

Cabinet – 23 March 2005

Corporate Plan 2005 - 2006

Portfolio:	Councillor Tom Ansell, Leader of the Council
Service Area:	Corporate Services
Wards:	All
Forward Plan:	Yes

Summary of report

This report presents the Council's corporate plan for 2005/6. This plan sets out the main objectives the Council will be pursuing over the year, to improve the services the Council provides to citizens and to make Walsall a better place.

Recommendations

Council is recommended to adopt the Corporate Plan as part of the policy framework.

Resource and legal considerations

The Council pledges and key service actions identified in the corporate plan are funded within the 2005/6 budget.

Citizen impact

The achievement of the Council's pledges and key service actions set out in the corporate plan will significantly improve local services for the benefit of residents. The achievement of the pledges will enable local people to judge how well the Council is doing and it is intended will lead to improved customer satisfaction. Feedback on progress will be provided to citizens in the Council's publication, Walsall Pride.

Community safety

One of the Council's ten strategic priorities is to *ensure all people are safe and secure*, and three pledges are directly targeted at improving community safety.

Environmental impact

Ensure a clean and green borough is one of the Council's ten strategic priorities and four pledges are directly linked to this priority. There are also a number of other pledges which will improve the road network and the environment in the town centre.

Performance and risk management issues

The Council has a hierarchy of plans to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into more detailed plans throughout the organisation. The Corporate Plan sets out high level corporate priorities and this plan is underpinned by directorate, service and team plans which set out more specific targets and improvements which are necessary in order to achieve our priorities. All pledges and key actions are identified in the appropriate directorate, service and team plan. These plans are risk assessed as an integral part of service planning processes.

The achievement of key actions resulting from recent corporate and service inspections will assist the Council in its objective of being an excellent Council by 2008.

The Corporate Plan will be reviewed quarterly by the Executive Management Team, with six month and 12 month reviews presented to Cabinet. This plan will also be subject to review via our scrutiny and performance panels and will be built into their work plans for 2005/6.

Equality implications

Equality is an integral theme within Vision 2008, with our commitment to build an inclusive borough where cultural diversity is recognised as one of Walsall's key strengths. The Council's pledges on establishing a shopmobility scheme, improving translation and interpretation services and seeking to increase the numbers of employees who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who have a disability, so that our workforce is more representative of the community it serves, are specific actions to meet this commitment.

Consultation

Vision 2008 was developed last year following extensive consultation with partners, staff and residents and Walsall Local Strategic Partnership have been consulted in order that they contributed to the draft corporate plan.

Vision 2008

The corporate plan includes the Council's vision for Walsall. It also sets out the pledges and actions which the Council, working with its partners, will take over the year which will help to realise this vision.

Background papers

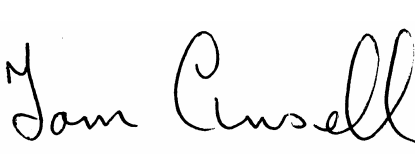
Cabinet report – 9th February 2005

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Date 14 March 2005

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Portfolio Holder – Councillor T Ansell

Date 14 March 2005

Walsall Council

Corporate Plan

2005 - 2006

March 2005

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Corporate Plan 2005-2006

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Foreword

We are delighted to introduce Walsall Council's corporate plan for 2005/6. This plan sets out the main objectives the Council will be pursuing over the year, to improve the services we provide to citizens and to make Walsall a better place. The purpose of the plan is straightforward. It sets out our priorities both now and in the future. Primarily it is so residents can see what their local authority is doing on their behalf. But it is also for our employees and for the large number of partner organisations with whom we work.

The plan includes the council's vision for Walsall in 2008 which was developed last year following extensive consultation. The vision is of a Borough that is prosperous, forward-looking, self confident and optimistic – a place where individuals and groups can thrive and develop. If we are to achieve this ambition we need to address the key priorities for local residents, for example wanting to live in safer, greener and cleaner neighbourhoods. We also need to address some fundamental issues for our organisation such as making services more accessible and listening more to local people. These objectives are also included in the plan.

Last year we made a series of specific pledges to local people about how we would improve local services and these have nearly all now been delivered. We have included in this plan, a new set of pledges for 2005/6 – practical and tangible changes that people can see and hold us to account for. We have also demonstrated how the council's resources are focused on the things that matter to local people.

This plan does not attempt to cover everything the council will do. There are many more detailed plans which provide the full picture and these are publicly available.

The plan will:

- Focus the efforts of all the employees of the council on the issues that matter to citizens
- Ensure we put resources firmly behind their priorities
- Strengthen our joint working with our partners to deliver the overall community plan for the borough
- Enable local people and our partners to judge how well we are doing and whether we are achieving our objectives.

The Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership which brings together the council, other organisations and the local community is preparing an overall community plan for the Borough. Our corporate plan is the part that we the local authority will play in this collective effort. It is an important stage in the council's journey to become an excellent local authority, providing leadership for the local community and bringing high quality services to local people.

We hope you find it interesting and informative and we would welcome your comments. Please send any comments to AnnieShepperd@walsall.gov.uk. We look forward to working with you to bring this plan to life.

Councillor Tom Ansell
Leader of the Council

Annie Shepperd
Chief Executive

Our vision of Walsall in 2008

In 2004 and following detailed consultation, we developed a vision for the sort place Walsall could become by 2008. This vision, which is set out below describes the type of community we are aiming to build here in the borough.

In 2008 Walsall will have an established reputation as an ambitious, “can-do” place where a civic, economic and cultural renaissance has been made possible by determined and responsible civic leadership, closely engaged with partner organisations and local residents. In 2008, Walsall people will be proud of their heritage, proud of what their borough has become and excited about future opportunities. The borough will have maintained and built upon its record as an inclusive place, where all people – our citizens and visitors – are treated fairly, and equally, and with respect, and where cultural diversity is recognised as one of Walsall’s key strengths.

In 2008 Walsall will be a learning borough that promotes the value of learning and achievement, in our schools and colleges, in the home, community and at work. Learning will be recognised as a fundamental basis of a flourishing local economy but also as a route to personal fulfilment and achievement. Walsall will be seen as a place for creativity and innovation – to help attract investment, support employers, and to create wealth.

In 2008 Walsall will have a reputation as a clean, green and safe borough. There will be high standards of maintenance of public areas and a sense of responsibility among local people to care for and protect both their neighbours and their local environment. This reputation will be highlighted by well-maintained and attractive civic gateways at principal entry points to the borough – to emphasise the established perception of Walsall as a welcoming and a caring place. By 2008, real improvement will be evident in the health of our citizens, and the needs of people who care for others will be acknowledged and their work valued.

In 2008 local people will see themselves as residents of the borough as a whole. Local districts and their centres will still have their strong sense of identity - strengthened by local neighbourhood partnerships and better, local access to services. Walsall town centre will be an exciting and vibrant place for culture and business – acting as the economic powerhouse of the borough.

In 2008 Walsall Council will be recognised by residents as a listening organisation, which effectively represents, but also tackles, the concerns of local people. It will be a modern organisation at the leading edge of good practice with a national reputation for excellence. Walsall will be a council which puts citizens first and which strives to provide the highest standards of customer service. The council will provide strong and responsive civic leadership, supporting local communities with the resources and tools to provide local solutions to local problems. Walsall will enjoy high levels of civic involvement in neighbourhood partnerships and in a capable, vibrant voluntary sector.

By 2008 Walsall will have played a full role in transforming the Black Country into a highly successful sub-regional economy. Walsall will be working in close partnership with other local authorities to enhance the international reputation and competitiveness of the Birmingham city region, so we are confident that the Black Country and Walsall will benefit greatly from this work.

Listening to Residents

We are committed to ensuring that Walsall Council's plan and policies are based on the views of local people. We try to be a listening organisation and we use a wide range of methods to understand better what matters to residents. This section explains the main messages we are told by citizens and also how we are trying to improve our consultation.

Key themes or messages which have emerged from consultations undertaken over the past 12 months and which have influenced our plans and our budget include:

- Increased communication with residents - 70% of the citizens' panel would welcome more information from Walsall council, including receiving a regular newsletter
- As part of concern over clean and green issues, recycling was seen as an important service - identified by 74% of the citizens' panel and 94% wanted the Council to take on a greater enforcement role
- Ensuring all people are safe and secure, a clean and green borough and listening to what people want were identified as priorities within the Council's Vision 2008 during budget consultation 2005/2006
- Affordable decent housing, health services, low levels of crime, education provision and clean streets were identified as important things in making somewhere a good place to live – citizens' panel, second survey
- Crime, community safety and the fear of crime, improving the local environment, access to local services and facilities, making our schools great, health, transport and listening to what people want are all issues identified within local neighbourhood partnership plans for local action
- Priority areas for improvement were identified as: roads & pavements, security and policing, housing repairs/improvements, schools and education, clean streets and activities for young people – citizens' panel, second survey.

We regularly seek the views of our residents through surveys, focus groups and our citizens' panel. In the last year, the panel has been consulted on three surveys seeking views on; environmental issues, the Council's priorities and the budget plans for this year. We are developing this panel, increasing membership from 600 to a 1000 strong representative sample of residents.

Over this year we will also be enhancing our consultation with residents and community and voluntary groups. We have chosen to be one of a small number of Councils participating in an annual tracker survey of public satisfaction with local government and its services, organised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). This is specifically being developed to produce feedback which can be translated into actions and contribute to the development of strategies.

We now have a consultation strategy with guidelines to ensure that all consultation has clear objectives, is consistent and that our activity across the Council is co-ordinated.

A key way in which we are listening to people is through the recently developed Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs). The nine partnerships, which cover the whole of the borough, consist of ward councillors, representatives from the police, schools and the health services, and up to ten locally appointed partners. Locally appointed partners reflect the diversity of each partnership area and include representatives from local voluntary and community organisations, businesses, housing trusts, faith groups and young people. In establishing the LNPs we have worked closely with the Community Empowerment Network and Walsall Voluntary Action so that we can fully involve and learn from the rich network of local community groups in Walsall.

All nine partnerships have now developed an outline Partnership Plan. These plans have been based from detailed data about their areas but also through local consultation. The plans are already feeding into the emerging community plan and the Council's performance management framework. The role of our LNPs will be enhanced with the creation of nine community forums, one per partnership, bringing together local voluntary and community groups facilitated by the Community Empowerment Network.

The Council takes the involvement of young people very seriously and meets regularly with Youth Opinions Unite (YOU), which is a part of the Youth Service and is the formal mechanism by which young people can be consulted regarding any issue that may impact directly or indirectly on their lives. The YOU process enables young people to meet within their locality monthly to discuss issues that concerns them, and links are now being made to the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships. There is also a borough wide YOU Group that focuses on issues that impact on young people right across the borough.

The young people also assist the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership Board, Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership, Community Empowerment Network Board and Black Country Connexions Local Management Committee, by ensuring that services which are delivered to young people are of the highest standard. Through Youth Opinions Unite there is a clear mechanism by which young people can voice their opinions, be kept informed and consulted on a regular basis.

Our Priorities and Pledges for 2005 - 06

In order to achieve the vision for Walsall we need to tackle some important issues. This section sets out what are our strategic priorities over the longer term and also the specific commitments we make to ensure visible, real improvements to local services over the next 12 months.

Our strategic priorities between now and 2008 are to:

1. Ensure a clean and green borough
2. Make it easier for people to get around
3. Ensure all people are safe and secure
4. Make our schools great
5. Make Walsall a healthy and caring place
6. Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall
7. Make it easier to access local services
8. Strengthen the local economy
9. Listen to what local people want
10. Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

These are the critical issues for a successful Walsall and they will need sustained effort over many years. For each one of these priorities the council is also committing to a series of very specific pledges to improve services over the next 12 months and these are as follows:

Ensure a clean and green borough

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will increase to 25% the proportion of household waste that is recycled and composted
- we will reduce fly-tipping by effective enforcement action
- we will ensure that all libraries and leisure facilities are clean, welcoming and accessible
- we will ensure our parks and open spaces are well maintained and safe places to enjoy and that local groups are involved in their development and improvement

Make it easier for people to get around

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will improve the condition of the Borough's roads – increasing the amount of our roads that we repair
- we will improve signposting along principal routes in the borough

- we will begin construction of a major improvement of the through route from the Arboretum to the Pleck Road junction

Ensure all people are safe and secure

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will work with partners to use the range of legal powers available to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour
- we will work with the police and other partners to reduce total reported crime in Walsall by 20% over the next three years
- we will work with Local Neighbourhood Partnerships to install up to 10 alley-gating schemes in crime hotspots across the borough where there is community support for this

Make our schools great

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- over the next 2 years we will make £32 million available to improve the quality of our school buildings
- we will complete the construction of six new school sport and community facilities
- we will improve the educational achievements of children and young people at our schools, with a particular focus on the achievements of those who are looked after by the council

Make Walsall a healthy and caring place

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will work with our partners to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies in the Borough
- we will develop a borough wide network of children's centres to support children and their families
- we will increase the number of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard in social rented housing by 10% and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups to at least 65%
- we will establish a shopmobility scheme for Walsall town centre
- we will support more vulnerable people to live in their own homes
- we will complete the build of three new young people's fitness centres
- we will ensure that schoolchildren are provided with and encouraged to eat healthy and nutritious meals and have the opportunity to participate in at least two hours of physical activity each week

Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will improve the key routes into the Borough including the A454 and A461 corridors as part of our gateways programme
- we will improve the environment in Walsall Town Centre by completing further phases of the Quality Streets programme including the Civic Quarter
- we will develop a Summer Programme for our young people

Make it easier to access local services

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will increase the availability of interpretation and translation services to ensure that all our communities have access to our services
- we will create a new, easy-to-use web site that will help local people access services around the clock
- library services will stay open at more convenient times, with greater access to books and information, particularly on line

Strengthen the local economy

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will develop plans which will bring about visible positive change in the main district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall
- we will implement nine Local Neighbourhood Plans each specific to local communities and addressing local priorities
- we will work with our partners, including the Learning and Skills Council and local businesses, to increase the level of qualifications, skills and experience of the local workforce

Listen to what local people want

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will engage young people to participate in improving the quality of Youth Services to ensure that they have a positive impact on their lives
- we will expand our Citizens' Panel of residents and use it as one way of shaping our services to reflect local needs and priorities
- we will produce and distribute a new civic newspaper to all households in the Borough

Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- we will increase the numbers of employees who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or have a disability, so that our workforce is more representative of the community it serves
- we will identify efficiency savings of at least 2.5% of the council's budget, and plough those savings into priority services and tasks
- we will continue to exercise sound financial management, delivering our targets within budget

Improving our performance

In order to achieve our goal of being an excellent Council we need to improve our performance. Walsall Council has been subject to a large number of external challenges which have helped us assess our strengths and weaknesses and identify what action we need to take. This section summarises the outcome of recent reviews and inspections and where, as a result we are going to focus attention to improve performance.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is a framework that provides external challenge to local authorities and focus to help assess performance. The CPA framework brings together judgements about core service performance in education, social services, housing, environment, libraries and leisure, benefits, use of resources and the council's ability measured through a corporate assessment.

Corporate Assessment

Walsall's first corporate assessment took place during February 2004 and categorised us as a 'weak' council. The report of the assessment identified, however, that Walsall Council had travelled a long way over the past three years. The report recognised that further work was required to achieve our stated ambition of becoming excellent by 2008 but "its current rate of improvement is rapid". The key actions for the year ahead are to:

- Establish and mobilise the strategic partnership with Fujitsu "Putting the Citizen First"
- Continue to improve our communication and engagement with local people
- Develop the role of scrutiny to contribute to delivering improvement
- Further develop our relationship with the voluntary and community sector
- Improve the image of Walsall
- Continue to develop the Council as a learning organisation
- Work with our partners to enhance the role of Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership.

Environment and Regeneration

Environmental services have improved significantly and are now rated a 1 star service with excellent prospects for further improvement. The key actions for the year ahead are:

- Invest extra funding to improve the condition of our roads

- Increase the amount of household waste recycled through kerbside collection service for paper, cans and glass, and the expanded garden waste collection scheme
- Ensure more planning applications are determined within government timescales
- Develop a Revitalisation Programme for the main district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall
- Improve the key routes into the Borough including the A454 and A461 as part of our Gateways programme
- Improve the environment in Walsall Town Centre by completing further phases of the Quality Streets programme including the Civic Quarter.

Strategic Housing and Community Regeneration

Housing Services improved from no stars to a 1 star, taking the service to a 'Fair' rating with promising prospects for improvement. The key actions for the year ahead are:

- Ensure good quality housing advice with efficient and responsive services on housing need and housing renewal grants and focus housing investment with partners to create sustainable communities and improve the quality of life for residents
- Establish a new VAT Shelter with Walsall Housing Group which will secure additional investment of £9 million over 10 years to support housing and environmental regeneration of neighbourhoods
- Increase the number of social rented homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard and increase the number of vulnerable households living in Decent Homes in the private sector
- Provide support to vulnerable households to remain in their own homes by increasing funding for Disabled Facilities Grants
- Launch a new 3 year Crime & Disorder Strategy.

Social Care and Supported Housing

Social Services consolidated its recent rapid improvement to sustain its 1 star rating with promising prospects for improvement. Key actions for the year ahead are to:

- Complete implementation of 3-year social services improvement plan in July 2005
- Reduce the number of looked after children and continued change in the placement mix in favour of family placements and local provision

- Commence reprovision of elderly person's residential homes and day centres
- Modernise the meals on wheels service, supporting more people in their own homes and meeting the needs and expectations of black and minority ethnic older people
- Improve the adaptations service, leading to shorter waiting lists and waiting times
- Continue reprovision of learning disability services
- Develop direct payments support services for adults and for parents with disabled children, and increase the numbers of service users in receipt of direct payments
- Progress to single mental health service with the NHS, under joint director.

Education, Lifelong Learning and Community

The Ofsted inspection confirmed Walsall Local Education Authority (LEA) as the fastest improving LEA in the country and is now judged highly satisfactory. The overall Ofsted judgements were that overall progress was "good", overall effectiveness was "highly satisfactory" and capacity for further improvement was "good". The successful Ofsted inspection together with improvements in children and young peoples' attainment and attendance at school resulted in an education CPA improvement from a one star rating in 2003 to an upper two star rating in 2004 one of only two LEAs to achieve such an improvement.

Key actions for the year ahead are to:

- Improve the quality of learning and teaching to raise attainment and increase participation and progress at all levels to achieve the Education Walsall targets and move towards meeting the Government targets
- Enhance learning opportunities for all children and young people through the provision of a curriculum that is personalised to individual needs
- Further develop the quality of leadership and management across all schools
- Support the development and implementation of a Walsall-wide multi-agency strategy and single plan for children and young people
- Improve the quality of Youth Services to ensure a positive and measurable impact on the lives of young people by implementing the recommendations of the Ofsted inspection and engaging young people in the process
- Develop and begin implementing a Green Spaces strategy
- Develop strategies for excellent libraries in line with the governments "Principles for Excellence" and the Council's strategic partner

- Widen opportunities for and participation in Adult & Community Learning
- Increase exercise and physical activity levels through improved participation, development and opportunity to contribute to the delivery of a co-ordinated strategy, through all key stakeholders, to address health concerns including obesity, fitness and preventative care.

Valuing equality and diversity

Valuing diversity is at the heart of the work of the Council and runs through the whole breadth of our vision and key priorities. Specific pledges for 2005/6 support this commitment. In addition, over the next twelve months we will be working with our partners to:

- Establish a borough wide equalities partnership within the WBSP framework
- Continue to work with the multi-faith forum to promote community cohesion through the Stand Together Against Racism (STAR) programme
- Develop a comprehensive equality and diversity strategy for the Council
- Revise our Race Equality Scheme and establish Disability and Gender Equality Schemes
- Achieve level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government
- Launch an improved Racist Incident reporting procedure.

Working with others

We recognise that to be successful in achieving our objectives we need to work with a wide range of other organisations including the private sector, other public agencies and voluntary and community groups. This section highlights the vital role of some of our key partnerships.

Effective and inclusive partnerships are fundamental in enabling us to deliver our priorities and objectives. We have now established a confident local framework.

Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership

The Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) brings together the Council's leadership with key partners - police, health economy, housing providers, local business, community and voluntary organisations, schools and colleges, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Learning Executive and the Walsall Regeneration Company. The Council, with other members of the WBSP, is currently preparing a community plan, setting out how in partnership we can transform Walsall.

The key targets for WBSP are to:

- Improve the image of the borough
- Reduce worklessness
- Further improve education
- Reduce teenage conceptions
- Reduce violent crime
- Reduce the fear of crime
- Promote inward investment
- Raise our profile in the Black Country and region

Local Neighbourhood Partnerships

LNPs are established within the constitution and performance management frameworks of both the Council and WBSP. The Council is not the sole provider of services to its citizens; many are facilitated or provided by its many partners, who collectively work to deliver the vision for 2008. LNPs are the vehicle for the council and partners to deliver local initiatives and to focus the delivery of services at a local level.

Strategic Service Delivery Partner

We are realistic about the limitations on the council's capacity to deliver on its own. Therefore we are embarking this year, on a strategic partnership with a consortium of companies led by Fujitsu Services. The partnership will be the largest one of its kind in the UK and will lead to £115 million investment in infrastructure, improved working processes and regeneration projects. It is branded 'Putting the Citizen First' reflecting our overall objective to transform the customer experience. This extensive strategic partnership will see substantial investment in customer facing and back office services alike.

Education Walsall

Education Walsall, a partnership of Serco, council and other stakeholders, working together, has developed a clear and simple vision for what we want for our schools and pupils. The skills and capacity are there to drive sustained and continued improvement. Key priorities are clear and all partners, councillors and officers, Education Walsall staff and schools, are totally committed to the continued and sustained drive to raise standards across the Borough. Relationships with schools are characterised by trust and confidence and the determination to improve is palpable across the whole of Walsall. We share a passion to improve education opportunities for all children and young people in the Borough. We know what we want to achieve and recognise that we will achieve it more rapidly through strong and effective partnership working.

Head teachers have commented:

'A strong leadership team is in place with clear priorities. Information flow is better and decisions are followed through. Capacity to improve has been demonstrated and continued improvement is likely in the collective view of many primary heads.'

'There now seems to be a clear partnership between the Council and its key stakeholders including schools and genuine and serious efforts have been made to achieve this.'

National Health Service

We will continue to work closely with Walsall teaching Primary Care Trust and Walsall Hospitals (NHS) Trust. This will include the development of single services with unified management utilising flexibilities contained within the Health Act or joint commissioning where these will demonstrably improve outcomes for service users.

Walsall Regeneration Company

Following its promotion by the Council and sponsors, Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) was formed in March 2004 with the intention of 'spearheading' urban regeneration with the Urban Regeneration Company (URC) area of Walsall on behalf of the Council and the other founding partners, Advantage West Midlands and English Partnerships. The company is focused on attracting 15,000 jobs and bringing 125 hectares of brown-field land into productive use. Working closely with the Council and sponsors, WRC's key objectives include:

- Providing a unified vision and framework for regeneration with the URC area that will raise aspirations and add real value
- Generating confidence in Walsall as a place to invest, work and live
- 'Making a difference' by securing commitment from public and private investors, both public in accordance with central Government policies and programmes for sustainable communities and urban renaissance.

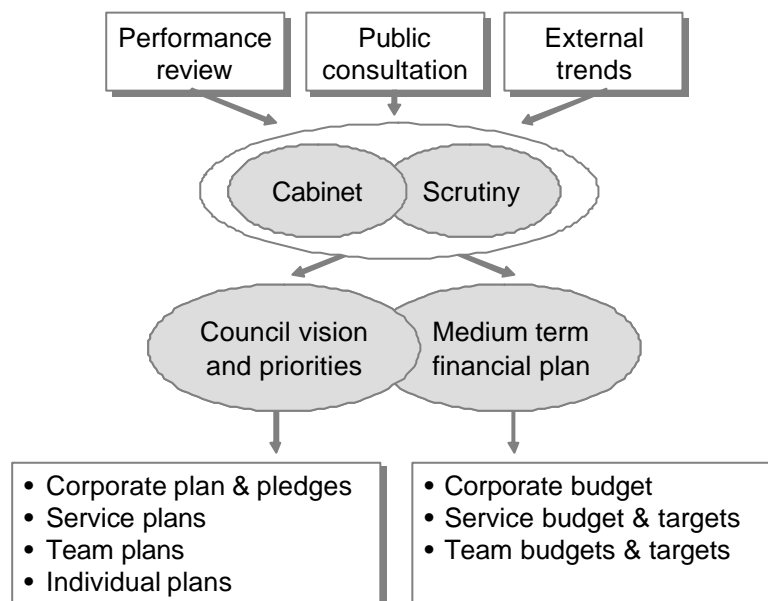
Using our resources

This section describes the main processes for ensuring that resources are allocated to deliver the council's key priorities, and how council finances are effectively planned and managed to ensure value for money and that services are run efficiently.

The Process

The council has a robust medium-term financial strategy, with detailed principles guiding the construction, implementation and achievement of the medium-term financial plan. Our budgeting is policy-led, to ensure that financial decisions link directly to delivery of the council's vision and objectives. The main elements of the policy and budget planning process are shown below. Extensive consultation on service and budget options, together with an assessment of external pressures and performance is used within the council's decision making process to agree overall priorities. These are then incorporated into the council's corporate plan and implemented as part of the medium term financial strategy, which in turn feed other planning and budgeting processes.

Diagram 1 - The Planning Process



The council developed a “stop start continue” framework some years ago to stabilise the council's finances and develop the first corporate five-year financial strategy and budget. This has now evolved into the established approach for our financial planning work. The process looks at each current and proposed service/activity and considers why we do it, how we do it, how well we do it, how much it costs (people, assets, money), aspirations, challenges and customer impact. This “Strategic choices” approach is a robust mechanism by which base budgets, investment and savings are evaluated and tested against corporate and performance objectives, and filtered during decision conferences with cabinet, scrutiny and other stakeholders.

Consultation for the 2005/06 budget has focused on the council's vision and its strategic priorities. We have again worked with an external partner to obtain objective commentary on budget and council tax proposals generated by a series of inclusive and

extensive focus groups (including young people, residents, service users, black and minority ethnic representatives, local businesses, employees and their representatives and the voluntary and community sector) and our new Citizen's Panel.

Revenue and capital budget 2005/06

Walsall Council's net budget for 2005/06 will be £342.470 million; an increase of £21 million or 6.6 per cent over last year and a council tax increase of 3.89 per cent (excluding precepts). The budget contains one-off budget reductions of £3.263 million and savings of £6.238 million, which have been used to improve front line services. The budget includes:

- extending Walsall's 'gold standard' in street cleaning to other districts in the borough
- improving the quality of streets and restoring heritage in district centres
- more 'alleygate' projects to close off problem alleyways when the community wants it
- extra resources to adapt homes for residents with special needs
- more investment to restore the Walsall Arboretum and extra cash to improve other parks and open spaces.

The council's capital programme will provide investment of over £92 million and a further £11.5 million in the leasing programme. Key capital projects this year will include:

- £3.16 million to improve the condition of the Borough's roads
- school building repairs and modernisation - £32 million over the next 2 years
- Installation of new lighting columns through the street lighting PFI – a cross-cutting scheme to promote safety and improve transport
- £9.6 million to bring forward strategic new business developments on a major site in Darlaston
- £3.1 million for the new South Willenhall schools project.

Efficiency gains

Delivering efficiency is a key challenge that the public sector, including local government, will have to face. The Government's Efficiency Review identified ways in which the public sector could deliver increased efficiency gains, set target levels and a time frame to work within. Local authorities are expected to identify 2.5% saving per annum for the next three years. Efficiency gains achieved through this process can be reinvested in local services.

The council's budget for 2006/07 onwards reflects 2.5% efficiency gains, of which 50% is cashable i.e. where there is a direct financial saving or benefit. This equates to approximately £9m in 2006/07. 2005/06 service plans will reflect how these efficiencies will be delivered. The strategic partnership with Fujitsu will make a significant contribution to addressing the issues raised by the Government's efficiency review, focusing on efficiency gains from better procurement, support functions and front and back office and will directly deliver the 2.5% annual target for in-scope services.

Making things happen

We recognise that robust and comprehensive performance management is essential in delivering service and corporate excellence. The purpose of performance management is to raise and maintain at a high level the performance levels of individuals, services and the authority as a whole to ensure that we deliver high quality, cost effective services. Performance management will make a significant contribution in delivering the council's vision of excellence by 2008.

The performance management framework set out in the diagram presents key elements of the process clearly and simply. This framework will be refined and developed over time with the assistance of our partners.

It is recognised that strategic risk management, as a corporate self diagnostic tool, provides demonstrable evidence of the organisation's capacity to improve. Hence risk management is an integral part of every planning process within this framework.

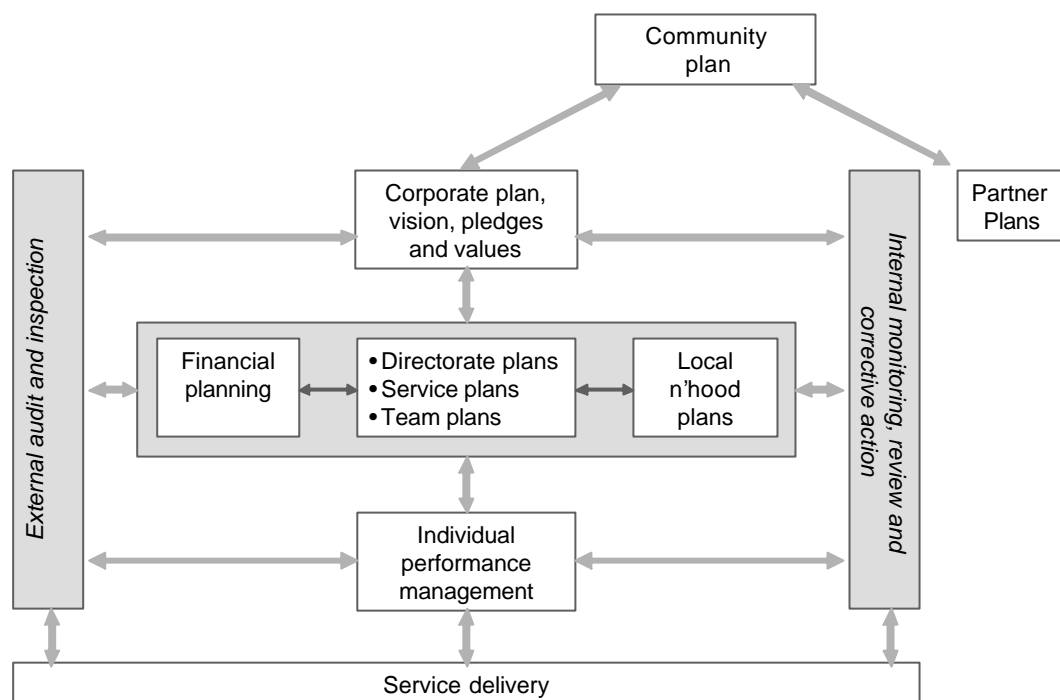
The diagram illustrates the relationship between the various elements that when jointly managed ensure continuous improvement and effective service delivery. Delivery of our vision for the borough of Walsall is managed through the various elements outlined in the diagram.

Performance management processes

1. Community Plan
The overarching influence is the community plan and our relationship with the community and our partners. The community plan outlines the aspirations of the communities of Walsall which are further interpreted by our own Vision, priorities and pledges.
2. Corporate Plan, and other council plans
The council has a hierarchy of plans to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into more detailed plans throughout the organisation. This includes:
 - The corporate plan – the main priorities and pledges for the organisation to achieve the vision and develop an excellent local authority
 - Directorate plans – how each directorate will contribute towards the corporate plan
 - Service and team plans – more detailed plans for individual council services and teams, setting out specific targets and improvements
 - Local neighbourhood plans – plans developed by each of the nine local neighbourhood partnerships to address local issues and needs.
3. Financial planning
This encompasses all financial decision making processes from the medium term financial plan and strategic choices exercises through to the annual budget setting process and the individual management of budgets at service level.
- 4 Individual Performance Management Plans

This is the process for the performance management of individuals and translates the priorities from the service and team plans into individual targets. This sets out what is expected from individual employees and how each individual contributes to the priorities for their service area and the overall council vision priorities.

Diagram 2 - Performance Management Framework



5. External
Audit and inspections are a key process for assessing the performance of a service or function and for identifying ways improvements can be made. External inspections, for example the CPA, also provide an opportunity to benchmark the performance of the council against other authorities and to share best practice.
6. Internal monitoring
The continual monitoring, review and implementation of required corrective action is vital to ensure continuous improvement and is done at every level of the financial, service and individual planning processes. Progress and performance of the key corporate priorities, as set out in this plan, will be monitored quarterly by the Executive Management Team and Cabinet as well as being subject to regular member scrutiny.

Review Process

This plan will be reviewed in harmony with the service planning review requirements. A quarterly review will be undertaken and presented to the executive management team. In addition the six month and 12 month reviews will be presented to Cabinet. This plan will also be subject to review via the scrutiny and performance panel process and this will be built into their work plans for 2005/06.

Feedback regarding our performance in delivering pledges will be provided via the council's newspaper and details will be included within the council's 2006/07 performance plan.

Our Values

*Following extensive consultation with employees and councillors, core values have been identified to support the Council's vision of building a better borough. The five values of **respect, integrity, equality, listening and excellence** have been chosen as a means of signalling to everyone, the beliefs, behaviours and principles that are required of the Council in order to deliver its vision and the best quality of life for local people. These set of shared and agreed values sets out what the Council stands for and how it will behave.*

In a sentence, Walsall Council will **respect** its staff and citizens, act with **integrity**, value **equality** and diversity, **listen** to what people say, do what we say, and strive for and deliver **excellence**.

The five values for excellence are:

Respect

- We will respect equally every individual - our citizens, stakeholders and staff – and their differences and diversity
- We will have mutual respect for the professionalism of individuals, teams and partners – communication will be valued and criticism will be constructive
- In respecting everyone, we will behave with civility, courtesy, decency, dignity, understanding, consideration and tolerance

Integrity

- We will be honest, open and consistent in all our dealings with our stakeholders, so that we may earn and maintain their trust
- We will keep our promises, be accountable and take responsibility for our actions
- We will demonstrate decisive, responsive, impartial and fair leadership

Equality

- We will, through our policies, statements and actions, include, promote and celebrate the great diversity of individuals and cultures across the borough

- We will gear our resources to ensure that our citizens and staff will see and feel real fairness and equality for all
- We will make council services accessible, and tailored to the needs of all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle or disability

Listening

- We will listen to and consult residents, community organisations, voluntary groups and staff – caring about and acting upon their views and concerns
- We will learn from any comments or complaints that local people may have and ensure they are responded to effectively
- We will consult citizens on major changes and involve them in the things that matter in their community, working with them to deliver the vision at local levels

Excellence

- We will strive to become an excellent council - forward-facing, outward-looking and constantly seeking to develop and improve our services in ways most meaningful to citizens
- We will learn, develop and work effectively and efficiently, acting as one council to deliver our one vision for the benefit of all Walsall citizens
- We will empower, trust and value all staff by providing the support, training, communication and opportunities to develop the ownership, responsibility and confidence to make decisions, solve problems and fulfil our potential to achieve continuous improvement for the benefit of local people.

The Council is now embedding the values in the day to day practices of each service area. The values are reflected in recruitment and retention processes and training programmes, including in particular our induction programme for new employees. They are also reflected in our human resource policies, practices and procedures and through all organisational development activities across the organisation.