

## Cabinet – 13 March 2013

### Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy - The Walsall Plan, 2013-2016

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

**Related portfolios:** All

**Service:** Communities & Partnerships

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### 1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval on the draft, refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy entitled The Walsall Plan 2013-2016. It explains the Council's current statutory duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy and provides a focus on the key priorities that the Council and partner organisations will be concentrating on in order to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of the Borough.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Sustainable Community Strategy, The Walsall Plan 2013-2016, be endorsed and referred to statutory consultees prior to submission to Council.
- 2.2 That Council be recommended to approve the Sustainable Community Strategy

#### 3. Report detail

##### 3.1 Background

Under the Local Government Act 2000 and Sustainable Communities Act 2007, the Council is responsible for preparing a Sustainable Community Strategy. The current Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy was produced in 2008. This report provides at **Appendix A** a draft refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy to replace this document entitled "The Walsall Plan" which is suggested to cover the period 2013-2016. It provides the top shared priorities and ambitions for the Borough between key agencies from the public, private and voluntary sector who

seek to improve the quality of life experienced in this part of the Black Country. It also sets out in overview the arrangements for getting there.

### 3.2 Detail - The Draft Walsall Plan 2013-2014

Partnership work in Walsall is nothing new, the Sustainable Community Strategy, 2013-16 ("The Walsall Plan") replaces the 2008 version of "Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy" which focussed on People, Places and Prosperity. A lot has happened since 2008 not least the economic recession, a change in Government and changes in legislation. Walsall's local circumstances have also changed within this context, for example, the Borough no longer has available Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and is seeing changes across all sectors as agencies and local people adapt to these austere times. It is appropriate that in making available a plan that promotes the economic, social and environmental well being of the borough, (as required to fulfil the function of an SCS) that, that plan is kept up to date. The draft "Walsall Plan" at **Appendix A** of this report provides the up to date SCS for the Borough.

- 3.3 "The Walsall Plan" highlights the vision for Walsall as **"a great place to live, learn, work and invest."** This document has been informed by a range of information including building on the experience of the last plan, information through the borough's six Area Partnerships, work through key analysis documents such as Walsall's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Police Strategic Assessment, the Borough's recent residents' survey, "Your Place, Your Well Being" and at a national level importantly the Marmot Review, "Fair Society, Healthy Lives."
- 3.4 The Plan provides a reflection on the outgoing Sustainable Community Strategy and some of the partnership achievements that have taken place in Walsall since 2008, prior to setting out some key facts about the Borough and the people that live here. Having done this it discusses at this time "what matters most" stating that overall concerns on the wellbeing of individuals and local communities is what matters the most and at this present time **"getting people into work and keeping them there"** is fundamental to ensuring wellbeing.
- 3.5 To ensure wellbeing four main priorities have been established in the plan that are supported by a number of ambitions. The economy is at the top of the priorities but the remaining priorities are unranked and all clearly interlink:-
- (i) **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.**
  - (ii) **Improving Health including well being and independence for older people**
  - (iii) **Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities** – Reducing levels of crime and providing the right environment for people to live in.
  - (iv) **Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People.** Recognising that a person's early years crucially help determine what kind of future they will have.

- 3.6 The evidence relating to the priorities and associated ambitions is provided in overview within the plan.
- 3.7 Having set out the above, the Walsall Plan then discusses the partnership infrastructure suggested as the appropriate mechanism to meet the priorities, ambitions and ultimately the vision for the Borough.
- 3.8 During the Summer of 2012 a locally led "Peer Review" of Partnership infrastructure in the Borough took place looking at the current arrangements for partnership working. This has helped inform the now emerging new partnership arrangements as described under sections 3.9 to 3.11 of this report, which are designed to support delivery against the new Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.9 The partnership infrastructure that has been suggested (as reflected in the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy) enables key organisations operating in the borough from the public, private and voluntary sector to bring their resources together, with others, on the things that matter the most.

**i) Delivery Plans**

- 3.10 Under these arrangements each thematic group and Area Partnership are suggested to pull together delivery plans that fit with their remit and responsibility set against the Walsall Plan. The delivery plans would be supported by operational leads from the Council and partner agencies who help facilitate the co-ordination of activity and support performance management arrangements through a proposed Partnership Tasking and Co-ordination Group. They would also be supported by shared partner data co-ordinated through the Walsall Intelligence Network (WIN). The outputs from all this work is suggested to be fed through to the Borough Management Board whose membership would include the Chief Executive of Walsall Council, the Chief Superintendent of Police, the Chief Executive of Walsall Housing Group, the Principal and Chief Executive of Walsall College etc. The Borough Management Board would take responsibility for ensuring the wishes of their respective agencies are followed in accordance with the Walsall Plan.

**ii) Monitoring**

- 3.11 Reporting from the thematic groups and Area Partnerships through to the Partnership Tasking and Co-ordination Group and Borough Management Board is suggested to be on a quarterly basis. Reports are to be made available to Walsall Council, including the relevant Council Scrutiny panels in order to further ensure good governance and accountability.

**iii) Communicating and Keeping Communities Informed**

- 3.12 Communicating how the Walsall Plan is being delivered and its impact on key issues for the Borough is suggested to be supported by a range of media including social media, quarterly Area Partnership newsletters, and an annual partnership newsletter made available to partner agencies, Ward Members and the local community through community venues and via the internet.

- 3.13 It is the intention that communities are continuously involved in the delivery of the Walsall Plan and the related Delivery Plans. On that basis methods for public participation will be focussed through the Borough's Area Partnerships.

#### **4. Council priorities**

- 4.1 This report provides the new priorities for the Borough to be endorsed by Cabinet. The priorities will inform the Council's Corporate Plan:-
- (i) **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.**
  - (ii) **Improving Health including well being and independence for older people**
  - (iii) **Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities** – Reducing levels of crime and providing the right environment for people to live in.
  - (iv) **Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People.** Recognising that a person's early years crucially help determine what kind of future they will have.

#### **5. Risk management**

There are no direct risks to bring to Cabinet's attention. The Sustainable Community Strategy is a high level document. Any initiatives associated with the delivery of this document will be subject to risk assessment as appropriate.

#### **6. Financial implications**

There are no direct budget implications associated with the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Any initiatives linked to the SCS will be subject to the Council's usual budget process. Production of the SCS will be from within existing budgets.

#### **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 and Sustainable Communities Act 2007, the Council is responsible for preparing a Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 7.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to consult key agencies on the proposed Sustainable Community Strategy. Please see section 11.2 of this report.

## **8. Property implications**

There are no direct property implications associated with the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **9. Staffing implications**

There are no additional staffing implications associated with the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **10. Equality implications**

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been prepared on the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **11. Consultation**

11.1 The Draft Sustainable Community Strategy has been developed through consultation with Directors, Scrutiny (26th February, 2013), Area Managers and the Borough Management Team. As a refreshed SCS it has been informed by previous consultation work such as the "Your Place, Your Well Being" survey.

11.2 Should Cabinet endorse the draft Sustainable Community Strategy key statutory agencies will be written to with the proposed SCS, seeking them to confirm their formal views on the document prior to recommended adoption at Full Council (and subject to any required changes).

## **12. Background papers**

12.1 The Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy 2008.

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5 March 2013

Councillor Mike Bird  
Leader of the Council



5 March 2013

# **The Walsall Plan 2013-2016**

**“Walsall is a great place to live, learn, work and invest”**

**DRAFT**

## Foreword

As Leader and Chief Executive of Walsall Council we are proud to work alongside our partners in the public, private and voluntary sector at a time when working in partnership could not be more important. It will only be through strong collaborative work that we will continue to deliver better outcomes for, and with our local communities.

The Walsall Plan sets out the top shared priorities for the Borough, our ambitions and in overview the arrangements in place to get us there. This plan is intentionally concise compared to the outgoing 2008 Sustainable Community Strategy. Local Government and local agencies are mindful that the public require outcomes not bureaucracy and it is for this reason we want to set out a very clear refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy for our area.

The Borough of Walsall is “a great place to live, learn, work and invest,” and we want it to remain just that. We are working hard with the police, health services including the new Clinical Commissioning Group and statutory “Health & Wellbeing Board”, the Fire and Rescue Service, Walsall Housing Group, Walsall College and our local voluntary and community sector amongst others, in order to deliver the best services whilst maximising the public value obtained from existing community assets, including local community venues, schools etc. This is in a climate where the Government is striving to eliminate the nation's debt. The Borough of Walsall and the agencies working within it, like the Country as a whole, needs to respond to growing and changing demand, improve social outcomes and create inclusive growth and prosperity. A joined up coherent approach is required that cuts across traditional service divides and geographical boundaries and the traditional relationship we have had with our customer, local Walsall people and the services we provide to them. These are indeed challenging times but our strong track record of partnership work means we are well placed to respond.

This document ambitiously holds on to Walsall remaining “a great place to live, learn, work and invest” by focussing on Wellbeing through the Marmot objectives which seek to address health inequalities and by clearly targeting:-

- **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.**
- **Improving health including well being and independence for older people**
- **Creating Safe and Sustainable Communities** – Reducing levels of crime and providing the right environment for people to live in.
- **Improving Safeguarding and the Learning and Life Chances for Children and Young People.** Recognising that a person's early years crucially help determine what kind of future they have and ensuring they are appropriately supported into adulthood.

It is with this clarity of purpose we are committing ourselves with our partners and we recognise we can only do this by working with local communities. We will continue to do this through our six Area Partnerships and as appropriate at ward level. Together we will ensure that Walsall will remain “a great place to live, learn, work and invest”.

Cllr Mike Bird  
Leader – Walsall Council

Paul Sheehan  
Chief Executive - Walsall Council

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## 1. Introduction

The Walsall Plan is the refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough of Walsall covering the period 2013-2016. It provides the top shared priorities and ambitions for the Borough between key agencies from the public, private and voluntary sector who seek to improve the quality of life experienced in this part of the Black Country. It also sets out in overview the arrangements for getting there.

### 1.1 The Walsall Partnership Story so Far!

Partnership work in Walsall is nothing new, this plan replaces the 2008 version of "Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy" which focussed on People, Places and Prosperity. A lot has happened since 2008 not least the economic recession, a change in Government and changes in legislation. Walsall's local circumstances have also changed within this context, for example, the Borough no longer has available Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and is seeing changes across all sectors as agencies and local people adapt to these austere times.

Within the above climate a lot has been achieved in the Borough and it is clear to continue to meet our communities' needs will require a continuation of the strong partnership approach to work that has served our communities well.

Highlights of successful partnership work in the Borough since 2008 include:-

#### People

- Successfully delivered the Home Office Drug Intervention Programme across Walsall.
- Developed the Black Country University Technical College, one of the first of its kind across the Country.
- Establishment of the Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group responsible for the commissioning of health services for people of Walsall.
- The Peer Review of Children's Services noted Walsall was a 'national leader' on Voice of Young People –and our turnout for the Youth Parliament elections was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest nationally in 2011.
- 57.3% of primary schools, were judged good or better 78.6% secondary schools and 85.7 Special schools
- First time offenders and re-offending rates show continued reduction over previous years and both are lower than the national average and there has been a reduction in youth related ASB –down 34% from 10/11 to 11/12.
- The establishment of 5 Multi-agency locality based teams have worked intensively with over 300 vulnerable children;
- Set up new Learning Community Projects– groups of schools working together to share best practice to improve pupil outcomes
- Supported over 1,500 young people a year to leave Walsall College with the skills and qualifications necessary for employment or higher education.
- Successful £700,000 Big Lottery bid providing new play equipment for children and young including "The Move Project", a three in one truck designed to motivate young people in Walsall to get up and move and the "Reach Up" project, a mobile climbing structure.

- The introduction of Street Champions across the Borough developing local volunteers who act as the first point of contact for residents who wish to report problems such as anti-social behaviour and graffiti.
- Successfully bid for and developed "Bookmark" Bloxwich, a community venue at Bloxwich library offering cultural activities supported by a local charity. The facility includes a cafe run through a partnership with Walsall Adult Community College and Adult Social Care at Walsall Council, to give students with special needs work experience.
- Work to support Community Cohesion including work with the organisers of Caldmore Village Festival (established in 2009), The Shaheedee Asian Football Tournament which was the largest in its kind outside the Indian Sub Continent (2012) ; The first Walsall Pride event for the gay community of Walsall (2012).
- Worked with five government departments (Health, Culture Media & Sport, Work & Pensions, Children's Schools & Families and Communities & Local Government) to introduce the highly successful national Free Swimming scheme for children and the 60+
- The 2012 Olympic torch relay. Partnership working with the local and regional police, neighbouring authorities, NHS, Walsall College, local volunteers, public transport providers, schools etc to ensure the borough had a day to remember, seeing some 30,000 to 40,000 people turning out to line the streets.

### Places

- Achieved the biggest reductions in crime across the West Midlands in 2012, with North Birmingham, where crime fell by over 25%
- The introduction of six Area Partnerships covering the Borough, providing multi-agency solutions to local issues from crime and litter through to health and supporting the most vulnerable.
- Established a Myplace facility for young people.
- £55 million of investment in our schools and learning resources include the Innovation Centre at Alumwell and the final phase of a significant enlargement scheme at Hillary Primary School, new builds at Sheffield Academy and Grace Academy and a significant enlargement project at Caldmore Primary.
- The number of car crashes in Walsall town centre plummeted by almost 60 per cent following the completion of the £23 million ring road.
- Opened a £55 million business College (Walsall College) with state of the art facilities designed to meet the training needs of industry.
- Opened £174 million of PFI-funded new facilities at Walsall Manor Hospital
- Successful application with the local Friends Group to the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake the £7.6m Arboretum Restoration scheme
- Development of 322 residential units in Walsall town centre's Waterfront South site – a £40 million investment attracting £15m of Homes and Community Agency support.
- From April 2008 until December 2012 development of 3846 homes across Walsall

### Prosperity

- The opening of Walsall Ring Road in 2009 providing great opportunities for investment in the Borough.
- The establishment of the Darlaston Enterprise Zone on the former IMI James Bridge copperworks. The Enterprise Zone will create much needed jobs for local

people and it is a priority for Walsall Council and for the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

- Secured investment of £26m into road improvements in the Darlaston and Pleck areas to improve access and open up sites for new business development.
- Development of a new Premier Inn hotel on the Waterfront, adjacent to the New Art Gallery.
- The creation of four Multi Agency One Stops Shops in Bloxwich, Caldmore, Darlaston and Walsall Town Centre, which have been successful in getting 1,261 people into employment, supporting 1,801 qualifications, and providing information, advice and guidance to a further 3,373 Walsall people.
- Establishment of the Walsall Works Apprenticeship programme which represents a £2million investment by the Council in the young people of the Borough, to recruit and support over 700 16-24 year olds into Pre- and Full Apprenticeships with quality local employers.
- Walsall Council has secured approval from the Department for Transport for the Darlaston Strategic Development Access programme, bringing in £26million for road and rail infrastructure improvements vital to the future success of the Darlaston Enterprise Zone.

Despite the challenges brought by the economic climate partnership work in Walsall has delivered and continues to deliver new opportunities for better outcomes for local communities.

Recognising the citizens of Walsall and the agencies that work in the Borough are now facing quite different circumstances to those anticipated in 2008, it is important to ensure community planning in the Borough remains up to date and reflects the current priorities of local people and those of the key agencies operating in the Borough. It is for these reasons that this document has been produced to refresh the “Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy” as “The Walsall Plan.”

## **2. About the Walsall Plan**

The Walsall Plan provides the vision for Walsall as “**a great place to live, learn, work and invest.**”. This document has been informed by a range of information including building on the experience of the last plan, information through the borough’s six Area Partnerships, work through key analysis documents such as Walsall’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Police Strategic Assessment, the Borough’s recent residents survey, “Your Place, Your Well Being” , Inspection judgements and the need for all partners to prioritise safeguarding – especially of children and at a national level importantly the Marmot Review, “Fair Society, Healthy Lives.”

The Borough is described below:-

### **2.1 A Snapshot of Walsall - Key facts**

Walsall Borough is made up of 20 wards, and is located in the Black Country which is part of the West Midlands conurbation. It is important to recognise in describing the Borough, that the different areas of Walsall face differing issues. Below is a snapshot of the Borough:-

#### **a) Population and Age Structure**

Walsall has an estimated usually resident population of 269,300 (2011 National Census). This is an increase of 15,800 residents, or 6.2%, in the ten years since the previous census. This rate of growth is lower than nationally (a 7.8% increase) but in line with the West Midlands regional growth of 6.4%.

The trend towards an increasingly dependent population has continued in Walsall, with implications for services as younger and older people tend to be more resource-intensive, and a potentially negative impact on economic growth due to a declining young working age population.

According to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Government’s official measure of multiple deprivation at small area levels, Walsall was ranked as the 30th (45<sup>th</sup> in 2007) most deprived English local authority (out of 326), making it amongst the worst performing 10% of districts. The Borough has 41 LSOAs (lower level super output areas) in the most deprived 10% of the country, out of the Borough’s 169 areas. This equates to just over 24% of the total and is in excess of the 16% average for the Region. A further 34 LSOAs (20%) are in the next most deprived 10% nationally. The most deprived areas are predominately in the west of the borough although there are pockets of deprivation in the more affluent east.

#### **b) Ethnicity**

The 2011 Census shows an increase in the level of ethnic diversity in Walsall. While ‘White British’ remains the largest single group at 76.9%, the number of residents from a minority ethnic group has risen to almost 1 in 4 of the total population. This figure of 23.1% residents is an increase on the 14.8% in 2001 (and higher than the 19.5% in England and Wales in 2011).

The largest increase is in people of Asian background, with a rise from 10.4% in 2001 to 15.2% in 2011. Within this group, those of Pakistani background have increased the

most to 5.3% of all residents (although Asian Indian remains the largest minority ethnic group at 6.1%). Minority ethnic groups are highly concentrated in certain parts of the borough.

### **c) Health and Caring**

The Census results confirm that overall health is poorer in Walsall than in England and Wales. One in five residents has a health condition that limits their day to day activities: 10.4% are limited a lot, and a further 10.3% limited a little. 77.3% of residents say their health is good or very good – lower than the 81.2% nationally – with 7.3% experiencing bad or very bad health (5.6% nationally).

In Walsall 11.4% of residents provide unpaid care to relatives, friends or neighbours compared with 10.3% nationally. This equates to over 17,000 people providing between 1 and 19 hours' unpaid care a week, while almost 8,800 provide unpaid care for over 50 hours a week.

A significant demonstration to supporting health and well-being in the Borough has been the adoption of the Marmot principles on health inequalities, by Walsall Council and how these principles have gone on to inform the Health and Well Being Strategy for the Borough which is supported by the Borough's Health and Well Being Board. The Health and Well Being Strategy is a key strategy that informs the overarching strategic approach supported by the Walsall plan.

Although predominately urban, Walsall offers great opportunities to access the countryside for outdoor leisure and recreation. There are 10 green spaces designated as Local Nature Reserves, 36 green spaces are designated as Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs) and 64 are Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs); 6 green spaces are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Indoor recreation and the opportunity for improved levels of physical activity is provided through a range of venues including Walsall Council's own leisure centres. Other providers such as Wolverhampton University, the Sports Colleges and the voluntary clubs also provide good access to sports facilities.

Local people can also access further help and support for a healthy lifestyle through the network of local libraries available across the Borough. For example, local GPs can prescribe books that can support people in understanding and coping with a range of medical conditions or making healthy lifestyle choices.

## **2.2 What Matters Most?**

Recognising the above we believe that over all concerns the well being of individuals and local communities is what matters the most and at this present time getting people into work and keeping them there, is fundamental to ensuring well being.

To ensure wellbeing four main priorities have been established that are supported by a number of ambitions. The economy is at the top of the priorities but the remaining priorities are unranked and all clearly interlink:-

## 1) Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.

### Overview of Ambitions

- a. Young people are prepared for and find work
- b. Ensure people have the skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviours to find work, stay in work and get better work
- c. Ensure good transport links are available and further developed to make it easier to get to work and support the local economy
- d. Provide the places and conditions that attract businesses and encourages their development
- e. Reduce the level of child poverty in the Borough

### The Challenge

Walsall has suffered a general economic decline over the past decade, exacerbated severely by the impact of the recent recession. There has been limited growth and new business creation as a consequence of this economic decline, and a fall in the number of available jobs resulting in high levels of worklessness.

Over 17% (27,850) of Walsall's working age population are not working and are dependent on out-of-work benefits; substantially higher than across West Midlands (13.7%) and England (11.9%). The highest proportion of these are dependent upon either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit suggesting they are unfit for work, or job seeker allowance and hence seeking work. However, across Walsall the average length of claims is increasing suggesting difficulties re-entering the job market. Claimant counts are rising most in wards that already suffer high rates of unemployment. One way to help combat this and allow people to re-enter the employment market would be through apprenticeships where individuals carry out work whilst training at the same time for a recognised qualification.

Double the proportion of 18-24 year olds are unable to find work compared to nationally. Walsall Council is supporting youth employment in a number of ways; including providing council apprenticeships and implementing 'Walsall Works' a multi-million financial investment aimed at creating the conditions for sustainable employment growth within Walsall based businesses. Our ambition is to that **young people are prepared for and find work.**

People's ability to gain access to employment is more limited in Walsall due to lack of skills and opportunities, and the situation is worsening in relation to the national and regional position. This has a knock-on effect on worklessness, income levels and hence poverty. There is a strong correlation between poverty and poor health outcomes.

A significant number of local businesses in Walsall have indicated that lack of skills and low aspiration acts as a barrier to recruiting new staff. The top three skills gaps were in literacy, numeracy and basic IT with the fourth being interpersonal and communications skills. Whilst school sector performance is improving, low skills and qualification rates amongst the adult population have been evident for some time. A fifth (19.5%) of Walsall's adult working age population have no qualifications, compared with just 15.1% regionally and 11.3% nationally; equating to 30,600 with no formal qualifications and 42,000 not reaching level 2 qualifications which is the threshold for employability. Some areas of the borough have intense needs for residents whose first language is not

English, including the need to support newly arrived migrants in language and citizenship skills. **We seek to ensure people have the skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviours to find work, stay in work and get better work.**

It is important for Walsall that the advantages brought through the Borough's location are maximised. Our ambition here is to **ensure good transport links are available and further developed to make it easier to get to work and support the local economy.**

Walsall has two major geographic advantages – its proximity to Birmingham and its location at the heart of the UK's road and rail network. The M6 is a major feature of the area and employers reliant on transport and travel provide many jobs both directly and indirectly within the local economy. The Borough is also close to the links to the M5 (connecting Walsall to the South West) and to the M54 (connecting the Borough to Wales). A series of proposals / opportunities exist to further improve the connectivity within Walsall and to areas such as Birmingham, addressing some of the issues set out above. Rail travel is an example of an area which shows the potential to provide a step change in sustainable travel within Walsall. This includes the potential to re-instate regular Walsall to Wolverhampton rail links via Willenhall and to re-instate Walsall to Aldridge rail services, the potential to re-open the Stourbridge to Lichfield via Walsall line, and the potential to take advantage of released capacity resulting from the delivery of High Speed 2 to Birmingham which would have implications for Walsall enabling longer distance services and enabling an increased frequency of services from Walsall to Birmingham.

Funding opportunities for the delivery of major transport infrastructure under the current economic climate remain uncertain.

It is vital that the Borough provides **the places and conditions that attract businesses and encourages their development.** Improving access to sites through highways improvements and identifying the reasons why sites are not being brought forward for development are key issues for us. We are finding that as well as land contamination, split ownership and overly ambitious land values are all contributory factors to land not being developed.

There are a number of areas of intervention needed to support sector growth to complement investment in economic infrastructure and skills, including; innovation, relocation assistance, business property, specialist premises, new markets; access to investment and inward investment. Walsall may also be able to capture benefits from the development of a low carbon economy by capitalising on its strong industrial base, existing engineering skills and strengths of key companies.

**Reducing child poverty** is an issue for the Borough as it is a key determinant in limiting life-long opportunities and increasing costs to the council and its partners and hence a key ambition to be driven forward. In Walsall, 30.6% of children were living in families whose income fell below 60% of the median national income in 2009, which equates to 16,675 children aged under 16 living in poverty in 2009, up by 1,010 from the previous year. The geographical variation in Walsall is substantial, ranging from 49.6% of children living in poverty in Blakenall to only 3.4% in Streetly. The Welfare Reform programme introduced by the national Coalition Government could place an estimated additional 2,200 children in relative poverty in Walsall. Addressing a complex issue such as child poverty requires all partners to work closely together to deliver Walsall's Child Poverty strategy outcomes of:-

- i. Priority access for parents to access worklessness reduction support services
- ii. Improved supply and quality of accessible childcare
- iii. More and better qualifications for young adults to help them find work
- iv. Less of a gap in attainment for those on Free school meals
- v. More support for families who are beginning to struggle and help that includes aspiration and attainment support
- vi. More hope for the future and self belief in attaining good qualifications and work
- vii. Better money management skills
- viii. Financial advice and support for families in poverty

## 2) Improving health including well being and independence for older people

### Overview of Ambitions

- a. Help people to live healthy and active lifestyles from an early age, make healthy choices, including tackling the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse and reduce health inequalities.
- b. Reduce the number of people living with preventable ill health and people dying prematurely, while reducing the gap between communities.
- c. Reduce levels of obesity, including amongst the young.
- d. Reducing the high levels of infant mortality
- e. Support healthy ageing and independent living of the most vulnerable including those who suffer from poor mental health.

### The Challenge

The recently refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2012 and the Director of Public Health's 2011/12 annual report Public Health is Everyone's Business identifies the wide ranging health and well-being challenges faced by the borough; particularly health inequalities typified by east – west trends in deprivation. Our ambition is to **help people to live healthy and active lifestyles, make healthy choices, including tackling the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse and reduce health inequalities.**

In terms of life expectancy there is a wide discrepancy between Walsall's communities, with men living in the most deprived wards in Walsall dying on average 11 years younger (women 7 years) than those in the most affluent areas. Walsall's population is ageing and more people are living with ill-health and chronic long-term conditions in later life, and also ill for a longer period of time. As a Borough we must **reduce the number of people living with preventable ill health and people dying prematurely, while reducing the gap between communities.** This is due mainly to high levels of infant mortality In Walsall as the proportion of stillbirths and infants dying before their first birthday remain higher than regional and national levels. There are wide inequalities between most and least deprived in Walsall, with the proportion of stillbirths and infant deaths being much higher in deprived areas. As a Borough we must **reduce the high levels of infant mortality.**

Obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges facing Walsall with poor choices in lifestyle (smoking, diet and physical activity) at above average levels in the borough. Surveys show that more than 55% of Walsall residents take part in no recreational physical activity and active participation rates (19%) are well below the national average of 22.5%, placing Walsall 14 from bottom of 339 local authorities. Childhood obesity is

particularly concerning with nearly 4 out of every 10 Year 6 children in Walsall considered overweight or obese. It is important that we focus on reducing **levels of obesity, including amongst the young.**

A commitment to encouraging everyone to “have a healthy and active lifestyle for life” is in-line with the government’s Sport England Youth & Community Sport national strategy 2012-17. This links early years through 5 to 15 and 16 to 24 years of age to change behaviour and gain a life changing start in life.

Promoting Free School meals to all children who are eligible so that they can take advantage of a daily nutritionally balanced hot meal whilst they are at school will help improve health.

There is an essential role for a borough-wide strategy linking a range of public, private, education and voluntary sector leisure providers to jointly contribute to the wider health agenda. The Council has its own plans to replace and/or refurbish its leisure centres and this will facilitate an overall increase in activity levels and the associated benefits. This approach is a clear demonstration of Marmot’s *Proportionate Universalism*.

Walsall experiences high alcohol related harm across a number of health and crime indicators. There were 2,174 alcohol related recorded crimes in Walsall in 2009/10, whilst levels have reduced alcohol related crimes levels are higher in Walsall than the regional and national average.

The General Household Survey (2010) estimates Walsall has 34,058 hazardous drinkers, 33,550 binge drinkers and 10,174 harmful drinkers. Though alcohol related crime rates have fallen in Walsall in the last 5 years, it remains higher than regional and national rates. Walsall has a higher rate of alcohol related hospital admissions than the national and regional average; in 2009/10 there were 2,121 alcohol related admissions in Walsall, an increase of 6% on 2008/9.

Smoking is still the single greatest cause of illness and premature death in England – killing one in two smokers prematurely. The estimated prevalence for smoking within the Walsall population is 24.5%, representing approximately 50,000 adults. Rates of smoking during pregnancy are also high in Walsall 16.8%, compared to nationally (14%). In terms of drug misuse, there are an estimated 2,000 problematic drug users (i.e. those who misuse heroin or crack cocaine) in Walsall.

The level of people with learning difficulties who are in residential care homes is above average. There is a need to develop more community based care and support services that provide individuals with a greater opportunity to remain in their own accommodation, and alongside this appropriate support for carers. The programme for self directed care, whereby people are supported to have control over the state funded services to which they are entitled will continue in Walsall. At the same time the preventative strategy that helps people to remain independent of social care and health services with a good quality of life and a range of life chances will be further developed. In recognition of this we are committed to **supporting healthy ageing and independent living for people with care and support needs, including those who suffer from poor mental health. We will expect that local communities will play an active part in developing this approach.**

### 3) **Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities** – Reducing levels of crime and providing the right environment for people to live in.

#### **Overview of Ambitions**

- a. Safeguard the most vulnerable adults from harm
- b. Reduce the level of crime experienced in the Borough focussing particularly on those areas that have historically experienced higher levels.
- c. Ensure support is provided to divert offenders from crime – particularly young people.
- d. Sustain and improve the natural and urban environment.
- e. Build and further develop the voluntary and community sector in the Borough, building resilience to enhance community cohesion.
- f. Increase the opportunities for local people to have a greater role in local decision making.
- g. Ensure the housing needs of local communities are met.

#### **The Challenge**

Crime across the Borough, at the time of writing, is at an all time low, with Home Office figures for Walsall showing total recorded crime in the borough has dropped by more than 19%, meaning 2,163 fewer victims of crime. Whilst reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) remain at high volume, levels of police reported ASB have decreased by 29% from 6,035 (2011/12 YTD) to 4,264 (2012/13 YTD). Most Serious Violence has increased by just under 9% between 2011/12 and 2012/13, although it should be noted that low numbers of incidents are involved and as such is open to fluctuation. Serious Acquisitive Crime had seen a 10% reduction year to date in 2012/13 from 2011/12, this is a reduction of 224 crimes. It is important to recognise within these statistics the needs of the most vulnerable who may be more prone to being victims of crime, including those who suffer domestic abuse. Here our ambition is to **safeguard the most vulnerable from harm.**

The Borough's Community Safety Strategic Assessment recognises that essentially there are six key areas within the borough which have been identified as priority areas for crime and community safety. These areas are identified a) as experiencing a relatively high number of repeat incidents that create multiple demands on local public services and b) where there's a need for a longer term partnership-wide approach to resolve 'challenging' community safety issues. During 2011/12 35.5% of total recorded crime incidents in the Walsall Borough occurred across the six priority areas. Our ambition is to further **reduce the level of crime experienced in the Borough focussing particularly on those areas that have historically experienced higher levels and by ensuring support is provided to divert offenders from crime.**

In helping support sustainable communities the role of the environment can not be underplayed and supporting opportunities to **sustain and improve the natural and urban environment** for the enjoyment of present and future generations is an important ingredient in ensuring Walsall is "a great place to live, learn, work and invest."

Local intelligence tells us that Walsall is a place that is relatively cohesive with the 2008 Place Survey results showing that 70.9% of people felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together and 56% of respondents felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood, comparing relatively well to national averages. Walsall's BME population

now forms 23.1% of the population; almost 1 in 4 and this is a significant increase on the 2001 census result of 14.8%. Initial analysis of this result suggests that Walsall has not seen the same volumes of Eastern European migration as some parts of the country have: only 3.8% of Walsall residents arrived in the UK in the past 10 years compared with 6.8% nationally, and only 1% were born in EU Accession countries. The largest increase locally is in people of Asian background, with a rise from 10.4% in 2001 to 15.2% in 2011. There are relatively low levels of hate crime in the borough; by nature most (78%) are racist offences followed by homophobic (10%). There are few identifiable patterns in offending, with the majority occurring spontaneously and secondary to altercations/arguments as opposed to unprovoked attacks with pattern of victimisation amongst the service industries, such as taxi drivers, retail staff and security offices who are abused as a result of undertaking their duties. With labour market restrictions from Romania and Bulgaria due to be lifted at the end of 2014, whilst the government has not released official predictions of the potential scale of immigration to the UK there is a great deal of speculation about the size and impact of population movement. This is also true for ongoing migration from other EU countries and the future for Walsall is similarly uncertain however, national research (<http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/commentary/romania-and-bulgaria-accession-guessing-game>) suggests that BME populations are expected to rise over the coming years with higher birth rates in these communities and an expected increase of eastern European residents from newly accepted EU countries such as Romania. Although it should be noted there are pockets in the borough which appear to be less cohesive with the Bloxwich area partnership having a much lower percentage of people (55.1%) who feel people from different backgrounds get on well together compared to the rest to the borough. The strength of our communities can be further supported by a strong and vibrant Voluntary and Community Sector. Sport and leisure has a key role to play through the 240 sports clubs, nearly all of which are run voluntarily by residents. The high profile demonstration of the 70,000 Gamesmakers at the London 2012 Olympics proves that people are keen to help and get involved; if they are asked. To further support community cohesion and to help sustain communities at a time of significant public sector cuts we need to **build and further develop the voluntary and community sector in the Borough.**

Your Place Your Well-Being research showed that despite an improvement in 'acting on concerns' since 2008 (from improved net result of -28 to -12), improvement is still needed since opinion remains very much divided on whether local public services are providing opportunities to have a say, acting on residents' concerns or keeping residents informed of improvements (net figures +4, -12 and - 8 respectively). The democratic deficit is well recognised nationally and key agencies in Walsall are committed to **increasing the opportunities for local people to have a greater role in local decision making**

65% of households in Walsall are living in owner occupied accommodation, 27% rent from a housing association and the remaining 8% rent privately or live rent free. The government's welfare and benefits system reform proposals will have a big impact on local residents that are benefit dependent, including an estimated 300 households that will be affected by the cap on household benefits.

Results from the recent 'your place your well being survey' highlights that the relative order of residents' priorities for improvement has changed, as a reflection of the current economic climate with recession related concerns becoming more salient. One third of respondents state that affordable decent housing (33%) is an important factor in their local quality of life (their fourth in the list of Quality of Life importance). It is recognised as

an ambition/aspiration in this plan that we must **ensure the housing needs of local communities are met.**

These concerns are exemplified amongst younger respondents, the unemployed, families by ethnicity and geographically. For example young people in Walsall are considerably more likely to say they would like to see improvements in local job prospects (54%), wages and the cost of living (27%) and affordable decent housing (30%) than corresponding borough averages (35%, 21% and 17%).

**4) Improving Safeguarding, Learning and The Life Chances for Children and Young People.** Recognising that a person’s early years crucially help determine what kind of future they will have.

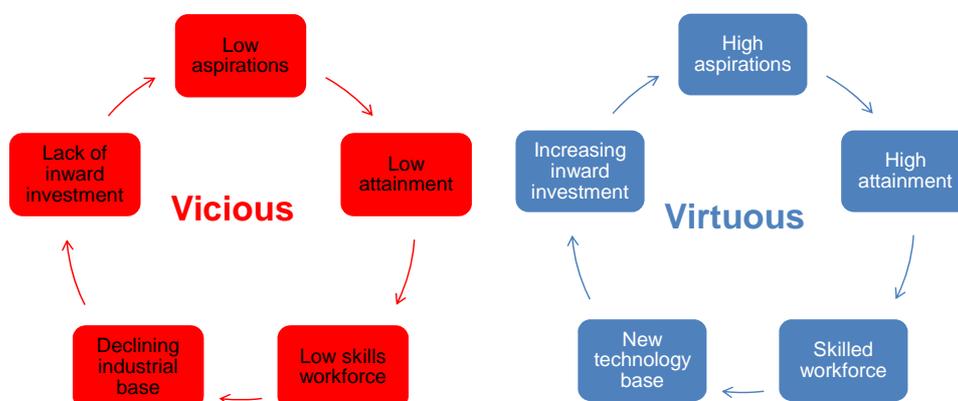
### Overview of Ambitions

- a. Safeguarding : Improving the quality and effectiveness of frontline practice, growing the capacity, capability and culture across the partnership; and improving the quality of partnership and governance
- b. Early Help: A whole systems framework for children and families from early help to statutory intervention
- c. Good Education: Learning provision which promotes high expectations and standards, so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential

### The Challenge

The ‘general economic decline over the past decade’ referred to previously has a large negative impact on the life chances of children and young people – leading to a vicious cycle of deprivation. Our challenge is for all partners to agree on how best to transform this into a virtuous cycle as shown below. Raising aspiration and attainment is a key part of the transformation – but this relies on jobs existing for young people to aspire to.

## Vicious or Virtuous Cycle



Our Vision and ambition for children's services is summarised by '*Being better together for children*'. and '*children and young people in Walsall are safe, happy, healthy and with a bright future*' It takes a community to raise a child and a whole partnership to keep children safe and cared for.

Ofsted judged Safeguarding Services for children and young people to be inadequate in June 2012. The Walsall Children and Young People's Services Improvement Board (WIB) was established in September 2012, with an independent chair to oversee the development and implementation of the agreed Improvement Plan and monitor compliance with the delivery of key milestones as required by the Improvement Notice issued by the Government. A key aspect of improvement is to ensure that other key partnership bodies e.g. the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and Borough Management Team are productive, mutually challenging and impact positively on better outcomes for children. The entire partnership needs to prioritise **the safeguarding of children and young people**.

The JSNA summarised the challenges facing children in their early years in Walsall as substantial, they have a 'poor start in life' with high infant mortality rates and poor educational attainment at age 3-5 together with high levels of obesity. In a borough with very high levels of deprivation (28<sup>th</sup> highest level of child poverty out of 152 councils) children and their families require help and support at the right time at the right place. Our approach is to offer 'Early Help' based on a strong strategic approach across the borough with clear referral pathways and measures of impact to ensure children and young people and their families receive support at the earliest opportunity and that staff in all partners agencies understand what to do when children's needs do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention but require targeted multi-agency early help. Early help will mean that not only will outcomes for children and their families will improve – it will also reduce costs to the council and partners. Partners from several agencies are now sharing information as part of a national programme to coordinate and target multi agency support to the most vulnerable families. Better outcomes and reduced costs will be delivered by **Early Help: A whole systems framework for children and families from early help to statutory intervention**.

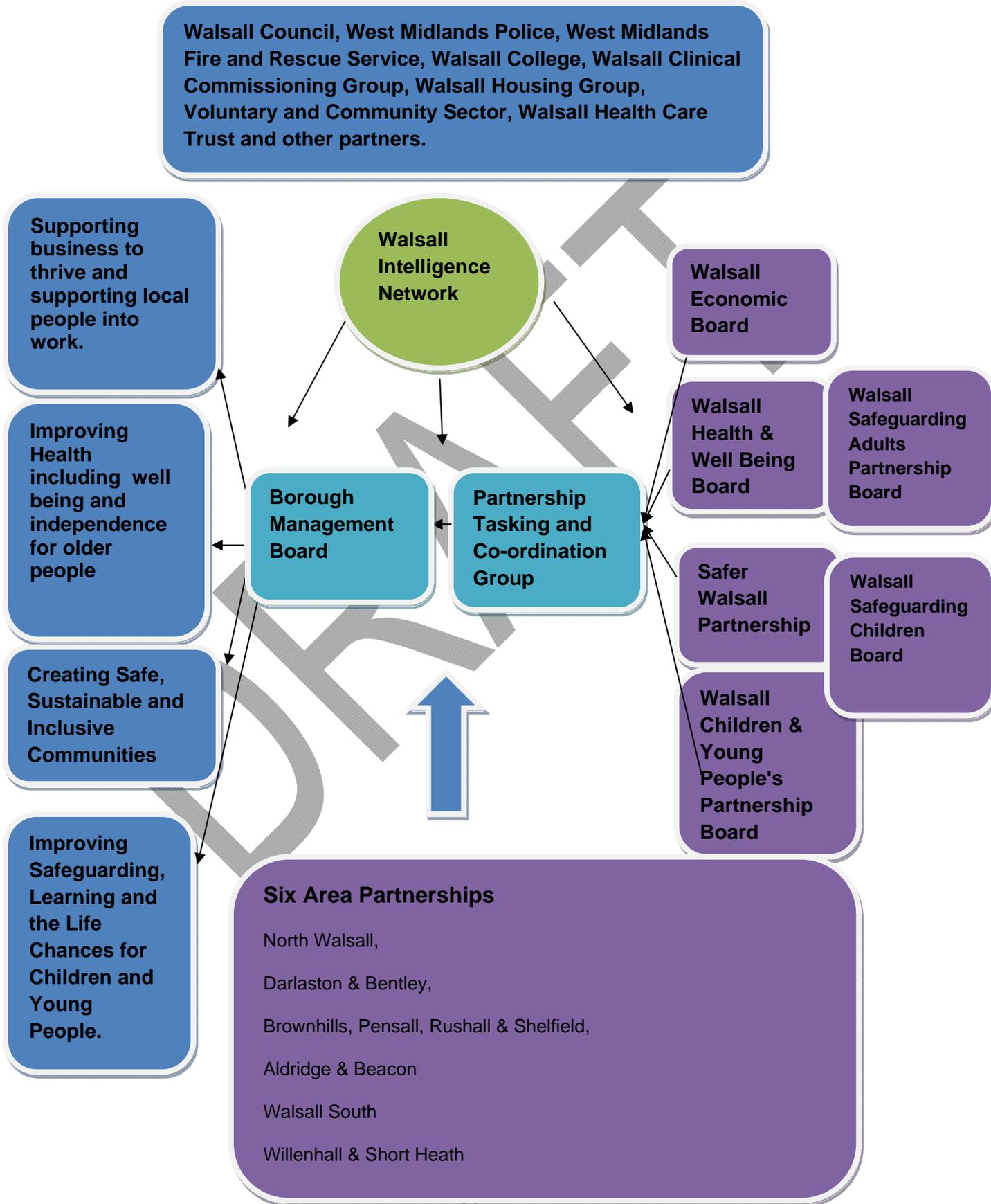
Dips in educational attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 mean both are in the bottom quartile – while this is to some extents because of 2 schools KS2 results being excluded and the English GCSE grading issue – this is challenging - as is our continued bottom quartile position at Key Stage 5 (A-Levels or equivalent). We are working with schools to improve our support to them and working with the college on adjusting their offer. The percentage of schools judged 'good or better' needs to increase from 57.3% of primary schools and 78.6% secondary schools. A new School Improvement Strategy is being developed to support schools and respond to the Academy programme that has resulted in most Secondary Schools becoming Academies – independent of the council. This means that **Good Education: Learning provision which promotes high expectations and standards, so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential** is a key priority for the partnership.

## 2.3 How Will We Get There?

### Partnership Arrangements In Walsall

#### Strategic Priorities

#### Thematic Groups



In order to deliver against the agreed priorities agencies in the Borough have developed a partnership infrastructure which enables each representative body to bring their resources together with others on the things that matter the most. Agencies that link into these arrangements include Walsall Council, Walsall Housing Group, Walsall College, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service, the Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust and Walsall's Clinical Commissioning Group.

**a) Delivery Plans**

Under these arrangements each thematic group and Area Partnership pulls together delivery plans that fit with their remit and responsibility set against the Walsall Plan. The delivery plans are supported by operational leads from the Council and partner agencies who help facilitate, through a Partnership Tasking and Co-ordination Group, the co-ordination of activity and support performance management arrangements. They are also supported by shared partner data through the Walsall Intelligence Network (WIN). The outputs from all this work feeds through to the Borough Management Board whose membership includes the Chief Executive of Walsall Council, the Chief Superintendent of Police, the Chief Executive of Walsall Housing Group, the Principal and Chief Executive of Walsall College, Chief Executive of Walsall Health Care Trust, and the Borough Commander Walsall Fire Service etc. The Borough Management Board takes responsibility for ensuring the wishes of their respective agencies are followed in accordance with the Walsall Plan.

The Borough Management Board has agreed the following:-

"All partners are committed to improving the opportunities for all communities in Walsall and recognise that this can be enhanced through working together. To be effective a shared approach has been developed with the following values. These describe the way we behave and work together to deliver the shared vision and priorities as detailed within the Walsall Plan:-

- The community is at the heart of what we do. We practice inclusion and value diversity.
- We empower ownership at all levels across the partnership to enable the swift and effective delivery of services.
- We are committed to all our stakeholders and champion innovation and enterprise.
- Working positively in partnership we deliver opportunities and prosperity for people within the wider community in and around Walsall Borough.
- We manage resources responsibly for the benefit of our community."

**b) Monitoring**

Reporting from the thematic groups and Area Partnerships through to the Partnership Tasking and Co-ordination Group and the Borough Management Board is on a quarterly basis. Reports are made available to Walsall Council, including the relevant Council Scrutiny panels in order to further ensure good governance and accountability.

Details on the Delivery Plans and Performance Reports can be found at: [www.walsallpartnership.org.uk](http://www.walsallpartnership.org.uk).

### **3. Communicating to Communities and Communities Participating**

Communicating how the Walsall Plan is being delivered and its impact on key issues for the Borough is supported by a range of media including social media, quarterly Area Partnership newsletters, and an annual partnership newsletter made available to partner agencies, Ward Members and the local community through community venues and via the internet.

It is the intention that communities are continuously involved in the delivery of the Walsall Plan and the related Delivery Plans. On that basis methods for public participation will be focussed through the Borough's Area Partnerships'. For further information on this and Area Partnerships please visit [www.walsallpartnership.org.uk](http://www.walsallpartnership.org.uk) or contact the Communities and Partnerships service using the details below.

#### **3.1 Further Information**

For further information on the Walsall Plan please contact:-

Communities & Partnerships  
Walsall Council  
Civic Centre  
Darwall Street  
Walsall  
WS1 1TP

Telephone: 01922 650000

Email: [walsallpartnership@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:walsallpartnership@walsall.gov.uk)

Website: [www.walsallpartnership.org.uk](http://www.walsallpartnership.org.uk)