



**Walsall** Council

***NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE  
SERVICE SUMMARIES***

## SPORT & LEISURE MANAGEMENT

- **How is spend prioritised**

There is little discretion over the prioritisation of spend. The ongoing operation of the leisure centres requires an absolute minimum level of operational staffing with which to operate safely over a seven day, 7.30am – 10.00pm period. In addition, a degree of consumable items that have to be replaced in the short term (balls, floats, rackets), medium term; five a side posts, inflatable structures, computer hardware or the long term; gymnastics equipment, squash court floors, gym equipment and so on. At any one time there are a number of items reaching the end of their life and the challenge is to replace those items required to maintain the service to the minimum standard required to retain customers and to cease services we cannot afford to deliver with the minimum of customer dissatisfaction. In addition to equipment the service carries the liability for internal building related issues such as tiling, lighting, decoration minor building repairs and all pool plant equipment all of which requires ongoing repair / replacement.

- **Minimum standards**

In addition to the National Indicator **NI8**: Percentage of adult population who participate in sport, the Council also has the corporate pledges to: *“... increase the number of people carrying out regular physical activity”* and *“... actively promote opportunities for volunteering in Walsall ...”*

Standards are set based on customer feedback and attendances, Health & Safety legislation and market competition. There are numerous external quality schemes we follow which set standards above the minimum, Charter Mark, QUEST (Bloxwich Leisure Centre) STA mark, sunbed association RLSS Approved Training Centres. Any or all of these could be dropped or replaced with alternatives standards. If the quality of the service is not to be diminished the alternative is the availability of the service and defining the minimum standards in terms of availability of service which translates into opening hours of facilities.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

The results of the last BV household survey for residents satisfaction with sports facilities (BV119a) gave a score of 56% in 2006 compared with 46% in 2003 – a 10 % increase. The national average for metropolitan authorities was 55%.

- **What is already being spent and where**

All expenditure is closely controlled to only allow essential items as described earlier. The budgets are used across cost centres to allow for essential items to be purchased / repaired as required to maintain the service.

- **Areas of concern**

The budget saving measures of recent years noticeably the £170,000 in income target effective from 2007/8 has created a deficit situation which has greatly increased pressure on the service across all budget heads. Additional savings elsewhere within Leisure & Culture in 2007 has also reduced finance that hitherto been available to supplement the repairs and maintenance budget ~ historically used to compensate for unexpected service demands not covered by Property Services landlord budgets.

- **Challenges**

The leisure centres are of differing ages and quality of provision. The fees and charges have gradually increased with limited ability to invest in the service to improve the quality to keep pace with customer expectations. There is a gradual reduction in swimming as an activity and rising alternatives to the leisure centre especially the proliferation of in home alternatives for entertainment via new media. The physical activity rate amongst Walsall adults is amongst the lowest in the country (16.4% against a national rate of 22%) creating a difficult market to engage with additional customers.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

It is generally accepted that positive engagement with the community in active leisure can have a positive effect in raising self esteem and with it aspirations thereby reducing antisocial behaviour. It is also at the very least a diversionary activity. In addition, services offered by Sport & Leisure Management have been given a high profile case through the recent Olympic successes as well as being a major contributor to personal activity, health (and inequalities), well-being, life expectancy, play, sport in general, and the positive social activity that is a central part.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

- **How is spend prioritised**

Council budget partially pays for small development team's salaries. The team develop creative projects with communities as commissioned and prioritised by external strategic partners and organisations, council departments or fundraised through grants and awards.

- **Minimum standards**

All projects are of a high standard designed to address the need for change with local communities using the most accessible creative participatory methods.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LA's**

2007/08 CDT involved 4500 local people in participatory activities with audiences of over 16,000. CDT bring in income of nearly three times the allocated budget from the Council. CDT assists and supports numerous local communities and organisations in obtaining funding, grants and awards.

CDT provide local involvement and creative consultation for; Regeneration, Children's Services, Social Care, Leisure & Culture, and Borough wide strategic agencies e.g. Walsall NHS

CDT working practices are used as models of good practice for Black Country and regional LA's

- **What is already being spent and where**

£189,000 Council budget spent on salaries. Income £500k spent on project work with groups borough wide.

- **Areas of concern**

Any reduction in budget will reduce CDT capacity to maintain the current level of income generation.

- **Challenges**

Recognition of CDT role as an effective catalyst and conduit for productive dialogue between services and communities. Developing a wider recognition of high value for money for delivery of consultation.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

Work covers health, well being, community cohesion, youth and young people, diverse or disadvantaged communities, looked after, pride in Walsall/ involvement in regeneration local area, equalities, work/life skills.

## ELECTORAL SERVICES

- **How is spend prioritised**

In 2009 there is the European Parliamentary election and the possibility of a UK general election. The funding formula for these is being changed to a per head basis so it may mean that the government grant may not cover all costs incurred. Priority of spending will be any of the above elections, the annual registration canvass, upgrading the software for the scrutiny of postal votes (to an automatic system) and replacement of IT hardware (undertaken in the year there is no council election).

- **Minimum standards**

The Electoral Commission (EC) has set 10 performance standards for electoral registration. It is not planned to allocate resources to two of them, being a public awareness strategy and working with partners to promote electoral participation. The EC is currently consulting on 10 performance standards for elections (to come into effect in time for the European election).

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

The EC has commenced gathering financial data on the cost of electoral registration and elections across all council's but nothing is yet available for any comparative analysis

- **What is already being spent and where**

N/A

- **Areas of concern (over the next 3-4 years)**

Potential change;

- of election day from a Thursday to a weekend.
- involving more voting options (eg, voting anywhere anytime)
- from household to individual registration.
- in lowering the age of voting from 18 to 16 years.

Increased workload from the Ministry of Justice's implementation of its Coordinated On-Line Register of Electors project

Inflationary costs for services and supplies (internal as well as external) greater than budget and election day staff costs for the European and UK general elections setting the benchmark.

Meeting the 18-20 EC's performance standards, which require more pro-active work in registration.

- **Challenges**

Staffing on election day, especially if it changes to a weekend.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

N/A

## CATERING SERVICE

- **How is spend prioritised**

To ensure we meet Government nutritional standards for school meals

Health and safety – eg repairs and maintenance of kitchen equipment, gas servicing

Food safety – meet legislative requirements & Environmental Health advice

Training – particularly legislative requirements for health and safety, nutritional standards and food safety

- **Minimum standards**

Nutritional Standards

Health and safety – particularly in relation to gas & electrical kitchen equip, fire etc

Food safety

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

APSE benchmarking rates us as one of the best value for money in our comparison group.

Total cost per meal in Walsall is £2.10, average total cost per meal in comparator group is £2.23.

Food cost per meal in Walsall is 62p. Average in group is 62p

- **What is already being spent and where**

See priorities above.

- **Areas of concern**

Rising food costs – projected to be 10% this year

Falling uptake as economic situation bites and children revert to packed lunches

- **Challenges**

Balancing the budget

Keeping meal numbers stable

Meeting nutritional standards

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

Children who stay on site and have a school meal will not be in the surrounding area potentially committing anti social behaviour.

Research shows good nutrition has a positive impact on children's behaviour

## SPORT & LEISURE DEVELOPMENT

- **How is spend prioritised**

Our spend is focused around our 4 service priorities: increasing activity, establishing our Community Sports Network, improving access and raising quality. These directly link to the Corporate Priorities. Savings have been made over the last 2 years and these have cut the areas of the operation with the least impact on the above priorities. No “new” mainstream funding to prioritise for the last two years. The service has however been able to expand (more than doubled) over the past two years based solely on external funding and this spend is prioritised based on the funder’s requirements.

- **Minimum standards**

There are no statutory minimum standards for sport & recreation however we directly impact on a range of National Indicators included in the LAA – specifically: **NI5**: Overall / general satisfaction with local area; **NI8**: Percentage of adult population who participate in sport (directly responsible for this indicator); **NI56**: Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6; **NI110**: Young people’s participation in positive activities. The Council also has the corporate pledges to: “... *increase the number of people carrying out regular physical activity*” and “... *actively promote opportunities for volunteering in Walsall ...*”

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

There are no quantitative performance measures for our service that are shared across authorities. Sports development means vastly different things to different authorities. Our service comprises health & fitness, sports development, capital projects, outdoor pursuits, residential outdoor education, behaviour improvement, study support and narrowboats – most of which wouldn’t be sports development remit elsewhere. Only real comparator is Quest quality score (external quality accreditation) for which we are by far the best performing Black Country authority and in the top 25% nationally.

- **What is already being spent and where**

Sports Development (inc. office costs, central costs, management & admin) £242,100  
Health & Fitness £123,400  
Behavioural Improvement £32,500  
Outdoor Adventure £123,100  
Sports Coaching £105,100  
Bryntysilio £389,500

- **Areas of concern**

Condition of the main building at Bryntysilio – significantly dilapidated and required significant investment if we are to be more vigorous in chasing income (as planned).

- **Challenges**

Relationship with schools – much of our service exists to service schools for which they do not pay the full cost – essentially Neighbourhoods subsidising Children’s Services. If we increase our charges schools will simply opt-out (as evidenced with school swimming) without a stronger steer from CS.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

Massive links – provision of diversionary / positive activities and alternative curricular programmes. This service was subject to cuts last year and is the most vulnerable this year however, on the positive side however, services offered by Sport & Leisure Development have been given a high profile case through the recent Olympic successes as well as being a major contributor to personal activity, health (and inequalities), well-being, life expectancy, play, sport in general, and the positive social activity that is a central part.

## GREEN SPACES

- **How is spend prioritised**

Spend is prioritised against the aims and objectives outlined within the Council's Green Spaces Strategy and Leisure & Culture Service Plan, the Allotments Strategy and Play Strategy. Expenditure is spread across the 25 premier parks & 500 areas of open space; overall 1,200 hectares of managed open space, a planned programme of improvement projects, countryside, buildings maintenance & infrastructure, 36 allotment sites and 80+ play, youth & games areas. High profile "Green Flag" awards in premier parks is also a priority.

- **Minimum standards**

Apart from allotments which do have to be provided, the absolute minimum level of service would be to have nothing. Parks could be closed, or just left open and allowed to become overgrown. This would however be unacceptable in particular from the council's landlord responsibility. Grass cutting frequencies could be reduced, countryside and open space can be allowed to become "meadows" and natural habitat; although this is often easily noticed and disliked by residents. Specialised provision, which is often expensive, could cease ~ cricket pitches, bowls greens and The Grange golf course. The bottom line is that once the Council has the land, it is obligated to manage it properly and safely.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

It is almost impossible to compare against other local authorities as few have comparable facilities either in numbers of parks, play areas, hectares etc. plus differing accountancy allocations of central costs.

- **What is already being spent and where**

Green Spaces is currently forecast to spend £4,951,600 with anticipated income of £220,200, a net budget of £4,731,400. £1.8m is paid to Streetpride for their work within parks and associated areas. All assets within Green Spaces are included within the net budget including maintenance of expensive items such as bowls greens (£5,000 each pa) and cricket pitches.

- **Areas of concern**

One of the Council's pledges is to "*... ensure more parks staff are present and visible in public places*". In addition is the pressure of previous year's budget reductions which, through efficiencies, have led to the "same being delivered for less". In the August Stage 1 Resource Pack, the strategies have been summarised down to 30+ priorities. Further additional cuts will now have to be met through a reduction in service delivery and quality. Within the service are an estimated 60,000 trees. A tree management system is presently being introduced to meet our safety obligations.

- **Challenges**

Delivering even the same with the same is considered an extremely difficult proposition. The current staff restructure and re-organisation, aimed at improving standards, increasing staff visibility, delivering an enforcement capability, is currently on hold due to Pay & Grading. Amalgamation of part of the Streetpride grounds maintenance team that works in parks into Green Spaces is also outstanding. Tight deadlines are on target to submit the application by March 31<sup>st</sup> to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £4.8m towards the £8m Arboretum modernisation scheme.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

Anti social behaviour is a double edged issue for green spaces. On the negative side it suffers from the effects of vandalism, alcohol, drugs, litter, graffiti, burnt out vehicles, fly tipping and poor behaviour. Costs to the service over the past year are £90,000. This links into a second Council pledge to "*... increase our actions to tackle graffiti, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping*". On the positive side however, green spaces are a major contributor to personal activity, nature, health, well-being, play, sport (football, cricket, bowls), heritage (buildings & bonfires), events and positive social activity.

**COLLEGE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION**  
*(This service is externally funded)*

- **How is spend prioritised**

Spend for the College is mainly within staffing costs and so we calculate the number of classes we need to provide to meet LSC targets as the first call on the external budget.

- **Minimum standards**

We must meet the Ofsted inspection criteria and meet achievement, retention and numbers targets to secure the external funding

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

No real yard sticks for the College however we know that we delivered the target FTE count of learners

- **What is already being spent and where**

Salaries obviously, payments to partner providers (C/A's) and general expenses

- **Areas of concern**

Amalgamation and its implications and liabilities which will all fall upon the Council

- **Challenges**

If we can develop enough NVQ students to meet our demanding targets

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

None.

## LIBRARIES & HERITAGE

- **How is spend prioritised**

The primary priority for Libraries and Heritage is to maintain and improve services to residents of Walsall. The budget supports the maintenance of adequate staffing levels to operate the advertised opening hours of the 16 libraries, mobile library services, 2 museums and the Local History Centre. Secondly, sufficient budgets are required to purchase stock and resources to provide a reasonable choice for customers to ensure the service has the flexibility to meet their changing needs. Particular priority is given to services to Children and developing learning opportunities.

- **Minimum standards**

The Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 places a statutory requirement on the local authority to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service'. A set of national public library standards define minimum levels of service in terms of access, quality and participation. Additional indicators are resident satisfaction with the service and cost per visit. New national indicators measure the use of libraries and museums. Museums are required to achieve MLA Accreditation and there are also national standards for Archives

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

Walsall has performed well in comparison to neighbouring authorities. In 2006/07 it was one of only 3 authorities which achieved all 10 national public library standards. The service no longer achieves the standards for opening hours and children's satisfaction. Walsall performs around the mid point for costs per visit at £3.27. This compared with other West Midland authorities which range from £4.35 in Wolverhampton to £2.66 in Coventry.

- **What is already being spent and where**

Libraries and Heritage budget totals: £7,460,333 (Libraries - £6,340,929; Heritage - £1,119,404). £4,074,057 is spent on staffing, £405,616 on premises costs including £233,107 on rates. The Media Purchase Fund from which all library stock is bought amounts to £673,490

- **Areas of concern**

The service is under considerable pressure to find increasing premises running costs. There is now significant pressure to cover rising rates costs which are £57,000 over the 2008/09 budget. In addition, premises costs for the library in Blakenall Village Centre are increasing substantially based on £82 per sq m.

Library public access computers are heavily used and require a rolling programme of updating to maintain their operation and ensure they can operate developing software.

- **Challenges**

To maintain the quality of services and enable ongoing development within a climate of declining resources, but increasing need and economic hardship. This includes keeping pace with new technologies, developing new services for emerging communities and being flexible enough to respond to national and local priorities.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

Libraries are a positive influence to combat anti-social behaviour. Services are available to everyone free of charge, regardless background. They can offer disaffected people a place to find an alternative outlet for entertainment ( Teenage reading groups), informal learning opportunities (ICT basic skills training) and, a place to develop a skill or enthusiasm and develop aspirations ( information peer networks). Libraries support formal learning and increase life chances by providing a gateway to opportunity qualifications.

## **CUSTOMER CONTACT (incorporating FIRST STOP SHOP, CONTACT CENTRE AND SWITCHBOARD)**

- **How is spend prioritised**

The customer service team has to be reactive to customer demand/need and spend is directed accordingly. We provide a first point of contact to the public and as a consequence our spend is pretty much restricted to providing the front line services we deliver on behalf of other service areas. The customer access strategy outlines the council's plans to improve public access to our services by enhancing our telephony systems and widening face to face provision with the introduction of local access points (e.g. libraries and customer service bus). We also focus on any council pledges to which we contribute

- **Minimum standards**

Greet all visitors within 5 minutes of arrival, all enquiries requiring the assistance of an advisor to be handled within 15 minutes, deal with all appointments within 10 minutes of arrival, answer 80% of telephone calls within 20 seconds, respond to as many enquiries as possible at first point (target 80%)

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

Detailed figures and comparisons are not available due to differing nature of service provision but can confirm operating costs are lower than Dudley and Sandwell with whom we network

- **What is already being spent and where**

*See financial summary*

- **Areas of concern**

While capital investment has been provided to develop our access points (First Stop Shop, Contact Centre, Customer Service Bus) this has not been matched with appropriate revenue provision particularly in the area of staff resources and training. Staff budgets transferred from other services did not take account of increased responsibility and customer demand which has enabled other services to use resources more effectively. Our customer expectation/demands as well as that of service areas has increased but is not being matched with sufficient resources. It is important that we raise standards to improve the customer experience and confidence which can not happen without quality trained staff to deliver the expected level of service.

- **Challenges**

To deliver the customer access strategy and empower and skill customer service staff to resolve more enquiries at first point

NI 14 (avoidable contact) is one of the new national indicators set which will impact on CAA

Impact of increased calls relating to introduction of the new waste policy

To work with other council services to identify failure demand (avoidable contact) and reduce the number of unnecessary customer calls/complaints.

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

The customer service team are a key area for reporting of incidents and the new customer service bus will create a valuable channel for information, advice and reporting.

## ARTS and EVENTS

- **How is spend prioritised**

Forest Arts Centre is Walsall's only Arts Centre and resource base for Arts Learning, Participation and Performance. Its extensive inreach and outreach programme reaches all Walsall schools and provides open access to arts activities of all genres for Walsall people of all ages. The spend on Forest Arts is used as "matched" monies to access Central Government grant funding and is the central plank in Walsall's arts engagement strategy. To maximise future Central Government funding we must safeguard the existing local funding / resource levels.

The Events team focuses on Town assets and brings cultural identity to Walsall Town Centre (Street Alive, etc.) and Districts (Bloxwich Library Theatre, Festive Lighting, etc) Walsall Town Hall (Walsall Live) and Arboretum.

The Illuminations is a financially high risk seasonal event with sub regional identity.

- **Minimum standards**

A new National Indicator (NI11) "Engagement in the Arts" is being introduced in 2008 / 09. Additionally, Forest Arts has three year Learning / Teaching standards (both quantitative and qualitative) with increasing targets at Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 monitored by Central Government.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

NI11 is being benchmarked this year. Similarly, the Key Stage standards are being established through comparative National Data. Presently, Walsall has exceeded National Standards in music.

- **What is already being spent and where**

Arts & Events is currently forecast to spend around £2,870,900 with grant income of £788,800, plus fees of £992,000 giving a net expenditure of £1,098,900. The Forest Arts Centre facility costs are included within the net budget including maintenance.

- **Areas of concern**

- Economic climate
- Audience attendance levels
- Changing visitor patterns
- Quality of venues (Town Hall and Arboretum)
- Lack of capital investment

- **Challenges**

- Achieving and sustaining reciprocal Central Government funding
- Recruitment and retention of quality specialist teachers
- Cost of transport

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

We make a major contribution to the Community Social Cohesion agenda. We provide year round extended school curricular programmes, diversionary and positive cultural engagement activities at Forest Arts Centre which is open daily (Monday to Friday) from 9:00 am to 9:30 pm.

## MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

A need was identified to create marketing and development services across Leisure Culture and Lifelong Learning to maximise resources, develop stakeholder partnerships and achieve service objectives.

Marketing and Development provides box office, venue and pitch hire and a full marketing service for 11 managers across Arts and Events, Bryntisilio, Catering, College of Continuing Education, Creative Development Team, Greenspaces, Leisure Centres, Leisure Development and Libraries and Heritage.

This provision includes strategic support, management, creation and development of research, databases, press, print, advertising, websites, e marketing, ticket sales, pitch/venue hire, sponsorship income and marketing partnerships.

This is a relatively new service across LC&LL resulting in cohesive marketing activity across the directorate supporting corporate priorities, service objectives and key performance indicators.

- **How is spend prioritised**

Spend is prioritised and driven by the service area needs and feedback from consultation.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

Outcomes and value for money compared with other LA's are difficult to identify as the structures are variable and sit in

- **What is already being spent and where**

The overall budget is £200,084 which is primarily staffing costs; the remainder covers essential software and a small amount for the production of What's on Walsall leaflet.

- **Areas of concern**

Areas of concern are linked to available resources and increasing costs e.g. paper, fuel, ink that impact on the communication tools required to achieve PIs and income targets.

- **Challenges**

The challenge is to deliver a comprehensive service to match the increasing demand for marketing and development activity to ensure target are met.

## THE NEW ART GALLERY WALSALL

- **How is spend prioritised**

Spend is prioritised for the delivery of the exhibitions, education and out reach and audience programmes along with effective marketing and acquiring works for the collection. We also take into account the ACEWM priorities with regard to:

- support of artists
- audiences and participation
- innovation and risk
- diversity
- partnerships.

(The ACEWM give £897.000 of RFO monies in 2008/9 – c. 46% of our total funding).

- **Minimum standards**

We are an exceptional LA Gallery in that we are one of very few in the UK that receive a 3 year protected Regular Funding Organisation (RFO) so our standards are very much higher than a 'normal' LA service.

- **Outcomes and value for money compared with other LAs**

The £1million that the Council invests in the NAG is extremely good value for money because of the national profile that the NAG brings to the Council.

- **What is already being spent and where**

Due to the nature of our operation we have to forward plan by at least 3 years to book in future exhibitions, hence the 3 year funding from the Arts Council. We are now contractually obliged to fulfil these commitments which we have allocated funding from the ACE and match funded by Walsall MBC. Any threat to these commitments would have a detrimental effect on not only our relationship with ACEWM but also with the artistic community that we rely on to provide Walsall with the world class exhibitions that are now expected of The New Art Gallery.

- **Areas of concern**

Any cuts to the LA contribution will not be viewed well by the ACEWM as the 3 year RFO package was agreed on the basis that the LA funding was not reduced or offset by the above inflation increase that the ACEWM provided to the NAG. Any reduction will be seen as breaking this funding agreement and potentially could lead to a comparable cut by the ACEWM.

- **Challenges**

To continue to deliver an expanded programme at the NAG in line with ACEWM policies and expectations and to further increase attendance figures over the next 2/3 years.

To prepare for larger expenditure on the building as it ages and needs more maintenance, refurbishment and repair.

To be able to fund properly the 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in 2010 (2009/10 financial year)

- **Links into anti-social behaviour**

The NAG Education Department are members of the Youth Arts Forum which consist of CDT, Youth Service, Blue Coats school and Walsall Youth Arts.

All schools + family workshops are open to PRU groups

We offer free talks and tours to PRU groups and regularly provide several workshops for Birmingham and Walsall PRU centres, for example:

Ready Steady Summer: 5 week graffiti project working with 3 professional artists to produce and organise their own show at The New Art Gallery. The project was widely received and the participants were interviewed on Radio 5 Live and BBC West Midlands. OCN accreditation was also offered and 2 participants passed.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY SERVICES (Safer Walsall Partnership)**

Community Safety Services (CSS) constitutes Walsall MBC's contribution to the Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP). The 2008\09 Walsall MBC budget allocation to CSS is £1.3 million. There are 43 staff within CSS spread across the Community Safety Team, Policy and Strategy Team, Surveillance/CCTV unit, Anti Social Behaviour Unit and Community Reassurance.

The SWP works closely in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to co-ordinate services and programmes to improve community safety and reassurance, reduce crime, anti social behaviour, alcohol and drugs substance misuse and environmental crime in the borough.

Residents concern around crime and anti social behaviour are very high. This fairly small service is under constant demand to address local concerns and deliver government targets. The service is much dependent on government funds. Two thirds of service costs previously came from external funds such as NRF, which the government has now terminated. The service has reached at a saturation point on what it can deliver with current resources.

The SWP is responsible for delivering on a number of Council priority and pledges:

- To publish and begin to implement a new Alcohol Strategy
- To deliver the Community Safety Plan for the Borough
- To focus on community safety, crime reduction and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing reassurance to local people
- take firm action against nuisance drinking in public places
- increase actions to tackle graffiti, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping

SWP through collective effort with partner organisations has achieved 18.2% reduction in total recorded crime over the last 3 years. This is higher than the government's recommended 15% target for the borough.

## **Built Environment Engineering & Transportation Service**

E&T Service provides primarily a range of statutory, regulatory and one area of non statutory services and comprises 8 distinct groups. The service operates in accordance with European, national and regional guidance. In particular it is responsible for the delivery of objectives set out in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan which includes design and implementation of priorities and schemes identified.

Effective delivery of these services ensures the development and maintenance of a safe borough highway network (an asset of some 530 miles with an estimated value of £800m) and makes a significant contribution to the regeneration of the borough. It both manages the use of the public highway by all users but also ensures the integrity of the structure itself. Economic vitality and community well being, in terms of safety and access to services, is dependent on effective delivery of this service. The effects of the service are felt by all those that live, visit, and work in the borough.

Key legislation for operation includes the Highway Act, New Roads and Street Works Act and Traffic Management Act with other national requirements and drivers dealing with environmental & air quality aspects and managing traffic congestion.

Performance to date has been good in many areas but external market forces and ever increasing expectations are producing great pressure on staff and financial resources. The service forms part of the externally assessed environment service rated as 4\*. Every opportunity has been taken to explore and implement collaborative working with other authorities or sectors to increase efficiency and delivery of the service. Partnered arrangements and framework contracts are in place to ensure delivery to time and budget. Bids for funding included within the documentation should ensure that the present state is maintained but this leaves little or no scope for improvement.

The service is funded through a combination of capital sources, grants, revenue - fees and income. However with ever increasing demands from new legislation and public it is becoming extremely difficult to continue to maintain the required standard. Service are prioritised via the Local Transport Plan process, the approved Highways Maintenance Strategy and approved Policies and Procedures.

The identified investments have been prioritised to clearly identify those unavoidable costs, those subject to legislative requirements and those relating to health and safety & market impacts and influences. The Service is assessed via BVPIs and now the new national Indicators and contributes to many of the key priorities and targets within the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

A major consideration is that the service has a duty to actively manage the operation of the highway network and must demonstrate this through its activities and if unsuccessful Government Intervention could follow. This is also a key element forming a major consideration in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

## **Neighbourhood Partnerships and Programmes**

The service employs 33.5 staff (fte) and has an overall budget of £1.97 million to support local neighbourhood partnerships, community development, equality and diversity, and programme management. Our priorities are to:

- Engage residents through local neighbourhood partnerships
- Deliver the equality and diversity agenda (including community cohesion and preventing violent extremism)
- Provide programme management services for 2 European funding programmes
- Voluntary sector liaison and voluntary sector grants
- Community development and support for community associations
- Co-ordinating and developing the Council's charities and trusts

We have provided services in the community which saw 112,501 attendances over the last year at the vast range of activities offered by community associations, and enabled 60 local groups to benefit from the small grants on offer through the LNP community cash scheme. We engaged an additional 1054 residents and groups with local neighbourhood partnerships compared with last year's figures.

The service provides front line community contact and offers opportunities for engagement to improve the services available in their area through the local neighbourhood partnerships and by accessing grants on offer from the community development team.

The community play bus is an integral part of delivering the Council's Play Strategy and has benefited from the award of a lottery grant to improve the range of and access to facilities for children and young people in their neighbourhood.

The equality and diversity team has produced equality schemes covering race, gender and disability to support the Council in its drive to improve services and make them accessible to all of its communities. They also support the employee networks (disability, BME, women and LGBT) and offer the opportunity to staff to have a say about changes and improvements that could be made in the Council.

## PUBLIC PROTECTION

The service employs 107 staff and has a budget of £6,437,558 (expenditure), £3,654,927 (income) and a net budget of £2,782,631. It has statutory regulatory responsibilities and delivers operational and administrative functions including:

- Bereavement Services – Cemeteries, Crematoria, Coroners Service
- Registrars of Births, Deaths & Marriages
- Emergency Planning, Business Continuity Planning
- Environmental Health, Enforcement, Public Health, Pest Control, Dog Wardens
- Consumer Services, Trading Standards
- Licensing, Hackney Carriages & Private Hire

Emergency Planning Services and the Register Office operate from the Council House and Civic Centre respectively. Environmental Health and Trading Standards operate from Challenge Building in Walsall town centre and the Disinfestation is based at the Aldridge depot. The main office for Bereavement Services is at Streetly Crematorium.

The drivers of service are

- **Improving The Customer Experience** – through the delivery and transformation of services,
- **Statutory Responsibilities** - Undertaking statutory duties to protect the public and responding to changes concerning the enforcement of the law.
- **National Priorities** – These include joint working relating to Crime and Disorder, modernising enforcement, meeting national indicators, working in accordance with statutory guidance and Business Continuity.
- **Local Priorities** - To meet Member and Directorate priorities and pledges:
- **Resources** – The effective management of Financial, People and Physical resources.

Public Protection's priorities are to modernise its enforcement arrangements, manage its resources effectively, deliver its health and safety action plan, take action to reduce sickness absence, make progress with IIP accreditation and to maintain business continuity across all services.

Costs have increased or may increase due to:

- Increased Coroner's costs,
- Increased prosecutions for litter, fly tipping and licensing offences;
- Impact of increased energy costs at the Crematorium;
- Introduction of reception service for stray dogs out of hours;
- Additional pressures to inspect farms due to increase in animal disease outbreaks;
- Need to provide mercury abatement at the Crematorium and to implement a programme of memorial safety at the cemeteries;
- Introduction of new waste collection arrangements likely to create an increase in fly tipping and associated clean-up and enforcement costs;
- Demands to enhance Muslim burial service; and
- Surveys show a very strong demand for the extension of the out of hours noise service.

## Street Pride

Street Pride employs approximately 350 staff and has an overall budget of £18.9 million. Services include refuse and recycling collections and disposal (£11.5 million), grounds maintenance and cleansing of highways and other council maintained land (£3.5 million) and the management and maintenance of the whole of the councils fleet of vehicles (£3.3 million).

102,000 properties receive a refuse and recycling collection each week, 80,000 properties receive a green waste collection every fortnight, collecting 120,000 tonnes of waste, 47,000 tonnes being sent to landfill. 860km of Highway are cleansed at various frequencies and 1,400 incidents of Fly Tipping dealt with. 757 items of vehicles, plant and equipment are managed and maintained

Priorities for the service are

- Increasing recycling and composting, reducing waste delivered to landfill and maximising landfill diversion to meet government targets, reducing LATS liabilities and potential penalties
- Improving the cleanliness of the streets, reducing anti social behaviour and modernising enforcement.
- Ensuring the authorities fleet and transport operations are legally compliant and meet service needs
- Improving the depot to comply with the H.S.E. Improvement Notice
- Improving the Customer Experience and Engaging in community involvement by consulting with the customer, developing customer and neighbourhood focus and developing a Street Management Strategy.

**Service Role** – Street Pride provide refuse and recycling collections and disposal for all domestic and commercial properties requesting the service within the borough. They also provide, grounds maintenance and cleansing of highways and other council maintained land to comply with the requirements of the E.P.A. as well as the management and maintenance of the whole of the councils fleet of vehicles.

**Service objective** – The service objective is to provide cost effective and efficient services that meet the requirements of the customer and comply with government legislation and targets.

**Key drivers** – The key drivers for the services provided include Improving the Customer Experience and Engaging in Community Involvement by consulting with the customer and improving cleanliness, reducing anti social behaviour and modernising enforcement. Managing our Resources better and Raising our Performance by diverting more waste from landfill to meet government targets, reducing LATS liabilities and potential penalties. Improving our Health and Safety management and arrangements and Promoting our employee's learning and development.

**Priorities** – Priorities for the service are increasing recycling and composting, reducing waste delivered to landfill and maximising landfill diversion, improving the cleanliness of the streets, ensuring the authorities fleet and transport operations are legally compliant and meet service needs, improving the depot to comply with the H.S.E. Improvement Notice, developing customer and neighbourhood focus and developing a Street Management Strategy.

**Key performance issues** – Key performance issues are diverting waste from landfill to meet government targets and improving cleanliness to ensure good customer satisfaction.

**Cost of service** – Adjusted gross expenditure for the whole of Street Pride is circa £18 million, £11.5 million for Waste Services, £3.5 million for Grounds and Street Cleansing, £3.3 million for Fleet Services.

**Other key factors** – Other key factors include the delivery of the new waste service commencing January 2009 and the impact from the review of grounds maintenance within Street Pride and Green Spaces.

## **Walsall Partnership**

The service leads on and co-ordinates the development and implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the negotiation and delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The SCS is the over-arching strategy for the Borough, which has been developed with partners and led by Walsall Council. The LAA contains those indicators which are considered to be the priorities for the Borough and ones which can be delivered using joint resources.

The Partnership is supported by a team of nine members of staff, who provides leadership, facilitation and co-ordination of partnership arrangements and ensure governance arrangements are robust and transparent. The team also provides information regarding performance against the indicators within the LAA and against programmes which are funded through the Area Based Grant (ABG). This information supports the Council and its partners in its decision-making by providing evidence based data and guides future priority setting.

The main challenges for Walsall Partnership are ensuring partners integrate the SCS in to their delivery strategies, enabling partners to jointly deliver against the LAA priorities and joining together resources to deliver value for money and jointly commissioned services.