

Cabinet – 3 February 2016

Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Portfolio: Councillor Bird (Leader of the Council)

Related portfolios: All

Service: Business Change

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

This report sets out for approval the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 which is attached as an appendix. The Corporate Plan builds upon the new high level purpose and priorities adopted by Council at its meeting on 21 September 2015. It has been developed alongside the budget setting process.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet approve and recommend to Council approval the Corporate Plan 2016-2020

3. Report detail

The Local Government Act, 2000 gave the Council collective responsibility for approving its policy framework and budget. The Corporate Plan forms part of that policy framework and also informs the budget setting process. It provides a clear focus to plan activities and target improvements.

4. Council priorities

At its meeting of 21 September 2015, Council approved a new purpose and set of priorities which form the basis of this plan.

The Council Purpose is to-

Improve lives and life chances for everyone who lives and works in the Borough of Walsall and in so doing minimise the help that residents need from the state.

4.1 The five priorities that will support this purpose are:

- Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work
- Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people
- Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities
- Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People, raising aspirations
- Create a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce designed around what Residents need.

5. Risk management

There are no significant risks associated with publishing the Corporate Plan, other than the risk to the Council's reputation if it fails to deliver. Effective risk management practice is incorporated into the planning of projects and initiatives that will support the delivery of the plan and this helps mitigate any risk of failing to deliver.

Headline measures for monitoring delivery of the plan have been developed through Directorates and are contained within the Performance Framework that was approved by Audit Committee on 9 November 2015 and is being presented to Cabinet on 3 February 2016

6. Financial implications

The development of the priorities has run alongside the budget setting process and as such activities needed in year to deliver it are all accounted for within the 2016/17 budget.

7. Legal implications

There is no legal requirement to publish a Corporate Plan though its adoption and implementation, and in particular the values it expresses will help deliver a more robust governance framework.

8. Property implications

There are no direct property implications associated with the approval of the corporate plan, though its objectives and priorities will help inform future property decisions.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

Health and well-being is a clearly expressed priority within the plan. Delivery of the plan will help improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all Walsall people.

10. Staffing implications

The Corporate Plan helps to provide staff with a clear vision of what the council is trying to achieve which can be translated into understandable priorities and actions for employees, connecting their individual roles and services to the council's priorities.

11. Equality implications

The Corporate Plan fully recognises the diverse needs within the borough and acknowledges the different approaches needed to meet these needs.

12. Consultation

The plan has been informed by intelligence gathered from numerous consultation processes including budget setting and area management. In drafting the plan colleagues from across services have been engaged. As part of the Budget Consultation process for 2016/17, residents and businesses were asked to what extent they agreed with the Council's stated purpose. 80% either agreed or strongly agreed.

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Councillor Bird
Leader of the Council

January 2016

Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Draft

Foreword

Like all Local Authorities, Walsall continues to face huge financial pressure resulting from rising demand and cuts to government grants. In stringent economic times, it is more important than ever that we focus our resources on what is most important, targeting where we can make the biggest impact. But it is also important that we remain positive, capitalising on the strengths that exist within the borough and making the most of new opportunities such as devolved spending through the West Midlands Combined Authority.

We know the scale of the challenge means that as a Council we will have to be smaller, doing fewer things, but through that necessity comes an opportunity to radically reshape what we do to better serve the residents of Walsall; engaging with communities to help them shape services around what they need and promoting independence to enable people to lead more fulfilling lives.

This Corporate Plan sets out, at a high level, the purpose and priorities that we believe will help to improve lives and life chances for the residents of Walsall over the next four years. It recognises the financial constraints within which we operate, but is ambitious for the Borough and its people.

Councillor M Bird

Leader of the Council

Contents

Foreword.....	1
Our Purpose	3
Walsall Council in 2020	3
Our Values.....	4
Finances	5
The Borough of Walsall.....	6
Our Partners.....	9
Locality Working	10
Our Priorities.....	11
1. Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.....	0
2. Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people	1
3. Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities	2
4. Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People, raising aspirations.....	3
5. Create a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce designed around what Residents need	4
Monitoring Progress	4

Our Purpose

Walsall Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall. Our purpose is to:

Improve lives and life chances for everyone who lives and works in the Borough of Walsall and in so doing minimise the help that Residents need from the state.

This does not mean ‘pulling up the drawbridge’ from those who genuinely need our help, but finding new and innovative ways to ensure the right kind of support is delivered at the right level to the most vulnerable and ensuring that individuals and communities are empowered to help themselves where possible.

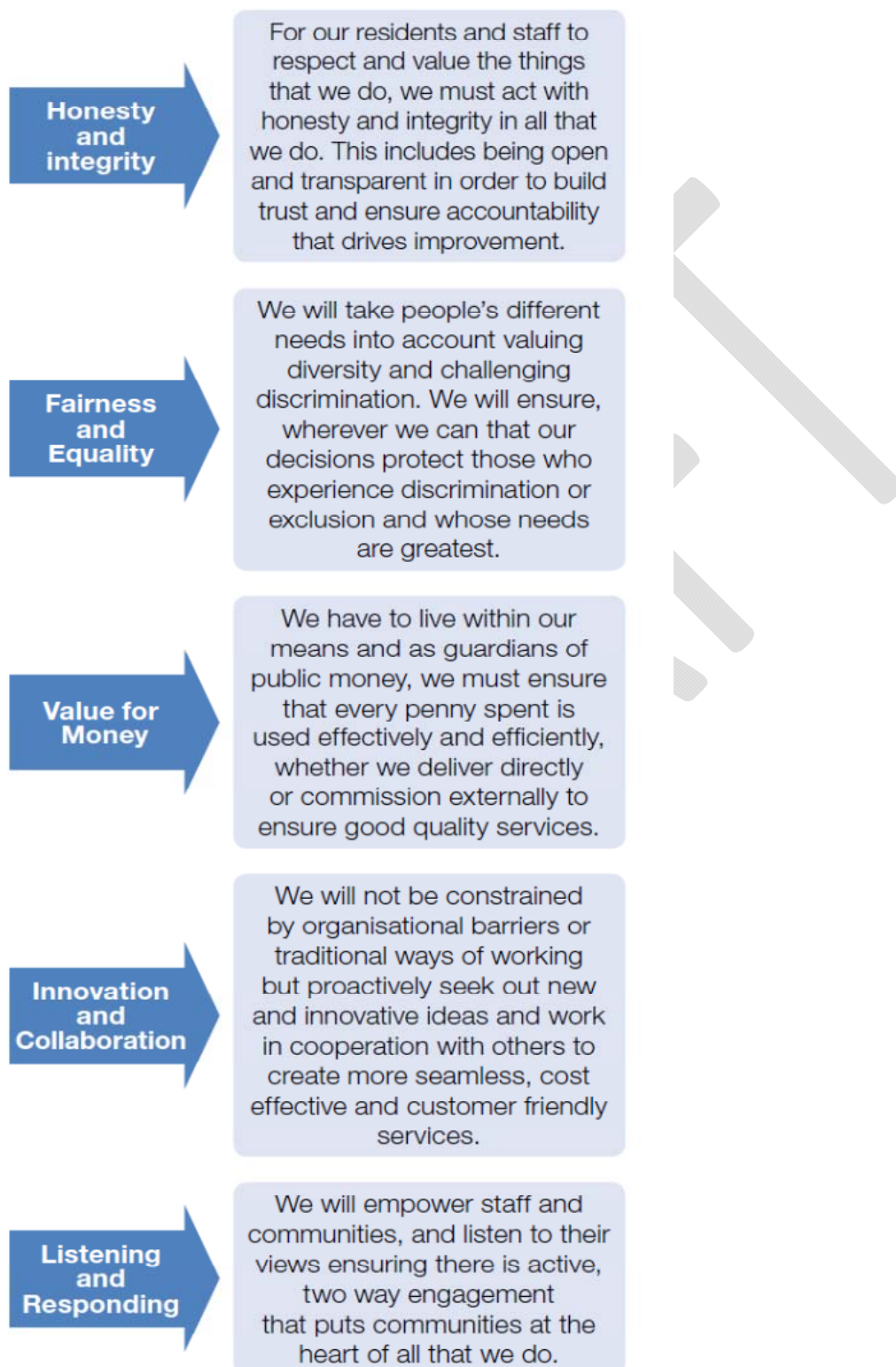
Walsall Council in 2020

In 2020 the Council will by necessity be smaller, doing fewer things, and those services that we continue to provide will be delivered in a very different way to how they are now. People will be less reliant on council services but will value those services they do receive as they will be responsive to their needs.

The Council will be a key enabler of improvements to Walsall and its’ Districts as a place to live, learn and work; working innovatively and collaboratively with strong and resilient communities, public sector partners, schools and businesses to shape services that deliver real and sustainable improvements to people’s lives.

Our Values

Our values will help us to achieve the Council's purpose and objectives. Our values underpin the way we operate as an organisation. They influence our choices and our behaviours - they are the thread running through everything we do.

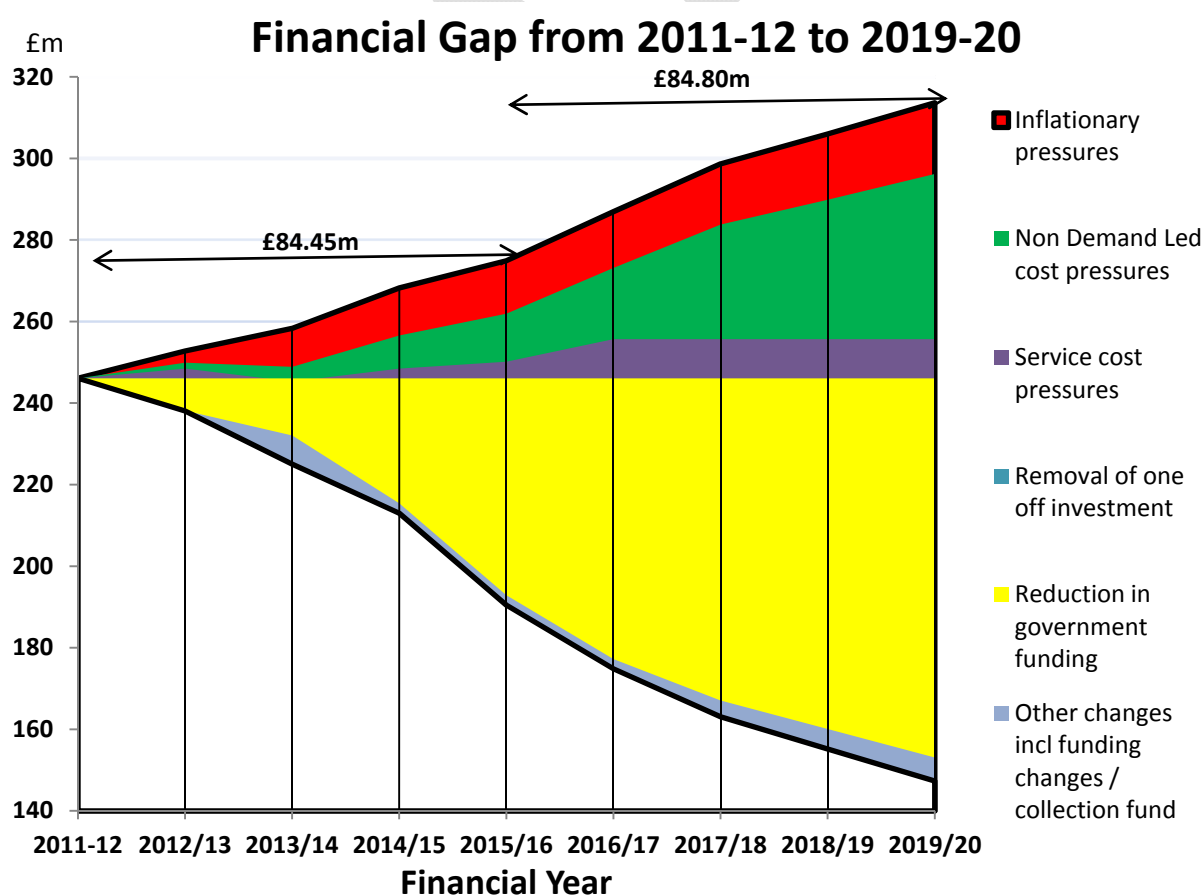


Finances

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

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

Reducing grant funding from central government, and rising costs, means a projected £84.8 million gap in finances, which needs to be closed over the next four years. The scale of this reduction means that radical changes need to be made. This is in addition to £84.45 million reductions we have already found in the previous 4 years. The graph below illustrates the extent of our financial challenge.



A proud history and a bright future



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



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



There has been significant investment in the borough, with over £376million over the last 6 years in the town centre alone, including the Waterfront, Walsall College, WHG offices and a new Tesco store. More development is also well underway including:

- £11m Business and Sports Hub at the college
- £3.2m HQ for Jhoots Pharmacy
- £12m cinema development at Walsall Waterfront
- £7.8m Primark and Co-op project as part of redevelopment of the Old Square Shopping Centre
- £26m Darlaston highways improvement scheme



Walsall had the fifth fastest growing economy in the country between 2009-2013 for the value of goods and services it produces. Around two-thirds of local businesses expect to grow over the next two years, mainly through securing new business in existing markets.



Walsall has a rich history, with a market dating back to 1220, the 'town of a hundred trades' has grown ...



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

Our successes



Male Life Expectancy in Walsall has improved narrowing the gap with national figures.



Jobseeker claimant levels have fallen steadily for the past 2 years, with reductions in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those seeking work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.



The proportion of Walsall schools rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted has risen to 73.3% in March 2015 compared with 68.7% in March 2014. Both local further education providers (Walsall College and Walsall Adult & Community College) have been rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted.



The average time a child spends in care before being adopted has reduced from 684 days in March 2014 to 600 days in March 2015.

More people with social care needs are able to live independently in their own homes



Record number of Gym Members, and doubled the number of Move-it Registrations, widening access to council sport and leisure activities for specific groups e.g. those on low income; aged 60+; people who need to lose weight to improve their health

Our challenges



Walsall has an increasingly dependent population; overall Walsall's population is ageing and this will impact on demand for local public services, with the need to plan for a growing number of older people being a key priority for all partners.



Deprivation is deeply entrenched in Walsall and has worsened with the recession. There are extremes of deprivation, with central and western areas typically much more deprived than eastern areas, though pockets of deprivation exist even in the more affluent parts of the borough.



Walsall's population is becoming more ethnically diverse and by 2011, 23.1% of Walsall residents come from a minority ethnic background; a significant increase from 14.8% in 2001



Walsall fares particularly badly in terms of education, income and employment and many of the issues that challenge the borough mirror the picture of deprivation nationally.



Large numbers of Walsall children (16,100 under 16's) are living in families that are experiencing poverty (29.2%, compared with 20.6% nationally). Growing up in poverty, or with no adults in their household in work, has an impact on young people's aspirations and future life chances, particularly their educational attainment and health.



'Healthy Life Expectancy' (the proportion of life lived in a healthy state) in Walsall is about 60.3 years, this is 2.3 years lower than the West Midlands and 3.4 years lower than England averages. This is a significant demographic pressure on health and social care services in the borough.



Walsall experiences slower than national population growth though this is in line with regional trends.

Our Partners

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

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

Agencies in the Borough have developed a partnership infrastructure which enables each representative body to bring their resources together with others on the things that matter the most, with a shared vision to make Walsall ***a great place to live, work and invest.***

Our relationship with the voluntary and community sector is particularly important and will become increasingly so as we strive to design services around local need. Walsall Local Compact is an agreement between Walsall Council, the local NHS, Walsall Partnership and the Voluntary and Community Sector. It is a framework that will help improve effective joint working and the way we work together towards common goals and visions.

Regionally, we already have excellent working arrangements with our local authority neighbours, including through the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership. This will be strengthened by moves towards a West Midlands Combined Authority.

Locality Working

The Council is committed to working in a way that gets closer to local residents. This 'approach to place' will be centred around local areas, with solutions designed around the needs of that area, rather than any one size fits all model, and will be flexible enough to respond to shifting demand. It is important to note that this does not necessarily signal devolution of services to local areas, and certainly not merely the division and replication of services around district areas. Rather, it is about making services more accessible to local people and better designed around their need and it likely to include a mixture of delivery at a borough, district, neighbourhood, doorstep and virtual level.

To inform this work a set of principles for locality working have been developed:

1. We need residents to have less reliance on the state and be self-sufficient as much as possible.
2. The voluntary and community sector have an important role to play in building self-reliance within communities.
3. We need to move to commission more services rather than grant fund them.
4. We need to replace historical organic and sometimes chaotic relationships relating to buildings and assets between the council and the third sector with professional and business like arrangements that are transparent and fair.
5. We need to get out of buildings and consolidate into a smaller number (and sell them as quickly as possible wherever appropriate).
6. Any future proposals for more locality-based working need to be firmly on the basis of how these will both improve effectiveness for residents and save money.
7. We need to make sure that opportunities are identified and taken to join up the many and various approaches to locality taken by public service providers.
8. We need to remove duplication across activities funded by the Council.
9. We need to reinforce the important roles of town and district centres wherever possible.

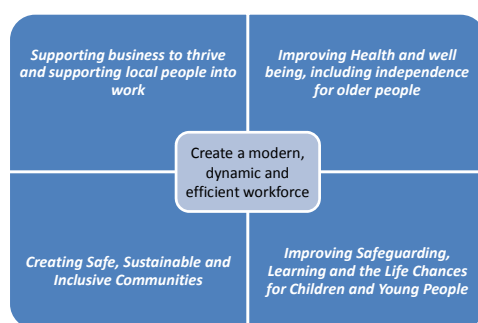
Our Priorities

In order to meet our purpose and vision, the Council will be focussing on the following key priorities over the next four years, recognising that we must do so with decreased and decreasing resources but building on the opportunities and potential of the borough.

Our priorities are taken from The Walsall Plan signed up to by partners and support the vision to make Walsall a great place to live, learn, work and invest. They are:

- **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work**
- **Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people**
- **Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities** – Reducing levels of crime and providing the right environment for people to live in.
- **Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People** - Recognising that a person's early years crucially help determine what kind of future they will have.

We also recognise the importance of ensuring that there is effective support for delivery and so a fifth priority is making sure that front line services are able to pull on the support they need from other services and **creating a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce**.



The Council is committed to delivering against these priorities and has focussed its efforts on a set of key outcomes for each priority.

1. Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work

The strength of the local economy is critical to achieving Walsall's purpose. Economic prosperity has a fundamental impact on other outcomes, including health, community safety and educational attainment.

To make a real difference we must focus on supporting businesses to create sustainable jobs and support local people into work. Working with a range of private and public sector organisations the council will create the conditions that will support growth and promote new investment and existing business expansion, building on recent successes such as the Primark Development.

We recognise the vital role the private sector plays in economic well-being and the important of creating the conditions in which they move into, and remain in, the borough. We will achieve this by providing them with the best possible opportunities, support and advice they require to facilitate expansion or relocation, supporting access to new markets, finance and supply chains to support their competitiveness and sustainability.

2. Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people and the protection of vulnerable people

Short-termism, and dealing with problems only when they become acute, leads to poorer outcomes for individuals, and increased costs in providing services. A longer term view, which manages and decreases demands on services reduces costs whilst also improving the lives, and life chances of residents.

We know that there is a strong association between poorer health and the social and economic conditions that give rise to other problems such as worklessness, social isolation and low attainment. Improving health, by making healthier diet and lifestyle choices easier, identifying and addressing those at high risk of developing health problems, and intervening early when problems start to appear can help to break the cycle of state reliance.

The Council cannot do this on its own however, and indeed is often not best placed to do so. Harnessing the potential of communities, the voluntary sector and volunteerism can help to shape locally based support that is better design around local need and able to intervene earlier, with less reliance on council services.

Whilst promoting independence and reducing reliance on the state, the Council recognises that there are those in society, whether because of age, disability or other circumstances are particularly vulnerable. Protecting these vulnerable groups, through the provision of vital council services and working in collaboration with partners and the community remains an absolute priority for the council.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable people is everyone's responsibility, and we must be proactive in identifying and supporting those at risk and join up effectively across departmental and organisational boundaries.

3. Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

For Walsall to be a great place to live, learn, work and invest, the place needs to be one in which people can take pride. Pride in a local area depends on people feeling safe on the streets and in their own homes, on the environment being clean and green and on people having a sense of 'belonging' and getting on well with their neighbours. There is already much to be proud of in this respect in Walsall: crime is at an all time low, levels of street cleanliness are good and surveys tell us that social cohesiveness is strong when compared to other areas. But we also know that much more needs to be done to maintain and improve this.

The Council has a key role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour, both in responding to and tackling reports of instances as well as engaging with families to undertake preventative work where ASB has been identified as a problem.

Our public places, including our parks and district centres and also our streets need to be kept clean and free from litter, fly-tipping and graffiti. A supply of suitable housing also needs to be encouraged. This will not only improve things for those already living there but also encourage people to live and stay in the area and invest their money there.

If an area is safe, clean and green it will help generate greater pride and a sense of community, but the council can also help this by promoting civic participation, allowing people to feel that they are able to influence local decisions and work together to create local solutions to local problems.

Redesigning locality and neighbourhood working, in a way that, improves access to services and puts communities at the heart of the design and delivery of services can help reduce reliance on the state, saving money as well as better meet local need.

4. Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People, raising aspirations.

Our children and young people are key to future improvements in the borough. Issues discussed above such as health, anti-social behaviour, skills and aspirations can be tackled much more efficiently and effectively at a younger age. Children and young people are the most vulnerable in society but they are also those with the greatest capacity to make a positive change.

Protecting children and young people from harm, either from abuse or neglect remains a key priority and in particular protecting vulnerable children from sexual exploitation.

We want to ensure that children are not only protected but allowed to thrive; equipping them with the skills and qualifications they need to progress into adulthood as active citizens and in a way that supports a healthy lifestyle.

Raising educational attainment across the borough is vital to the future success and wellbeing of our young people as well as to our economy. We are determined to provide all our children with an education that allows them to get the best possible start in life as well. We will work to identify the root causes of continued low educational attainment and address them

It also important to ensure that skills match those needed by employers, ensuring that young people leave education and training 'work ready' so that local people can fill local jobs. We recognise the value of apprenticeships as one effective way of meeting this need.

5. Create a modern, dynamic and efficient workforce designed around what Residents need

Delivering the kind of services that Walsall residents need and deserve, within the financial constraints set, will require us to take a radically different look at what we do and how we do it. As the services we provide change, so must our workforce; we understand the creative power, drive and ambition available to us and must work effectively at all levels of the organisation to harness and release this potential.

Who delivers services, as well as how they are delivered, will be based on a thorough understanding of need and demand and how these can best be met, ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt to shifting demand and making appropriate use of technology.

Monitoring Progress

We are committed to transparency and will be honest and open about our progress, publishing regular updates on how we are doing in delivering this plan. Progress will be monitored through reporting on delivery of the outcomes outlined

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

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