Council priority: developing strong and dynamic communities**

Recognising the diversity of our communities we aim, through closely working with local people and partners, to implement a new model of community engagement and neighbourhood provide support to create a thriving third sector and tackle poverty via support to businesses, activities to address worklessness and helping people to live independently in sustainable fit for

purpose homes.

### **Portfolio Objectives**

- To work more closely with local people and partners to deliver services that respond to local need (Environment)
- To implement a new model for engaging communities and improving public services through neighbourhood management (Communities & Partnerships)
- To improve our arrangements for voluntary sector support to create a thriving third sector with sustainable budgets (Communities & Partnerships)
- To ensure that Walsall has cohesive communities by implementing the community cohesion strategy and action plan (Communities & Partnerships)
- To promote social inclusion and reduce child poverty (Children's Services)
- To stimulate and support activities that help address worklessness and improve the skills level of all Walsall people (Regeneration)
- To support existing businesses and assist in the development of new ones (Regeneration)
- To improve the standard, sustainability, choice and access to housing and helping people live independently (Regeneration)
- To support the transformation of Walsall Town Centre into a competitive and vibrant strategic centre that is the economic and cultural driver of the Borough (Regeneration)
- To support and develop district and local centres and priority housing and employment areas (Regeneration)
- To lead the delivery of Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Capital Programmes to support the overall Transforming Learning approach (Regeneration)
- To ensure the availability of accessible services that are empowering, socially inclusive and responsive to user preference (Social Care & Health)

## **Our priorities: improving education and skills**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Sustainable Community Strategy makes clear our belief that Walsall's future depends on developing our people. Our aim is for all of our residents, families, communities and neighbourhoods to reach their potential and become confident, self-motivated learners who will enable the borough to be a great place to live, work and invest. We will improve the facilities and opportunities available in schools and encourage life-long learning for everyone. We will continue to create more children's centres where children, young people, parents and carers can access support, services and opportunities close to where they live. We will encourage schools to provide a more personalised learning for students, more opportunities for 14- to 19-year olds, more extended services to families and carers and more support to people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

The education of children and young people will be a key element in delivering the economic growth within and across Walsall. There will be greater collaboration between educational institutions and local, sub-regional and regional partners to give every child and young person the best opportunities; growing up in Walsall will be as good as it can be, children will realise their full potential. The Black Country Challenge will provide resources and opportunities for improvements in many schools. At the same time we will maximise the employment and economic activity and the well-being of young people in a regenerated borough, reducing the numbers who are not in education, employment or training and reducing child poverty. We will encourage our young people, parents, families and communities to have higher aspirations and help them to achieve qualifications and access higher education. We will promote life-long learning and widening participation into training, learning and educational opportunities in local areas. This will increase the potential of our workforce in the borough. We will work to develop and deliver our neighbourhood employment, knowledge and skills action plans, which identify the barriers to work opportunities and gaps in services in local areas and the actions needed to assist people to develop skills and get jobs.

We know that new investors and new businesses attracted into Walsall require higher levels of skills, expertise and knowledge than our current population, on the whole, can offer. To overcome this we will encourage partnership working between learning, education or training providers and employers. We will ensure that the needs of businesses are better understood. We will create a new business and learning campus, which will be the centre for working with local people to develop their skills knowledge and qualifications. We are aiming for a world-class education structure and a learning framework to ensure that children, young people, adults, employees and communities will all have the opportunity to be educated, knowledgeable and skilled to meet future business requirements.

Walsall is entering a new era of growth and development. The borough's future rests on our ability to adapt quickly and positively to change. Over the next six years there will be a noticeable increase in the number of knowledge and technology-based businesses and the use of technology by all who live or work in Walsall. We will develop our own gigaport - a fibre-optic network that will be 120 times faster than broadband - to meet the evolving needs of business and enterprise for the twenty-first century. Alongside this physical infrastructure will be a clear alignment of higher and further education institutions, business support and training providers, who will work with international

blue-chip companies to provide high-quality learning, development and training, knowledge acquisition and renewal, research and development support. A workforce with the skills, expertise and knowledge relevant to these new initiatives, together with the appropriate technological infrastructure, underpins our aspirations for increased prosperity as the keystone for sustainable communities.

**What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Walsall has an above average rate of child poverty and a below average rate of improvement. This is due to the deteriorating economy and presents substantial challenges to improving outcomes for children. Some children in Walsall do not have as healthy a start in life as others. Local public services are working together to reduce infant mortality by tackling smoking in pregnancy, increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing maternal obesity levels. Children in Walsall are kept safe in the places and services they go to and use. By the end of their primary and their secondary education children's achievement continues to be the same as that nationally and in other similar areas. Although the overall proportion of schools judged good or better in inspection has improved, primary school performance is uneven with under half judged good or better in inspection, compared with two thirds of secondary schools. Results for young people aged 16 achieving five or more A\* to C including English and mathematics have improved with the gap closing slightly with similar councils over the last four years. Provisional and unvalidated data for 2009 show that standards are continuing to rise.

**Council priority: improving education and skills**

The foundation for future success lies in how we build an infrastructure that ensures all local people and especially children and young people fulfil their potential with the right skills, learning, environment and opportunity to maximise their achievements and and the contribution they make to their community.

**Portfolio Objectives**

- To maximise existing and to create new learning opportunities for local people to enhance their life skills and enrich their life chances (Leisure & Culture)
- To lead the delivery of Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Capital Programmes to support the overall Transforming Learning approach(Regeneration)
- To stimulate and support activities that help address worklessness and improve the skills level of all Walsall people (Regeneration)
- To support existing businesses and assist in the development of new ones (Regeneration)
- To promote social inclusion and reduce child poverty (Children's Services)
- To value and support our young people (Children's Services)

## **Our priorities: improving housing choice**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

Our aim and that of our partners is to provide better housing choice for everyone in the borough, including the growing numbers of smaller households, our ageing population and our changing, diverse communities. We will ensure that this choice includes aspirational housing, affordable home ownership and social rented properties to give us balanced, sustainable communities. We will provide a range of smaller homes for town and district centre living and larger family homes where they are needed across the borough. Where possible we will support people to remain in their own home by providing appropriate services, adapting and repairing existing property and encouraging new properties to be built to the 'lifetime homes' standard. We will also encourage the development of new housing to provide a modern alternative for people not able or wishing to remain in their own home.

We will improve our existing private sector homes, especially those occupied by vulnerable people. We will make 70% of these homes decent by 2010 and 75% decent by 2020. We will reduce fuel poverty for those households by 2010 and for all households by 2016. We will also make housing more environmentally friendly and energy efficient and we will work towards the government target of zero carbon new housing by 2016.

Our Strategic Regeneration Framework sets out a 10- to 15-year programme of priority areas where we will deliver new and improved housing, starting with Pleck, followed by Goscote, Brownhills, Moxley, Bentley and Willenhall. We will continue to work with our partners in the Black Country and the Midlands, over the coming years to tackle desirability and value of the housing market renewal in the west and north of the borough, including Darlaston, Willenhall, Bloxwich and Walsall town centre.

### **What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

For some time, Walsall has provided more new homes than it was asked to. Partners are clear on the importance of good housing. It is improving housing choice by preventing homelessness, increasing affordable homes, improving the standard of homes and enabling people to live independently. Key targets agreed with government cover extra homes and fuel poverty. Walsall has good information on its need for affordable housing, and good plans that are designed to provide more affordable homes. However it has not met all need so far. Walsall is successfully tackling homelessness issues across the area. Walsall is making progress in tackling fuel poverty, but many private tenants on low incomes are living in homes which are not fuel efficient and therefore expensive and difficult to heat.

### **Council priority: improving housing choice**

Provision of quality and fit for purpose homes that meet the needs of our communities and are well served by local amenities will support the development of district and local centres and help people to live independently.

<b>Portfolio Objectives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To improve the standard, sustainability, choice and access to housing and helping people live independently (Regeneration)</li><li>• To support the transformation of Walsall Town Centre into a competitive and vibrant strategic centre that is the economic and cultural driver of the Borough (Regeneration)</li><li>• To support and develop district and local centres and priority housing and employment areas (Regeneration)</li></ul>



## **Our priorities: improving the quality of our environment**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Sustainable Community Strategy indicates the importance of a high-quality environment to improve our quality of life and to help us to feel proud of where we live. Access to a range of diverse and better quality environments also enhances our health and well-being. The value of land, property and levels of investment are also improved when the environment is improved. Access to places to play is also vital to ensure good childhood memories and builds self-esteem.

What we do next on a local, national and global level will affect the future of our planet. We are committed to acting now locally to reduce our impact upon the environment to more sustainable levels. We are also committed to adapting to the effects of adverse climate change including flooding or other catastrophes.

Working with our local partners we will improve our green spaces and access to green spaces and we will support the Black Country Consortium to make the Black Country an 'Urban Park'.

### **What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Overall satisfaction with the area and with parks and open spaces is in the worst 25 per cent of similar areas, although overall satisfaction has increased since 2006/07. According to residents, the state of the roads and streets remain areas for improvement. More waste is recycled or composted through a new household waste collection scheme. The Council has met its statutory target and is above average on recycling and satisfaction with recycling is in the best 25 per cent. Walsall has introduced various energy efficiency measures to try to reduce energy consumption, and is making good progress in reducing the environmental impact of waste buried in landfill sites.

### **Council priority: improving the quality of our environment**

Ensuring the highway network and public transport services are well managed and maintained is key to supporting businesses, the transformation of the Town Centre and district centres and improving the quality of the environment. In addition keeping streets free from litter and detritus and managing the impact of waste through increasing recycling, reducing our impact on the environment and managing issues associated with contaminated land and air quality are key to improving our environment.

#### **Portfolio Objectives**

- To improve the management of the existing highway network (Transport)
- To keep our streets free from litter and detritus to help people feel proud of their neighbourhood, their town, and their

borough (Environment)

- To continue to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill by further investing in our recycling service and residual waste treatment facilities (Environment)
- To respect the dignity of our residents through the delivery of a high quality, sensitive and accessible bereavement and registrar's service which responds to the needs of all sections of our community (Environment)
- To reduce our impact on the environment to more sustainable levels (Environment)
- To manage the impact of contaminated land and issues associated with air quality (Environment)
- To improve the condition of our cemeteries and access to public buildings, at the same time as addressing memorial safety issues (Communities & Partnerships)
- To ensure a clean environment by tackling public health nuisances, environmental crime and animal welfare. (Environment)
- To support existing businesses and assist in the development of new ones (Regeneration)
- To support the transformation of Walsall Town Centre into a competitive and vibrant strategic centre that is the economic and cultural driver of the Borough (Regeneration)
- To support and develop district and local centres and priority housing and employment areas (Regeneration)
- To develop effective and appropriate transport infrastructure to improve access, support economic prosperity and enhance the Borough's strategic corridors and gateways (Regeneration)

## **Our priorities: reducing worklessness and creating opportunity and potential**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Sustainable Community Strategy takes pride that Walsall has a strong and vibrant business community and commits the Walsall Partnership, and each of its members, to work with business across all sectors. Through a programme of engagement and support, we can help Walsall's businesses overcome some of the many challenges that they face in today's global economy by promoting employment opportunities, continual professional development and career progression, whilst benefiting the Walsall economy as a whole. To encourage existing businesses looking to make significant investments in their operations we will offer tailored packages of support. This will include encouragement to develop sites, train the existing workforce and create new jobs. We will also encourage apprenticeship. Support will also be offered to inward investors, making Walsall an attractive option in which to relocate a business and create new job opportunities, investment and growth.

Working with a range of partners, we will link new job opportunities to local residents and communities. We will also continue to assist employers to develop this workforce to increase the level and range of skills and knowledge in the borough and provide further opportunities. We aim to procure products and services locally to enable local businesses to take advantage of expenditure taking place in the borough. These opportunities for local business will be promoted through our Think Walsall initiative, when tenders and contracts will be delivered.

The Sustainable Community Strategy makes clear that creating more and better jobs for local people is our key challenge. Having a job unlocks many other benefits that improve the quality of life of individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities. With our partners we are committed to working with everyone to enable them to reach their potential and to improve their education, knowledge and levels of skills, including the provision of specialist support to workless adults.

Walsall is in the process of creating new business opportunities, based on information and communication technologies and the sharing of knowledge. This will require new skills and knowledge to be developed for local people, thus enabling them to gain employment. We know Walsall has many people willing and capable of improving their skills, knowledge and qualifications and so we will provide better opportunities for adult learning across the borough. This will raise the aspirations of individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities and help them to improve their confidence and fulfil their individual and collective goals. In turn this will not only boost our local economies but it will also generate a more even distribution of wealth and income.

Within the framework of the Walsall Partnership, we will work with the Learning and Skills Council, and with providers of adult, further and higher education, to ensure that there are learning opportunities for all. We will widen and deepen the participation of individuals, groups and communities in learning, education and training whilst promoting life-long learning. We will ensure that learning is accessible and meets the demands of employers. We will aim to provide a service which is constantly improving to meet demands of individuals, families,

neighbourhoods, communities and businesses and which delivers seamlessly to all. Along with the traditional places of learning, we will provide community-based informal and on-line courses. We will provide access and support that encourages and enables learners to work at their own pace, using our libraries, partners, community organisations and ICT networks. Together we can help create a positive environment that will both encourage and demand learning inside and outside of the workplace.

We will work with schools and others to develop a more personalised learning approach for all children and young people. We will improve the achievement of all school leavers especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds, under-achieving boys, looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

We will encourage people to make better use of different kinds of transport which give them better, cheaper or healthier forms of access to learning and employment opportunities.

We will also encourage people to volunteer within their community and we will involve communities in the decisions affecting their lives. This will include providing opportunities to lead more healthy lifestyles and improve their well-being.

**What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Local public services have worked well together and had some success in helping local people into employment or training. One stop shops that cater to people needing work have proved particularly successful in some of the more deprived areas. The programme focuses on vulnerable groups and those who find it most difficult to get jobs. The recession has meant that individual projects and programmes have not made enough of an impact on the total jobless and targets to reduce unemployment in Walsall have not been met. Walsall is now joining forces with the other six West Midlands areas and others to work more effectively, on a larger scale. This is happening through a "Multi-area agreement".

Relatively few local people think they can influence decisions affecting their local area. Satisfaction with the area is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and lower than the national average of 81 per cent. However despite this, Walsall has made it easier for local people to access services for instance getting in touch with the Council. Its 'First Stop Shop', provides a single point of contact for customers. This has been enhanced by the 'First Stop Express' a customer service bus which provides a mobile First Stop Shop, which allows people from district centres across the borough to contact the Council.

**Council priority: reducing worklessness and creating opportunity and potential**

The huge challenge of the current economic situation requires a response of equal significance. Building on current activity we will continue to support local people through the provision of activities that will help address Worklessness. Whilst a key priority is to reduce Worklessness it is just as important that we continue to ensure our services are accessible, support all and are socially inclusive if opportunities for everyone are to be created. As important is valuing and supporting our young people, our

businesses and our communities.

### **Portfolio Objectives**

- To stimulate and support activities that help address worklessness and improve the skills level of all Walsall people (Regeneration)
- To support existing businesses and assist in the development of new ones (Regeneration)
- To support the transformation of Walsall Town Centre into a competitive and vibrant strategic centre that is the economic and cultural driver of the Borough (Regeneration)
- To implement and develop partnerships to enhance services and engage new audiences (Leisure & Culture)
- To celebrate and raise the profile of Walsall's cultural services and assets to promote pride in Walsall (Leisure & Culture)
- To value and to support our young people (Children's Services)
- To lead the delivery of Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Capital Programmes to support the overall Transforming Learning approach (Regeneration)
- To ensure the availability of accessible services that are empowering, socially inclusive and responsive to user preference (Social Care & Health)

## **Our priorities: increasing enterprise and making Walsall a vibrant borough**

### **What the Sustainable Community Strategy says:**

The Sustainable Community Strategy commits partner organisations to work to ensure people can access key services easily and in a timely manner at reasonable cost, with adequate, affordable and accessible transport between the people and the location of services they require. Solving accessibility problems is partly about transport, but it is also about locating and delivering key activities together and closely to places where people can reach them. Walsall is a town for enterprise and we are creating a new and exciting business culture. We will develop and promote our major assets, such as our excellent location, network of direct rail and road links, business support and workforce. Raising Walsall's profile, backed up with delivery, will stimulate more local, sub-regional, regional, national and global investment in the borough's businesses, communities and people.

Working with our partners we will provide a full range of high-quality support to local businesses. We will support the private sector in developing and building upon its current strengths, and the social enterprise economy will be encouraged to develop its potential. We have streamlined our processes to create a more effective approach to business development. We have identified strategic development areas with the potential to create between 2,000 and 4,000 jobs. Re-building Walsall Manor Hospital will provide better health-care for our communities; it will also create opportunities for jobs and skills training, and for local firms and social enterprises to supply goods, services and expertise.

We will make better use of our existing roads and target new road proposals that support access to areas where development is needed. High-quality information systems, greater enforcement, targeted local road improvements and up-to-the-minute information for drivers will all make journey times more reliable. We will support the road networks through investment in high-quality and safe public transport networks. We will work with operators to target those services that connect people to our key areas of activity at the times they want to travel. This will be supported by easy-to-understand information, making residents and visitors feel they are well-informed travellers, happy to use public transport. Good businesses minimise their adverse impact upon the environment. We will ensure that there are networks of safe, high-quality footpaths and cycle routes to connect our key areas of commercial activity to residential areas, which in turn will take some of the pressure off the roads and encourage healthy and environmentally friendly short journeys. We will make a special effort to link these footpaths and cycle routes to our network of schools and local centres, encouraging children to do more beneficial physical activity and reducing the negative impact of people travelling to school by car.

Walsall has pioneered green business parks where groups of businesses work together to reduce waste, share suppliers and improve their physical environment. This is the future of businesses in the twenty-first century and we will lead the way to move from a traditional high-carbon economy to a new, sustainable, low-carbon economy. Our reputation will be built as a place where business is mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to the impact of a changed climate. This will bring new skills and knowledge to the borough, as well as jobs, future viability of communities and economies.

Walsall's excellent location at the gateway to the Black Country and at the heart of the wider City Region offers the opportunity to play a leading role in the renaissance of the West Midlands. This location means that around five million people are within 45 minutes of Walsall by public transport. Over the next 15 years our town centre will see a radical change to its landscape, with significant development taking place in business, retail, leisure and residential sectors. We will promote Walsall as a leading Black Country town, and it will attract new investors, new residents, new shoppers, new tourists and new visitors. The town centre will look and feel fresh, vibrant and modern. A set of new office buildings will be developed which will be supported by new technology such as fibre optic data transfer, which is unique in the UK. This will act as an incentive to attract business and inward investment from global organisations.

#### **What the Comprehensive Area Assessment says:**

Partners are effectively regenerating the area through a series of important physical developments. Walsall's regeneration plan "Prospectus for Growth" sets out a clear scheme for regenerating the borough. This aims to create over 5,500 jobs and 1,500 new homes, aiming to meet the future needs of local people. The new Walsall College opened in September, with work having just started on the old college site for a Tesco Superstore. The new Manor hospital is under construction and the first phase of the scheme for the St Matthews Quarter regeneration has been completed.

The Council is working to help local business deal with the effects of the recession, which has had a major impact on Walsall businesses because of the area's focus on manufacturing. For example, it set up an Enterprise and Business Support team, which helped 106 Walsall businesses during 2008/09.

#### **Council priority: increasing enterprise and making Walsall a vibrant borough**

A key part of making Walsall a great place to live and work is connected to ensuring there are firm foundations for building capacity in the town to increase enterprise which will assist in addressing issues such as Worklessness, health inequalities and poverty. Central to this is developing a highway network that attracts businesses and employers to the borough whilst also supporting existing businesses and attracting more visitors to the borough because of the ease of access and the quality of facilities available.

#### **Portfolio Objectives**

- To undertake targeted highway capacity improvements as a driver to create jobs for local people (Transport)
- To improve parking facilities for visitors to Walsall Town Centre (Transport)
- To enhance public transport serving our centres and key facilities (Transport)

- To support existing businesses and assist in the development of new ones (Regeneration)
- To protect and enhance the quality of the Borough's environment (Regeneration)
- To support the transformation of Walsall Town Centre into a competitive and vibrant strategic centre that is the economic and cultural driver of the Borough (Regeneration)
- To support and develop district and local centres and priority housing and employment areas (Regeneration)
- To lead the delivery of Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Capital Programmes to support the overall Transforming Learning approach(Regeneration)
- To develop effective and appropriate transport infrastructure to improve access; support economic prosperity and enhance the borough's strategic corridors and gateways (Regeneration)



## Our priorities: working smarter

As a public body we have always had a duty to use public money efficiently and effectively, in a time of national economic recession this money is diminishing so it becomes even more important that we use the resources still available to us as wisely as possible. Working smarter is not just about saving money but about maximising the impact of every pound we spend for the benefit of local people.

Council performance, corporately and at a service level, has improved significantly over the last 7 years; numerous external inspections at both corporate and service levels have confirmed this improvement. However, whilst external assessments have reflected the progress that the council has made, and have acknowledged those changes, satisfaction levels amongst residents and service users have remained low compared to other similar local authorities. Part of working smarter is to better understand what residents and service users want and expect from us, both in terms of service standards and service delivery, so as to ensure that our resources are being allocated in the right way. We also need to improve our two way communication with residents, to not only learn what they want but also to keep them informed about what we are doing so they have confidence in the Council's ability to use their resources effectively and help build pride in Walsall.

We have embarked upon an authority-wide change management programme, so that we are prepared and ready to meet the challenges of the future, able to achieve the depth and scale of service improvements and cost reductions that will be required, and to meet the expectations of local people. Walsall Council has a good history of delivering successful change programmes, projects and initiatives. To drive forward the programme, a new Business Change service has been established, containing both Business Solutions and Corporate Programme Delivery and Governance, and the council has secured funding from the West Midlands Improvement & Efficiency Partnership to support current initiatives.

### Council priority: working smarter

Through established business solution techniques empower services to achieve greater efficiencies and improved quality by challenging existing processes and adapting more effective ways of working that place the customer at centre of all activity .

#### Portfolio Objectives

- To invest in technology to improve the operation of the network (Transport)
- To maintain the high quality and effectiveness of services whilst operating within constrained budgets (Leisure & Culture - all portfolios)

- To provide the best possible customer service to our citizens and visitors in a polite, efficient and professional manner by giving clear, consistent and accurate advice and information (Communities & Partnerships – all portfolios)
- To create a community focussed public safety service by aligning public protection and community safety services utilising joined up working and innovative practices (Communities & Partnerships)
- To lead the delivery of Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Capital Programmes to support the overall Transforming Learning approach (Regeneration)
- To work in innovative and efficient ways to meet customer needs (Regeneration - all portfolios)
- To make the most of our property assets to support regeneration and the delivery of more effective Council services (Regeneration)
- To establish a programme of “quick wins” to improve highway efficiency (Transport)
- To ensure a high quality workforce [in adults social care and inclusion] (Social Care & Health – all portfolios)
- To deliver more efficient business processes that free up resources to give choice and control to users of services and that respond to changes in levels of need (Social Care & Health – all portfolios)
- To ensure effective collaborative working to produce good outcomes for service users and support delivery of our shared objectives (Social Care & Health)
- To improve service delivery (Children’s Services - all portfolios)
- To ensure that our customers’ needs and wants are increasingly well understood and that the organisation operates effectively and efficiently to meet them (Business Support - all portfolios)
- To achieve significant reductions in operating costs by changing the way the council works and empowering managers and staff to work smarter (Business Support - all portfolios)
- To ensure that programmes and projects are delivered effectively and relevant benefits are realised (Business Support)
- To provide quality support services and business expertise to managers and staff to enable them to deliver services needed and valued by our customers (Business Support)
- To manage the Council’s relationship with and demands of government inspectorates to ensure the Council’s reputation is maintained (Business Support)
- To ensure a high standard of corporate governance and effective decision-making (Finance & Personnel)
- To ensure that strong financial management and innovation lead to effective value for money for the council’s customers (Finance & Personnel)
- To ensure that the council’s staff are developed and empowered to deliver services needed and valued by our customers (Finance & Personnel)
- To enable local residents to have pride in Walsall through an understanding of what their council does on their behalf (Finance & Personnel - all portfolios)



## 6. Sources of further information

The council produces a wide range of information, including other key plans and strategies. Details of these plans can be found on the **council's web site**, [www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk), or can be obtained from the directorate or service concerned.

The borough's **Sustainable Community Strategy**, and the **Local Area Agreement**, described in more detail in chapter 3, both prepared by the Walsall Partnership. These are available in full on the Partnership's own web site at [www.walsallpartnership.org.uk](http://www.walsallpartnership.org.uk), along with a range of other information on the Partnership.

Each year the council publishes its **Corporate Budget Plan** which is available via our web site. Also available on the council's web site are full details relating to the **council's decision making processes**, including the council's **constitution**, and details of the role of the cabinet, the scrutiny & performance panels, the audit and standards committees and regulatory committees for development control and licensing. Details of **forthcoming meetings**, as well as reports and minutes, are available on the web site, as are details relating to elected **councillors**, their electoral wards and their local 'surgeries'. Details can also be obtained from local libraries.

The council also publishes a range of information relating to how our services have performed. These details are also placed on the council web site.

The council, along with other statutory partners, has signed up to a **Local Compact with the community and voluntary sector**. The Compact is an agreement between public services including the council, the local NHS, and others, with the community and voluntary sector, operating within the framework provided by the Walsall Partnership. The council is committed to the Local Compact and will continue to work with partners to ensure that its principles are reflected in all that we do in particular the on-going work on the Local Area Agreement. The Compact is available on the Walsall Partnership web site [www.walsallpartnership.org.uk](http://www.walsallpartnership.org.uk). The council will contribute positively to the review of the Local Compact by the Walsall Partnership, planned to take place during the year ahead.

The council operates in accordance with the **Freedom of Information Act** (FOIA) and related legislation. Information held by the council and by council services which is not already available publicly can be requested in line with the FOIA, and the council will respond within 20 working days. In those instances where the council may be unable to release information, a reason will be provided. For guidance on making an information request, visit the council web site at [www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk).

**Comments, complaints and compliments** about council services can be made at any council service, by e-mail or letter or using the council-wide Tell Us form; there is also an e-form on the council web site. Complaints will be acknowledged promptly, and a full response will normally be provided within 15 working days.

## 7. Glossary of terms

[to be added]