

Cabinet – 20 March 2024

Walsall Proud: Update and Next Stages of Transformation

Portfolio: Councillor Bird – Leader of the Council

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Council Wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 This report details the key outcomes, achievements and progress of the Council's Proud transformation journey and outlines the approach to service transformation going forward.
- 1.2 This report also marks the formal closure of the Council's strategic partnership and contract with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

2. Summary

- 2.1 In October 2018, Cabinet approved the establishment of the Walsall Proud Programme (WPP) framework with the aim of transforming the way the Council works and establishing the three key indicators known as Proud Promises:

- Achieving better outcomes and customer experience
- Increasing staff satisfaction and engagement
- Improving service efficiency and performance

The Council engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as a strategic partner to provide transformation expertise, resource capacity and skills transfer to support the programme delivery.

- 2.2 The Proud Programme ran from 2019 to 2022. In the March 2022 report to Cabinet, it was agreed that the Proud transformation work should no longer be defined as a "Programme" with a defined start and end, Cabinet agreed that it should become embedded into the Council's ways of working through a culture of continuous improvement with a mature mechanism for delivering change.
- 2.3 The Council has delivered significant transformational change, as measured against the three Proud Promises, and has matured its capability and capacity

to deliver effective organisational change through seven formal workstreams, ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place (i.e. Workstream Steering Groups, clear Roles and Responsibilities, a Transformation and Finance Group and Proud Board).

- 2.4 This report updates Cabinet on the following three areas:
- Sets out the outcomes and benefits achieved so far against the three Proud Promises and the investment made.
 - Sets out the areas of work that are still in progress and consideration as to how these will be taken forward.
 - Explains the approach to delivering future transformation and change ensuring alignment to the Council Plan.

3. Recommendations

This report recommends that Cabinet note:

- 3.1 The positive progress of the Council's transformation journey over the past 5 years and recognises the successful outcomes which have been delivered.
- 3.2 That the contract with PwC has now come to an end.
- 3.3 The approach for the next stages of Walsall's transformation work.

4. Report detail - know

4.1 Context

- 4.1.1 Local government will continue to have significant budget pressures over the coming years. The need to continuously improve and transform remains critically important to the Medium-Term Financial Outlook (MTFO) for the Council to maintain service delivery to residents and customers. Alongside budgetary savings considerations, as part of the next phase of transformation work, the Council will incorporate the feedback from:

- The recent LGA Peer Challenge
- The refresh of The Council Plan
- Resident feedback
- Employee survey and action plan
- Remaining transformational workstream activity
- We Are Walsall 2040

With the resources and skills the Council developed over the past 5 years, there is opportunity for the next phase of transformation and change to be managed internally using staff skills and capability.

- 4.1.2 Following on from March 2022 Cabinet report (Walsall Proud Programme: Next stages of Proud) and the LGA Peer Review feedback from March 2023, it is evident that the Council has developed a culture of improvement. This has

recently been recognised in the Council's nomination for 'Most Improved Council' at the LGC 2024 awards. The Council has maintained momentum on delivery of the Proud promises, despite rapidly changing its ways of working to address the immense challenges the Covid-19 pandemic presented. Outlined below are key achievements against each Proud Promise and the suggested next steps to continue this good progress.

Outcomes and Benefits Achieved

4.1.3 Proud Promise 1: Improve Outcomes and Customer Experience

- 73% overall Customer satisfaction – up from 67% in 2018, as demonstrated through a customer e-survey carried out in late 2023.



- Customer Strategy launched in December 2021
- Walsall Connected provision launched - This moves the Council away from the previous model of one front door into the Civic Centre and provides residents access to advice and support in a convenient local location through a partnership of 28 local 'Walsall Connected' centres. This offers a great opportunity for residents to access signposting to other beneficial services through our partners.



- Walsall Connected aims to help residents to become more confident in the use of the internet and improve the ability for residents to self-serve digitally.

- Since its inception Walsall Connected has achieved the following:



- The Council's Centralised Customer Experience Centre established.



- Digital self-service Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for residents was introduced in March 22. It provides online access for residents to request, book and pay for a range of 'Clean and Green' services. It has been updated with improvements based on employee and resident feedback – the new functionality went live in February 2024. As part of the Customer Strategy, this has been supported by a new telephony system and new web site.



- This has realised a 50% channel shift in customer behaviour to digital self-service for this group of services.



25,000
MyWalsall
online accounts
created to date



50,000
transactions have
been delivered
digitally



4.1.4 Proud Promise 2: Improve Employee Satisfaction & Engagement

- Recent Employee Surveys demonstrated that staff engagement levels have increased from 57% in 2017 to 64% in 2023 (+7%) – individual measures are outlined in Table 1 below.
- Increased staff engagement is also evident in the employee survey response rate. Participation increased from 44% in 2021 to 53% in 2023.
- Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy and its supporting action plan was launched in 2023 – it outlines 5 key pillars to attract, develop and retain staff within the Council:
 1. Supporting transformation, flexibility, change and innovation.
 2. Live our Values.
 3. Maximise leadership and management capability.
 4. Developing a skilled, flexible, and motivated workforce that puts the customer first.
 5. Planning for the workforce of the future.
- Increased communication with the workforce through a refresh of Inside Walsall (staff intranet), conducting biennial employee surveys, annual staff recognition awards and regular communication updates from the Chief Executive to all staff.
- Leadership and training offer strengthened to develop all staff through the provision of connected working coaching and a wide array of courses available through OneSource.
- Employee forums and champions networks established to support employees on a range of key issues – examples include Workforce Equalities Board, Mental Health First Aiders, Menopause Champions, Digital Champions, and Change Champions.
- Delivered management and leadership capacity – support for Directors and Senior Management Groups through dedicated spaces for collaboration, regular meetings, and actions.
- New Operating Model for IT (Digital and Technology Services – DaTS) service provision providing more strategic delivery of digital developments and technologies.
- Enabling and Support Services (ESS) – business partnering implemented across HR, Finance and DaTS to support the business to define its prioritisation and approach to change.

Table 1: Employee Survey 2023 Engagement Measures

| Contributing measures and questions | 2017 scores (Strongly agree / agree) | 2023 scores (Strongly agree / agree) | Change (2017 to 2023) |
|--|---|---|--------------------------|
| I am proud when I tell others I work for Walsall Council | 49% | 59% | +10 |
| I would recommend Walsall Council as a great place to work | 37% | 56% | +19 |
| Overall, I am satisfied with my current job | 58% | 71% | +13 |
| I am not thinking of leaving Walsall Council in the next 12 months | 62% | 70% | +8 |
| Walsall Council inspires me to do the best in my job | 42% | 46% | +4 |
| I have a positive future ahead of me at Walsall Council | 35% | 57% | +22 |

4.1.5 Proud Promise 3: Improve Service Efficiency and Performance

- A total of £53.76m of savings has been delivered as at the end of 2023/24. Taking into account a forecast carry-forward of £5.13m of undelivered savings from 2023/24 along with £20.10m of new savings in 2024/25, this equates to a total of £78.99m.

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Savings delivered in 2023/24 | £53.76m |
| Carry forward of undelivered savings from 2023/24 | £5.13m |
| New savings planned for 2024/25 | £20.10m |
| Total savings | £78.99m |

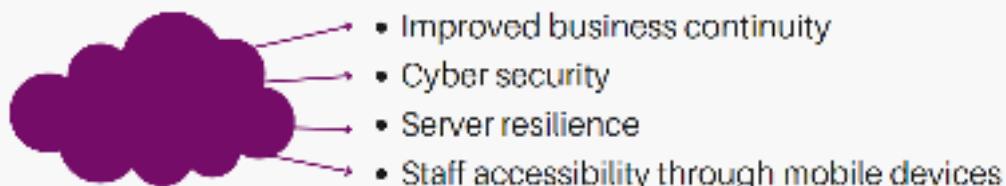
(Further information in section 4.4 – Financial management)

- Technology investment and productivity tools to help staff do their work – The OneSource system implemented to automate and improve processes around financial, procurement and people management.

- Combining up-to-date technology provision for staff the mobile computer tablets and Microsoft cloud based Office products they use have enabled staff to work effectively whether in the office or remotely out in the community.
- Rapid Process Improvements designed to leverage existing technology – Examples include:



- All IT systems have been reviewed, some obsolete systems were decommissioned, saving contract and licencing costs other significant IT systems have been migrated into the Cloud, providing:



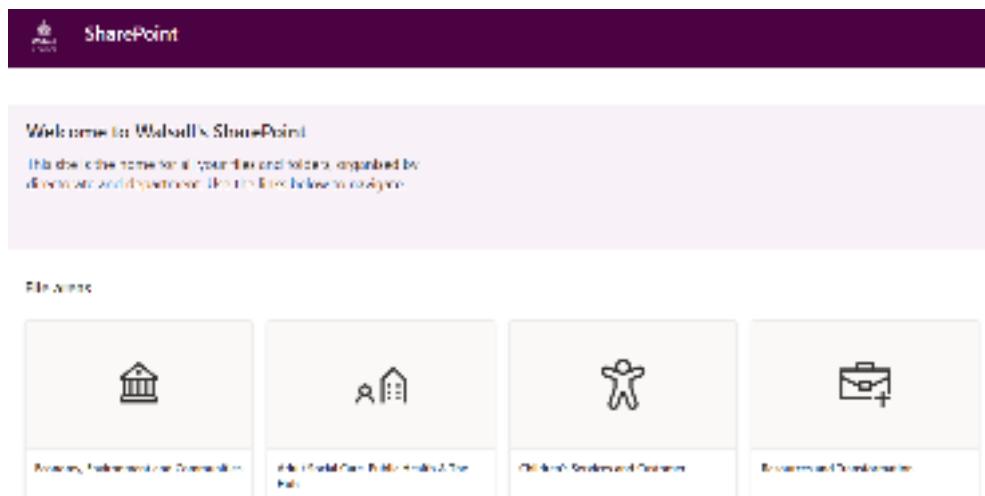
- Utilisation of Microsoft products has supported the Council through Covid. MS Office 365 and Teams services has supported remote, and hybrid working, maintaining service delivery and enabled the internal telephony system to be decommissioned.



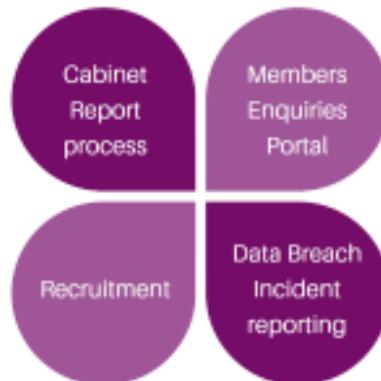
- Supporting improved document storage and management has introduced paperless records management, through scanning and digitising records. This has:



- Electronic document management has been transformed through the introduction of MS SharePoint as a structured repository for digital records. This advancement will support future initiatives and tools such as Artificial Intelligence.

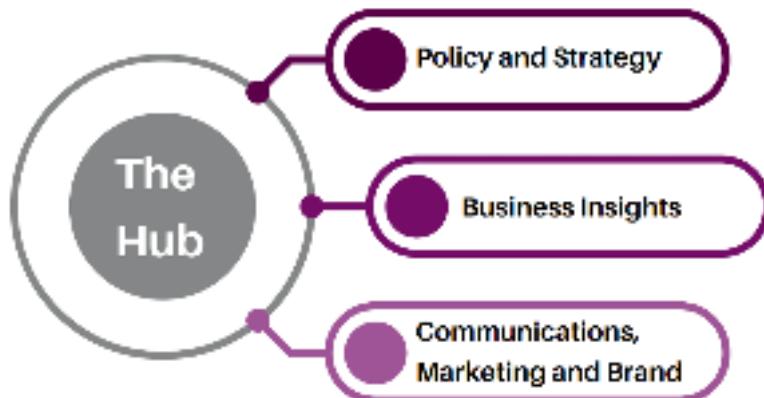


- Several process design initiatives have been developed to help automate and simplify processes:



- Strategic Service Planning and Budgeting

- Council Hub established with 3 Services to encourage insight driven decision making:



- Driven by the Proud transformation the Council is also taking a more commercial approach to cost reduction and income generation. The delivery of opportunities identified by this approach are forecast to generate around £10m by the end of 2023/24. Opportunities include:

- Electric vehicle charging points, generating £226,000 through the Local EV Infrastructure levy.
- Recruitment agency review delivering up £0.6m per year.
- Income from renting out office space £100,000 in 2023/24.
- Outdoor advertising on council-owned land and assets.
- Virtual gym Instructors.

Next Stages of Transformation

- 4.1.6 The Council will leverage the achievements outlined above to help deliver efficiencies and continuously improve service delivery in a sustainable way. The LGA Peer review (2023) recognised the great effort that has gone into transforming the Council over the past five years and made a key recommendation to set out a clear scope for the next stages of transformation aligned to wider Council outcomes and We are Walsall 2040. Alongside delivering on the outcomes outlined in WAW2040, it is good practice to review and align transformation priorities to ensure they remain fit for purpose and provide value for money for residents.
- 4.1.7 The next stage of Walsall's transformation should align to the strategic objectives and outcomes from the Council Plan and the MTFO. Key strategic themes will help to define the priorities which the transformation work should address. A holistic approach to achieve a 'One Council' design will also show

how initiatives relate and consider interdependencies. Applying the learning from the work to date will aid the Council in the design of future cross cutting initiatives.

4.1.8 The approach to designing the next stages of transformation is outlined below. This sets out the areas of work that are still in progress and how these will be taken forward alongside any refreshed or new priorities for transformation across the Council.

- **Proud Identity** – Proud has been associated with the Council's transformation since the launch of the programme. In recent years the Proud Promises and the Proud brand have become embedded into the identity of the Council. The identity will remain beyond the closure of the initial programme and the launch of the next phase of transformation, continuing to position the Council as a Walsall organisation that is Proud of our past, our present and for our future.
- **Scope** – The scope of some of the existing workstreams has reduced as successful delivery has been achieved. As progress continues to be made against these workstreams, some have created new initiatives through mandates and business cases and others have delivered their outputs and moved closer to business as usual and continuous improvement. A review of the status of the workstreams is currently being undertaken concurrent to defining the next stages of Walsall's transformation journey. The next stages of transformation will be aligned to the Council vision and goals through the refreshed Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Outlook and Directorate and Service area delivery plans. Transformation will be focussed on addressing those emerging areas of demand and cost pressures within services e.g. Adults & Childrens Social Care and ensuring that the Council is well equipped to handle regeneration of the borough at pace.
- **Transformation Measures** – Use data and insights to measure progress against outcomes. Leveraging the skills within the Business Insights function and the approach to analysing service design, will inform evidence-based business cases. The Proud Promises have targets which need to be revised and set. Alongside these refreshed targets, the Council values (PLATE) will be refreshed to reflect the Council's refreshed workforce and organisational development strategies.
- **Service Redesign and Improvements** – Walsall is developing a data driven approach to service redesign to address consistent and effective customer engagement (i.e. the Front Door into the Council) and maintain appropriate service delivery. Whilst moving to the next iteration of transformation there is merit in applying existing tools and techniques, to do full end-to-end design, so moving into the back-office area and designing digital processes which can be automated and require little or no intervention. This provides the opportunity to make the biggest impact on service design and efficiencies. Small scale service improvement work should continue through existing leadership arrangements. True transformational activity is defined as cross cutting change which impacts organisational structures, IT systems and processes, cultures, and is potentially high risk/high reward impacting the way the business operates.

- **Enabling and Support Services** – transformational activity by its nature has a demand for the skills and expertise provided by support services functions such as HR, Finance, DaTS and Legal. In order to support the internal support services and prevent a bottleneck due to an uncoordinated approach to prioritising the volume of change requests, it is important that capacity requirements are planned as initiatives are being designed so that the necessary capacity and capability is available.
- **Programme/Project delivery and assurance** – The Transformation and Change function developed the Proud Programme Management Office (PMO) which will continue to provide programme and change management to the existing workstreams, and any new/refreshed workstreams which support the Proud governance reporting. The Proud PMO provides assurance and governance to support the current 7 work streams, Steering Groups and Boards and Programme and Project Management capacity to aid Proud projects to deliver their outcomes. The Proud PMO is maturing well and is well placed to transition into a Corporate PMO Centre of Excellence to support a revised set of transformation programmes. A piece of work is currently underway to review the capacity of change and project resources across the Council. The PMO will ensure utilisation of a standard programme management framework to coordinate multiple initiatives and ensure their alignment to the overall Council plan delivery.
- **Lessons Learned and Post Implementation Reviews** – Capturing lessons learned is a key element of any change work. The Council will take lessons learned from the transformation work delivered to date and use the maturing internal change and programme management capability to support the next stage. Post Implementation Reviews are also good practice to assess the ongoing outcomes and benefits of change and will be included in good governance arrangements going forward.
- **Governance and oversight** – building on the learning from governance and assurance currently in place to enhance the next stages of transformation.

4.2 *Council Plan priorities*

- 4.2.1 Proud Programme and Continuous Improvement approach has been fundamental to the successful delivery of the Council's priorities and the next stages of transformation will enable delivery of a refreshed Council plan moving forward. During the last five years of transformation several refreshed strategies and actions plans were launched to support delivery of the Council Plan and improve outcomes for residents, these include the Customer Experience Strategy, The Organisational Development Strategy, Workforce Strategy and Digital Strategy.
- 4.2.2 The next stages of transformation are aligned to the planning and process in place to design and develop the next Council Plan later in 2024. This ensures that the new Council Plan will capture the ongoing high-level improvement journey of the Council and articulate to residents and staff how outcomes will

continue to be achieved through transformation that are also aligned to We are Walsall 2040 ambitions.

4.3 *Risk management*

- 4.3.1 Risks are managed through the Council's current Risk Management Approach, with strategic risks regularly reviewed by CMT. Through the governance of the Proud work so far, risks and issues are reviewed by Steering Groups and escalated to Proud Board where necessary. This is an effective way of defining and managing risks and will be incorporated into the next stages.

4.4 *Financial implications*

- 4.4.1 In December 2018, Cabinet agreed a range of benefits and a number of financial parameters in relation to the making of investment and delivery of benefits to the Programme. The original business case identified that by transforming ways of working, the Council could achieve between £39.2m low-level to £80.9m high-level of recurring benefit (saving), this being dependent on the level of ambition and appetite for change in each of the identified opportunity areas. The high-level benefit was subsequently amended to £70.3m by Cabinet in September 2020 following a review of addressable spend which resulted in spend on PFI's and schools being marked as out of scope. The low-level benefit was unadjusted.
- 4.4.2 In order to deliver the financial savings of the potential identified above, there was a need to incur one-off revenue and capital investment. In December 2018, Cabinet approved the following two financial parameters:
- A total investment cost to benefit ratio of 1:3 (i.e. for every one-off £1 invested - inclusive of contract value and all other investment - at least £3 recurring benefit would be delivered which could be used to support the Council's financial position or be reinvested into services).
 - In year financial benefits will exceed the in-year investment and therefore finance itself, without placing any strain in any particular year on the medium-term financial plan.
- 4.4.3 Within the above total investment cost ratio, total one-off revenue and capital investment was therefore capped at £26.1m. Because the baseline opportunities had changed, an amended ratio of 1:2.5 was agreed in September 2020 i.e., for every £1 invested, savings of £2.50 would accrue, resulting in a revised cap of £28.1m (against the revised baseline high level benefit of £70.3m).
- 4.4.4 During 2021 and 2022, the global pandemic had a significant impact on the Council's operations, its finances and on delivery of savings, as resource and capacity were diverted to manage the impact of Covid-19. As a result, there were savings delivery delays experienced across the board. Whilst the Council was confident that savings would be delivered of the scale outlined, it was evident that the original timelines would be extended, with a resulting impact on investment and the financial parameters originally agreed.

4.4.5 In March 2022 Cabinet approved the decision to remove the existing financial parameters and replace with an indicator that better reflects the returns delivered on that investment. For instance, payback of the investment is secured within a certain number of years, the exact payback period being dependent on the project. A positive return on investment would be required for the programme. This return-on-investment principle to be built into investment business cases and approved through the Transformation & Finance Group as part of the Proud governance arrangements.

4.4.6 As at the end of 2022/23 £39.12m of benefits had been delivered. £12.65m is forecast for delivery by 31 March 2024 and a further £1.99m of proposals have been identified which Cabinet have decided not to implement. This gives a total of £53.76m as at the end of 2023/24. Taking into account a forecast carry forward of £5.13m of undelivered savings from 2023/24 along with £20.10m of new savings in 2024/25, this equates to a total of £78.99m, therefore the target will have been met and exceeded by the end of 2024/25 (subject to the full delivery of savings in 2024/25).

4.4.7 Investment to 31 March 2024 is forecast at £30.32m, representing an investment cost to benefit ratio of just under 1:1.8. Some further costs will be due for 2024/25. Whilst this does not achieve the targeted 1:2.5 ratio, it is understood that in many cases investment is required up front to deliver core infrastructure such as technology systems detailed below, additional core technology requirements have been implemented which will support future benefit delivery, and a number of efficiency benefits may not be seen until future financial years. Additionally, as indicated above, some additional investment was required to ensure delivery of savings delayed due to the impact of the pandemic, which has been widely reported. This impact was on both resource in terms of timescales being extended and inflationary cost changes. Further, additional core technology requirements have been implemented which will support future benefit delivery.

4.4.8 Investment includes:

- Capital expenditure to fund the technology roadmap, including delivering the core enabling digital platforms to support customer access management improvements, enabling a single view of the customer, improve their experience, and introduce efficiencies in our ways of interacting with them such as customer query workflow; a telephony platform; a member portal; a business intelligence platform, with configuration and integration of the technology stack to pull data from multiple sources and make accessible dash-boarding visualisations etc.
- Work with our partner PwC, including provision of support for the programme by a PwC core team; joint development of blueprints for service redesigns; income generation and cost recovery and commercialisation opportunities; development of the Hub; reducing third party spend and improving the ‘Procure to Pay’ process and systems; support to the developing technology roadmap, etc.

- Investment on other one-off costs such as external support to provide additional capacity and specialist capability to support service transformation plans, with appropriate knowledge transfer to ensure sustainability of provision – such as business analysts, coaching services, etc – and additional internal and backfilling costs in support services to the programme and work streams.

4.4.9 Moving forward, the Council will need to continue to identify savings beyond the scope of the current transformation programme, as Government funding changes and increasing demand and cost pressures will continue to put pressure on Council finances. As such, it is acknowledged that further one-off investment will be also required to deliver future change in ways of working – examples include investment in short term capacity, change skills and further technology. These investment requirements will become clearer as the next stages of transformation develop and follow appropriate governance routes for approval.

4.5 Legal implications

4.5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report – where applicable, all processes and procedures have been adhered to throughout the delivery of Proud.

4.6 Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report – Cabinet is asked to note that the PwC contract came to an end in December 2023. During the next stages of transformation - any subsequent transformation investment will adhere to procurement policies and guidelines and follow appropriate governance to ensure value for money.

4.7 Property implications

4.7.1 There are no direct property implications arising from this report – any property implications within the next stages of transformation will adhere to the appropriate governance framework and align with the Council's overall strategic asset plan.

4.8 Health and wellbeing implications

4.8.1 Achieving the Proud promises of increasing customer satisfaction and increasing staff engagement has a direct positive impact on the health and wellbeing of both employees and residents. Any implications on resident or staff health and wellbeing have been considered during formal approval for implementation of the Proud workstreams and will continue to be prioritised through ongoing monitoring and governance during the next stages of transformation.

4.9 Reducing Inequalities

4.9.1 Equalities impact assessments have been produced and adhered to where applicable during the delivery of the programme and workstreams. The programme aims to enable delivery of the Council's vision to ensure inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised through initiatives such as increasing options for customers to access Council services or increasing digital literacy amongst residents.

4.10 Staffing implications

4.10.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising as a result of this report – during the delivery of Proud workstreams, refreshed organisational structures and ways of working were established. Any implications on staff followed the appropriate governance route and policies.

4.11 Climate Impact

4.11.1 There are no direct climate impacts arising from this report. During the implementation of new ways of working, climate impacts were considered e.g. initiatives such as hybrid working and printing reduction to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

4.12 Consultation

4.12.1 Consultation, listening and engagement with both employees and residents has been undertaken in line with appropriate business need, legislation, and processes. Consultation, listening and engagement has been meaningful, and adjustments made to take feedback into account, such as the implementation of the Hub (Business Insight, Strategy and Policy and communication functions) or resident consultation on the customer experience strategy. The next stages of transformation will ensure adherence to fair and meaningful consultation continues.

5. Decide

5.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse and acknowledge:

- The contents of this report as a positive update on the progress of the Council's transformation journey over the past 5 years and recognise the successful outcomes which have been delivered.
- The contract with PwC has now come to an end.
- Endorse the approach for the next stages of Walsall's transformation work to continue delivery of benefits to residents and employees.

6. Respond

6.1 The next stages of transformation will be aligned to the Council plan vision and budget setting process – the internal capability built within the Hub and Digital and transformation will continue to enable delivery of benefits.

7. Review

- 7.1 Regular progress updates will be provided to CMT and Cabinet on the ongoing progress of transformation linked to the Council plan and wider budget reporting and will remain in line with internal governance monitoring.

Appendices

Background papers

- 24 October 2018 Cabinet - Walsall Proud Programme
12 December 2018 Cabinet - Walsall Proud Programme Contract Award
16 June 2021 Cabinet – Resetting the Council through Proud
16 March 2022 Cabinet - Walsall Proud Programme: Next Stages of Proud
22 March 2023 Cabinet - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Findings and Action Plan

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Signed

Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director – Resources
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20 March 2024



Signed

Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council

20 March 2024