

25 November 2015

Resource Allocation 2016/17 to 2019/20: Draft Revenue Budget for Consultation

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor Harris - Community, Leisure and Culture

Summary of report

This report outlines the portfolio plans for future service delivery for the Community, Leisure and Culture portfolio. This includes Cabinet's draft revenue budget proposals for 2016/17 to 2019/20 for consultation, for the panel to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet if they so choose.

Recommendation

The panel are recommended to:-

1. Consider the portfolio plans for future service delivery and draft revenue proposals in this report and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

Reason for scrutiny

To enable consultation and scrutiny of the draft portfolio plans and draft revenue budget proposals for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Resource and legal considerations

Cabinet on 28 October 2015 presented their draft portfolio plans on future service delivery, including the draft revenue budget for 2016/17 to 2019/20 for consultation.

The full budget papers can be accessed with this link:

[Resource Allocation 2016/17 to 2019/20: Draft Revenue Budget for Consultation](#)

The report includes the context in which the draft budget has been set, including the reference to council priorities and consultation arrangements.

Attached to this report are the portfolio plans applicable to the remit of this panel.

Citizen impact

The budget is aligned with council priorities. Further details are shown within the policy papers attached to this report.

Environmental impact

The impact on the environment is considered in all budget proposals.

Performance management

Financial performance is considered alongside service performance. Managers are required to deliver their services within budget and there are comprehensive arrangements in place to monitor and manage this.

Equality Implications

Service managers have regard to equalities in setting budgets and delivering services. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken as required prior to final recommendations being made to Council on the budget.

Consultation

This is a specific meeting for scrutiny to consider the draft revenue budget for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Consultation is an integral part of the corporate budget process and arrangements are in hand to consult with a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. councillors, residents, service users, business sector, voluntary and community organisations, etc.). This is outlined in the budget report to Cabinet on 28th October 2015.

An update on feedback from consultation will include scrutiny members' comments and will be presented to Cabinet on 16th December 2015 for their consideration.

Any changes to these proposals, following public consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the panel, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet may wish to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals

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PORTFOLIO: COMMUNITY, LEISURE & CULTURE

Summary of services within the portfolio

- Area Partnerships and Community Development
- Bereavement & Registration - Streetly Crematorium, 8 Cemeteries (Bentley, Bloxwich, James Bridge, North Walsall, Ryecroft, Streetly, Willenhall Lawn and Wood Street Cemetery), Registration service (Births, deaths and marriages), shared Black Country Coroner service (with Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton), Post Mortem service through Walsall Manor Hospital
- Sport & Leisure - Oak Park Leisure Centre, Bloxwich Leisure Centre, Gala Baths, Darlaston Swimming Pool, Sneyd Watersports Centre, Walsall (Aldridge) Airport Environmental & Outdoor Education Centre, Sports & Health Development, Town Hall Management (Walsall & Darlaston), Development and Box Office, Behavioural Improvement team
- Catering - Management and delivery of the schools' catering service to 39 schools across the Borough, corporate catering/committee room teas, the Town Hall Restaurant and the 2nd floor Civic Centre café
- Technical, Safety & Admin - Overall health and safety management within Leisure & Community Health, administrative and business support
- Libraries - Operating through a network of 16 branch libraries, mobile library services and a school's library support service
- Museum services - Walsall Leather Museum
- Archive and local history services
- Arts services - The New Art Gallery, Forest Arts centre and music service & the Creative Development Team

Portfolio Objectives/Outcomes/Purpose

We intend to invest along with our key partners, in building a stronger and more effective voluntary and community sector across the Borough, to support our overall objective of Walsall residents needing less help from the state.

The Leisure and Community Health Service seeks to maintain and improve the health and well-being of all Walsall's residents. This is delivered through the provision of a range of indoor and outdoor sports, leisure and recreation opportunities, the delivery of nutritional school meals, and ensuring the availability of sports and health development, outdoor education and behavioural improvement.

The objective is to get more people, more active, more often, becoming healthier, being happier whilst also achieving a variety of health improvements such as weight loss, smoking cessation, less stress and fewer days off sick.

Libraries Heritage and Arts will offer residents of all ages a wide range of facilities and cultural experiences to use and experience and help to make Walsall a place that they can enjoy and be proud to live in. Services will also offer children and young people opportunities to learn, discover and develop to fulfil their full potential.

In line with the priority to support business, libraries will continue to offer access to up to date business information and encourage new business by offering small business start up packs. Through free access to computers and basic skills courses they will help people develop their learning and skills to help them into employment.

Financial summary

Table 1 details the revenue cash limits for the Community, Leisure and Culture Portfolio for the next four years. Full details of savings and efficiencies for 2016/17 and 2017/18 are shown in table 2.

Table 1: Community, Leisure & Culture Portfolio Cash limit 2016/17 – 2019/20				
	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
Opening cash limit	7.34	6.33	3.91	3.60
Investment required to deliver savings	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00
Less: Savings / efficiencies - <i>see table 2</i>	(1.11)	(2.42)	(0.31)	(0.18)
Revised cash limit	6.33	3.91	3.60	3.42

Estimates for pay, pensions and contractual inflation costs are held centrally and will be allocated to services once confirmed.

Proposed revenue savings and efficiencies

Table 2 details the revenue saving and efficiencies for Community, Leisure and Culture Portfolio for both 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Table 2 : Proposed savings and efficiencies			
Saving reference	Detail of saving / efficiency	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
70	Reduce the maintenance budget and implement efficiencies at the New Art Gallery	10,000	
71	Reduced recruitment costs associated with New Art Gallery	1,500	
72	Reduce opening hours at the New Art Gallery (Policy)	19,360	
73	Reduce exhibitions budget for the New Art Gallery:	5,000	
74	Consider Closure of 7 libraries across the borough and mobile library service. (Policy)	328,854	159,058
Saving reference	Detail of saving / efficiency	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
75	Implementation of open+ technology in retained libraries to support opening hours and enable the more efficient deployment of staff. (Policy)		349,813
76	Restructure of library service management levels.		120,000
77	Cease operation of the creative development team unless it can be self sustaining by 2017/18.		118,579

78	Efficiency savings at Forest Arts Centre		100,000
79	Sports development to become self sufficient	61,934	61,934
80	Cease area management and area panels (Policy)	100,000	100,000
81	Reduction in the councils contribution towards the cost of the coroners support		20,000
82	Increase income from a wider range of memorials available from bereavement services	10,000	
83	Introduce a British Citizenship application checking fee (Policy)	2,000	
84	Increase bereavement fees by 10% for cremations and 3% for burials	125,000	
85	Provide light refreshments at Streetly crematorium	1,000	
86	Provide an income stream from the use of the environmental levy (Policy)	100,000	
87	Leisure Centres to become self sufficient by 2018/19		777,576
88	3% increase in charges at all leisure facilities	14,333	2,867
89	Additional charges to cover the council's contribution to schools library support service above those charged for the core service. This will achieve full cost recovery.	39,848	
90	Registrars service to become self sufficient by 2018/19	11,208	20,000
91	Amended governance arrangements for sports and leisure services (Policy)		522,195
92	Potential transfer of community development to the voluntary sector		25,000
93	Staffing restructure within bereavement services to reflect the changing needs of the service	29,369	
94	Deletion of a full-time managers post	43,290	
95	Restructure of the sports and leisure management team	20,000	
96	Management restructure of the arts service	67,000	
97	Senior management savings – Libraries	65,027	
98	Staff savings in sport & health development		42,000
99	Senior management savings – Communities	60,988	
	Total	1,115,711	2,419,022

Where draft saving proposals are identified as 'policy' changes in the above table, these are supported by further details provided in the following pages.

Draft Proposal – reference 72 – Reduce Opening Hours at the Art Gallery

- **Close the New Art Gallery to the public on Sundays**
- **Close one hour earlier than currently (at 4.00pm) Tuesday to Friday, for 20 weeks of the year during winter months October to March**

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
£19,360	-	-

1. Description of the Proposal

- 1.1 The proposal involves closing the New Art Gallery to the public on Sundays saving casual staffing costs, and closing one hour earlier than currently (at 4.00pm) Tuesday to Friday, for 20 weeks of the year during winter months October to March.

2. Implications Associated With Proposal

A reduction in the opening hours would limit the gallery's availability at times when many visitors and users are free to visit, particularly at the weekend. This would limit their ability to view exhibitions, engage in gallery activities and use facilities. This would particularly affect families and those who work during the week. However, Saturday hours will remain as now meaning weekend visiting choice is still available.

2.1 Corporate Plan

The New Art Gallery makes a significant contribution to delivering the council's priorities. This proposal will reduce the time the collections are available to the public and students hours over the winter period with Sunday closure having a more significant impact:

- *Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.* There will be a reduction in the time available for development activities to encourage young people into the creative world and to exhibit the work of young and new artists.
- *Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people.* This proposal will reduce the time the collections are available to the public and students.
- *Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People,* raising aspirations. There will be a reduction in the time available to plan and deliver educational visits although the loss of hours will not affect school classes, but will reduce the time available to students of further and higher education.

2.2 Customers

This proposal will reduce the hours people can view or work with collections in the New Art Gallery during the winter period with Sunday closure having a more significant impact especially on families.

2.3 Employees / Staffing

There would be a reduction in staff hours, which would require consultation and negotiation.

2.4 Partners

None.

2.5 Economic Implications

Sunday closure would reduce the cultural offer in the town centre, which may impact upon nearby restaurants and bars.

2.6 Environmental Implications

None.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

This proposal will reduce the time the collections are available to the public and students.

2.8 Other Council Services

None.

3. Associated Risks / Opportunities

- 3.1 There is a risk that Arts Council England will oppose the proposal to close the Gallery on Sundays, given the level of funding they provide to the overall running costs of the Gallery. However, Arts Council England may also be subject to cuts in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review which in turn may have an impact on their view of this proposal.

4. Consultation and Customer feedback

- 4.1 Consultation was undertaken in 2014/15 on a reduction in hours during the winter months. Survey results told us that the majority of respondents supported this proposal fully (57%) or with concerns/amendments (23%). A service specific consultation exercise would need to be undertaken with regard to Sunday closure.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

6. **Equality Implications**

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment is being produced to consider the impact of Sunday closure.

Draft Proposal – reference 74: Consider Closure of 7 libraries and the Mobile Library Service with retention of 9 libraries and the Housebound Service.

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
£328,854	£159,058	-

1. **Description of the Proposal**

- 1.1 The proposal for consultation is to consider closure of 7 libraries (Beechdale, Blakenall, New Invention, Pleck, Rushall, South Walsall, with Walsall Wood book exchange relocated to Oak Park Active Living Centre) keeping 9 libraries and the housebound service as the core library service for the Borough - Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston, Pelsall, Pheasey, Streetly, Willenhall, Central, Housebound Library Service).
- 1.2 The proposal would save a total of £487,912, £328,854 to be delivered in 2016/17 representing implementation at the end of July and a further £159,058 in 2017/18. These savings would be made from a reduction of staff and property costs released from the reduction of the library network.
- 1.3 There would still be a library service point available within 2 miles of those areas where a library closed. The housebound service would still deliver media to people, who, for reasons of age, disability or caring responsibilities, are unable to leave their homes.
- 1.4 Any community groups or organisation expressing a wish to provide a book exchange facilities following a library closure would be supported by the service while they establish their centre and identify funding streams.

2. **Implications Associated With Proposal**

2.1 **Corporate Plan**

The council purpose is to “*Improve lives and life chances for everyone who lives and works in the Borough of Walsall and in so doing minimise the help that residents need from the state*”. The Library Service makes a significant contribution to delivering this purpose:

- *Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work* - The Library Service offers up to the minute business information for established businesses and starter packs for people thinking of setting up a new

business. Basic computer skills courses are available to help people improve their skills and improve their employability and job clubs in libraries help with CV writing, job searches, etc.

- *Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people* - As well as offering books and other materials to promote healthy lifestyles and help people understand and cope with health conditions, libraries offer inclusive clubs and reading groups to offer social opportunities to people, volunteering opportunities. They also offer a welcoming, friendly and neutral space for people to relax, browse and read.
- *Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities* - Consultation has shown that many people regard the library as a community focal point, particularly the activities for adults and children and the opportunity to meet other people in a social atmosphere.
- *Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People, raising aspirations* - Libraries engage and motivate children and young people to read by giving free access to high quality books and reading promotions and activities, thereby helping the development of literacy and a love of reading. They provide a wide range of information books for homework and general interest and the opportunities to support learning and the development of information literacy. Libraries are physical spaces that capture children's imaginations and meet children's changing needs as they grow with stock for all ages and abilities that stimulates children's desire to read and that reflect the diverse community in which they grow up. They also provide a programme of reading activities for all ages; free and safeguarded access to the internet and IT applications and staff who have a knowledge of children's books and can help with children's enquiries
- *Create a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce designed around what Residents need* - Library staff are responsive to the needs of the local people who use the service and are flexible and knowledgeable to ensure the service is relevant and appropriate. They are trained in enquiry techniques and in dealing with people of all ages and abilities.

2.2 Customers

- 2.2.1 The closure of any library would impact on those least able to travel to their next nearest service point – children, older people and those with a disability. An equality impact assessment is being undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed closures, particularly on those people with protected characteristics.
- 2.2.2 The cessation of the mobile library service would mean that those people in areas with no easy access to a branch library would have to travel to the nearest library to access the service. The mobile library would not be available to offer a service to those areas losing their local library service.
- 2.2.3 Online and digital services would be increased and improved to widen access. Where practicable, the Library Service will work with local community groups to develop community run facilities.

2.2.4 There would still be a Walsall library within 2 miles of every household in the Borough. Each remaining library will offer access to books, learning and information, free access to computers and digital technology, have a programme of cultural events and activities for both adults and children, offer access to other council services and be a safe, neutral space which is also friendly and welcoming. Each will also reflect the local needs of the communities it serves, both in terms of the stock it has available and the services it offers.

2.3 Employees / Staffing

The closure of 7 libraries would result in the deletion of up to 13 posts and the consequent redundancy of those staff. Every effort would be made to mitigate compulsory redundancies by using vacant posts and a voluntary redundancy trawl at appropriate levels. Those staff affected would be put on the redeployment list as soon as possible.

2.4 Partners

Partners and stakeholders will be consulted on these proposals and additional partnerships will be actively sought with any group or organisation that expresses a wish to run a community-led book exchange facility where a local service point is proposed to be lost. A package of support for such organisations is being developed.

2.5 Economic Implications

Libraries are located in centres of local communities such as local shopping areas or with other services such as community associations and health centres. The closure of the library may impact on the number of visits to the locality and possibly on the economic viability of the centre.

2.6 Environmental Implications

Where libraries are lost the vacated buildings may remain empty for some time until a decision is made on their future use or demolition. This may attract vandalism, litter and have a generally detrimental impact on the environmental standards of the area.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

Libraries play a large role in raising awareness and promoting well being and healthy lifestyles to people of all ages. This is done both through the information they provide and by events, promotions and activities. Where libraries are lost, this activity would cease. The loss of the Mobile Library would particularly impact on those who do not have easy access to a static service point.

2.8 Other Council Services

This proposal will not impact directly on other council services, although the possibility of using libraries as “touch-down” facilities for community based staff will be lost in those areas where libraries close. There will no longer be a need for cleaning and caretaking services for the libraries involved. The option will impact on the schools education programme and support to the curriculum.

3. Associated Risks / Opportunities

- 3.1 The closure of libraries may be challenged on the grounds that some people will lose their right of access to the service. The major impact of these proposals will be on children and young people, older people or people with a disability and those who find travelling difficult.

There would still be a library service point available within 2 miles of those areas where a library closed and a housebound service which would deliver media to people, who, for reasons of age, disability or caring responsibilities, are unable to leave their homes.

- 3.2 Any support given to a community organisation for a community run book exchange would impact on the level of proposed savings.

4. Consultation and Customer feedback

- 4.1 Consultation on this proposal will be undertaken at a formative stage and form part of the budget consultation process starting at the end of October. A range of methods will be used to consult. Feedback will be considered by Cabinet before the final budget recommendations are finalised.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to provide a Library Service that is both “comprehensive and efficient” for all persons in the area that want to make use of it. The service must provide books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area. “Comprehensive and efficient” are not defined in the Act, but an authority should pay regard to:

- Securing that facilities are available for borrowing, or reference to, books and other materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general and any special requirements of both adults and children.
- Encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the service

- 5.2 There would still be a library service point available within 2 miles of those areas where a library closed and a housebound delivery service.

6. **Equality Implications**

- 6.1 A full equality impact assessment will be completed for this proposal and will be assessed by the equalities team. It is acknowledged that this option will impact primarily on children, older people and those who are disabled or unable to travel to their nearest service point. Every effort will be made to offer them a service through the mobile and housebound service or online.
- 6.2 There will still be a library service point available within 2 miles of those areas where libraries have closed. The housebound service will deliver media to people, who, for reasons of age, disability or caring responsibilities, are unable to leave their homes. Any community groups or organisation expressing a wish to provide book exchange facilities where libraries have closed will be supported by the service while they establish their centre and identify funding streams.
- 6.3 The reduction of staff would be effected according to the redundancy and redeployment policies of the council. Every effort will be made to mitigate compulsory redundancies by using vacant posts and a voluntary redundancy trawl.

Draft Proposal – reference 75: Implement Open+ technology in retained libraries to support opening hours and enable the more efficient deployment of staff.

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
-	£349,813	£300,000 (capital)

1. **Description of the Proposal**

- 1.1 Open+ is a system which enables access to library buildings and basic facilities without the need to have library staff on site. It works with the existing library management system and will automatically control self-service kiosks, public access computers, security, lighting etc. It has the potential to extend library opening hours and save on revenue budgets by only having staff available at times that have been identified as the busiest.
- 1.2 This proposal would see the implementation of Open+ in those retained libraries which have the appropriate layout and thereby enable staff efficiencies and possible enhanced hours of access. In association with the proposal for the rationalisation of the library network, this would offer savings of around £349,813.
- 1.3 The capital cost of implementing Open+ is approximately £25,250 where libraries already have self service kiosks and £33,250 where self service would have to be installed. If applied to the option to retain 9 libraries, to be

around £300,000. (This includes building works to bring Darlaston Library on to the ground floor only, meaning there would be an option to lease the first floor to another service or organisation.) The actual cost will depend on the libraries selected. The layout of the Central and Pelsall libraries mean that they would be inappropriate for Open+.

- 1.4 Implementation could be in 2017/18 to allow for the procurement and installation of the system.

2. **Implications Associated With Proposal**

2.1 **Corporate Plan**

The new Council Purpose is to “*Improve lives and life chances for everyone who lives and works in the Borough of Walsall and in so doing minimise the help that residents need from the state*”. The Library Service makes a significant contribution to delivering this purpose:

- *Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work* - Use of the library during Open+ times would still offer access business information from the internet and use of computers for CV writing, job searches, etc.
- *Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people* - The loan of books and other materials to promote healthy lifestyles will still be available during Open+ opening times.
- *Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities* - Consultation has shown that many people regard the library as a community focal point, particularly the activities for adult and children and the opportunity to meet other people in a social atmosphere. The potential to enhance opening hours through Open+ would mean the library space was more available for community use.
- *Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People, raising aspirations* - Libraries are physical spaces that capture children’s imaginations and meet children’s changing needs as they grow with stock for all ages and abilities that stimulates children’s desire to read and that reflect the diverse community in which they grow up. Children would have to be accompanied by an adult who had “signed up” to Open+ before they could use the library during Open+ times.
- *Create a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce designed around what residents need* - With the implementation of Open+ staff could be focussed more efficiently to meet the needs of customers during times of peak use.

2.2 **Customers**

Customers would have to “opt in” to use Open+ and agree to an acceptable use policy. Having done this the library would be accessible to them during Open+ hours. Potentially that access could be from 8.00am to 8.00pm. Times when the library is staffed would be clearly advertised, so that customers who wished help or support would know when it was available.

2.3 Employees / Staffing

Open+ would enable staff further efficiencies by enabling the deployment of staff at more than one library. This would require consultation and negotiation with staff to take place prior to any agreement to the implementation.

2.4 Partners

There is a potential for partners such as social care and the police to be issued with Open+ cards so that they could use libraries as local drop down centres.

2.5 Economic Implications

None.

2.6 Environmental Implications

None.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

The installation of CCTV and an emergency telephone would reduce the risk of people using the building unsupervised. There are no other implications.

2.8 Other Council Services

There is the potential for staff of other services, working in local communities to be issued with a card to allow them access to the library during Open+ hours as a “drop down” facility.

3. Associated Risks / Opportunities

- 3.1 Customers have to “opt in” to use Open+ and agree to an acceptable use policy. They are then issued with a special card and PIN which they have to use to gain entry to the library when it is in Open+ mode. In authorities where it is in use, children under 16 cannot use the system unless accompanied by an adult who is registered. This is for safeguarding reasons rather than purely a security consideration.
- 3.2 Security cameras record who accesses the building when they enter their PIN, as well as monitoring people in the library. A book detection system can record any item leaving the building without being issued through a self service kiosk. All Open+ hours can be monitored from the Central Library using CCTV and this system can be used at closing time to ensure everyone has left the building.
- 3.3 Security devices would be needed to ensure that computers could not be removed and non public areas accessed. Every library would need a telephone linked to the Central Library in case of emergency.

- 3.4 There is a risk that people will not use the library in Open+ mode and access to staffed times will be more limited than previously. However, many people currently choose to use the library without any reference to staff in terms of seeking help and advice. Times when staff are available would be clearly advertised and customers will have the choice to seek staff help at certain times, or not.

4. **Consultation and Customer feedback**

- 4.1 It is vital that significant customer consultation on this proposal be undertaken at a formative stage and form part of the budget consultation process between the end of October and the end of November. This consultation will take the form of questionnaires, focus groups and public meetings. Feedback will be considered by Cabinet before the final budget recommendations are finalised.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The council has a statutory duty under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to provide a Library Service that is both “comprehensive and efficient” for all persons in the area that want to make use of it. The service must provide books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area. “Comprehensive and efficient” are not defined in the Act, but an authority should pay regard to:

- Securing that facilities are available for borrowing, or reference to, books and other materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general and any special requirements of both adults and children.
- Encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the service

6. **Equality Implications**

- 6.1 The implementation of Open+ would improve access to the library building for all customers.

Draft Proposal – reference 80: Area Management Review

This proposal covers the following;

- a) **Investment in Voluntary Sector Infrastructure** (£101,000)
- b) **Cease Area Management and Area Panels** (£200,000 over two years)
- c) **Relates to part of Review and restructure of management and staff posts across Democratic Services** (operational saving - £203,854)

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
-	-	£101,000
£100,000	£100,000	-
part of £203,854	-	-

1. Description of the Proposal

- 1.1 Proposal a) is to invest additional funding, alongside other key partners, into a new voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisation, in order to help to build and maintain a more vibrant, effective and sustainable sector going forward. This is a key strand of the work to support the corporate plan purpose of 'Walsall residents need less help from the state'. The proposal would increase the council's investment from the current £69,000 per annum to £170,000 per annum, starting in 2016/17. The proposal follows the recommendations arising from an independent report produced by John Taylor, who was commissioned jointly by Walsall Voluntary Action (WVA) and the council. These recommendations have also been accepted by the WVA Board. It means that a new infrastructure organisation will be established with support from neighbouring Black Country equivalents, who will provide assistance until a new self-sustaining organisation is in place.
- 1.2 Proposal b) is to cease Area Management and Area Panels, along with the grant funding currently provided to Areas for community events and activities.
- 1.3 The individual proposals will reduce the democratic services staff available to support committees. This is an operational decision but is very much linked to the policy decision to withdraw from Area Management. The proposal also reduces and refocuses the existing area managers. In addition there is no proposal to continue to use earmarked reserves to support the funding of community events through area panels.
- 1.4 The proposal to cease area management is phased over two years. The current Area Partnerships infrastructure will cease to exist in April 2016, but some staffing resources will be retained for a further year in order to support the work of the new voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisation in helping local communities to become stronger and self-sufficient by, amongst other things, providing external funding expertise and an increased volunteer pool within Walsall.
- 1.5 Because Area Panels will cease, there is no longer a need for support from the Democratic Services team, which assists in the separate operational savings proposal to review and restructure management and staff posts across Democratic Services.
- 1.6 It is expected that consultation on these proposals will be complete and the proposals could be implemented by 1 April 2016, subject to impact

assessment, consultation feedback and the use of these in formulating the final recommendations of Cabinet to Council.

2. Implications Associated With Proposal

2.1 Corporate Plan

Area management and Area Panels (including grants to communities) have made a contribution to council priorities, notably:

- Improving health and wellbeing, including independence for older people and the protection of the vulnerable.
- Creating safe sustainable and inclusive communities.

Clearly a reduction in funding for community activities may have a negative impact on these priorities but with the right mitigation and the right level of support the risks may be outweighed by the opportunities as communities grow and become more resilient, supported by a stronger more effective voluntary and community sector.

2.2 Customers

These proposals do not impact on any statutory services. The main impact on customers will be reduced opportunity to listen and contribute to local debates on local issues and a potential reduction in local activities and events. However, public attendance at area panels is typically low and there are other ways in which the council and its partners can effectively engage communities on specific issues as they arise.

2.3 Employees / Staffing

There are currently 6 full time equivalent (FTE) Area Managers posts, funded in part from contributions from both the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Walsall Housing Group (WHG). There are currently no firm proposals from CCG or WHG to continue funding in 2016, although discussions are ongoing.

In 2016-17:

With CCG/WHG funding there would be 4 FTE posts
Without CCG/WHG funding there will be 2 FTE posts.

There will be continued discussions with key partners about how to make best use of the remaining resource during 2016/17 in order to manage the transition to a different method of working together in localities.

There are also job reductions arising from the operational proposals within Democratic Services, made feasible in part through the ceasing of Area Panels.

2.4 Partners

Partners will lose access to regular area tasking meetings. However, these may be picked up by new community based structures which grow organically from an investment in the voluntary and community sector. There is also potential for staff from other teams/partner organisations to continue operating the tasking system.

2.5 Economic Implications

There are no direct economic implications.

2.6 Environmental Implications

There may be a reduction in small localised environmental projects through the non availability of grants through area panels. Alternative sources of funding external to the council may be identified. Access to external funding could be improved through the revitalised voluntary sector infrastructure arrangements.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

There may be a reduction in small localised environmental projects through the non availability of grants through area panels. Alternative sources of funding external to the council may be identified. Access to external funding could be improved through the revitalised voluntary sector infrastructure arrangements.

2.8 Other Council Services

Other council services have often benefited from focused area support provided by the area management team. This will not be available under this proposal so services will have to develop greater capability to work with customers and other services effectively.

3. Associated Risks / Opportunities

- 3.1 The proposals will give the council the opportunity to redesign its relationship with the voluntary and community sector giving local organisations the opportunity to be at the heart of communities designed for and by them. There is a risk that the appetite and capability to meet this challenge will result in patchy community and voluntary support very much dependant on the area in which you live. This can be mitigated by supporting organisations and volunteers to offer services outside their local communities. In addition the proposed investment in the voluntary sector infrastructure should support the building of a vibrant and effective voluntary and community sector.

4. Consultation and Customer feedback

- 4.1 There will be consultation with the following groups:
- The general public.

- Area panels
- Local organisations including community associations and voluntary groups.
- Partner organisations

There is no statutory consultation required.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications.

6. **Equality Implications**

6.1 There may be fewer local activities for a period of time and this could have an impact on equalities. A full equality impact assessment is being carried out.

Draft Proposal – reference 83: British Citizenship Application: Introduction of a Checking Fee

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
£2,000	-	-

1. **Description of the Proposal**

- 1.1 Newcomers to the United Kingdom are entitled to apply for British citizenship. To become a naturalised citizen of the UK, applicants must complete “Form AN” and meet specific eligibility requirements and residential requirements, providing information as: biographical data, proof of residency requirement and employment information.
- 1.2 The proposal is to offer a Form AN checking service.
- 1.3 New applicants will pay a nominal fee to the council’s Register Office for a document and application checking service to ensure that a valid application is submitted to the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration office and the requirements for citizenship are met. The checking service will be undertaken by the council’s existing registration officers as part of their day-to-day work.
- 1.4 The implementation date would be 1 April 2016.

2. **Implications Associated With Proposal**

2.1 **Corporate Plan**

The impact for residents is that this proposal will help new citizens to the United Kingdom improve their life chances by becoming a national resident of this country. Indirectly, helping people submit correct applications will support them gain work, raise aspirations and support residents to gain what they need.

2.2 Customers

This is not a statutory function.

Offered by local authorities in partnership with the Home Office, the application checking service will improve the quality, accuracy and speed of applications for British Citizenship. The proposed fee per application is as below and is in-line with neighbouring authorities:-

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| • Single application | £55 |
| • Couple application | £100 |
| • Husband, wife and up to 2 children | £120 |
| • Subsequent child | £35 |

2.3 Employees / Staffing

There is no staffing impact.

2.4 Partners

By checking applicants' information before submission, the UK Visas and Immigration office will receive fewer applications that are wrong or incomplete.

2.5 Economic Implications

There are no implications concerning the economy, regeneration, business sector.

2.6 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

Gaining UK citizenship is highly sought after and often enables applicants and their families to attain a better quality of life and improved health and wellbeing. The proposal will support their application for citizenship.

2.8 Other Council Services

Other services, including support services are unaffected by the proposal.

3. Associated Risks / Opportunities

- 3.1 This provides an opportunity for additional new income with minimum expenditure.

4. **Consultation and Customer feedback**

4.1 Other local authorities are providing this service.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposal.

6. **Equality Implications**

6.1 A full equality impact assessment is not required because there is no adverse impact.

Draft Proposal – reference 86: Provide an Income Stream from the Use of the Environmental Levy

Estimated Net Saving		
2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
£100,000	-	-

1. **Description of the Proposal**

1.1 Streetly Crematorium currently has three cremators which are used to cremate the remains of the deceased plus mercury abatement (removal) equipment. The cremators and mercury abatement equipment were replaced in 2014 at a cost of c.£1m and was funded by the collection of an Environmental Levy of £52 per cremation. The levies were put aside into a fund and used to off-set the demand for capital funding from the council's capital programme.

1.2 It is proposed that rather than accumulating the levies into a fund, the c.£100k per annum is used to support on-going service delivery elsewhere in the council. As no funding is being set aside, future replacement of the cremators and mercury abatement equipment will need to be met from the capital programme. Future replacement is likely in the 2024/25 financial year.

2. **Implications Associated With Proposal**

2.1 **Corporate Plan**

The proposal releases funding that would be set aside for a future capital replacement scheme at Streetly but allows revenue funding to be used to protect front line services in the meantime.

2.2 **Customers**

This is not a statutory function. There will be no direct impact on the bereaved families.

2.3 **Employees / Staffing**

There is no staffing impact.

2.4 **Partners**

There is no impact on partners.

2.5 **Economic Implications**

There are no economic impacts.

2.6 **Environmental Implications**

There are no environmental implications.

2.7 **Health and wellbeing implications**

There are no adverse health and wellbeing implications.

2.8 **Other Council Services**

There is no impact on other services, or support services.

3. **Associated Risks / Opportunities**

- 3.1 The cremators and abatement equipment are sophisticated pieces of equipment. As well as major brickwork replacement, on occasions, unplanned, on-going or emergency repairs can be very expensive, the costs for which are unpredictable year on year.

4. **Consultation and Customer feedback**

- 4.1 Timescale for cremator replacement is based on information from the manufacturer.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposal.

6. **Equality Implications**

- 6.1 A full equality impact assessment is not required as there is no adverse impact.

Draft Proposal – reference 91: Amended Governance Arrangements for Sports and Leisure Services

Estimated Net Saving

2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	Implementation / Investment cost
-	£522,195	-

1. **Description of the Proposal**

- 1.1 Walsall currently has four leisure centres at Bloxwich, Walsall Wood (Oak Park), Darlaston and Walsall (Gala Baths). Bloxwich and Oak Park are currently part-way through being rebuilt as Active Living Centres and are scheduled to open in mid 2016.
- 1.2 As a discretionary service the council has set an aspiration that the leisure centres should operate at no cost to the council by 2018. It is anticipated that the new Bloxwich and Oak Park Active Living Centres will meet this target. It is unlikely that Darlaston Swimming Pool and the Gala Baths will be able to do so unless alternative delivery proposals are considered.
- 1.3 Reducing government grants to local authorities has led the Cabinet Office to promote alternative service delivery models (ASDMs) to generate income to protect services, allowing the facilities to compete and encourage greater commercialism and efficiency.
- 1.4 It is proposed to move to a full-cost-recovery model for Sport and Leisure Services – the same basis that has allowed the retention of the Outdoor Pursuits team. The surplus generated from the new Active Living Centres would subsidise the continuation of other elements of the service – specifically Darlaston Swimming Pool and Walsall Gala Baths.
- 1.5 The anticipated savings that may be generated from such alternative governance arrangements will be confirmed in the coming months however the actual trading performance of the new Active Living Centres will only become apparent following the first twelve months of operation once the centres open, provisionally June 2016. This will inform the shape of the service that can be funded from Autumn 2017 onwards.

2. **Implications Associated With Proposal**

2.1 **Corporate Plan**

The purpose of Active Living and the construction of the new centres at Bloxwich and Oak Park is to offer better opportunities for Walsall residents to undertake more activity. By doing so it has the potential to improve lives and life chances for participants.

The Chief Medical Officer also highlights that there is a health cost of inactivity. Higher levels of activity have a positive impact on five key diseases (bowel cancer, breast cancer, diabetes, coronary heart disease and strokes) as well as helping reduce obesity levels.

The proposal will support the continuation of Darlaston and Gala Baths, thereby improving health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people. It helps create safe, sustainable and inclusive communities, supports the life chances for children and young people and raise aspirations.

2.2 Customers

This is not a statutory function. This proposal will however support the continuation of Leisure Centres to offer better opportunities for Walsall residents to undertake more activity.

2.3 Employees/Staffing

If an 'arms length' organisation was formed to operate the leisure centres then the Sport and Leisure service would transfer to the new organisation. This would affect around 125 staff (45 full time equivalents).

2.4 Partners

There is no explicit impact on the work of partners – existing partnerships where they are mutually beneficial and affordable (such as those with Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport) should continue.

With a pared down Sport and Leisure Service the council may struggle to respond to queries and requests for support and advice in the broader area, in particular in the support that it gives to the voluntary sector.

A large amount of sports provision and club organisation is delivered solely by the voluntary sector. The council plays an important role in helping develop Lottery grant applications to bring additional investment into the Borough whilst also helping with scheme design and development.

2.5 Economic Implications

The Chief Medical Officer's data estimates that health costs of physical inactivity to Walsall are £5.6m a year, whilst the economic costs are estimated as £70m a year. The reduction / cessation of funding for Sport and Leisure will need to have due regard to protecting physical activity outcomes and its broader impacts on social cohesion and well-being.

2.6 Environmental Implications

None.

2.7 Health and wellbeing implications

The purpose of the Active Living project is to meet the council's philosophy to get "more people, more active, more often" and thereby improve their physical and mental health as well as overall well-being.

2.8 Other Council Services

Optimising the surplus from the new Active Living Centres will require Sport and Leisure Services to take a commercial approach to several aspects of service delivery. It is essential that council support services are in a position to support this commercial approach. Sport and Leisure does not fit the profile of a traditional council service with substantial income generation and a workforce deployed up to 18 hours a day, 7-days a week.

3. **Associated Risks / Opportunities**

- 3.1 An options appraisal is being commissioned to examine the various management models and the contingent risks and benefits.
- 3.2 The principal operational risk is the commercial performance of the service. Fundamentally the service will become wholly funded by the income the service generates. Ultimately this risk is addressed by having the shape and scale of the service dictated by the income performance.

4. **Consultation and Customer feedback**

- 4.1 Any proposal to introduce new governance arrangements will require appropriate staff consultation as staff will need to transfer to the new organisation. A transfer in itself should have any impact on service users; on this basis customer consultation should not be required.

A reduction in services is not part of this current proposal.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Further advice, legal and otherwise, is currently being commissioned on alternative service delivery models.

6. **Equality Implications**

- 6.1 At this stage it is not believed that a full equality impact assessment is required. The change in management structure should not alter front-line service delivery. As such there should not be any discernible impact on people with protected characteristics. In the event that service reductions are required to balance the budget, these reductions will need to be subject to a full equality impact assessment.