



Walsall Council

Scrutiny Overview Committee

Meeting to be held on: **20 April 2023 at 6.00 P.M.**

Meeting to be held via: **Council House and Microsoft Teams**

Public access to meeting via: www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor Murray

Vice Chair: Councillor Nawaz

Councillor Bains
Councillor P. Bott
Councillor Cooper
Councillor Ditta
Councillor Follows
Councillor Hicken
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor Sears
Councillor Singh-Sohal

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

Councillor Bird

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:

All

ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

1.	Apologies To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.	
2.	Substitutions To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.	
3.	Declarations of interest and party whip To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.	
4.	Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda (if applicable).	
5.	Minutes To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023.	<u>To Follow</u>
6.	Voter Reforms and Raising Awareness To inform the Scrutiny Overview Committee of the implications of the Voter ID requirements, which are coming into effect for the Local Elections on the 4 May 2023.	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Findings and Action Plan To present the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer challenge findings and action plan.	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	We are Walsall 2040 Draft strategy consultation To provide and update on the We are Walsall 2040 draft strategy.	<u>Enclosed</u>
9.	Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees To receive any feedback from meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committees since the last meeting.	<u>Enclosed</u>
10.	Recommendation Tracker To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.	<u>Enclosed</u>
11.	Areas of Focus 2022-23 To review the Committees Work Programme and the Forward Plans for Walsall Council and the Black Country Executive Committee.	<u>Enclosed</u>
12.	Date of next meeting To be confirmed.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

20 April 2023

6

Voter Reforms and Raising Awareness

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: All

1. Aim

The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Overview Committee of the implications of the Voter ID requirements, which are coming into effect for the Local Elections on the 4 May 2023. The report aims to outline the responsibilities of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, the legislative changes brought in by the Elections Act 2022 and Voter Identification Regulations 2022, acceptable identification, voter authority certificates, and the responsibility of the Presiding Officer. It also details the actions being taken by the Council to fulfil these responsibilities.

2. Recommendations

Scrutiny Overview Committee are recommended to note the responsibilities of Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer and of the actions being taken to deliver these responsibilities.

3. Report detail – know

3.1 The Elections Act 2022 and Voter Identification Regulations 2022 require electors in England to present an acceptable form of identification to vote in polling stations during the Local Elections.

3.2 Acceptable forms of ID include:

International travel

- Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country.

Driving and Parking

- Driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (this includes a provisional driving licence),
- A Blue Badge.

Local Travel

- Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom,

- Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom,
- Oyster 60+ Card funded by the Government of the United Kingdom,
- Freedom Pass,
- Scottish National Entitlement Card,
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card,
- Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card,
- Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland,
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland,
- War Disablement SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland,
- 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland,
- Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland,
- Proof of age,
- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card).

Other government issued documents

- Biometric immigration document,
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card),
- National identity card issued by an EEA state,
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland,
- Voter Authority Certificate,
- Anonymous Elector's Document.

- 3.3 If a person does not have any of the acceptable ID listed above they can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC). This can be done online via a Government portal; paper applications are also available for download on the Electoral Commission website or can be posted to the elector upon request. In addition to this, electors are able to visit any of the Walsall Connected Hubs or book an appointment with the elections team in the Civic Centre for assistance with their application.
- 3.4 The election team is required to upload paper applications to the government portal, including a scan of the photo provided, for processing. The application form requires an elector to provide their national insurance number, date of birth, address and full legal name, and a suitable photo. These details are first checked against records held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) through an automated system called the Electoral Registration Officer Portal (EROP).
- 3.5 If the data check against DWP records does not match, the electoral services team will check local council data i.e. council tax and housing benefit, to try and confirm the elector's identity. Where both national and local data matching are unsuccessful, the elector will be required to provide further documentary evidence which will be explained in an email or paper communication. As of 15/03/2023 only 4 electors have been required to provide such documentary evidence.
- 3.6 Where the information is matched the application is then moved onto the determination process where a member of the core elections team reviews the photo provided, ensures that the elector is registered to vote and that the elector is eligible for a voter authority certificate. The photo provided must meet certain

criteria laid out in the legislation and Electoral Commission guidance, in particular the photo must be:

- Of the elector facing forwards and looking directly at the camera;
- A close up of the electors head and shoulders, without any head covering, unless one of worn for religious beliefs or medical reasons. The face must not be covered for any reason;
- With a plain facial expression and with the electors eyes open and clearly visible e.g. without sunglasses and not obscured with hair.

The photo must also:

- Be in colour;
- Be a true likeness of the elector without any modification or filters;
- Be taken against a plain background;
- Be in sharp focus and clear;
- Be free from “red-eye,” shadows which obscure the face, or reflection;
- Not be damaged.

If an elector is unable to meet these requirements due to a disability the Electoral Registration Officer has the discretion to accept a photo that does not meet all of the above specifications.

- 3.7 If the elector’s photo does not meet the requirements listed above they will be notified by email or letter, dependent on the communication method the elector chose during the application stage, to inform them that a new photo must be supplied. Electors are given 28 days to resubmit a new photo, with a reminder sent after 14 days, before the application is rejected. This communication also reminds the elector of the photo requirements and provides the option to visit a Walsall Connected Hub or book an appointment with the elections team if they need assistance in taking a photo.
- 3.8 Where an application is rejected, the legislation requires the ERO to write to the elector with information about why it was rejected, the grounds for appeal, and the process for reapplication. The application is then stored for a period of 12 months by the ERO.
- 3.9 Where then application is accepted, the Voter Authority Certificate is issued through the ERO and sent to a government procured print service who dispatch the certificate via Royal Mail 1st Class post within 2 working days. An explanatory document is sent with the certificate which can be requested in Braille, Easy Read or Large print.
- 3.10 If an application is dispatched close to the election and is unlikely to be delivered in time for the polls, the ERO has limited discretion to issue a temporary VAC which must be collected by the elector in person at the Civic Centre. These temporary documents can only be used for a specified poll and will be forfeited at the polling station upon receiving a ballot paper.
- 3.11 When an elector arrives at the polling station the polling station staff will first ask for their name and address to ensure they are on the electoral register. Once this is confirmed, the polling station staff will ask the elector for their ID and offer the

use of the privacy pod which will be available in all 126 polling stations across Walsall.

- 3.12 The elector will be required to show their ID to the polling station staff either at the staff's desk or inside the privacy pod. An elector who wears a face covering will be required to remove this to verify the ID matches, female members of staff will be available to inspect female electors ID on request.
- 3.13 Where an elector does not have a suitable form of ID or refuses to show their ID the polling station staff will not issue a ballot paper. The electors name and number on the register will be recorded on the Ballot Paper Refusal List and the elector will be invited to return with a suitable ID document. If the elector does return, with acceptable ID, the Ballot Paper Refusal List will be marked to reflect this.
- 3.14 Once the register and ID checks are completed by the staff, the elector will be issued with a ballot paper and will be able to vote in the usual way.
- 3.15 Information from the Ballot Paper Refusal List will be sent to the Electoral Commission and DLUHC who will use the information for further policy and legislative reform.
- 3.16 The RO recognises the significance of ensuring that all voters are aware of the new voter ID provisions and as such the elections team have been working closely with Communications, the Community Cohesion team, Walsall Connected and the Electoral Commission to raise the awareness of the requirements for photo ID and also for how those that need to can apply for a VAC.
- 3.17 The council has utilised a mixture of Electoral Commission materials and ones produced locally to raise the profile of the need for photo ID. Posters were circulated via teams working in the community in December 2022. On 21 February 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shared that Walsall was 19th out of 387 Local Authorities across England, Scotland and Wales for VAC applications. This is indicative that the early attempts to raise awareness were beneficial.
- 3.18 A full social media campaign has been ongoing since January 2023, when the ERO Portal was opened by the government for VAC applications. This was timed to coincide with the Electoral Commissions national campaign which features social media messages, TV and radio advertisements and posters on busses and bus stops.
- 3.19 Printed materials regarding photo ID have been provided to Walsall Connected, libraries and community centres. The distribution of printed materials promoting the need for photo ID is continually growing as requests are received or suggestion made.
- 3.20 With support from the communications team a [short video](#) has been produced and shared on social media that explains the requirement for photo ID and also the proposed use of privacy pods at polling stations. This has been picked up by other councils as best practice. We have encouraged community groups and

partners to share this link and social media posts on their platforms and it has, for example, been shared on the Walsall Muslim Noticeboard Facebook page.

- 3.21 Via elected members and community contacts we are inviting community leaders, faith leaders and electors in to see the 'mock-up' polling station we have set up in the Council House. This provides the opportunity to share information regarding how the privacy pods will be deployed. This has provided valuable feedback that is informing how the privacy pods will be used.
- 3.22 In addition to the online media, printed advertisements advertising the photo ID requirements have been placed on 8 bin wagons which deliver across Walsall and are expected to be seen by over 200,000 residents in the 6 weeks they will be displayed.
- 3.23 The deadline for applying for a VAC if you need one for the Local Elections on 4 May 2023, is 5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023.

4. *Financial information*

- 4.1 There are costs directly associated with the implementation and administration of Voter ID. The Government has provided all Local Authorities with a grant to cover some of the costs incurred. The grant comes with specific restrictions and can only be used for:
- Here to help badges
 - Chairs
 - Large pencils
 - Pencil grips
 - Elector engagement for the Local Elections 2023
 - Administrative costs for processing Voter Authority Certificates
 - Training for core election staff members
- 4.2 All other items, including privacy screens, mirrors, cameras, printers and equipment storage cannot be funded through the grant. Instead the funding must be applied for from the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing through their Justification Lead Bid (JIB) process. Details for this bidding process have yet to be shared with Local Authorities.

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

The ongoing communication and engagement activity seeks to ensure all eligible electors have the opportunity to participate in the upcoming Local Election, reducing any inequalities and addressing any accessibility issues.

6. *Decide*

Scrutiny Overview Committee are asked to note this briefing and the actions being taken to ensure electors are aware of the voter ID requirements.

7. *Respond*

As part of the ongoing implementation of the Elections Act 2022 the elections team under the guidance and direction of the ERO and RO will continually review and revise activity to ensure responsibilities are fulfilled.

8. Review

This briefing sets out the process being taken by the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer in relation to Voter Identification. A report will be prepared after the polls for this committee to review the impact of the new legislation.

Background papers

None

Author

Helen Dudson, Electoral Services Manager. Helen.dudson@walsall.gov.uk

James O'Sullivan, Deputy Electoral Services Manager. James.osullivan@walsall.gov.uk

DATE: 20 April, 2023

7.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Findings and Action Plan

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr M Bird - Leader

Report:

The Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) process is an opportunity for Councils to engage with peers and elected members from other areas who have experience on specific areas or issues. It is recommended that Councils undertake a CPC every 5 years to allow the organisation the space for reflection, stocktake and consideration of its future direction. The last peer challenge assessment in Walsall was undertaken in 2017 and was the catalyst for the Proud transformation programme that has delivered a fundamental shift in Council services and delivery.

From 16-19 January 2023, we welcomed a team of peers to Walsall, including senior officers and one Member from leading Councils across the country. During their visit the peer team spoke to 120 staff, Members, volunteers, and partners through group workshops, focus groups, 1-1 conversations and examination of Council strategies and plans.

The peer team's final report, including 11 recommendations for further consideration, was shared with the Council in February in draft form. The final version went to Cabinet in March 2023, alongside an Action Plan (appendix 2) that was developed to highlight the Council response to the report's recommendations. The responses and actions we have set out highlight that many programmes and specific activities that address the recommendations were already planned before the CPC or indeed are already underway. However, the review gives the Council a valuable external perspective, and is an opportunity to reflect and consider how we might add to our existing plans to strengthen the next stage of our transformation journey.


The final report was very positive on the progress Walsall Council has made across a number of challenging areas. Some of these are highlighted in the report (appendix 1) and presentation. Members were singled out for praise for their broad local knowledge of the communities they serve and the trusting and effective relationships that exist between officers and Members across the Council.

Recommendations:**That:**

- Members note the findings from the Corporate Peer Challenge and the successes that it highlights.
- Members note the recommendations that the LGA put forward, and the Action Plan produced as a response that sets out all the activity already planned or in progress.


Contact Officers:

Karen Griffiths – Head of Policy & Strategy

 . 01922 653831

karen.griffiths@walsall.gov.uk

Liz Connolly – Senior Policy & Performance Officer

 . 01922 654357

elizabeth.connolly@walsall.gov.uk

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Corporate Peer Challenge Report

Scrutiny Overview Committee (20 Apr 2023)



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - background

- Recommended that councils undertake CPC every 5 years – Walsall's last was in 2017.
- Not an inspection: peers provide challenge and share learning (final report with recommendations)
- On site in Walsall 16-19 January 2023
- Structured around **EPICC priorities** plus LGA **core elements**:
 - Local priorities and outcomes
 - Organisational and place leadership
 - Governance and culture
 - Financial planning and management
 - Capacity for improvement

Page 14 of 120



Progress to date

- **LGA Feedback Report:** received 21 February and final version agreed with LGA (to identify factual errors, agree tone etc).
- **Recommendations:** peer team set out **11 recommendations**, spanning the five themes.
- **High level Action Plan:** produced by Walsall Council in response to final LGA Report and recommendations (Cabinet approved these: **22 March**)
- **Chief Exec/Leader statement** circulated and published online alongside report, with separate comms to members, staff and partners

In our own words...

Peers met with 120 staff, at all levels and across all services, during their four-day visit

“I can go to the Chief Exec directly”

“The council has moved on”

“I feel listened to”

“PROUD transformation work was owned by the whole council”

“I feel consulted”

“It feels like a good place to work”

“Strong political leadership”

“I have good relationships with colleagues across the council”

“PROUD attracted me to Walsall”

“There is intent in the organisation to change”

“The council is seen as a good place to work”

“It’s a great place to work”

Page 16 of 120

It feels positive”

Findings- strengths

- We understand our challenges and have lots of areas of good practice to build on
- Proud transformation evident
- Building blocks for future are in place (Hub)
- Strong controls – scrutiny, finance and audit (Audit Committee “one of the strongest they have seen”)
- Positive performance in challenging service areas
- Strong partnership working locally and regionally
- Strong political leadership and good officer/member relationships
- Talented and passionate staff
- Culture of improvement
- Be proud of the 2040 engagement work
- Good work in equality, diversity & inclusion



Page 17 of 120

Next Steps

- **Six-month check-in** with peer team: an opportunity to discuss progress and next steps
- **Wider discussions:** using this CPC process as a starting point to think about where we want to be as a Council in 5 years' time (in the same way the last CPC helped to shape Proud)
- **Internal Delivery Plan:** now being worked up to maximise the value of the review and its recommendations
 - Workshops conducted with Directors/EDs and senior managers to identify existing/potential activity
 - Seek to align actions to existing workstreams, ensuring delivery and accountability, fit to EPICC/Proud etc
 - Identify officers to work up actions/make appropriate links to other activity

Action plan

Recommendation 1: Maximise the opportunities that are presented to the Council through partnership and convening arrangements.

Actions:

We are Walsall 2040 engagement

Strengthening and alignment of Walsall Partnerships

Strategic approach to Voluntary community sector



Action plan

Recommendation 2: Consider the Council's approach to inclusive growth in delivering the 2022 Economic Strategy and maximising the impact of the "Walsall Pound".

Actions:

Promote our social value policy

Re-establish Walsall Economic partnership and deliver the Economic strategy

Recommendation 3: Define the content and deliverables that will be included in the "Proud" initiative going forward.

Actions:

Design and implement outcomes based budget process to determine next phase of transformation deliverables

Page 20 of 120

Action plan

Recommendation 4: There is a framework of Plans and priorities that exist across the Council; however, consideration should be given to their alignment and support staff understanding.

Actions:

Implement culture workplan aligned to Enabling Communications & Culture workstream of Proud
We will align Our Council Plan and Values, Proud promises, Key Areas of Focus and 2040 borough plan



Action plan

Recommendation 5: Provide a coordinated approach to issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to support the workforce to better represent local communities.

Actions:

Planned EDI work to review Equalities governance and strengthen corporate approach

Implement new workforce strategy

Future workforce activities such as the Coaching for Career Development programme on underrepresented groups.

Work with West Midlands Employers to deliver a bespoke Allyship programme for senior leaders at Walsall



Action plan

Recommendation 6: Review the Council's approach to flexible working in the round and communicate this clearly to staff.

Actions:

Staff engagement and communication, consistency of message and management practice
We are reviewing and enhancing our induction, training and coaching offer to staff to ensure effective management in relation to customer focussed ways of working.

Recommendation 7: Articulate and consider the contribution of Organisational Development to the next stage of the Council's transformation.

Actions:

Strengthen the Council's OD functions and align to our transformation plans.
Deliver workshops to embed our PLATE values [Page 24 of 129](#) day-to-day behaviours.



Action plan

Recommendation 8: Maintain effective financial control and establish a sustainable and resilient financial future post-COVID.

Actions:

We will maintain effective financial control and continue working towards implementing an outcome-based budgeting approach for 2024/25

We will consider continuity planning in Audit Committee – ensuring it remains an exemplar.

Recommendation 9: Consider the Management Responsibilities of Senior Officers at the Council.

Actions:

We will continue to consider Management responsibilities and succession planning as part of new Workforce strategy implementation.



Page 24 of 120

Action plan

Recommendation 10: Consider the knowledge transfer required from the Council's strategic partner to support the newly established Corporate Hub.

Actions:

We will continue the knowledge transfer processes that are underway across the Council and develop the existing prioritisation processes and workplans that are in place for the Hub.

Recommendation 11: Ensure that internal processes are proportionate and consistently applied

Actions:

Continue work aligned to Proud workstreams and conduct an officer governance review in Spring/Summer 2023

Implementing tools to support governance processes and further strengthen officer Member communications

Page 25 of 120


Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Corporate Peer Challenge Report

16-19 January 2023

Feedback report





1. Executive summary:.....	3
2. Key recommendations:	6
3. Summary of the peer challenge approach	9
4. Feedback	12
5. Next steps	20

1. Executive summary:

Walsall Council has undergone significant transformation and change in recent years. This has included the proactive design and delivery of the Council's "Proud Programme" but also the reactive response of the organisation to wider social changes and reforms. In this context, there is an exciting opportunity for the Council to build on this practice, utilise their strong governance and financial foundations, and apply the principles and learning of the Proud Programme to wider socio-economic challenges. This will enable the Council to continue their journey of improvement, addressing outcomes through a convening and enabling role with wider partners. Ultimately, this will support the ambitions set out in the "We are Walsall 2040" (WAW2040) Programme over the coming years.

The vision of WAW2040 has been shaped by extensive engagement, with more than 10,000 residents and businesses contributing towards the development of a shared ambition to create a borough "*that works for everyone*". The opportunity now exists for the Council to build on the discussions to date to deepen engagement and maximise the contribution of communities to these goals. The Peer Team appreciate that further work is ongoing on the development of a framework for this approach but hope that the recommendations and findings set out in this report support Walsall Council with this process.

Through the Peer Review process, the team were presented with evidence of strong governance arrangements and effective financial planning. This corporate core provides a strong foundation for services, engagement, ongoing transformation, and is underpinned by clear financial reporting, effective engagement with audit, and appropriate internal scrutiny. The Peer Team appreciates that there have been further corporate improvements made in recent years, including securing additional capacity for communications, a Programme Management Office, and the development of a Corporate Hub, bringing together Communications, Marketing and Brand (including consultation), Policy & Strategy (including performance and behavioural science), Commissioning (including procurement and contract management) as well as Business Insights. This creates exciting opportunities to create more community focused services and driving forward effective place-based leadership that builds on these foundations and applies their benefit beyond the Council.

Beyond these corporate functions, the Peer Team heard evidence of effective partnership working in a number of service areas, and a wider Council approach of working "*positively*" and "*collaboratively*" with others. This included notable practice in areas such as health

and social care, including the operation of seven integrated teams, OFSTED rating Children's services as 'good', and praise for the organisational focus and approach to addressing delayed transfers of care. As always with partnership working, there is opportunity to do more, and this report highlights some specific examples which the Council may wish to consider.

Similarly, the Team heard about the strong relationships that the Council developed with Voluntary and Community Sector through the leading role that they played in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic and in leading on development of Plans for 2040. Taking forward these relationships for the delivery of WAW2040 will require them to be strengthened to maximise the benefits of early intervention, prevention, and demand management and improve outcomes for residents and support financial improvement. This will require the Council to move towards a more strategic relationship with partners, which would benefit by being underpinned by longer-term approaches to investment with these groups.

The Council has a strong track record in financial management that has served the organisation well. The Council has a net revenue budget of approximately £226 million and has an allocated Capital Programme of £310 million for the next four years. The Council has a good record in delivering savings (£225 million from 2010/11 to 2021/22) and has plans in place to address £24 million saving requirement in 2022/23. It will be important that this financial rigour continues, to ensure that the organisation has appropriate resources, reserves, and plans to address national challenges of inflation, cost of care reform, as well as the delivery of the remaining £16 million of savings in 2023/24.

During our time on site in Walsall Town Hall, the Peer Team met with many committed, hard-working, and enthusiastic staff who are proud to work for Walsall Council. These staff are a valuable asset to the organisation, and this report sets out a number of considerations that will support the Council to develop and embed their approach to Organisational Development (OD), whilst also encouraging consistency of practice on a number of human resource processes across all directorates. A central strand to this work will be providing more clarity and consistency regarding the Council's approach to flexible and remote working, and this should be considered in the round, including the impact on workforce, community engagement, estate, ICT, regeneration, and the local economy. The Peer Team appreciate that the Council's new OD Strategy is nascent (2023-2026) but believe that further work is required to embed the "PLATE" principles of (Professionalism, Leadership, Accountability, Transparency and Ethical). Embedding these principles should be considered beyond annual performance conversations in to how these behaviours are

sponsored by senior leaders and experienced daily. Furthermore, it will be important that there is clear alignment of the PLATE principles, WAW2040 vision, and Proud Programme to avoid the risk of duplication or confusion.

This work on Organisational Development should be extended to include consideration of the Council's approach to issues of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and the organisational benefits that could be achieved from improvement in this area. The Team appreciate that progress has been made on these issues in some services and would encourage the Council to consider the support and structures required to extend this across the organisation. An important asset that will support progress in these areas is the trusting relationships that exist across senior Officers and Members of the Council. From the conversations that the Peer Team had, it is clear that there is trust and respect across these roles, which has been supported through a conscious investment of time, capacity, and training for those in political and managerial leadership positions.

As context for this review, Walsall is one of 36 Metropolitan Authorities in England and is located in the West Midlands. The borough shares borders with Staffordshire County Council to the North, and to the South and West is bordered by Wolverhampton, Sandwell, and Birmingham. Walsall is one of seven Councils with full voting rights who comprise the West Midlands Combined Authority.

The borough covers approximately 40 square miles, and serves a population of 286,700 residents, with the largest settlements being in Walsall, Bloxwich and Willenhall. The borough is both economically and demographically diverse, and the Council has extensive information regarding the social challenges that exist in the borough. This includes approximately 50% of residents living in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England, with the Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking Walsall as 25 out of 317 for the most deprived local authorities, facing particular challenges on income, education, skills, and employment. The deprivation of the borough splits broadly on an east-west axis, with the more prosperous areas being in the East.

Politically, following a period of no-overall control (2011-2019) the Council is now led by a Conservative majority through a Leader and Cabinet model. The current distribution of seats across political groups is Conservative 38, Labour 20, with two members sitting as non-aligned or independent Councillors. The political make-up of the Council is decided on electoral thirds, with the next elections taking place in 2023, 2024, and 2026.

Finally, this Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) took place in January 2023, during the notice period of the departing Chief Executive who had chosen to leave to take a role elsewhere in the Sector. This Chief Executive had been central to the content and delivery of the Proud Programme and had provided visible leadership to this work. The Council has appointed the Interim Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) as interim Chief Executive whilst they recruit a permanent replacement. This approach will provide important continuity to the Council over the coming months, supporting budget setting, elections, and continued delivery of services.

The appointment of a new permanent Chief Executive will naturally be a key juncture for the organisation, and it is hoped that this report will support them in taking this role and act as a bridging document to support continuity and ownership of improvement. However, making progress against the findings of this report and the recommendations included will require leadership permissions (both politically and managerially), and without this, there is a risk that momentum could be lost during transitions.

2. Key recommendations:

The main body of this report contains a range of findings and recommendations relevant to Walsall Council. Many of these may be easy to implement “quick wins” and practical actions. However, the key recommendations below focus on the issues which will be most critical to the Council’s improvement, and those which should be prioritised going forward include:

- **Recommendation One: Maximise the opportunities that are presented to the Council through partnership and convening arrangements:** The Council’s improvements through the Proud Programme have been largely internal to-date. The next phase of WAW2040 will require these priorities being shared and embedded across partner organisations. There is more work to be done to socialise this vision and support its recognition and understanding of partners contributions towards it. This will require regular and active engagement, investment in relationships, and clear communications.
- **Recommendation Two: Consider the Council’s approach to inclusive growth in delivering the 2022 Economic Strategy and maximising the impact of the “Walsall Pound”:** There is strong political appetite to support inclusive growth in Walsall. The Peer Team would encourage the Council to be ambitious in this space, this should include ambitions for better paid jobs in the borough, as well as an increase in the

number of roles, and could do more to benefit from the Council's role as a major employer and procurer of goods and services. There is learning available from within the sector on social value frameworks and good employment charters, and this will build on the good foundations that are already in place from the Council's approach through Walsall Works.

- **Recommendation Three: Define the content and deliverables that will be included in the “Proud” initiative going forward:** The Council's “Proud Programme” ran from 2018 to 2022 and identified significant savings within a specific business case. It is appreciated that the Council has now moved towards these principles as an ongoing way of working rather than an individual programme with specific milestones or end dates. However, there is still a need to set-out what this includes (and does not include) in order to support resourcing, reporting, and tracking benefits.
- **Recommendation Four: There is a framework of Plans and priorities that exist across the Council; however, consideration should be given to their alignment and support staff understanding:** The relationship between ‘Proud’ transformation, “EPICC” priorities, ‘PLATE’ values, and “WAW2040” vision is a language which is spoken fluently among senior Council officers. There is a need to make sure that these programmes are appropriately aligned, and that this understanding exists at all tiers of the organisation.
- **Recommendation Five: Provide a coordinated approach to issues of EDI to support the workforce to better represent local communities:** The Council has recognised that further work is needed to strengthen work on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, this has included good progress to date on your gender pay gap, and the introduction of staff network groups to support staff voices. This should be built on with reporting, publishing, and monitoring progress against other “pay gaps” (such as ethnicity and disability) as well as wider public sector duties. This will support the workforce to better represent the communities of borough.
- **Recommendation Six: Review the Council's approach to flexible working in the round and communicate this clearly to staff:** Through COVID-19 Walsall Council has transitioned from a largely onsite corporate workforce to a largely remote corporate workforce and is now working to strike an appropriate middle ground built around “customer focused ways of working”. This needs to be considered in the round alongside the workforce implications for teams, engagement with elected members, Council assets, as well as the strategic approaches to supporting the local economy and being connected to local communities. This work will require engagement and communications to talk through these issues and their relationship to each other. The Peer Team would recommend that this includes Officers attending formal meetings in-

person as far as possible and appropriate, particularly Scrutiny Committees and Joint Consultation Committee meetings with Trade Unions

- **Recommendation Seven: Articulate and consider the contribution of Organisational Development to the next stage of the Council's transformation:**
The importance of OD to the next stage of the Council's journey cannot be understated, and the Council should consider the investment of time, capacity, and resource required to support this, as they move to embed proud ways of working. This should include how PLATE values are embedded beyond annual conversations, and how these principles are demonstrated at all tiers of the organisation. This will require regular two-way communication with staff.
- **Recommendation Eight: Maintain effective financial control and establish a sustainable and resilient financial future post-COVID.** In common with most councils, Walsall has experienced additional funding pressures and disruption to its financial strategy during the pandemic which, despite government funding, have had to be managed. The council now needs to ensure that it re-establishes a sustainable budget and maintain reserves to assure its future resilience.
- **Recommendation Nine: Consider the Management Responsibilities of Senior Officers at the Council:** The Council's approach to giving Executive Directors additional responsibility for cross-cutting initiatives such as 'customer experience' is not a model which is used commonly elsewhere in the sector. It is appreciated that this supports senior accountability for corporate priorities and helps work across directorate silos. However, this model will require the Council to be live to implications such as capacity challenges and succession planning in the medium-term.
- **Recommendation 10: Consider the knowledge transfer required from the Council's strategic partner to support the newly established Corporate Hub:** The Council has worked through a strategic partner model to deliver the Proud Programme. Going forward, the Council should consider the benefits that can be gained across the organisation through the knowledge transfer from the Council's strategic partners over coming years to make sure that it maximises the value from this investment. Similarly, there is potential for the Council's Community Hubs to consider the whole council offer beyond the current functions and improve the customer journey.
- **Recommendation 11: Ensure that internal processes are proportionate and consistently applied:** There is potential for the Council to free up capacity within the organisation by simplifying some processes, including report approvals and recruitment processes. This would support capacity to be best aligned to priorities. This should also consider the channels and processes used for sharing information with and

resolving issues raised by Elected Members. This would be welcomed by both officers and members and would free up capacity that is currently being spent resolving these matters elsewhere.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1 Background and Overview:

From 2017-2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) delivered 447 Peer Challenges, including 182 Corporate Peer Challenges. This process involves Officer and Councillor Peers from across the sector reviewing Council services and functions through constructive and respectful challenge. This process enables experience and expertise to be shared across the sector collectively and is a central element of sector-led improvement.

These reviews are designed to be locally led, with Councils requesting that Peer Challenges are completed and volunteering to take part. This includes the LGA working with Councils in advance to jointly develop the scope of the review, and key areas of focus. In this spirit, the findings and recommendations from Peer Challenges are locally owned, with Councils responsible for the development of their own Action Plans in response to these reports, and updating staff, partners, and Councillors as appropriate.

The benefit of Peer Challenges has been independently validated, including an evaluation of the process which was completed in 2020 by Shared Intelligence. The feedback which has been received by Participating Councils has included 93% of respondents saying that this process has helped to provide an external view of the organisation, and 94% stating that the process had contributed a positive impact on their relationship with partners.

3.2 The Peer Challenge Team:

Peer Challenges are delivered by experienced Councillor and Officer Peers who are working elsewhere in the local government sector. The make-up of a Peer Team is carefully planned in line with the Council's requirements and the agreed scope. Ahead of this Peer Challenge, the Council supported the development of a scope document by asking for the Peer Team to consider corporate issues and provide constructive challenge to the next stage of the Council's transformation.

The Council requested that there was additional focus placed on issues of staff and customer experience through this review and requested that there was expertise on the team to support this work. It was also possible in this instance for one of the Peer Team members who supported the Council's previous CPC in 2017 to be on the team, enabling conversations to be informed of previous findings. The LGA would like to thank the following Peer Team members for supporting this review:

- Lead Peer: Alison McKenzie-Folan (Chief Executive, Wigan Council)
- Lead Political Peer: Cllr Rob Waltham (Leader, North Lincolnshire)
- Senior Officer Peer: James Binks (Assistant Chief Executive, Manchester City Council)
- Finance Peer: Alan Finch (LGA – Principal Advisor Finance)
- Senior Officer Peer: Jill Greenfield (Service Director, Communities and Customer, Kirklees Council)
- Senior Officer Peer: Tinu Olowe (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Enfield Council)
- Shadow Peer: Ellen Vernon (Programme Director One Public Estate, LGA)
- Peer Challenge Manager: Matt Dodd (Local Government Association)

3.3 The Peer Challenge Methodology:

Peer challenges are improvement focused; and it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans, proposals, or specific services. Instead, the Peer Team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, documents they reviewed, and the culture which they saw.

The Peer Team prepared for this work by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure that they were familiar with the Council, the Borough, the opportunities that exist, and the challenges that it is facing. This included a position statement that the Council produced specifically for the Peer Challenge, which is designed to encourage self-assessment, reflection, and dialogue across the organisation. Alongside this position statement, the Council also provided reference documents including (but not limited to) copies of key Plans and Strategies, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and service information.

Alongside the documents provided by the Council, the Peer Team also undertook an independent assessment of the performance of Council services and wider Council finance using publicly available information through L.G. Inform. The Team also commissioned a dedicated financial review of the Council's financial position. These assessments were shared with the Peer Team in advance of the review and provided to the Council to support discussion and dialogue on these issues. Prior to arriving with the Council, Peer Team Members contacted their equivalents working at Walsall. These meetings were completed to support the Teams' understanding of the Council, and to the development of appropriate

lines of enquiry. Beyond this, the Team also:

- Collectively spent c. 280 hours to determine and refine our findings (the equivalent of one person spending over seven weeks in Walsall).
- Spoken to over 120 Councillors, Staff, and Partners through a mixture of 1-2-1s and focus groups.
- Reviewed the press and watched online meetings.
- Attended your all staff event and visited your Community Hubs.
- Observed regular meetings.
- Spent time working, visiting, and being in Walsall.

Immediate feedback was delivered to the Council on the afternoon of Thursday 19 January, at a session which was attended by the Council's Senior Leadership Team, the Council Leader, and other Cabinet representatives. A copy of these slides was immediately provided to the Council to support communication with those who took part in the process. This final report was produced in February 2023, with agreement that the Peer Team will engage with the Council approximately six-months following publication to discuss progress against their Action Plan.

3.4 The Peer Challenge Scope:

The Peer Team considered the following five themes which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges that the LGA undertake. These are the areas that are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

- **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the Council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
- **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the Council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
- **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge, and scrutiny?
- **Financial planning and management:** Does the Council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
- **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

It was requested that when considering these themes, that the Peer Team would consider the implications for the next phase of the Council's Transformation Programme, as well as wider issues of staff and customer experience. Rather than these issues being reported in isolation, this report tries to highlight these issues through the framework above.

4. Feedback:

4.1 Understanding the local place and priority setting:

Through the review process, the Peer Team met with a broad range of local Councillors who showed an impressive knowledge regarding the borough and the communities that they serve. Prior to spending time in Walsall, the Team was provided with access to a range of key documents regarding the borough. These documents demonstrate that the Council has a robust evidence base regarding the needs of the borough, and helped the team to better understand the local area and the associated social issues, including:

- Walsall being more ethnically diverse than the national average with 33% identifying themselves from minority (non-White British) backgrounds according to the 2021 census - up from 23% in 2011.
- There is a significant gap in life expectancy between the boroughs most and least deprived wards of 10.4 years and 8.8 years for men and women respectively, illustrating issues of health inequality.
- Walsall performs well-below the national average on skills and education outcomes, with 28% of residents having degrees (or higher) qualifications, and 70% having GCSE level, compared to respective 43% and 78% national averages.

This information has been used by the Council to inform key strategy documents setting out the organisation's priorities. Importantly, there is also a clear cross-party consensus on the prioritisation of addressing inequalities. This includes the recently refreshed Council Plan which runs from 2022-2025, as well as the wider "WAW2040". Beyond these cross-cutting documents, the Council also has clear plans and strategies, including (not a complete list): Customer Strategy, Digital Strategy, Safer Walsall Plan, Housing Strategy, and Strategic Economic Plan. This is an asset to the organisation that will support management grip, progress, and milestones in these areas. However, there is a continued need for the organisation to manage the interdependencies and relationships that exist across these documents. This includes a need to consider the other benefits which the Council can achieve through these measures that will address wider social challenges in the borough. In this context, there is also a need for clear communication regarding the relationship and prioritisation across their content.

The Peer Team appreciates that the structure of the Council Plan, and the identification of “*markers of success*” supports clear performance reporting. It is good practice that this performance information is presented to Cabinet on a regular basis alongside financial reporting to present these two issues in the round. There is opportunity for this information to be used more within the organisation, including supporting the identification of key issues for working groups to address. The Council will need to keep the measures which are reported under review, to ensure that this performance report reflects the organisation’s priorities.

To date, there has been excellent and extensive engagement on the development of the WAW2040 vision for the borough, with 8,000 residents and 2,000 businesses inputting to the process through a broad range of engagement methods. The next stage of the Council’s transformation in delivering these ambitions will require these priorities being shared and embedded across partner organisations. This will require further work to socialise the vision, and support recognition, understanding and ownership across local partners. This will require regular engagement, communication, and investment of time and resources into these relationships and a shared understanding of these goals. There is also an opportunity for the Council to build on the conversations that they have had with residents to inform this vision at a locality and neighbourhood level, to work with community groups to increase engagement, and co-produce approaches that support the Council’s journey.

The Council should also consider the ‘soft power’ and influence which they can exert to address outcomes in the borough. This includes political appetite to support inclusive growth and social value to address entrenched inequalities. This presents an important opportunity for the Council to be ambitious in the types of jobs and skills levels which they are looking to develop in the borough. The Council has made some progress in this area, including weighting within some contracts, but there is more that could be done, including considering this in more of the Council’s spend, as well as raising awareness of the Council’s Social Value Charter and embedding it across the whole organisation and consideration of good employment charters. This would require the Council to consider what can be done to maximise its influence as a major employer and procurer. This would be a timely issue to consider given the Council’s significant investment Plan, and the opportunity to maximise local approaches to regeneration through the Future High Street Fund, Town Deal, and Levelling-Up Funding.

The Council has made progress in delivering against some of these priorities. This includes progress through their approach to integrated health and social care services through the mature relationships developed through Walsall Together, which has supported the development of seven integrated teams at a locality level, as well as marked improvement in performance regarding delayed transfers of care. This good practice provides building blocks which will support opportunities for further examples of early intervention and

extending this offer, both through the incorporation of more internal services (e.g., leisure) as well as the contribution of wider partners (e.g., Voluntary and Community Sector). However, there is a need to ensure that the Councils governance and scrutiny arrangements are appropriately structured to support challenge and holding the programme to account, especially as interdependencies with partner agencies grow through the process.

4.2 Organisational and place leadership:

The Peer Team appreciates that there is strong political leadership of the Council and were impressed by the effective and coherent Cabinet which brings together a range of diverse views in developing policy. This is supported by trusted relationships across the senior political and managerial leadership of the Council, which models appropriate member and officer relations to other levels of the Organisation. However, the Peer Team did hear some frustration regarding issues of communication and member enquiries and would encourage the Council to review these processes in these areas. Whilst this may require additional resources, this investment would create clear challenges, but positively would free up capacity that is current being used reactively and be well received by officers and members.

The current structure of the Council's senior management roles has been designed to share good practice across directorates as well as joined-up approaches to cross-cutting issues. This includes Executive Directors leading on corporate priorities alongside their service responsibilities. Whilst this has value, we would encourage the Council to be mindful of the challenges this creates with regards to balancing improvement and accountability, and the potential challenges this could create for workloads and succession planning.

The Peer Team heard praise for the leading role of the Council in the borough's response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This leadership, and the development of new ways of working has improved engagement and interactions with local voluntary and community groups, and there is a potential to do more in this space, and an appetite from groups to work with the Council. To this end, the Council will need to consider the resources which will be required to support this work and the development of a consistent approach to working with community groups across the organisation. This work is currently being developed through the Council's "resilient communities" work, however, there were mixed definitions of this programme provided to the Peer Team and there is potential for this work to move beyond 'resilience' to incorporate issues of 'co-production' and 'co-creation' with groups. A significant development that would support progress in this area would be moving towards longer-term funding arrangements with Voluntary and Community Sector Groups, which would provide them stability of resources and would support the organisation

to move towards engagement on more strategic issues over the medium-term, rather than capacity being invested to support funding cycle discussions.

The Council was seen as a “pragmatic” and “positive” partner for other organisations to work with. However, the leadership of Place happens at a number of levels. There is huge potential for Walsall to consider the contribution that partnerships across these levels can make towards their priorities (Region, sub-region, borough, neighbourhood, and hyper-local). This approach will support alignment and ensure that these inter-twined and overlapping networks are working towards consistent outcomes and maximising the contribution of a broad range of partner organisations. This could be accompanied by a review of partnership governance arrangements to embed this alignment into formal structures, reduce duplication, and maximise collective efforts.

The Peer Team was provided with examples of Walsall’s contribution to the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (as responsible body). Given the structural reforms which are taking place to LEPs, there is a need for the Council to align resources to new arrangements and contribute proactively to these forums. The team heard there were opportunities for Walsall to make stronger contributions to the West Midlands Combined Authority in order to help drive benefits for the borough. This will require some internal coordination so that the Council’s priorities on issues of Housing, infrastructure, and transport are clearly defined and supported with appropriate business cases to support their propositions when negotiating with partners over a larger geography. There is also an opportunity for the Council to establish a local business forum to enable the Council to highlight this context and emerging opportunities to the local business community.

4.3 Organisational Governance and Culture:

The Council operates through a Leader and Executive model, with nine portfolio holders sharing responsibility across the breadth of Council Services. This group works through a collective decision-making model and meets on six-weekly cycle. The Peer Team heard praise for the quality of reports that were presented at these meetings, however, it was recognised that there is a lengthy approval process for these reports being approved with multiple checkpoints. The Council is introducing an online portal to support improved efficiency in this area; however, this will also require consideration of cultural issues of permission.

The Council’s approach to Scrutiny is structured around five Committees with voting members drawn from beyond the Executive. This includes a Scrutiny Overview Committee

which provides oversight and supports coordination and planning, with four service specific Committees focusing on areas of Education, Children's, Social Care/ Health, and Economy/Environment. There is a mixed approach to appointment of Committee Chairs, with some Committees being Chaired by the ruling group, and others by the opposition (which is seen as good practice within the sector). The Council has introduced dedicated Scrutiny Training to support these Committees as well as a 'recommendation tracker' to support their oversight and grip.

Whilst it is a legal requirement for formal Committees (and voting members) to meet in person, this does not extend to the officers supporting the meeting, and that we heard there are occasions where officers from the Council and partners attend remotely. The Peer Team encourages the Council to ensure officers do consistently attend in-person meetings as appropriate, such as formal Committees as well as other key meetings, for example key engagement with Trade Unions.

There are good relationships across the organisation and a good understanding of the respective roles of officers and members which has been supported by a robust member development programme. This programme draws on internal officers of the Council, as well as external representatives and is underpinned by public commitments by Councillors to invest in their development.

These relationships underpin robust governance at the Council that has responded well to external change over recent years. During our time on site, the Team heard particular praise for the Council's Audit Committee, and recognition for the contribution of the Chair in taking this forward over a number of years. This includes the effective use of a risk strategy, clear reporting of corporate risks, and constructive engagement with external audit. This continuity of Chair has been important to the Committee as there has been a level of churn in other Committee Members.

The Peer Team appreciate that governance and culture are often set by the relationships that exist across the 'golden triangle' of statutory officers (Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer). We would suggest that these officers make dedicated and regular time to share information and support continuity of approach in managing risk as these transitions take place.

The Peer Team enjoyed attending the staff recognition awards event that was held during our time on site and gave an illustration of the Council's approach to engagement. This is accompanied by a clear increase in levels of employee engagement from 57% to 61% from 2017 to 2021 as shown through the Council's Employee Survey.

Through this event, and our wider time onsite, the Peer Team met with many talented and passionate staff, and we encourage the Council to consider how they can best support and develop these assets through Organisational Development, and the creation of a more permissible environment that will support their growth over coming years. Central to this work will be considering and communicating the Council's approach to flexible working. The Peer Team heard that this was interpreted and applied differently across directorates, this needs to be considered alongside issues of workforce, community engagement, the Council's physical assets, and regeneration ambitions and be applied consistently across the organisation.

Walsall's current People Strategy (2023-2026) is built on the PLATE values (which were introduced through the Proud Programme 2018), but further work is required to embed these principles within the organisation. Therefore, the Council needs to consider how these are communicated regularly to support staff understanding and recognition beyond employees' annual conversations with their manager. This work needs to include how values are communicated on a 'day-to-day' basis through the actions of Officers and Managers, to ensure that they become the lived experience of those who work for and with the Council. Beyond these issues of Organisational Development, there is also a need for more consistency on standard Human Resource processes, as reflected by only 49% of staff having had their annual conversation with their line-manager, as well as the need for increased awareness on offers of help and support available to the wider workforce and consistency of practice on training opportunities and long-term sickness. It was also presented to the team that the current processes of recruitment are complex and time consuming, and there was significant appetite for them to be simplified.

Importantly, the Council is aware that there is further work that is needed to strengthen their approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The recent introduction of value-based recruitment gives the opportunity to support the recruitment of under-represented groups and support the organisation's workforce to better reflect the communities it represents. This issue is particularly true in the senior roles of the organisation, and thought should be given to how the Council can improve progression rates. The Council's work to-date on EDI has included good progress through the introduction of the Corporate Equalities Group as well as staff network groups, but it is recognised that these are used differently in some Directorates and there would be a benefit to more corporate ownership of these issues and consistency of practice. The Council may wish to consider reporting against other 'pay gaps' as well as the gender pay-gap to support progress as well as wider public sector duties.

4.4 Financial planning and management:

The net revenue budget for Walsall Council is £226 million. The Council has demonstrated effective financial management over recent years, including the delivery of historic savings and efficiencies (£225m since 2010/2011). The Council manages their budget process strategically, and there is clear alignment between resources and the political priorities of the organisation. This includes the reporting of budgets at an Outcome level, setting out the total revenue budget spend against the priorities included in the Council Plan. This promotes clarity of spend on key areas and will support further conversations regarding outcome-based budgeting should the Council wish to continue to develop this. In particular, as the council moves towards a more data-driven approach, there is the opportunity to use this to inform resource allocation and thence budget setting and to bring together the reporting of budget and performance management information.

Throughout the review process, Peers were told of the “*credibility*” and “*capability*” of officers in the Council’s Finance Team to support work in this area. This included praise for the support that they provided to key finance committees, as well as the team’s role as a business partner in supporting directorates with their financial grip.

Like others, Walsall Council is working within the context of wider financial challenges. This is reflected in the savings which are required over coming years, with the Council needing to save £16.3 million in 2023/24 and having a further four-year budget gap of £52 million from 2024 onwards. These figures have been well developed and tested, and it is encouraging that the Council already has plans identified for the delivery of £20 million saving in this envelope. However, this naturally highlights the further work required over the coming months and years to develop budget proposals within the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Plan, in this context, there is a need to make sure that saving proposals are robust prior to their inclusion to mitigate the risk of slippage and non-delivery. In 2022/23 the Council identified savings of £24 million, but there is currently £7million which is highlighted as ‘at risk’ and increased preparatory work may reduce this issue in future years and support the Council to achieve full year benefits from reforms and changes.

The Council is also facing immediate cost pressure reflecting those across the wider sector, with issues of inflation, increased demand, cost-of-living crisis, and social care reforms all presenting short-term challenges. This has presented as significant pressures on the revenue budget, with the Council reporting a projected overspend of £11.3 million in the month before the Peer Review, with pressures emerging especially in Adult Social Care. In response, the Council has reviewed budgets and identified mitigating actions in 2022/23. This is not out of step with the experience of other authorities post-COVID, but it is

nevertheless important to maintain robust control over spending and investment, particularly in demand led areas, to plan a sustainable way forward and to ensure that budget reporting is supporting timely conversations on mitigating actions.

The Council is forecast to close 2022/23 with adequate levels of reserves, currently holding £16.6 million in general fund reserves, as well as earmarked reserves of £167 million (from £217 million at the start of 2022/23, largely from COVID grants). This level of reserves provides the council with some assurance as to its financial resilience, but the use of reserves underlines the message about ensuring a sustainable future.

The Council has a significant Capital Budget with £310 million identified over the coming four years (2022-2025). There has been significant re-phasing within this programme with £92.6 million (40%) being reprofiled from 2022/23 into 2023/24. Given the inflationary pressures facing the Council, further work may be needed to consider the affordability of some proposals, and to support prioritisation and decision making based on benefits and returns in this changing context.

The Council is currently in year 18 of 25 for a lighting PFI that they entered in 2005. It is good practice to review these arrangements as they enter into their final six-years. This is one of a number of PFI that the Council reported through their annual accounts, and these should be reviewed both individually and collectively.

4.5 Capacity for Improvement:

The Council's capacity for improvement has been demonstrated through the Proud Programme (initiated in 2018), which has had a positive impact for staff and customers (including a 4% increase in customer satisfaction). Moreover, this programme has supported the Council to develop these skills and experience which can now be applied to other issues and future transformation as this becomes the organisation's approach to change. To-date, this work has been supported through the commissioning of a strategic partner which has provided capacity and expertise to support this work. As this arrangement comes to an end, the Peer Team encourage the Council to maximise the knowledge transfer from these arrangements to support the organisation to be able to take forward the next phase with less external support and ensure that the remaining savings (£16m) associated with the original Proud Programme are monitored and managed through this transition.

The Council has added capacity to a number of key corporate areas, including the development of Programme Management Office and Corporate Hub (including increased communication capacity) which will be a valuable asset in taking forward this next phase. The challenge for the Council will be making sure that this capacity is best aligned to

support progress against key priorities and minimising the risk that it could be 'spread too thinly'.

A further key area to support the next phase of transformation is Organisational Development, and, as with other key areas, the Council should consider the investment and capacity required to support this. The Council has a recently developed OD Strategy but there is more work to be done to share and socialise this document and move this work on to the next level. This could also include drawing on the ideas and innovations that exist within the workforce and more widely within the sector to support further improvement within the Council. This will naturally link to taking forward the findings from the 'pulse' surveys which the Council has completed and the dialogue which has begun through this process.


During our time with the Council, the Peer Team have been told of a number of internal processes which could be improved and made more efficient. This included specific examples regarding invoicing, recruitment processes and report approvals. Making improvements with these processes would be welcomed by staff, and more importantly would release capacity to further support organisational focus on priorities.

There is potential for the Council to work more closely with partner organisations and benefit from their capacity and contributions towards outcomes in the borough. This will require the Council to be able to understand the roles and contributions of partners at different levels, including regional, sub-regional, borough and community. Similarly, the progress and engagement through WAW2040 presents an opportunity to improve dialogue with local residents and community groups and utilise community capacity through co-designed solutions to issues.

Finally, Walsall Council has a clear appetite for continuous improvement, as shown by their appetite for external challenge through this peer challenge. Going forward, we would encourage the Council to continue and expand the use internal challenge and processes to further build and embed this appetite and support service improvement. This approach will support the Council to adapt to a changing operational context, as well as new ways of working. This challenge will need to be based on timely and accurate data and intelligence regarding finance, services, staff and customer experience. This will support prioritisation, the targeting of actions, as well as demonstrating progress and improvement over coming years.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss, and reflect on these findings over the coming weeks. To support transparency, the



Council is expected to publish this report within six weeks of receiving a final draft. There is also an expectation that an action plan is publicly available within eight weeks of the report's publication.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the Corporate Peer Challenge Revisit. This process includes a six-month check-in holding a structured conversation across Peers and the Council to consider progress made against these recommendations.

In the meantime, Helen Murray, Principal Advisor for the West Midlands, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Helen is available to discuss any further support the Council requires and can be contacted by email Helen.Murray@local.gov.uk

Ref	Recommendation	Our consideration & response	Action(s)	Lead Director(s)
1	Maximise the opportunities that are presented to the Council through partnership and convening arrangements.	<p>We are reviewing and revitalising our partnerships in line with We are Walsall 2040 borough plan delivery.</p> <p>We recognise the key role for Cabinet in regional place shaping and influencing West Midlands Combined Authority.</p> <p>Our building community resilience programme is underway and will inform our approach to working/investing in the voluntary and community sector.</p>	<p>We will consult on the We are Walsall 2040 vision through the spring of 2023 and ensure regular engagement, investment in relationships, and clear communications. The final strategy will be published June 2023 and engagement will continue throughout the life of the strategy to 2040.</p> <p>We will strengthen Walsall partnerships locally and regionally throughout 2023 and 2024 and align to We are Walsall 2040 delivery.</p> <p>We will set out our strategic intentions on how the Council will work with and support the voluntary and community sector to ensure there is clarity, consistency and transparency in how we work together.</p>	<p>Director of Public Health, Policy & Strategy and Business Insights</p> <p>Director of Public Health, Policy & Strategy and Business Insights / ED for Economy, Environment and Communities</p> <p>ED for Adult Social Care & Hub / ED for Children & Customer / ED for Economy, Environment and Communities</p>
2	Consider the Council's approach to inclusive growth in delivering the 2022 Economic Strategy and maximising the impact of the "Walsall Pound".	<p>Inclusive growth ambitions will be incorporated in delivery plans for the newly agreed Economic Strategy – including establishing and/or refocusing relevant partnership arrangements</p>	<p>We will further promote our Social Value Policy (2020) to reduce inequalities in line with Our Council Plan – learning from good practice in other areas and partners and building on the good foundations already in place in some Council services.</p> <p>We will re-establish a Walsall economic partnership during 2023, with membership</p>	<p>Director of Public Health, Policy & Strategy and Business Insights / Director of Regeneration & Economy</p>

			and terms of reference aligned to our 2040 vision and place strategies.	Director of Regeneration & Economy
3	Define the content and deliverables that will be included in the “Proud” initiative going forward.	The Proud delivery plan for 2023/24 and beyond will be embedded in our continuous improvement programme for the Council.	We will implement an outcomes-based budget process to inform the next phase of Proud transformation and its deliverables.	Director of Transformation & Digital / Director of Finance, Corporate Landlord and Assurance/ ED Resources
4	There is a framework of Plans and priorities that exist across the Council; however, consideration should be given to their alignment and support staff understanding.	<p>We will continue the engagement of our workforce through the Enabling Communications & Culture workstream of Proud to support strong organisational development and understanding of our plans.</p> <p>The Hub will ensure there is a golden web clearly articulated to staff linking our 2040 ambitions through to individual objectives to support staff to understand their role and connection to the borough plan.</p>	<p>We will implement our culture workplan during 2023, aligned to the Proud workstream Enabling Communications & Culture.</p> <p>We will align Our Council Plan and Values, Proud promises, Key Areas of Focus and 2040 borough plan through staff engagement activities, performance conversations, service planning approaches, strategy and policy development and communications with staff.</p>	<p>Director of HR & OD</p> <p>Director of Public Health, Policy & Strategy and Business Insights / Director of HR & OD</p>
5	Provide a coordinated approach to issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to support the workforce to better represent local communities.	A Workforce Equalities Board has been established alongside an existing Corporate Equalities Group to	We will continue with planned Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion work across the organisation to meet workforce objectives, Public Sector Equalities Duty, celebrate and	Director of HR & OD/ Director of Public Health, Policy & Strategy and Business

		<p>strengthen our equality, diversity & inclusion approach.</p> <p>We are appointing a Senior equality, diversity & inclusion advisor to support equality, diversity & inclusion activities within the organisation. This includes strategic advice to the Workforce Equality Board, co-ordinating and developing the Equality Champion Network, promoting activities to celebrate/promote the events.</p> <p>A Coaching for Career Development Programme for underrepresented groups has been developed, the first cohort is currently underway with delegates from Black Asian Minority Ethnic Backgrounds being prioritised.</p> <p>Workforce strategy development is well underway and will be considered by the Enabling Communications and Culture Group.</p>	<p>promote equality, diversity & inclusion through events and community resilience, and reinforce the importance of Equality Impact Assessments in policy development.</p> <p>We will focus future activities such as the Coaching for Career Development programme on underrepresented groups.</p> <p>We will work with West Midlands Employers to deliver a bespoke Allyship programme for senior leaders at Walsall.</p> <p>We will develop and implement our new Workforce Strategy during 2023.</p>	<p>Insights / Director Resilient Communities</p> <p>Director of HR & OD</p> <p>Director of HR & OD</p> <p>Director of HR & OD</p>
6	Review the Council's approach to flexible working in the round and communicate this clearly to staff.	<p>The Customer Focused Ways of Working have been agreed by Personnel Committee and Cabinet. This sets out the principles of how we work: 'work is what we do not where we do it' and we will work in the best place to meet the</p>	<p>We will carry out engagement and communications activities with staff, to explore workforce issues and ensure consistency of message and management practice across all services.</p>	<p>Director of HR & OD / Director of Communications, Marketing and Brand</p>

		<p>customer need. This enables the Council to recruit from the widest possible pool of talent, support retention of staff, improve customer experience and ensure value for money service delivery.</p> <p>Managing performance and ensuring positive staff mental health and wellbeing in an agile environment can require different skill sets in both leadership and management. Our induction for managers, internal training offers, and connected working offer, are being reviewed and enhanced to include tools kits for managing differently.</p> <p>The Enabling Communications & Culture group is exploring organisational culture and how we work, with focus groups planned for Spring 2023</p>	<p>We are reviewing and enhancing our induction, training and coaching offer to staff to ensure effective management in relation to customer focussed ways of working.</p>	Director of HR & OD
7	Articulate and consider the contribution of Organisational Development to the next stage of the Council's transformation.	<p>We are reviewing how to embed PLATE values beyond Annual Performance Conversations, and how these principles can be demonstrated at all levels, all of the time. This includes trialling different improvement models and our Connected Working offer that</p>	<p>We will continue with planned activities to strengthen the Council's Organisational Development functions and align to our transformation plans.</p> <p>We are currently developing workshops to embed our PLATE values so that they are meaningful in day-to-day behaviours.</p>	Director of HR & OD

		<p>coaches staff to embed positive behaviours.</p> <p>The Organisation Development Strategy and the Workforce Strategy will be launched in early April 2023. These will support our ambition in respect of talent management and succession planning; developing our workforce through leadership programs, future leaders' programs, graduate development programs and apprenticeships.</p>		
8	Maintain effective financial control and establish a sustainable and resilient financial future post-COVID.	<p>Financial controls were noted to be very strong – with Audit Committee an exemplar. We will continue working towards ensuring a sustainable budget and maintaining reserves to assure future resilience.</p> <p>Additional government funding was made available to Local Authorities in relation to Covid-19. The LGA recommend that all Councils consider the implications that the end of this funding will have on budget-setting going forward. This is something we have already factored into our current balanced budget and our future processes.</p>	<p>We will maintain effective financial control and continue working towards implementing an outcome-based budgeting approach for 2024/25 budget, building on capacity and capability from the Hub (Policy & Strategy, Business Insights and Commissioning).</p> <p>We will consider continuity planning in Audit Committee – ensuring it remains an exemplar.</p>	<p>Director of Finance, Corporate Landlord and Assurance</p> <p>Director of Finance, Corporate Landlord and Assurance</p>

9	Consider the Management Responsibilities of Senior Officers at the Council.	Peer team noted this was a model they were unfamiliar with. However, the report overall was very positive so the senior management structure as it stands has supported the delivery of positive outcomes for the organisation. Challenges will be addressed as a matter of course with any staff changes at senior level.	We will continue to consider Management responsibilities and succession planning as part of our new Workforce strategy implementation.	Chief Executive / Director of HR & OD
10	Consider the knowledge transfer required from the Council's strategic partner to support the newly established Corporate Hub.	Built into the partnership agreement with PwC were the transfer of skills and approaches to maximise the value. This knowledge transfer was crucial to the thinking from the outset and built into the contract with PwC.	We will continue the knowledge transfer processes that are underway across the Council and develop the existing prioritisation processes and workplans that are in place for the Hub.	ED for Adult Social Care & Hub / Director of Transformation & Digital
11	Ensure that internal processes are proportionate and consistently applied	<p>We have already undertaken a review of internal processes and will continue to streamline and simplify these to free up capacity. Work is already underway or planned aligned to Proud transformation workstreams.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing the channels for officer/member communications and issue resolution to ensure consistency of our approach.</p>	<p>We will continue work aligned to Proud workstreams and conduct an officer governance review in Spring/Summer 2023</p> <p>We are developing and implementing tools to support governance processes and further strengthen officer Member communications.</p>	<p>Director of Transformation & Digital</p> <p>Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer / Director of Customer Engagement</p>

DATE: 20 April, 2023

8.

We are Walsall 2040 Draft strategy consultation

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Perry & Cllr Murphy

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to update on the We are Walsall 2040 draft strategy has been out for consultation with the public until 21 March and will be finalised and approved through Cabinet and Council June 2023

Report:

We are Walsall 2040 is a unique opportunity to engage in dialogue with residents, community groups, businesses, investors, and partners to understand their views on what matters most in the borough now and for the future. This conversation has led into development of a strategic borough 'plan' which sets out the long-term ambitions for Walsall to be achieved by 2040. Engagement activities have taken place with over 8k people consulted through the We are Walsall engagement programme in the summer and autumn of 2022. The insight has helped us consider the key priorities to inform the development of the 2040 draft borough plan.

The draft framework (can be found on CMIS [here](#)) has incorporated these many resident, partner, and business views in shaping the vision and four strategic ambitions. Each ambition consists of three themes of focus with high level outcomes to be achieved by 2040 for each theme. The framework articulates Our Walsall story, what partners will work together to achieve over the next 18 years and redefines our relationship with residents and communities. It outlines what we expect residents and communities to do to ensure we co-design and co-deliver a borough of which we are all proud.


The draft strategy framework was sent out for consultation to partners, community groups and the public in February 2023 for a short consultation that closed before the pre-election period. The public consultation feedback is currently being analysed with over 350 different respondents leaving over 533 comments or likes on the online consultation portal- Common place, or through sending us hard copy feedback. Officers are looking through the feedback and will be tweaking and finalising the strategy over coming weeks with the final full strategy approved at Council in June 2023.

Recommendations:**That:**

- Members note and comment on the draft strategy framework.
- Members note the timescales for finalisation of the strategy in June 2023 (Cabinet and Council)


Contact Officers:

Karen Griffiths – Head of Policy & Strategy

 01922 653831

karen.griffiths@walsall.gov.uk

Liz Connolly – Senior Policy & Performance Officer

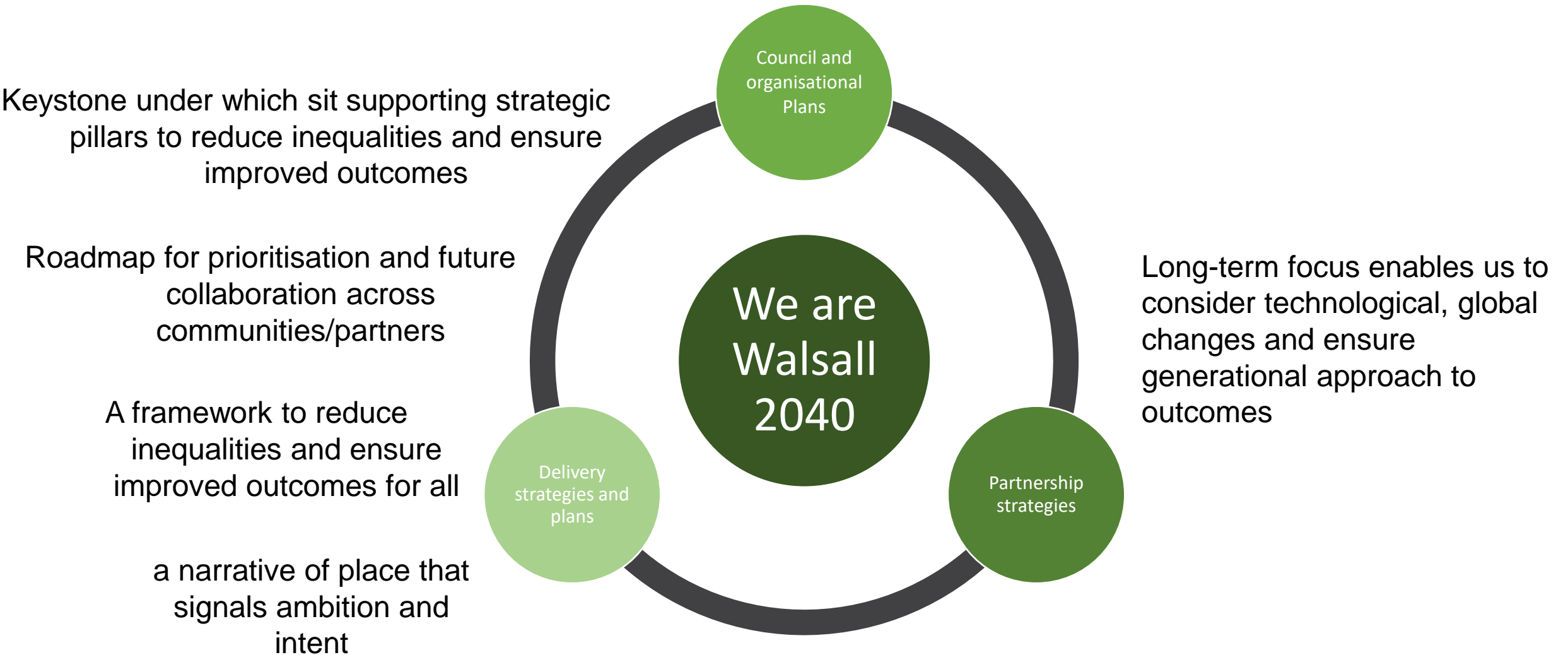
 01922 654357

elizabeth.connolly@walsall.gov.uk

WE ARE WALSALL 2040

April 2023
SOC

Walsall strategic framework



Partnership:

We are Walsall 2040 will provide a strategic framework for Walsall to prioritise resources, develop shared ambitions and ensure we are aligned in leading and shaping a Walsall that works for everyone: a Walsall we can all be proud of.

Our Partners include:



Partnerships: Theme partnerships will help drive the delivery.

Asking each partnership to comment on the draft and then later this year to endorse and commit to collectively delivering the vision

Walsall 2040 engagement and listening



- Engaged with Schools (1639) and young people through Freshers Fairs , University of Wolverhampton campus event (100) , Young carers group discussion



- VCS co-design and co-delivery of engagement activities (2186 people)



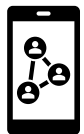
- Reached parents through Holiday Activity Fund surveys (1698 responses) and specific parent focus group



- Postal survey (1468 responses) and online (423 responses) and Focus groups, business survey



- Attendance at events and job fairs (86), postcards at public venues, faith engagement (32),



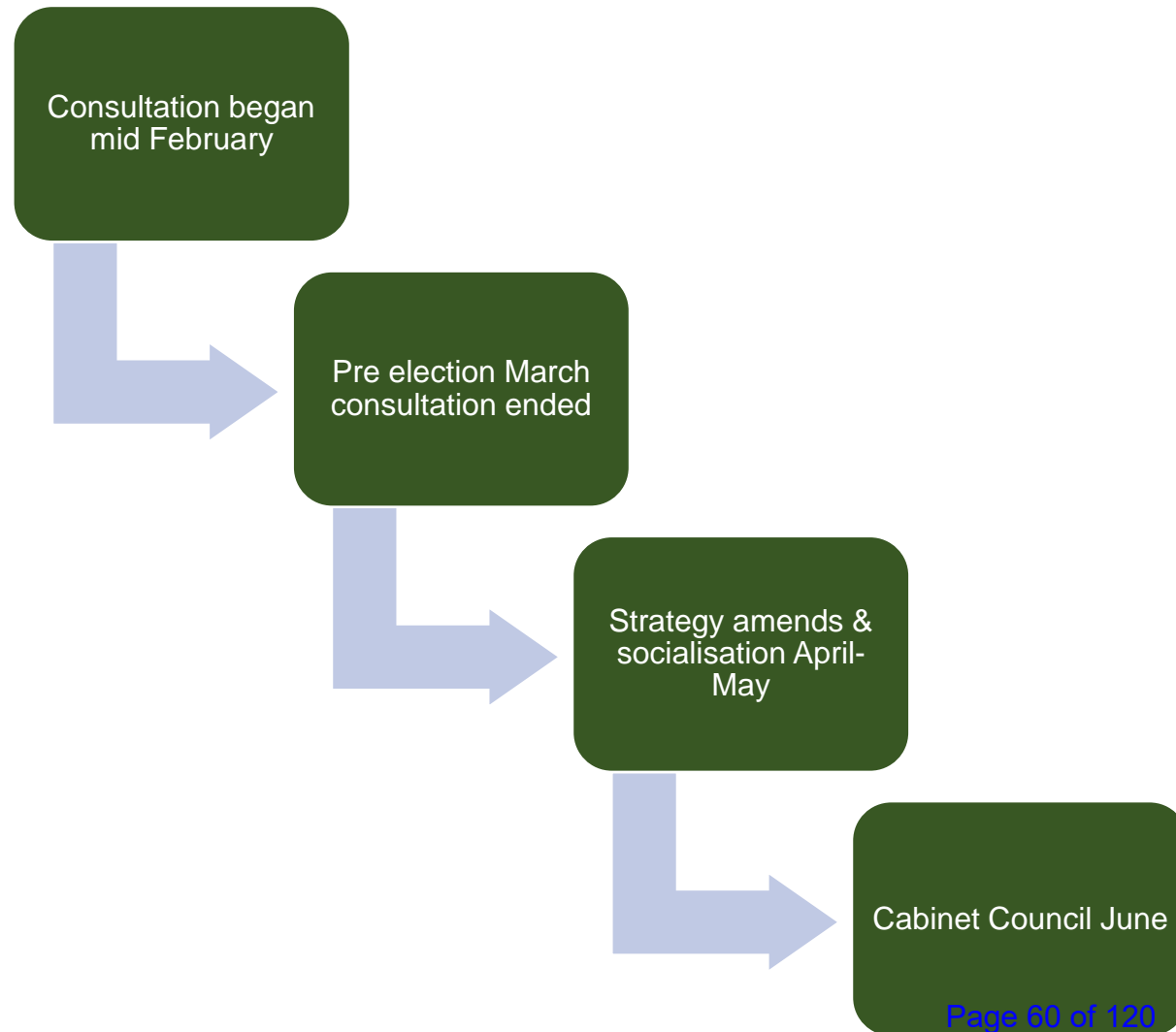
- Social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter and Instagram



Summary of all engagement

- Regeneration and investment across Borough are key for our residents
- Jobs and skills seen as priorities. Economic Strategy delivery to support growth and investment
- Learning and skills offer- Walsall talent in Walsall!
- Safer Walsall focus on reassurance, enforcement and work in specific local areas
- Maintaining quality parks and open spaces an ongoing priority for residents.
- Climate Change acknowledged as important.
- Retail offer and leisure opportunity including children and youth offer and local activities/events
- Community –we have a strong foundation to be built on for future years particularly in health and care
- Recognition of need for better health services and in qualitative feedback wellbeing choices

Timescales



Public consultation closed for pre-election period

Discussions with partners continue

Delivery :

Mapping gap analysis underway against the 12 themes in the draft strategy.

Theme partnerships to be reviewed to align to 2040 delivery

June Council signoff

Consultation on draft

- Socialisation of draft
 - Attending partnership/partner meetings
- Shared on Wm now
- Posters, flyers in community buildings
- Written to partners : VCS, Schools....
- Engagement activities attended
 - Job expos, police events, College event
- Pushed on social media
 - Facebook ads
- Commonplace survey 348 different respondents leaving 533 comments or likes fantastic response to a strategy draft!

WALSALL
2040

We are Walsall 2040

Log in

We are Walsall 2040: Get involved

'We are Walsall 2040' is our strategic borough plan that outlines everyone's shared ambitions for what the borough should be like by 2040.


It will be informed by the views, experiences, ideas and ambitions of those who live, work, study, visit and do business in the borough.


Get involved by sharing your views!


☐ Keep me updated


'...all will be a place where people are proud to live and residents and businesses work with public services to create a thriving borough of opportunity.'


To what extent do you agree or disagree with this vision?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Does the vision adequately reflect the ambition needed for the borough of Walsall?

Do you think the ambition "We are thriving and happy" and themes of focus are right for the borough of Walsall?

Select one option

Yes

No

Not sure

Why do you say this?

Vision and ambitions

Walsall in 2040 will be a place where people are proud to live and residents and businesses work with public services to create a thriving a borough of opportunity



Principles

- **We are sustainable**
- **We are inclusive**
- **We are local**
- **We are resident focussed**
- **We are honest**

Ambitions

Each of the four ambitions consists of three themes of focus.

- Child friendly borough
- Empowered communities
- Feeling safe

We are thriving and happy



- Living active lives
- A community that cares
- Good mental wellbeing

We are healthy and well



- Quality homes
- A strong economy for all
- Connected borough

We are prosperous and innovative



- Clean and green borough
- Celebrating our culture and heritage
- Vibrant towns

We are proud of our borough



Healthy and well-living active lives

Outcomes

By 2040 Walsall will be a dementia friendly borough known for high quality care where people can live independent lives at home and in their communities

By 2040 Walsall will have narrowed the gap in health inequalities

By 2040 people will live longer and healthier lives in Walsall, with reduction in smoking prevalence and drug and alcohol addiction

By 2040 people in Walsall will live more physically active lives.

By 2040 we will see a reduction in car journeys across the borough and an improvement in air quality in Walsall particularly in Pleck and Palfrey

Healthy and well-living active lives

We will:



Design and deliver the right health services that meet your needs where you live



Understand the barriers to living healthy lives and work together to address them for all communities



Provide and share opportunities for you to do what you love to stay active and well



Consider health in all our decision-making and put it at the heart of what we do to improve quality of life for all



Promote and encourage green travel options to reduce car congestion and emissions



Do more to look after your health, wellbeing and happiness



Use your pharmacist , GP and other health services as needed, choosing the right care at the right time



Participate in opportunities across the borough to stay fit, well and happy



Understand the needs of any condition you have and tell us when we interact with you

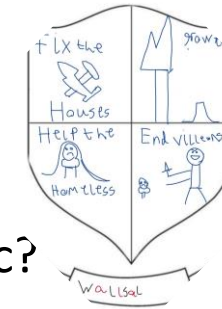
So you can:

Questions

1. SOC are asked to comment on draft

1. Are these the right ambitions for the Borough?
2. Are these the right priorities?
3. Is there anything you would want to see that is not reflected?
4. Do you support the principle of including 'So you can' statements to the public?

WE ARE WALSALL 2040



Link to Draft framework from Feb 2023 Cabinet [here](#)



Cabinet – February 2023

Cabinet Report – We are Walsall 2040 Strategy consultation

Portfolio:	Councillor Perry & Councillor Murphy
Related portfolios:	All
Service:	Policy & Strategy Unit
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 We are Walsall 2040 is an opportunity for us to listen to residents, businesses and communities and understand what is important now and for the future. It gives us a unique opportunity to shape the borough that we want to work in and live in and create a better tomorrow for those born today.
- 1.2 We are ambitious for the borough and want to create a thriving place with healthy and happy people. The We are Walsall 2040 strategy allows us to create a shared narrative of the Walsall we all want to create by 2040. It enables a redefined agreement between public agencies, community groups and residents on what we can work together to deliver and how people can help themselves, help each other and their communities.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A range of engagement activities were carried out with residents, businesses, community groups, schools and partners throughout June-November 2022. In total over 8k views have been received through the We are Walsall engagement programme and the insight has helped us consider the key priorities to inform the development of this 2040 draft borough plan.
- 2.2 The draft strategy framework has incorporated these many resident, partner, and business views in shaping the vision and four strategic ambitions. Each ambition consists of three themes of focus with high level outcomes to be achieved by 2040 for each theme.
- 2.3 The strategy articulates Our Walsall story, what partners will work together to achieve over the next 18 years and redefines our relationship with residents and communities. It outlines what we expect residents and communities to do to ensure we co-design and co-deliver a borough of which we are all proud.

- 2.4 The draft strategy framework will be sent out for consultation to partners, community groups and the public in February 2023 for a short consultation to finish before the pre-election period. The final full strategy will be approved at Council in June 2023.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet approve the We are Walsall 2040 strategy high level framework as appended to this report.
- 3.2. That Cabinet recommend the We are Walsall 2040 framework to Scrutiny Overview Committee for consideration as part of the consultation.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 A paper was taken to Cabinet in December 2021 outlining our plans to work with partners to develop a borough plan for 2040 (The borough plan-‘Our Walsall Story’) that will provide a framework for future collaboration across all communities and partners with a shared ambition, priorities and outcomes to create a borough that works for everyone.
- 4.2 The plan signals Walsall's ambition of place to encourage regional and national collaboration and to create a thriving borough of opportunity to attract investors and developers to the Borough.
- 4.3 Through the summer of 2022 data analysis was carried out to develop a rich and insight needs of Walsall now and for the future. This insight has been used alongside engagement feedback to develop the focus of the borough plan to ensure we can work towards a Walsall where all can thrive in 2040.
- 4.4 A comprehensive programme of engagement was designed to capture a breadth of real voices from residents, community groups, businesses and partners throughout the summer and autumn of 2022. This included commissioning a range of engagement activities using qualitative and quantitative methods and co-delivery of activities by community leaders and trusted voices to ensure we were as open to as many views as possible.
- 4.5 Approximately 8 thousand responses have been analysed over recent weeks to create a clear picture of emerging views, priorities and needs for Walsall 2040. A paper was taken to Cabinet in December 2022 outlining the detailed findings of the engagement programme and shared with We are Walsall 2040 partners.
- 4.6 Through the engagement responses we have heard the clear desire from residents and communities to focus on our regeneration ambitions to revamp and revitalise town centres and create a draw for businesses and leisure and retail opportunities. They want Walsall to be a destination of choice -create a pull for them and others to come to the borough to shop and socialise, live and work.
- 4.7 The cost of living crisis has compounded people's concerns for their immediate needs and we heard from many residents that they are keen for Walsall to have

more opportunities for jobs and skills, good quality homes available for all and opportunities to stay healthy and well. Residents have also shared that they want to feel safe in towns, neighbourhoods, and streets, have a clean and green borough that is tidy and litter free, with the excellent parks and green spaces maintained for now and the future, and for Council and partners to do more to help reduce environmental impact of waste and address the challenges around Climate change.

- 4.8 Throughout the engagement residents and community groups have told us they want to do more to help themselves, their communities, and the borough. Many have acknowledged that they can play a greater role in shaping the communities and centres within which they live and work. One of the key aims of the Borough Plan is to articulate to the public what public partners and agencies will do and what we expect residents to do for themselves. It redefines our relationship with residents and communities by highlighting what we expect residents and communities to do to work with us to create a borough of which we are all proud. This is captured in the 'You will' sections of the draft strategy as outlined below.
- 4.9 The draft strategy framework is attached at Appendix 1. The vision is ***Walsall in 2040 will be a place where people are proud to live and residents and businesses work with public services to create a thriving borough of opportunity.***
- 4.10 Aligned to this vision are principles by which the public can expect all partners to operate:
- We are sustainable
 - We are accessible
 - We are local
 - We are resident focussed
 - We are honest
- 4.11 The draft strategy consists of four strategic ambitions. Each ambition consists of three themes of focus and under each the following which can be seen in Appendix 1:
- high level outcomes to be achieved by 2040;
 - what partners will do - 'We will'; and
 - what we expect residents to do - 'So you can'
- 4.12 Ambition 1: **Thriving and happy**
- Child friendly borough
 - Empowered communities
 - Feeling safe
- 4.13 Ambition 2: **Healthy and well**
- Living active lives
 - A community that cares
 - Good mental wellbeing
- 4.14 Ambition 3: **Prosperous and innovative**
- Quality homes
 - A strong economy for all

- Connected borough

4.15 Ambition 4: **Proud of our borough**

- Clean and green borough
- Celebrating our culture and heritage
- Vibrant towns

4.16 The draft strategy will be sent out for consultation with the public, Members, businesses and partners until 23 March when consultation will cease due to the pre-election period. The feedback will be considered in developing the full final document and to shape the supporting 3/5 year delivery plan. The final full strategy will be approved at Council in June 2023.

Risk management

4.17 The key risk associated with We are Walsall 2040 is that the plan is not fit for purpose leading to lack of buy-in from key partners and the public and failure to impact on delivering much needed ambition for the borough.

4.18 The breadth and scale of engagement activities carried out between June-November 2022 - the thousands of people consulted ensure that the strategy is built on a strong foundation of co-produced insight, based on need and public priorities.

4.19 Partners have been presented with the engagement findings and involved in drafting the borough plan to ensure wider partner buy-in and support and creation of a collective vision and ambition.

Financial implications

4.20 Whilst there are no direct financial implications of this report, the strategy will sit alongside the Council Plan as a strategic framework for the Council when setting the strategic direction of financial investments informing strategic decision-making.

Legal implications

4.21 There are no direct legal implications from this report. An Equality impact assessment is in development and will be completed following receipt of formal consultation feedback on the draft strategy and presented alongside the final strategy to June Cabinet and Council.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.22 There are no direct procurement implications from this report.

Property implications

4.23 There are no direct property implications from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.24 Health and wellbeing has been highlighted as a key priority for residents and many community groups and public have expressed a desire in the engagement feedback to do more to manage their own and their communities health.
- 4.25 The 2040 borough plan aligns with the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy and work is already underway to embed health within the 2040 delivery plan and take a health in all policies approach.

Staffing implications

- 4.26 There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.27 The We are Walsall 2040 borough plan considers addressing inequalities as a key cross cutting focus to ensure we can meet the ask of residents to create a borough that thrives. Specific health inequalities are addressed within the **We are healthy and well** strategic ambition.

Climate Change

- 4.28 Resident feedback from the Postal and online survey has highlighted that 6 in 10 are concerned about climate change and the impacts for their future. Nine in ten residents in both the postal and online surveys have indicated that they want the Council to work with partners in the borough to look at what else we can do to mitigate the impact of climate change. This is therefore be a key focus within the **We are Proud of our borough** ambition and the **Clean and green** theme.

Consultation

- 4.29 The 2040 plan is based on extensive engagement that was carried out as outlined in this report. The draft borough plan will be approved for consultation by Cabinet cil and open for consultation formally until 23 March 2023.

5. Decide

This is a unique opportunity to develop a Borough strategy which sets out the ambitions for Walsall by 2040. The four strategic ambitions and 12 themes have been developed through consideration of needs assessment/insight and the engagement feedback received through the 2040 engagement programme as well as ensuring alignment against existing strategies (e.g., Health and Wellbeing, Economic strategy, Street Scene strategy, Mental Wellbeing strategy etc...).

6. Respond

The Council is already undertaking programmes and activities that directly address the priorities and concerns identified by the public through the 2040 conversations. Work will continue to develop a clear 3-5 year delivery plan to ensure that we achieve key milestones and staging posts on our journey towards the 2040 ambitions.

7. Review

Cabinet will have an opportunity to reflect and consider the draft strategy consultation feedback in June 2023 and shape the final strategy before Cabinet and Council in June 2023.

Updates against performance in the delivery plan will be provided to the Walsall Proud Partnership and through portfolio holders to ensure performance against the borough plan 2040 is on track.

Background papers –

[Cabinet December 2021 The borough plan-‘Our Walsall Story’](#)

[Cabinet December 2022 We are Walsall 2040 Engagement feedback](#)

Annexes:

Appendix 1

Author

Dr Karen Griffiths

Head of Policy & Strategy

✉ karen.griffiths@walsall.gov.uk

Simon Neilson

Executive Director Economy, Environment and Communities

✉ simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk

WE ARE WALSALL 2040

Draft strategy framework
February 2023

Vision and ambitions

Walsall in 2040 will be a place where people are proud to live and residents and businesses work with public services to create a thriving a borough of opportunity



Principles

- **We are sustainable**
- **We are inclusive**
- **We are local**
- **We are resident focussed**
- **We are honest**

Ambitions

Each of the four ambitions consists of three themes of focus.

- Child friendly borough
- Empowered communities
- Feeling safe

We are thriving and happy



- Living active lives
- A community that cares
- Good mental wellbeing

We are healthy and well



- Quality homes
- A strong economy for all
- Connected borough

We are prosperous and innovative



- Clean and green borough
- Celebrating our culture and heritage
- Vibrant towns

We are proud of our borough



Thriving and happy-child friendly borough

Outcomes

By 2040 all Walsall children will have the best start in life with excellent support available to families to ensure they thrive.

By 2040 child poverty will be significantly reduced and children will feel safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods

By 2040 Walsall will see increased opportunities for children to play and learn across the borough

By 2040 we will see improvement in education levels across the borough with a narrowing of the gap in outcomes for vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

By 2040 Walsall will be a borough of opportunity for young people with broad options for apprenticeships, graduate roles and pathways for careers in local business

Thriving and happy-child friendly borough

We will:



work with families, so that every child starts school healthy and ready to learn



ensure excellent provision of education and support for vulnerable children and those with Special educational needs



develop opportunities to prepare children and young people for career pathways that mean they can live and work locally, so talent is retained in the borough



identify a caring home for every child in the Council's care



promote activities, events and opportunities for children to learn and play

So you can:



Use your local maternity and early years services for under 2's to be pregnancy ready and access support



Consider if you can adopt, or become a foster carer and give a child a home



Help your child understand and engage with your community and feel pride in the borough



Support your child to be school ready and do their best in their education. Work with us to help them achieve



Encourage your child to respect others no matter who they are and value difference

Thriving and happy- feeling safe

Outcomes

By 2040 we will see lower levels of crime particularly anti-social behaviour and violent crime

By 2040 people will be actively involved in helping their towns and neighbourhoods feel safe.

By 2040 young people will feel secure and gang violence will be a thing of the past

By 2040 we will have vibrant town centres where people feel safe and welcome, and new buildings are developed to promote safety and wellbeing

By 2040 we will be a prevention borough where children, young people and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from abuse and exploitation.

Thriving and happy- feeling safe

We will:



work with communities to reduce crime



understand issues and barriers leading to anti-social behaviour within communities and address the causes



work with young people to understand reasons for gang culture and violence.



Tell us if anything is wrong or concerning in your community related to crime and safety



Be eyes and ears in your community for vulnerable people and neighbours



Consider joining neighbourhood watch and other safety schemes



work with schools and communities to help children and young people understand safe behaviours



promote neighbourhood schemes and activities to help you participate in making your community and neighbourhoods safer



Be mindful of the law and model positive community behaviours



Tell us if you are concerned about a child or vulnerable adult when something doesn't feel right

Thriving and happy- empowered communities

Outcomes

By 2040 public services will be shaped by and for Walsall residents who will have an active voice and be at the heart of what we do

By 2040 we will have a strong and sustainable voluntary and community sector that plays a key leadership role in Walsall life

By 2040 Walsall will be known as a place of cohesion where communities work together, and diversity is celebrated and respected

By 2040 Walsall will have vibrant and sustainable community spaces that act as a hub for community life

Thriving and happy- empowered communities

We will:



work with, invest in and support community groups to give you opportunities to come together and shape and deliver local services



promote activities, events and programmes that bring communities together



regularly have conversations with residents to ensure their voices are heard in service design and delivery.

So you can:



Take part in your community and get involved in clubs, activities and events locally



Invite and tell others about what's going on in your community to help them to take part and feel they belong



Vote in elections and participate in consultation surveys and engagement activities and events to tell us your views



work with communities to ensure Walsall is a place of tolerance and respect where communities live happily together and have opportunities to celebrate belonging



promote volunteering to help you do more in your communities



Take up volunteering opportunities in your locality and make a difference



Show tolerance and respect to those around you and in your community who may look different or have a different culture.



Take part in events to celebrate the diversity of the borough

Healthy and well-living active lives

Outcomes

By 2040 Walsall will be a dementia friendly borough known for high quality care where people can live independent lives at home and in their communities

By 2040 Walsall will have narrowed the gap in health inequalities

By 2040 people will live longer and healthier lives in Walsall, with reduction in smoking prevalence and drug and alcohol addiction

By 2040 people in Walsall will live more physically active lives.

By 2040 we will see a reduction in car journeys across the borough and an improvement in air quality in Walsall particularly in Pleck and Palfrey

Healthy and well-living active lives

We will:



Design and deliver the right health services that meet your needs where you live



Understand the barriers to living healthy lives and work together to address them for all communities



Provide and share opportunities for you to do what you love to stay active and well



Consider health in all our decision-making and put it at the heart of what we do to improve quality of life for all



Promote and encourage green travel options to reduce car congestion and emissions



Do more to look after your health, wellbeing and happiness



Use your pharmacist , GP and other health services as needed, choosing the right care at the right time



Participate in opportunities across the borough to stay fit, well and happy



Understand the needs of any condition you have and tell us when we interact with you

So you can:

Healthy and well- a community that cares

Outcomes

By 2040 all carers will be supported to meet their needs and maintain their quality of life

By 2040 Walsall will be a borough with excellent end of life care where all people have choice and control and we will see an increase in end-of-life care in homes and communities.

By 2040 we will have health and care services that are flexible and local with more people accessing community services to stay healthy and well

Healthy and well- a community that cares

We will:



Ensure high quality care and support across the borough for all



ensure health and care career skills and opportunities are developed so our workforce is made up of local people with enough health and care staff for the future



Listen to carers and help them feel supported

So you can:



Tell us if you are a carer and how we can support you



Tell us if you feel your care or the care of a loved one is below standard



Look out for elderly family, neighbours and those without close support networks in your world



Show kindness to those around you and show respect and kindness online

Healthy and well- good mental wellbeing

Outcomes

By 2040 mental health is well understood and we will see a decrease in mental illness, anxiety, and depression in Walsall as more people know how to self-care to maintain their wellbeing.

By 2040 Walsall will have mental health services that are local and accessible and enable people who need them to fully participate in Walsall life.

Healthy and well- good mental wellbeing

We will:



work with employers to ensure staff are supported with mental wellbeing and resilience



promote mental health awareness and highlight where people can go to get help and support



ensure children and young people understand good mental health and where to go for local support

So you can:



Support mental wellbeing awareness campaigns and projects in your work and community



Learn what to do to keep good mental wellbeing and know where to go to get support



Be mental health aware and support family, friends, colleagues and those around you with accessing advice and support



Be supportive and understanding to those around you with mental health issues

Prosperous & innovative- quality homes

Outcomes

By 2040 Walsall will have an ambitious Local plan to provide houses in the right places that meet local need and are quality, affordable, and sustainable.

By 2040 we will have improved quality of rented and social housing across the borough

By 2040 levels of homelessness will be significantly reduced in Walsall

By 2040 we will have adaptable homes to support residents live quality lives

Prosperous & innovative- quality homes

We will:

So you can:



invest in building high quality affordable homes across the borough that meet local need



ensure new developments are part of connected communities with local services, and facilities



work with landlords to encourage high quality private rental properties across the borough



Tell us about anyone you see that is sleeping rough



Look for opportunities to stay and live in the borough



Ensure your properties are of a decent standard for your tenants



ensure social houses are of a high standard and repairs are carried out quickly



ensure a mix of housing schemes across the borough



Take pride in your home and street and let your landlord know of any repairs needed quickly.



eliminate rough sleeping across the borough

Prosperous & innovative- strong economy for all

Outcomes

By 2040 Walsall will have a strong investment brand and be known as a place to do business.

By 2040 Walsall will have seen a sustained increase in jobs with more new businesses investing and growing in the borough year on year

By 2040 Walsall will be an international centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing, modern construction, low carbon innovation, logistics and health.

By 2040 Walsall will be a borough where school leavers and graduates can live and work locally with opportunity for progression

By 2040 Walsall will have increased skill levels to close the gap on the national average and have a workforce that is ready to meet the needs of the future economy

By 2040 we will be a financially inclusive borough with reduced debt levels and high levels of financial literacy

Prosperous & innovative- strong economy for all

We will:



Attract investors and new businesses to the borough to create more jobs and higher skilled, better paid jobs



Provide support to small and local businesses to help them grow



ensure people can get the skills they need to get into work, progress in their careers and access better paid jobs



Increase graduate and apprentice opportunities across the borough



Promote shopping and buying goods and services locally to residents, partners and businesses



Encourage partners and businesses to pay a living wage

So you can:



Buy local services and goods



Consider paying the living wage if you are a local employer



Start a business or upskill to improve your career opportunities



Hire locally if you are a business owner or employer and develop graduates, apprentices and work placements



Bid for public contracts to provide your goods and services as a local business

Prosperous & innovative- connected borough

Outcomes

By 2040 Walsall will be one of the most connected boroughs in England by rail and road with faster, quieter, and more reliable connections to new and existing destinations

By 2040 Walsall will be a cycling borough with a network of cycling routes and facilities that are safe and secure.

By 2040 Walsall will have advanced digital infrastructure to enable new approaches to technology, lifestyles and drive business growth.

By 2040 we will have a digitally skilled workforce to meet business needs of the future

By 2040 Walsall will be a digital borough where all residents can access digital services and are confident and capable in a digital world

By 2040 residents will confidently consent to shared data usage across Walsall partners to drive insight and improved lives.

Prosperous & innovative- connected borough

We will:



Invest in our road networks to reduce congestion and improve journey times



Improve the transport offer within and across the borough



Invest in cycling and walking routes to help people feel safe travelling by bicycle or on foot



Improve access and skills so our residents are digitally confident



Invest in new digital platforms and technology to improve customer service and give residents and communities greater voice and choice in local decision



Increase access across the borough to 5G networks and support residents getting online

So you can:



Car-share where appropriate with family, friends and colleagues



Use public transport options where you can



Support family, friends and older and vulnerable people in your world to navigate safely online



Walk and cycle more to get around locally and reduce congestion



Work flexibly if you can and help reduce congestion at peak times



Contact us through digital channels where you can



Access local digital skills opportunities to become digitally confident

Proud of our borough-clean & green

Outcomes

By 2040 we will have a greener borough with highly regarded parks and open spaces and be known as a place where nature is respected and protected.

By 2040/41 we will have a net zero economy and all public sector partners will be carbon neutral in their operations with sustainable public buildings and new homes.

By 2040 we will have infrastructure in place to enable residents to have smoothly switched off fossil fuel consumption.

By 2040 Walsall will be a leader in waste technology and we will have closed the gap in our recycling rate and be known as a high performer nationally

By 2040 residents and communities will work with partners to create and maintain clean streets and neighbourhoods.

Proud of our borough-clean & green

We will:



Ensure that Walsall has the right infrastructure and technology to process waste and recycling



Support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle and promote what you can do to live sustainably and reduce your carbon footprint



Maintain our parks and green spaces for your enjoyment and safeguard our nature and biodiversity



Reduce plastic waste and recycle and reuse the right way



Reduce your energy consumption and your carbon footprint



Keep your town centres clean and do not throw litter



Promote opportunities for you to do more to look after your streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces



Work in partnership with businesses, communities and public bodies to deliver our climate change ambition, and ensure Walsall is ready for the effects of a changed climate



Make good use of parks and open spaces and get involved helping to keep them clean and green



Take part in keeping your local area clean and get involved in tidy up activities



Tell us if you notice environmental issues such as graffiti or issues with bins

Proud of our borough-celebrate culture & heritage

Outcomes

By 2040 we will have strong creative industries with programmes and events that showcase the borough's diverse arts and culture scene

By 2040 we will have diverse leisure and tourism opportunities for all ages that make Walsall a key destination in the region

By 2040 we will continue to build on our heritage and identity within the Black Country and celebrate our shared stories and legacy.

By 2040 our communities will come together to celebrate their diversity and traditions in an inclusive way

Proud of our borough-celebrate culture & heritage

We will:



Attract investment to develop culture, heritage and sports opportunities and facilities



Celebrate our unique heritage and history through events, activities, exhibitions and promotions



Promote the borough and tell you and others about what's on



Ensure children and young people can participate in culture and heritage opportunities



Support and promote opportunities for celebrating diversity and culture across the borough

So you can:



Talk up the borough and tell others what you are proud of in Walsall



work with us to produce and promote a strong cultural offer



Take part in and support local arts and culture activities in the borough



Participate in heritage and events, activities, exhibitions and promotions to learn more about the history of Walsall



Consider getting involved in supporting and running local sports, leisure and culture clubs and activities

Proud of our borough-vibrant towns

Outcomes

By 2040 we will see an increased sense of pride with people speaking highly of life in Walsall.

By 2040 our towns will be revamped with improved physical infrastructure and shopping and socialising locally will be the first choice for residents.

By 2040 our local towns and villages will retain their unique identity and Walsall town centre will be a reimagined destination with mixed use culture, leisure, retail and green amenity space.

By 2040 Walsall will have flourishing markets, festivals, and events as hallmarks of a prosperous borough

By 2040 Walsall town centre will be a residential destination of choice with a strong community

Proud of our borough-vibrant towns

We will:



Attract investors and developers to regenerate and invest in our towns



Create a strong Walsall brand to encourage retailers and leisure providers to the borough



Support thriving markets across the borough and ensure a range of events and activities to draw people into town centres



Support town centre events and activities and tell others



Visit your local centres and shop/buy local



Ensure a range of travel and parking opportunities to make it easy for people to come into town centres



Support your local market



Avail of travel options and parking to shop and socialise locally

20 April 2023

Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Portfolios: All

Wards: All

1. Summary of report

This report provides a short summary of the activity of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

2. Recommendation

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

3. Report

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is scheduled to meet on 18 April 2023 to consider:

- The Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report
- Children at risk of Exploitation

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 28 March 2023 and considered:

- Ofsted Local Area SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Update
- New SEND Inspection Framework
- SEN forecasting and modelling

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 18 April 2023 and considered:

- Willenhall, Darlaston and Aldridge Railway Stations
- Phoenix 10
- Waste Management Strategy

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 6th April and considered:

- Dentistry Provision
- Update on the Walsall Walk-in Centre and Emergency Department

Author:

Edward Cook
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 653204
✉ Edward.Cook@walsall.gov.uk

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Recommendation Tracker (22/23)

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
15 March 2022	Fly Tipping Enforcement	A report on the use of 'electric refuse collection vehicles' be brought to a future meeting.	Dave Brown	In progress	n/a	Feedback provided to members (Sent 20.04.2022). Date for report to be agreed in new municipal year.
16 June 2022	Areas of Focus	A work programme for the municipal year be produced and be circulated to members of the Committee.	Craig Goodall	Complete	7 July 2022	Work programme drafted. Individual items to be scheduled.
		The suggested items of children's play strategy and associated children's health be referred to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Craig Goodall	Complete	26 July 2022	Members of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the item for inclusion on the Committee work program.

		That a working group be established to investigate the issue of School Gates Parking	Craig Goodall	Complete	27 July 2022	First meeting held on 27 July, with further meeting on 21 September 2022.
10 October 2022	Registered providers of social housing	<p>1. Scrutiny is concerned at the time taken to decide on planning applications delaying much needed housing as pointed out by Registered Social Housing landlords. The Scrutiny Overview Committee therefore asks Cabinet to look at the resources required to speed up the Planning process and further recommends that the Head of Planning and Development Control bring a report to the Committee on this issue at its meeting on 12 December 2022.</p> <p>2. The Scrutiny Overview Committee calls for the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities to attend a meeting in-person to report on steps to ensure that available land for housing development is utilised.</p> <p>3. The Scrutiny Overview Committee requests Cabinet to examine whether they feel there</p>	Simon Neilson Craig Goodall	Complete	12 December 2022	<p>Recommendations reported to Cabinet on 19 October.</p> <p>Cabinet agreed to provide reports requested to SOC on 12 December 2022.</p>

		is a need for increased competition in the social housing sector within Walsall.				
		<p>Walsall Housing Group provide Members with the following information:</p> <p>Number of right to buy and right to acquire sales;</p> <p>Contact details for community housing officers;</p> <p>Details of 'pin drop'.</p>	WHG	Complete	30 November 2022	Majority of information provided to Members in October 2022. Community Housing Officers shared 1 December 2022. Further details on pin drop e-mailed to Members on 2.3.23.
		<p>GreenSquareAccord provide Members with the following information:</p> <p>The Councillor enquiry email address;</p> <p>The number of right to buy sales;</p> <p>The energy costs savings for residents in the Darlaston 'wrapped house';</p> <p>How many new homes have been built and are planned to be built in Walsall;</p>	GreenSquareAccord	Complete	n/a	Information provided to Members via email in October 2022.

		<p>How many housing first schemes are there in Walsall;</p> <p>The number of care schemes and managed agent properties operating in Walsall.</p>				
	Effectiveness of Scrutiny	Financial scrutiny training be made available for all Council Members prior to December budget-scrutiny scrutiny committee meetings.	Craig Goodall	Complete	30 November 2022	All Members invited to Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Finance Scrutiny Seminar that took place on 17 October 2022.
10 November 2022	Council Plan Markers of Success Q1	<p>Officers provide Members with the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The full data set which informed the presentation, as submitted as an appendix to the October 2022 Cabinet report; 2. The weblink to the Local government Association's 'LG Inform' database and benchmarking system; 3. Statistics regarding contamination rates in recycling services, on a ward-by-ward basis, or 	Karen Griffiths	Complete	31 January 2023	E-mailed on 8.3.23

		as close to a ward-by-ward basis as is possible.				
		4. That future quarterly reports on Council Plan Markers of Success incorporate and apply national benchmarking criteria, or benchmarking criteria from similar Local Authorities;				
		That the Council Plan Markers of Success be added to the Committee's work programme on following the end of Quarter 2;	Craig Goodall	Complete	2 December 2022	Added to work programme.
	Effectiveness of Overview & Scrutiny	An in-person budget scrutiny training session, open to all Members of the Council, be provided by the Executive Director for Resources and Transformation prior to the draft revenue and capital budget being presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committees in January 2023.	Deborah Hindson Craig Goodall	Complete	11 January 2023	Training session provided on 16 January 2023.
		That external training for overview and scrutiny members takes place annually and that all members should be required to attend.	Craig Goodall	In progress	30 June 2023	Email sent to Members by Craig Goodall, 28 February.

12 December 2022	Watmos Community Homes Constitution Change	That the report, when sent to Council, be amended to clarify whether tenant board members will always have a majority on voting matters.	Elise Hopkins	Complete	23 December 2022	Report considered at Council amended accordingly.
		That information regarding the skills matrices identified as required for future Board appointments and the Watmos succession plan, be provided to Members.	Watmos	Complete	16 March 2023	E-mailed on 8.3.23
	Customer Engagement	That an update on Member enquiries be provided at the meeting of the Committee on 7 February 2023, subject to the Member-Officer working group having met prior to that date	Elise Hopkins	Complete	16 March 2023	On the SOC agenda for 16 March 2023.
		That data be shared with Members regarding: a. Demographics of users and issues raised at Walsall Connected; b. A detailed breakdown on the time it takes calls to be answered across the Council.	Elise Hopkins	In Progress	16 March 2023	
	Planning Services Performance & Resources to Deliver New Housing	That a breakdown of housing by type, as set out in paragraph 3.3 to the report, be provided to Members.	Alison Ives	Complete	16 March 2023	Shared 07/02/2023

07 February 2023	Corporate Financial Performance 2022/23 – 7 month position ended 31 October 2022	That the full list of mitigating actions taken in response to the forecast overspend, as set out in the report submitted to cabinet, be shared with members of the Committee.	Shaun Darcy	Complete	20 April 2023	E-mailed to Members on 9 th February 2023.
	Draft revenue budget and capital programme budget 2023/24 to 2026/27	That the recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee regarding the draft revenue budget proposals be referred to Cabinet for consideration on 8 February 2023	Nikki Gough	Complete	8 February 2023	Feedback provided to Cabinet on 8 February 2023
		That the Scrutiny Overview Committee request that Cabinet produce a full options appraisal on the future use of the Civic Centre before allocating resources to its refurbishment.	Nikki Gough	Complete	8 February 2023	Feedback provided to Cabinet on 8 February 2023. Report on Council House and Civic Centre being considered by Cabinet on 22 March 2023.
		That Cabinet are requested to consider the impact of the financial overspend within Adult Social Care and Children's Services and that a robust action plan aimed at dealing with the overspend is produced for the next financial year.	Nikki Gough	Complete	8 February 2023	Feedback provided and noted by Cabinet on 8 February 2023.

		That information be provided on funding received for Clean and Green purposes via email.	Simon Neilson	In progress	20 April 2023	
		That information regarding the Aids & Adaptations budget and waiting list be provided to Members via email.		Complete	20 April 2023	E-mailed on 29 th March 2023.
	Community Protection Enforcement	That information be provided regarding the number of scrap metal dealers licensed in Walsall.	David Elrington	Complete	20 April 2023	E-mailed on 14 th March 2023.
	Areas of Focus 2022-23	That the following be added to the Committee's Areas of Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We Are Walsall 2040 draft strategy framework; the Walsall Local Plan (for consideration when appropriate during the next Municipal Year) 	Nikki Gough	Complete		Revised areas of focus submitted to meeting of 16 March 2023.
		That the Children's Play Strategy be referred to the Economy & Environment Committee for consideration as soon as practicable	Nikki Gough	Complete		Considered by the E&E OSC on 28 February 2023.
		That the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark be referred to the Economy & Environment Committee for consideration at a future meeting	Nikki Gough	Complete		Added to the E&E OSC's work programme on 28 February 2023.

16 March 2023	Member Enquiries	That an out of hours contact for use by Elected Members in case of emergencies be incorporated into the app under development.	Marcus Hobbs	In progress		
	Our Council Plan: Markers of Success Q2 22/23	That the presentation and report submitted to the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 February regarding Childhood Obesity, be distributed to all members of the Scrutiny Overview Committee.	Steven Gunther Nikki Gough	Complete		E-mailed on 12.4.23

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Area of Focus – 2022-23

	4 October 2022	10 November	12 December	7 February	16 March	20 April
Economic Growth, for all people communities and businesses <i>Lead OSC: Economy & Environment</i>			Planning			
People have increased independence, improved health and positively contribute to their communities <i>Lead OSC: Social Care & Health</i>						
Internal focus, all Council services are efficient <i>Lead OSC: Scrutiny Overview Committee</i>	Effectiveness of scrutiny	Council Plan performance report Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Effectiveness of scrutiny	Council Customer Engagement inc. member queries and responses	Draft Revenue & Capital Budget 2023/24	Council Plan performance report Customer Engagement & member queries follow-up	Voting reforms, voter ID and raising awareness. LGA Peer Review
Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well <i>Lead OSCs: Children's & Education</i>					School Gate Parking Working Group	
Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion <i>Lead OSC: Scrutiny Overview Committee</i>	Social Housing School gate parking		WATMOS	Enforcement		WAW2040 Draft Strategy

Items to be scheduled

Notes: Council Plan themes can be cross cutting for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Lead Overview and Scrutiny Committees identified for reference

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Area of Focus – 2022-23

To be scheduled

- a) Housing strategy;
- b) Section 106 and the Infrastructure Levy;
- c) Role of Council Officers and their consultations;
- d) Proud workstreams (CX to attend);
- e) Recruitment and employee retention.
- f) West Midlands Police
- g) Walsall Local Plan (to be 2023/24)

Via Email

Quarterly Financial Monitoring



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

3 April 2023

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

Page 115 of 120

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MAY 2023 TO AUGUST 2023 (03.04.23)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
15/23 (6.3.23)	Council Plan Markers of Success Q3: To note the Quarter 3 2022/23 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25	Cabinet Non-key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Bird	19 April 2023
16/23 (22.3.23)	Adult Social Care budget increase: To seek Cabinet approval of an increased budget to Adult Social Care to fund adult social care market rate pressures. <i>This will be a private session report containing exempt information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Tony Meadows Tony.Meadows@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Pedley	19 April 2023
20/23 (3.4.23)	Temporary Workers (Agency) Provision: To appoint the Council's temporary agency provider. <i>This will be a private session report containing exempt information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Michelle Leith Michelle.Leith@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Ferguson	19 April 2023

155/22 (7.11.22)	Council Plan: Review of Achievements 2021/22: To note the Review of Achievements for 2021/22, highlighting successes and progress towards achieving our Council priorities.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
17/23 (3.4.23)	Pre-Audit Outturn 2022/23: To receive the pre-audit revenue and capital financial outturn position for 2022/23 and approve recommended carry-forwards, and financial and treasury indicators for 2022/23.	Cabinet Key decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
18/23 (3.4.23)	Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the annual report for treasury management activities 2022/23 including prudential and local indicators.	Council Non-key decision	Treasury Management Code of Practice. Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	June 2023
6/23 (9.1.23)	Borough Playing Pitch Strategy: To adopt and publish the Walsall Playing pitches strategy and the Black Country strategic framework	Cabinet Key Decision	Liz Stuffins Liz.Stuffins@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing	June 2023
129/22 (5.9.22)	Update on Resilient Communities Safer Streets Programme: To report back on Safer Streets activity and recommend any	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Paul Gordon Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk Page 117 of 120	Internal Services	Portfolio Holder for Resilient Communities	June 2023

	adjustments/additions to the programme.					
14/23 (6.2.23)	Growth Funding for Schools: To enable the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places, through the adoption of a policy for the application of revenue funding for school growth.	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal services, Schools Forum	Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills	June 2023
19/23 (3.4.23)	Corporate Financial Performance 2023/24, approach to Budget Setting for 2024/25, and changes to the council's Tax Strategy: To report the financial position based on 3 months to June 2023, and to set out our approach and timeline for the 2024/25 budget process and amendments to the Tax Strategy.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Vicky Buckley Vicky.Buckley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Leader of the Council	July 2023

Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions Published up to July 2023

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Black Country Executive Joint Committee Governance			
05/12/2022	Approval of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement Approval of the revised Black Country Joint Committee Collaboration Agreement, attached as Appendix A.	Simon Neilson Simon.neilson@walsall.gov.uk	Walsall Council	19/04/2023
06/03/2023	Constitution and Timetable of meetings Approve the timetable of meetings for 2023/24. Approve the amendments to the BCJC Constitution and Terms of Reference. Approve the amendments to the BCJC Working Protocols.	Deborah Hindson ChiefExecutive@walsall.gov.uk	Dudley Council Sandwell Council Walsall Council City of Wolverhampton Council	26/07/2023

