

Corporate Plan 2016-2020



Walsall Council

Foreword by the Leader of the Council

Walsall is a wonderful place. As a resident and as someone involved in the community for many years I see some great people, communities and organisations that make Walsall a great place to live, learn, work and invest. The diversity of communities from Aldridge to Willenhall has led to a borough with a unique identity. This identity is underpinned by the many and varied backgrounds and cultures within our borough. However, I also recognise the challenges that the Council has to meet, the main challenge being a financial pressure placed on this Council which forces us to make tough decisions. I make no apology, within an environment of reducing budgets we have an obligation, and it is a key principle of this administration, to ensure we deliver services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of need. Both parties to the Coalition will work tirelessly to meet this objective and I will demand from my cabinet and officers that they too keep this principle at the forefront of our thinking.

Since the last time I was in office the deep cuts have got deeper, we will have a balanced four year budget and there will be a golden thread leading from this corporate plan all the way through to service delivery. Whilst our budgets have reduced by over £84m in the last four years I do not see the financial situation improving over the next four; indeed it will probably get worse and it is anticipated that a further £85m of savings will need to be found over the next four years. I will not stand by and cut services indiscriminately. We will apply our thinking across the Council and the region to protect the most vulnerable. We will use the many and varied resources to be found in our wonderful communities to help restore pride in Walsall.

This corporate plan identifies the Coalition's priorities. In short we will be focused on reducing inequalities and maximising potential. If at the end of my period of office I can say I have delivered that, I will have succeeded.

Our commitment to delivering our services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of need applies to all the people of Walsall. It is not dependant on age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith, disability, gender or race. However, the young people of Walsall are our future and deserve the opportunity to grow up in a safe, clean and caring environment. We will not let them down.

My Cabinet and I will continue to find new and better ways of doing things to ensure we deliver the maximum output from our limited resources. We will work with our partners locally and across our region to continually improve what we do and how we do it. This corporate plan will be followed by an action plan which will produce the detail of how we will deliver a transformation in terms of our relationship with residents. We will listen to all our wonderful communities and they will have the opportunity to play a role in continuing to make Walsall a wonderful place to live and work.

We are now very close to becoming a Combined Authority; this will give us many new opportunities to work with our neighbours at a different strategic level and have a greater influence over strategic decisions within the region. The priorities I set out here will be our priorities within the Combined Authority.



Councillor Sean Coughlan
Leader of the Council

Contents

Foreword	2
Our Purpose	4
Walsall Council in 2020	4
Our Values	4
Finances	5
The Borough of Walsall	5
Our Communities	6
Our Priorities	7
1. Lifelong health, wealth and happiness	8
2. Safe, resilient and prospering communities	9
3. Sustainable change and improvement for all	10
Delivery	11

Our Purpose

Walsall Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall, by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable. Our purpose is to:

Reduce inequalities and maximise potential

By working to reduce health, social and economic inequalities the potential of the area, local businesses, communities and people will be maximised, making Walsall Wonderful.

We do this with limited resources and so must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible.

We are led by the communities we serve who help shape the services we provide and we help those communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement and cooperation.

Walsall Council in 2020

In 2020 the Council will be a key enabler of improvements to Walsall, its Districts and the region, working innovatively and collaboratively with strong and resilient communities, public sector partners, voluntary organisations, schools and businesses to shape services that deliver real and sustainable improvements to people's lives.

The Council will by necessity be smaller and so do fewer things. Services that will continue to be provided will be delivered in a very different way to how they are now. Our efforts will be focused on reducing inequalities and maximising potential, ensuring people are safe, and narrowing the gap in life chances by helping them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, increasing aspirations and remaining independent for as long as possible. In doing this we will support active civic engagement and cooperation.

Our Values

Our values will help us to achieve the Council's purpose and objectives. They will help to deliver our priorities and shape how we as a Council will work in our local and regional communities. Our values underpin the way we operate as an organisation. They influence our choices and our behaviours - they are the thread running through everything we do.

Honesty and integrity

For our residents and staff to respect and value the things that we do, we must act with honesty and integrity in all that we do. This includes being open and transparent in order to build trust and ensure accountability that drives improvement.

Fairness and Equality

We will take people's different needs into account valuing diversity and challenging discrimination. We will ensure, wherever we can, that our decisions protect those who experience discrimination or exclusion and whose needs are greatest.

Value for Money

We have to live within our means and, as guardians of public money, we must ensure that every penny spent is used effectively and efficiently, whether we deliver directly or commission externally to ensure good quality services.

Innovation and Collaboration

We will not be constrained by organisational barriers or traditional ways of working but proactively seek out new and innovative ideas and work in cooperation with others to create more seamless, cost effective and customer friendly services.

Listening and Responding

We will empower staff and communities, and listen to their views ensuring there is active, two way engagement that puts communities at the heart of all that we do.

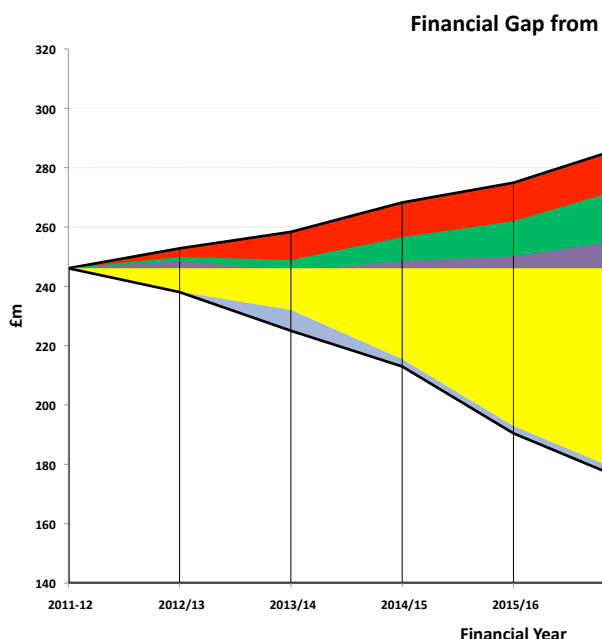
Finances

The Council, as recognised by our external auditors, has been well run financially across a number of years, continuing to balance the books and meet tough savings targets, whilst largely protecting front line services. Like other local authorities, however, we continue to face exceptional budgetary pressures, driven by increases in demand and unprecedented cuts to public services.

The Government's July 2015 Budget confirmed a continued commitment to austerity as well as a raft of measures in welfare and housing that are likely to push up demand still further. This has left Local Government struggling to find solutions to the new financial environment.

Reducing grant funding from central government, and rising costs, means a projected £86 million gap in finances, which needs to be closed over the next four years. The scale of this reduction means that radical changes need to be made. This is in addition to £100 million reductions we have already found in the previous 5 years to 2016/17.

The graph below illustrates the extent of our financial challenge.



The Borough of Walsall



Walsall has a rich history, with a market dating back to 1220, the 'town of a hundred trades' maintains a high degree of innovation amongst local companies and adds to the vibrancy of our communities.



The Borough benefits from extensive countryside particularly in the east of the borough incorporating attractive green spaces such as Barr Beacon, Pelsall Common and Brownhills Common; a number of attractive urban parks notably Walsall Arboretum with its new visitors centre, Willenhall Memorial Park and Palfrey Park.



Our central location within the UK provides access to a large market for companies and a wide range of job opportunities for residents, whilst the central position on the motorway network provides an opportunity to develop attractive employment locations to attract new investment and employment.



There has been significant investment in the borough, with over £376 million over the last 6 years in the town centre alone, including £11m Business and Sports Hub at Walsall College, £32m HQ for Jhoots Pharmacy, £12m cinema development at Walsall Waterfront and £7.8m Primark and Co-op project as part of redevelopment of the Old Square Shopping Centre.



Walsall had the fifth fastest growing economy in the country between 2009 -2013 for the value of goods and services it produces and the Council is committed to supporting businesses to thrive and helping local people into work.



Walsall has a number of successful visitor attractions, including the award winning New Art Gallery and Leather Museum.

Our Communities

Local Communities

Walsall is a town of many districts and many communities. We recognise and value the diversity across the town and in our local communities from Brownhills to Darlaston, Willenhall to Aldridge and Bloxwich to Caldmore and Pleck, to name just a small number.

The Council is just one of the organisations in the borough that has a role in meeting the needs of local people. We work collaboratively on a day to day basis with our partners to provide vital services to residents.

Whenever it makes sense, we will always look to work in partnership. True partnership is not activity for its own sake, it is a collective commitment to improve Walsall, grounded in the realisation that we can achieve more together than we can alone.

Our relationship with the voluntary and community sector is particularly important and will become increasingly so as we strive to design services around local need.

Walsall's role in the region

Walsall has an established track record of collaborating with partners across the Black Country and the West Midlands to achieve progress in areas of key strategic importance for both Walsall and the region, such as:

- Greater economic growth
- Better job prospects and skills training
- Access to funding opportunities
- Transport improvements

Walsall has always worked closely with its neighbouring Black Country local authorities through ABCA (The Association of Black Country Authorities), and this important relationship was further strengthened and formalised with the establishment of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which provides opportunities for business communities and the public sector to work effectively together to drive economic improvement. This led to a successful award of some

£160m of Local Growth Funding in 2015 aligned to outcomes in the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan. Walsall is enjoying significant investment from this fund over the coming years, including M6 Junction 10 improvements.

Regional collaboration has been taken further by the establishment of a West Midlands Combined Authority which Walsall signed up to in March 2016. As a core, constituent member of the WMCA alongside our Black Country LEP membership, Walsall is in a strong position to contribute to and benefit from the establishment of the Combined Authority and Government's proposed Devolution Deal, which, taken together with other funding and financing mechanisms, might see up to £8bn invested in improving the economic prospects of the West Midlands over the coming decades.

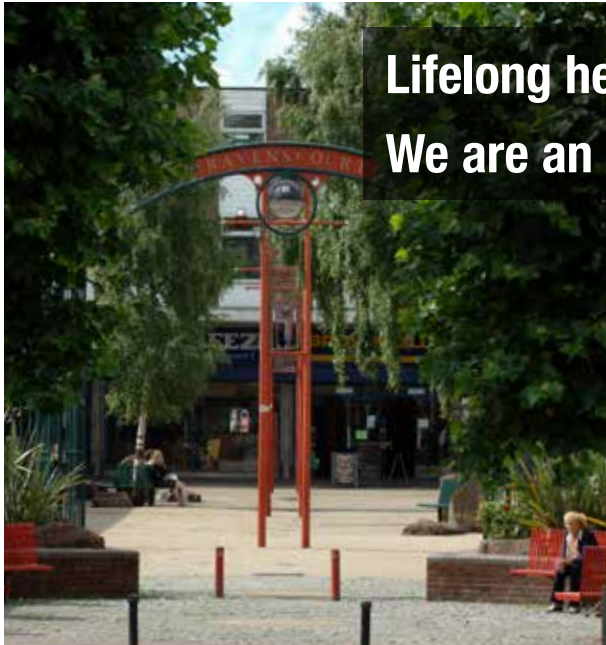
Some key policies and strategies:

- Walsall Strategic Economic Framework
- Black Country Strategic Economic Plan
- Walsall Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- WM Strategic Transport Plan – 'Movement for Growth'
- WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy

What will Walsall do to continue to play its part in the region?

- Continue to be a key player in the Black Country LEP, acting as accountable body for its Growth Funding
- Contribute to the work towards a formal WMCA devolution deal
- Develop projects and programmes for funding that will assist the economic improvement of the Borough
- Ensure that Walsall's best interests are strongly represented and investment enhances the towns, communities and neighbourhoods of the Borough as a whole

Our Priorities



Lifelong health, wealth and happiness
We are an efficient and effective council.

Sustainable change and improvement for all
Our communities are engaged and sustainable.



Safe, resilient and prospering communities
Staff are empowered and quick to adapt.

Lifelong health wealth and happiness

Creating jobs and improving educational achievements will both help residents ensure they have the right skills and confidence to find suitable, sustainable employment that helps them achieve greater financial stability and reduce reliance on short term high interest loan providers and the state.

Continuing to promote health and well being and enabling residents to find suitable opportunities to be active through the range of services provided will help people live independent, healthy and active lives.

Developing healthy and sustainable places and communities and continuing to tackle all inequalities will help to strengthen and empower our diverse communities.

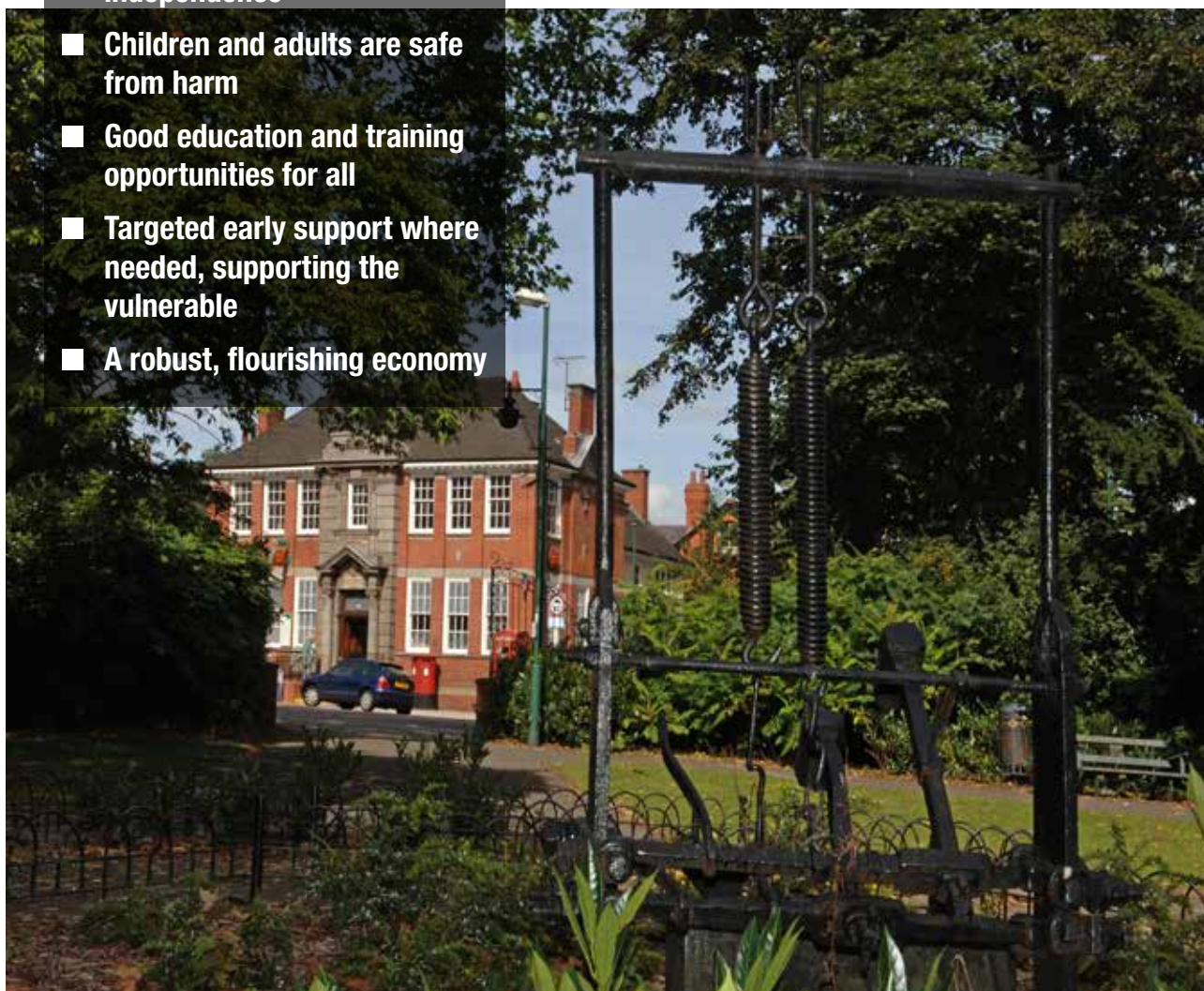
- Preventing and tackling ill-health, supporting greater independence

- Children and adults are safe from harm

- Good education and training opportunities for all

- Targeted early support where needed, supporting the vulnerable

- A robust, flourishing economy



Safe, resilient and prospering communities

Our communities represent the history of our borough and remain the focus of all that we do. Walsall has a proud history of being the 'town of a hundred trades' and the diversity in our communities is a continuation of our history with strong cohesion and pride evident across the borough.

Moving forward we will champion all development opportunities that will strengthen and build capacity within our communities, empower them and celebrate our diversity and cohesion.

To empower communities we need to listen and putting Walsall residents and businesses at the heart of decision making, more integrated work with all partners and identifying opportunities for greater integration of community assets will improve access to key services. A cooperative approach, tailored to local need and demand, can help us deliver more with less as existing assets and potential become fully utilised.

- **Our work with communities, businesses, voluntary organisations and in district centres is co-ordinated and they feel supported and championed**
- **Strengthening community pride and cohesion, empowering residents and celebrating our neighbourhoods.**
- **Creating more local and sustainable employment opportunities for local people; supporting business growth.**
- **Increased local volunteering and community managed facilities.**

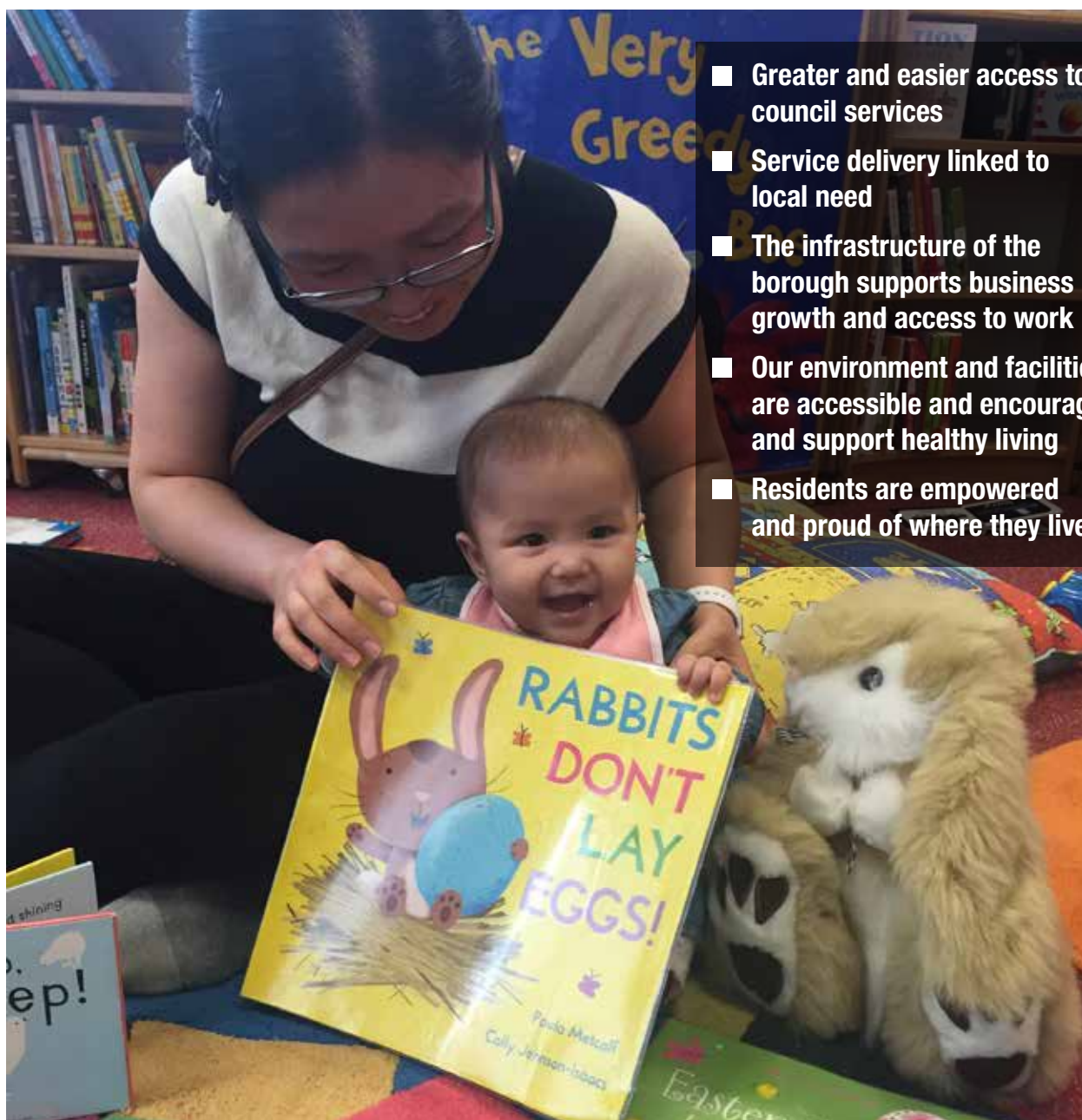


Sustainable change and improvement for all

The continuing financial challenge that the council faces means we have to look at what services we provide and how we deliver them whilst continuing to prioritise reducing inequalities.

We will seek ways of improving access to services for those that need them by maximising the potential in electronic access to services (digital platforms) and in our community assets.

We will work with and empower our local communities to keep the borough clean and tidy and maximise the use of parks and green spaces to support healthy living and protect the environment.



- Greater and easier access to council services
- Service delivery linked to local need
- The infrastructure of the borough supports business growth and access to work
- Our environment and facilities are accessible and encourage and support healthy living
- Residents are empowered and proud of where they live

Delivering this plan

This plan sets out our priorities and ambition for Walsall from a strategic view. It is supported by a comprehensive plan of activity and a number of performance measures that will be regularly monitored. It is important that we closely check how delivery of priorities is progressing so we can if necessary take corrective action.

Every member of cabinet plays an important role in championing these priorities on behalf of our communities and in monitoring delivery and performance.

The importance of the council's workforce in delivering the ambitions of this plan is recognised, as is their professionalism and commitment to delivering quality services in increasingly challenging financial circumstances. It is important therefore that we continue to identify and deliver efficiencies and that staff feel empowered in their roles so they can adapt to meet the needs of our communities.

If you would like this document in another language or format contact please contact

Change and Governance

Phone 01922 653732

Text 01922 654000

Email BusinessChangeProgrammeOffice@walsall.gov.uk

Change & Governance

Walsall Council

Council House

Lichfield Street

Walsall

WS1 1TP

Tel: 01922 653733

Email: BusinessChangeProgrammeOffice@walsall.gov.uk

Web: www.walsall.gov.uk