

Cabinet – 18 March 2009

Corporate Plan, 2009/10 to 2011/12

Portfolio:	Councillor John O'Hare, Leader of the Council
Service:	Corporate Performance Management
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Summary

This report sets out for approval the council's Corporate Plan for 2009/10, which is attached as an appendix. This plan confirms the council's continued commitment to the shared vision for the borough of Walsall set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, developed through the Walsall Partnership and launched in July 2008, and sets out the key outcomes for local citizens that form the key focus for the council and for all council services for the year ahead.

As a key policy document for the authority, the Corporate Plan will be submitted to Council for its adoption.

2. Recommendations

That cabinet approves the Corporate Plan for 2009/10 as a key part of the council's policy framework, and to refer it on to Council for adoption.

3. Background information

3.1 The council has produced a Corporate Plan each year from 2004/05, as a key component of its corporate integrated planning and performance framework. The Corporate Plan reflects the council's commitment to overarching partnership plans for the borough, specifically the Sustainable Community Strategy, and provides the focus and direction for directorate, service and team plans, and for all council employees.

3.2 The attached draft Corporate Plan for the year 2009/10, looking ahead to 2010/11 and 2011/12, reflects the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the shared vision for the borough set out in that document, that

Walsall will be a great place to live, work and invest, where...

- people get on well with one another
- people can get around easily and safely
- people support and look after one another
- there are more and better jobs for local people
- people can live an independent and healthy life
- there is a wide range of facilities for people to use and enjoy
- people consider the impact of what we do now on future generations
- there exist high-quality and distinctive designs of buildings and spaces
- growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential
- people are our strength and have the skills and attitude required by employers
- everyone has the chance to live in a home fit for their purpose and fit for the future
- people feel proud to live.

3.3 In common with the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan sets out the partnership's agreed blueprint for the future, for local people, for the places where we live and work, and in terms of prosperity, where action to create a more prosperous economy is the key to improved health and well-being, lower levels of crime, and greater educational achievement.

3.4 In addition, as a document specific to the council, the Corporate Plan sets out the authority's own ten-strand Walsall Outcomes Framework, agreed by cabinet on 19 December 2007 and central to the Corporate Plan for 2008/09, as approved by Cabinet on 6 February 2008 and as adopted by Council on 25 February 2008. This encompasses the whole range of our activity, and all our services and functions, and helps ensure that the whole of the council – all five council directorates, all services and teams, and the individual members of staff working within them - focus all their resources, energy and attention on specific shared goals – seven citizen outcomes, each focussed on action, to ensure that citizens are:

- Healthy
- Safe and secure
- Aspiring and achieving
- Enjoying a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile
- Active - contributing to their communities
- Financially and materially secure - achieving economic well-being
- Free from discrimination or harassment.

These seven citizen outcomes are matched by a focus on the council's internal systems, to ensure that they continue to provide the momentum that is needed to deliver the council's commitment to the Sustainable Community Strategy, the shared vision, and our citizen outcomes. These internal drivers relate to:

- Effective use of resources
- Delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations
- Taking forward the transformation agenda

- 3.5 In addition, as in previous years, the Corporate Plan includes a set of pledges, each one focussed on one of the citizen outcomes or internal drivers. Each pledge is designed to provide tangible evidence for local people of the council's commitment to the delivery of our vision for the borough, and the achievement of progress with each of the council's priority outcomes. With the pledges, there is a clear focus on front-facing services and upon the issues and concerns of local people. As in previous years, these pledges will be monitored through the year.

4. Resource considerations

- 4.1 **Financial:** The council pledges and key service actions identified in the Corporate Plan are accounted for within the council's budget for 2009/10.
- 4.2 **Legal:** The publication by the council of a Corporate Plan, supplemented in June 2009 by a set of performance data, including the National Indicator Set (NIS) for the year 2008/09, complies with best practice guidance on the publication of such information.
- 4.3 **Staffing:** The development of a forward looking vision, linked to directorate, service and team actions and targets, provides a clear focus on addressing the priorities for the borough and its people, for all council employees, to be taken forward through the year ahead via the Individual Performance Management (IPM) process, as set out in the council's Corporate Integrated Performance Planning Framework (the CIPPF).

5. Citizen impact

The council's priorities for the year ahead, and the set of ten pledges set out in the draft Corporate Plan have been developed in the context of the council and partnership's on-going analysis and assessment of the borough, its communities and local needs and priorities, in terms of population studies and statistics, an understanding of future trends, legislative change, and also the views, concerns, expectations and priorities of local people expressed through consultation..

6. Community safety

Community safety, the reduction of crime, and of the fear of crime in our communities, are key elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and are reflected in the shared vision which looks forward to a borough which "will be a great place to live, work and invest, where people get on well with each other [and] get around easily and safely". The council's own outcomes framework includes outcomes to ensure that citizens are "safe and secure" and "free from discrimination or harassment".

7. Environmental impact

The council and partnership's vision includes a focus looking towards a borough which "will be a great place to live, work and invest, where people consider the impact of what we do now on future generations, feel proud to live, having high quality and distinctive designs of buildings and spaces, where there is a wide range of facilities for people to use and enjoy, and everyone has the chance to live in a home fit for their purpose and fit for the future, [and] where people can get around easily and safely". The council's outcomes framework focuses on action to ensure that citizens enjoy a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile".

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

The Corporate Plan, and the set of pledges set out within it, have been risk assessed as an integral part of service planning processes.

8.2 Performance management:

The Council has a hierarchy of plans, including budget plans, within the Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF) to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into detailed plans throughout the organisation. The Corporate Plan sets out high level corporate priorities and this plan is underpinned by directorate, service and team plans which set out more specific targets and improvements which are necessary in order to achieve our priorities. Pledges and other key actions will be identified in the appropriate directorate, service and team plans for the year ahead.

Pledges are monitored by the relevant directorate and by the Corporate Management Team, with reviews presented to cabinet on a quarterly basis.

9. Equality implications

Equality is a key theme within the vision for the borough, which looks towards a borough where "people get on well with each other". The council's outcomes framework includes a specific focus on action to ensure that citizens are "free from discrimination or harassment". The Corporate Plan reiterates the council's core values, which include respect and equality.

10. Consultation

The shared vision for the borough, set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and central to the council's corporate priorities and to the Corporate Plan, was developed by the Walsall Partnership following a detailed consultation programme, Vision 2021. The council's priorities, and the set of pledges set out in this plan reflect the needs and priorities of local people, and our stakeholders, based upon information, including demographic information held by council services, and on customer feedback, including the recent budget consultation programme.

Background papers

All published.

Authors

H. Dudson – Acting Manager of Corporate Performance Management

☎ 653524

✉ dudsonh@walsall.gov.uk

J. Pryce-Jones - Corporate Performance Manager (Customer Focus & Intelligence)

☎ 652077

✉ pryce-jonesj@walsall.gov.uk



Rory Borealis
Executive Director (Resources)

9 March 2009



Councillor John O'Hare
Leader of the Council

17 February 2009

Walsall Council

Corporate Plan

2009/10 to 2011/12

April 2009

Contents

Page

1. Setting the scene – introduction by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive
2. The purpose of this document
3. Our vision for the borough of Walsall
 - Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy
 - Our vision to 2021
 - Our focus: people, places, prosperity
 - Our Local Area Agreement
 - The Walsall Outcomes Framework
 - Our pledges for 2009/10
4. Holding fast to our values
5. Effective consultation and engagement – acting on the views of local people
6. Making best use of our resources
7. Making it count – our performance management framework
8. Sources of further information

1. Setting the scene

[text to be added]

Councillor John O'Hare
Leader of the Council

Paul Sheehan
Chief Executive

2. The purpose of this document

The council publishes a Corporate Plan each year as a key element of our corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF). The plan sets out the council's vision for the borough, our aims and objectives, and the key priorities for the year ahead, both corporately and within each directorate. This year, for the first time, the document provides a three year focus, for 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12, but it is still the council's intention to review and renew the plan each year.

The plan reflects the council's contribution to the work of the Walsall Partnership, and the Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough, and the Local Area Agreement which will take it forward. The Corporate Plan, the budget, and other key plans and strategies of the council, and of the wider partnership, are all informed by an understanding of the people, nature and demographics of our borough: primary statistical and trend data, customer feedback, and other analyses of community needs, which supports the design and delivery of our services, corporately and at directorate, service and team levels.

3. Our vision for the borough of Walsall

Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy

At the heart of the council's plans and strategies stands the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), the overarching community plan for the borough, which was published by the Walsall Partnership during 2008/09, and which was informed by, and reflected a wide ranging consultation programme 'Vision 2021' delivered by the Partnership and by individual partner organisations. The Sustainable Community Strategy includes clear targeted plans to be delivered by local partners, singly and in partnership. The SCS informs, and sits at the heart of the plans of the individual partners, including the council. The council is committed to the SCS, and to the delivery of our own contribution to the implementation of the strategy, and the action plans, including the Local Area Agreement, which will make it happen.

To this end, the council has endorsed, and signed up to the new **shared vision for the borough of Walsall, looking ahead to 2021**, that is set out in the SCS. Our vision is that

Walsall will be a great place to live, work and invest, where...

- people get on well with one another
- people can get around easily and safely
- people support and look after one another
- there are more and better jobs for local people
- people can live an independent and healthy life
- there is a wide range of facilities for people to use and enjoy
- people consider the impact of what we do now on future generations
- there exist high-quality and distinctive designs of buildings and spaces
- growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential
- people are our strength and have the skills and attitude required by employers
- everyone has the chance to live in a home fit for their purpose and fit for the future
- people feel proud to live.

The Sustainable Community Strategy shapes the future ambitions for the borough under three general headings - people, places, and prosperity – acknowledging that these three headings reflect a single inter-dependent focus on the needs of the borough, on the people and communities that make up the borough, where we are all working to achieve an environment where people can thrive.

People

In Walsall we are proud to have a diverse community where people are friendly and get on with each other. People are our most important resource for the future and so we are committed to consult with communities in the preparation of our plans and services. During consultation towards the SCS, residents said that they want their neighbourhoods to be:

- safe and free from crime
- places where people are able to meet one another
- communities which are friendly and where people look after one another
- places where individuals, families, groups and communities are treated in the way they wish to be treated

The Walsall Partnership's priorities for people and communities, based on the views of residents are:

- creating opportunity and helping people to achieve their potential
- feeling safe and being healthy
- individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities working together to create strong and dynamic communities

Creating opportunity and potential

Creating more and better jobs for local people is our key challenge. We know that having a job unlocks many other benefits that improve the quality of life of individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities. We are committed to working with everyone to enable them to reach their potential and to improve their education, knowledge and levels of skills. We will provide specialist support to workless adults.

Walsall is in the process of creating new business opportunities, based on information and communication technologies (ICT) and the sharing of knowledge. This will require new skills and knowledge to be developed for local people, thus enabling them to gain employment. We know Walsall has many people willing and capable of improving their skills, knowledge and qualifications and so we will provide better opportunities for adult learning across the borough. This will raise the aspirations of individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities and help them to improve their confidence and fulfil their individual and collective goals. In turn this will not only boost our local economies but it will also generate a more even distribution of wealth and income.

We will work in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), along with providers of adult, further and higher education, to ensure that there are learning opportunities for all. We will widen and deepen the participation of individuals, groups and communities in learning, education and training whilst promoting life-long learning. We will ensure that learning is accessible and meets the demands of employers. We will aim to provide a service which is constantly improving to meet demands of individuals, families, neighbourhoods, communities and businesses and which delivers seamlessly to all. Along with the traditional places of learning, we will provide community-based informal and on-line courses. We will provide access and support that encourages and enables learners to work at their own pace, using our libraries, partners, community organisations and ICT networks. Together we can help create a positive environment that will both encourage and demand learning inside and outside of the workplace.

We will work with schools and others to develop a more personalised learning approach for all children and young people. We will improve the achievement of all school leavers especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds, under-achieving boys, looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

We will encourage people to make better use of different kinds of transport which give them better, cheaper or healthier forms of access to learning and employment opportunities.

We will also encourage people to volunteer within their community and we will involve communities in the decisions affecting their lives. This will include providing opportunities to lead more healthy lifestyles and improve their well-being.

Feeling safe and being healthy

Feeling safe and being healthy is important to our quality of life.

Despite a decrease in recorded crime, fear of crime remains an issue for some communities. The Safer Walsall Partnership is the key agency tasked with ensuring a multi-agency approach to tackling crime and the fear of crime. We will work through and alongside them to support people who are vulnerable and likely to be drawn into crime, particularly through drug and alcohol abuse. In transforming our town and district centres we will create an environment that reduces crime and enables people to feel safe. We will also work in partnership with organisations and businesses to reduce business crime.

Making people feel safe requires more than just dealing with crime and disorder. We will create safe open spaces and parks and encourage physical activity to enable people to relax and enjoy themselves. More people using these facilities and spaces appropriately makes those areas feel safer. We will also make our streets feel safer by tackling anti-social behaviour. Safety in the home is important and we will work to protect people against creating fire hazards and the trading of potentially dangerous counterfeit goods.

People have concern over the availability of adequate health care facilities. We will work together to tackle health inequalities and to meet the care needs of all.

We will reduce the health inequalities that exist between the east and the west of the borough and also between different disadvantaged minority ethnic groups. The Joint Health Inequalities Strategy will be delivered in partnership and will consider the factors that cause ill-health, including sustained unemployment, educational under-achievement, poor support and bad environment. By working on these factors together we will raise life expectancy and reduce infant mortality.

Improving the quality of life and encouraging independence is essential to generating good health and improving general well-being. We will continue to support our vulnerable citizens and their carers; people will be helped to retain their independence for as long as possible. We will ensure that those who receive these services are able to exercise choice and exert control over the form such services take and by whom they are delivered; the carers of our vulnerable adults will continue to be supported through the delivery of high-quality and timely support.

Developing strong and dynamic communities

Strong and prosperous communities are created by active citizens who engage with local democracy to help shape places and lives.

Walsall communities have laid the foundation for building a borough where everyone can have a great life and a prosperous future. We will continue to nurture good, dynamic and strong relationships within and between individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods and communities and between them and those who plan and deliver public services. We will work more fairly and effectively with those most in need. We will encourage people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and will continue to promote the value of our diverse communities.

We will support self-leading communities and will value volunteering for the contribution it makes to economic, social and environmental regeneration. We will enable democratic engagement with individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods and communities in the knowledge that this will improve how services are delivered in neighbourhoods and districts.

We will make sure that local people really can play a part in shaping their future. We will expect service providers to accept this challenge, get engaged with our neighbourhoods and listen and respond to the needs of our communities.

We know that people want to live in a high-quality environment. This also encourages well-being and investment. We will promote and celebrate the natural environment as part of building strong communities. We will develop green spaces and ensure that they are accessible to the public.

Places

Creating places where people want to live and feel proud of is important in order to retain and attract people to Walsall.

Successful places have a mix of well-designed homes, a choice of facilities and a high-quality environment with access to jobs and services. The poor quality of the urban and fringe environments undermines efforts to attract new industries and people, leading to a spiral of decline, particularly in some of the local centres and neighbourhoods.

We aim to create growth in housing, improve local centres and stimulate the local economy by focusing investments in new homes, jobs, transport improvements, community facilities and the environment. We recognise that Walsall has diverse communities with specific requirements and that there is a growing demand for smaller homes due to both an increasingly ageing population and the number of single-parent families. There is also a need for more affordable homes.

During consultation towards the SCS, the partnership was told that local neighbourhoods should be:

- accessible, safe and secure
- places that make residents feel proud
- places where people have access to high-quality open space for play, recreation and enjoyment
- clean.

Our aspiration is that every neighbourhood in Walsall will be a popular place to live with a wide choice of housing and high-quality leisure and cultural activities. The Walsall Partnership's priorities to achieve this are:

- improving housing choice
- improving the quality of our environment
- improving access to employment and services

Improving housing choice

Our aim is to provide better housing choice for everyone in the borough, including the growing numbers of smaller households, our ageing population and our changing, diverse communities. We will ensure that this choice includes aspirational housing, affordable home ownership and social rented properties to give us balanced, sustainable communities. We will provide a range of smaller homes for town and district centre living and larger family homes where they are needed across the borough.

Where possible we will support people to remain in their own home by providing appropriate services, adapting and repairing existing property and encouraging new properties to be built to the 'lifetime homes' standard. We will also encourage the development of new housing to provide a modern alternative for people not able or wishing to remain in their own home.

We will improve our existing private sector homes, especially those occupied by vulnerable people. We will make 70% of these homes decent by 2010 and 75% decent by 2020. We will reduce fuel poverty for those households by 2010 and for all households by 2016. We will also make housing more environmentally friendly and energy efficient and we will work towards the government target of zero carbon new housing by 2016.

Our Strategic Regeneration Framework sets out a 10- to 15-year programme of priority areas where we will deliver new and improved housing, starting with Pleck, followed by Goscote, Brownhills, Moxley, Bentley and Willenhall. We will continue to work with our partners in the Black Country and the Midlands, over the coming years to tackle desirability and value of the housing market renewal in the west and north of the borough, including Darlaston, Willenhall, Bloxwich and Walsall town centre.

Improving the quality of our environment

A high-quality environment improves our quality of life and helps to make us feel proud of where we live. Our health and well-being are also enhanced by access to a range of diverse and better quality environments. The value of land, property and levels of investment are also improved when the environment is improved. Access to places to play is also vital to ensure good childhood memories and builds self-esteem.

What we do next on a local, national and global level will affect the future of our planet. We are committed to acting now locally to reduce our impact upon the environment to more sustainable levels. We are also committed to adapting to the effects of adverse climate change including flooding or other catastrophes.

We will improve our green spaces and access to green spaces and we will support the Black Country Consortium to make the Black Country an 'Urban Park'.

Improving Access to Employment, Services and Facilities

We will ensure people can access key services easily and in a timely manner at reasonable cost.

We will ensure that adequate, affordable and accessible transport exists between the people and the location of services they require.

Solving accessibility problems is partly about transport but it is also about locating and delivering key activities together and closely to places where people can reach them.

Prosperity

A more prosperous economy will lead to other improvements such as better health and improved well-being, lower levels of crime and greater educational achievement.

Providing more and better paid jobs for local people is the main focus of this part of the strategy. This will reduce the overall difference, for the better, in the levels of prosperity between rich and poor and so deliver improved economic and social wellbeing for individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities.

During consultation towards the SCS, residents, businesses and other partners said that they want Walsall to be a place where there is:

- a vibrant town centre
- reduced business crime
- improved transportation
- more on-the-job training and work-based learning
- a more flexible approach to working with developers
- more investment in schools to enable them to prepare pupils for work and other means to improve their lives
- better use of canals and the development of amenities and attractions alongside them
- a local workforce with the skills, expertise and knowledge to gain, keep progress and transfer to the jobs created by business investment

The Walsall Partnership's priorities for increasing prosperity, based on the outcomes of consultation, are:

- better education, improved knowledge and skills
- accessible and sustainable places for business
- vibrant town and neighbourhood centres
- research and development
- working with employers to create jobs and opportunities

Education, Knowledge and Skills

Walsall's future depends on developing our people. Our aim is that all of our residents, families, communities and neighbourhoods reach their potential and become confident, self-motivated learners who will enable the borough to be a great place to live, work and invest. We will improve the facilities and opportunities available in schools and encourage life-long learning for everyone.

We will continue to create more children's centres where children, young people, parents and carers can access support, services and opportunities close to where they live. We will encourage schools to provide a more personalised learning for students, more opportunities for 14- to 19-year olds, more extended services to families and carers and more support to people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The education of children and young people will be a key element in delivering the economic growth within and across Walsall. There will be greater collaboration between educational institutions and local, sub-regional and regional partners to give every child and young person the best opportunities; growing up in Walsall will be as good as it can be, children will realise their full potential. The Black Country Challenge will provide resources and opportunities for improvements in many schools.

At the same time we will maximise the employment and economic activity and the well-being of young people in a regenerated borough, reducing the numbers who are not in education, employment or training and reducing child poverty. We will encourage our young people, parents, families and communities to have higher aspirations and help them to achieve qualifications and access higher education. We will promote life-long learning and widening participation into training, learning and educational opportunities in local areas. This will increase the potential of our workforce in the borough.

We will work to develop and deliver our neighbourhood employment, knowledge and skills action plans, which identify the barriers to work opportunities and gaps in services in local areas and the actions needed to assist people to develop skills and get jobs.

We know that new investors and new businesses attracted into Walsall require higher levels of skills, expertise and knowledge than our current population, on the whole, can offer. To overcome this we will encourage partnership working between learning, education or training providers and employers. We will ensure that the needs of businesses are better understood. We will create a new business and learning campus, which will be the centre for working with local people to develop their skills knowledge and qualifications.

We are aiming for a world-class education structure and a learning framework to ensure that children, young people, adults, employees and communities will all have the opportunity to be educated, knowledgeable and skilled to meet future business requirements.

Accessible and sustainable places for business

Walsall is a town for enterprise and we are creating a new and exciting business culture. We will develop and promote our major assets, such as our excellent location, network of direct rail and road links, business support and workforce. Raising Walsall's profile, backed up

with delivery, will stimulate more local, sub-regional, regional, national and global investment in the borough's businesses, communities and people.

We will provide a full range of high-quality support to local businesses. We will support the private sector in developing and building upon its current strengths, and the social enterprise economy will be encouraged to develop its potential. We have streamlined our processes to create a more effective approach to business development. We have identified strategic development areas with the potential to create between 2,000 and 4,000 jobs. Re-building Walsall Manor Hospital will provide better health-care for our communities; it will also create opportunities for jobs and skills training, and for local firms and social enterprises to supply goods, services and expertise.

We will make better use of our existing roads and target new road proposals that support access to areas where development is needed. High-quality information systems, greater enforcement, targeted local road improvements and up-to-the-minute information for drivers will all make journey times more reliable. We will support the road networks through investment in high-quality and safe public transport networks. We will work with operators to target those services that connect people to our key areas of activity at the times they want to travel. This will be supported by easy-to-understand information, making residents and visitors feel they are well-informed travellers, happy to use public transport.

Good businesses minimise their adverse impact upon the environment. We will ensure that there are networks of safe, high-quality footpaths and cycle routes to connect our key areas of commercial activity to residential areas, which in turn will take some of the pressure off the roads and encourage healthy and environmentally friendly short journeys. We will make a special effort to link these footpaths and cycle routes to our network of schools and local centres, encouraging children to do more beneficial physical activity and reducing the negative impact of people travelling to school by car.

Walsall has pioneered green business parks where groups of businesses work together to reduce waste, share suppliers and improve their physical environment. This is the future of businesses in the twenty-first century and we will lead the way to move from a traditional high-carbon economy to a new, sustainable, low-carbon economy. Our reputation will be built as a place where business is mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to the impact of a changed climate. This will bring new skills and knowledge to the borough, as well as jobs, future viability of communities and economies.

Vibrant town and neighbourhood centres

Walsall's excellent location at the gateway to the Black Country and at the heart of the wider City Region offers the opportunity to play a leading role in the renaissance of the West Midlands. This location means that around five million people are within 45 minutes of Walsall by public transport. Over the next 15 years our town centre will see a radical change to its landscape, with significant development taking place in business, retail, leisure and residential sectors. We will promote Walsall as a leading Black Country town, and it will attract new investors, new residents, new shoppers, new tourists and new visitors. The town centre will look and feel fresh, vibrant and modern.

A set of new office buildings will be developed which will be supported by new technology such as fibre optic data transfer, which is unique in the UK. This will act as an incentive to attract business and inward investment from global organisations.

Research and development

Walsall is entering a new era of growth and development. The borough's future rests on our ability to adapt quickly and positively to change. Over the next six years there will be a noticeable increase in the number of knowledge and technology-based businesses and the use of technology by all who live or work in Walsall. We will develop our own gigaport - a fibre-optic network that will be 120 times faster than broadband - to meet the evolving needs of business and enterprise for the twenty-first century.

Alongside this physical infrastructure will be a clear alignment of higher and further education institutions, business support and training providers, who will work with international blue-chip companies to provide high-quality learning, development and training, knowledge acquisition and renewal, research and development support. A workforce with the skills, expertise and knowledge relevant to these new initiatives, together with the appropriate technological infrastructure, underpins our aspirations for increased prosperity as the keystone for sustainable communities.

Working with employers to create jobs and opportunities

Walsall has a strong and vibrant business community and we are committed to working with business across all sectors. Through a programme of engagement and support, we can help Walsall's businesses overcome some of the many challenges that they face in today's global economy by promoting employment opportunities, continual professional development and career progression, whilst benefiting the Walsall economy as a whole. To encourage existing businesses looking to make significant investments in their operations we will offer tailored packages of support. This will include encouragement to develop sites, train the existing workforce and create new jobs. We will also encourage apprenticeship. Support will also be offered to inward investors, making Walsall an attractive option in which to relocate a business and create new job opportunities, investment and growth.

Working with a range of partners, we will link new job opportunities to local residents and communities. We will also continue to assist employers to develop this workforce to increase the level and range of skills and knowledge in the borough and provide further opportunities. We aim to procure products and services locally to enable local businesses to take advantage of expenditure taking place in the borough. These opportunities for local business will be promoted through our Think Walsall initiative, when tenders and contracts will be delivered.

Within the SCS, the three headings of People, Places and Prosperity are developed around the ten key outcomes set out above, and in turn these outcomes are each supported by a set of priority actions, all backed up by the combined effort, and the commitment of the Walsall Partnership, and by each individual partner – including this council. Details are set out below.

Outcome	Priority
People	
Creating opportunity and potential	Encouraging the achievement of personal goals, skills and ambitions
	Improving personal health through changing lifestyles
	Enhancing the quality of life for people living and working in Walsall
	Providing accessible learning opportunities
	Broaden access to information in an appropriate environment
	Improve the quality and range of cultural and leisure activities
Feeling safe and being healthy	Reducing total levels of recorded crime
	Ensuring partnership support in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods
	Reduce health inequalities between the east and west of the borough
	Improving the quality of life and increasing the independence of people in Walsall
	Reducing the incidence of road traffic collisions
Developing strong and dynamic communities	Encouraging active citizens to participate in local decision-making processes
	Ensuring groups, neighbourhoods and communities can influence decisions affecting their local area
	Ensuring strong neighbourhoods where people can get on well together
	Value and enable families to be self supporting and resilient
Places	
Improving housing choice	Prevent homelessness
	Increase the number and choice of affordable homes
	Increase the overall standard of rebuilt housing in the private sector
	Enabling people to live more independently
Improving the quality of our environment	Create cleaner greener and safer neighbourhoods
	Ensure people sufficient and efficient heat and energy
	Monitor and reduce the impact of pollutants on our environment

	Improve energy efficiency
	Value and preserve the natural environment
	Reduce our adverse impact and adapt to climate change
Improve access to employment, services and facilities	Provide efficient and effective transport access to services
Prosperity	
Education and skills	Supporting children to do as well as they can and enjoy their childhood and youth
	Improving educational attainment and school facilities
	Reducing child poverty and promoting the economic well-being of young people and their families
	Improve the skills and knowledge of people both in and out of work
Accessible, sustainable places for business	Deliver the vision of Walsall being a town for enterprise
	Manage our key road and public transport networks
	Focus on climate change by reducing carbon dependence and by using environment technologies
	Offer a full range of high quality support to new and existing local businesses
	Preventing business arson
Vibrant town centre and neighbourhoods	Attract new businesses
	Develop the town centre canal-side
	Create a new shopping experience in Walsall town centre
	Create a new cultural, educational and leisure facilities
	Work with existing businesses to help them remain, grow and thrive in Walsall
	Recognise and raise awareness of the borough's historic environment
	Seek new, sustainable uses for important historic buildings
Focus development on neighbourhood centres to revitalise them and to enable them to flourish whilst maintaining a unique identity	
Research and development	Develop the skills of our local people to ensure that the demands of new businesses are met
	Work with our educational providers to ensure that our children, young people and adults both in and out of work, develop the new skill set required
	Build a technology-based infrastructure to support knowledge and communications-focussed business, by providing fast internet access 120 faster than broadband
Working with employers to create jobs and	Support existing business to grow and expand
	Attract inward investment opportunities in Walsall
	Link businesses to workforce development initiatives

opportunities	Develop Think Walsall to maximise social, economic and environmental benefits
	Support for businesses looking to make redundancies

For more information, see Walsall’s Sustainable Community Strategy, available from the Walsall Partnership, 1st Floor, Challenge Building, Hatherton Road, Walsall, WS1 1YG: telephone 01922 654709, or via the partnership’s web site www.walsallpartnership.org.uk.

Our Local Area Agreement

Walsall’s new Local Area Agreement (LAA) provides the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy. The LAA contains the priorities for the first three years of the Strategy and will establish the foundation on which the successful implementation of the longer term vision will rest. The SCS sets the scene for Walsall to become a prosperous borough. It shows how, while not forgetting the past, Walsall’s story is about our future - **every place has its time and it is now Walsall’s time**. The SCS unites all partners behind a common goal, setting the context for partners to work together to deliver a sustainable and more prosperous borough. It puts the need for a thriving local economy at the heart of our plans, recognising that getting people into work helps deliver the other benefits that we want. Health, educational achievement, increased aspirations, quality of housing and environment, reduced crime, people getting on with each other; all improve as a result of a successful local economy.

For more details see the Local Area Agreement, available from the Walsall Partnership, as above, or via the web site www.walsallpartnership.org.uk.

Our outcomes framework – the Walsall Outcomes Framework – seven citizen outcomes, three internal drivers

The council is fully committed to the vision of the borough, set out above, developed jointly with our partners through the Walsall Partnership. We are a key partner, and central to the achievement of that vision, and of the priority actions set out above, set out in detail in the SCS and LAA. To ensure that our own five directorates, and the services, teams, and individual members of staff working within them, all focus their resources, their energy and their attention in this direction – on the things that matter most to local people, the things that will take forward our common agenda to achieve our shared vision, the council has adopted the ten-strand Walsall Outcomes Framework. Initially adopted as a key component of the council’s Corporate Plan for 2008/09, this framework is reflective of the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being, and the seven outcomes developed by the Commission for Social Care Inspection for the assessment of adult social care: improved health, improved quality of life, making a positive contribution, economic well-being, freedom from discrimination or harassment, personal dignity and respect, and the exercise of choice and control. However, the council sees our Walsall Outcomes Framework as one

which reflects the whole spectrum of our activity, and all our services and functions. It is built around **seven citizen outcomes**, each focussed on action to ensure that citizens are:

- Healthy
- Safe and secure
- Aspiring and achieving
- Enjoying a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile
- Active - contributing to their communities
- Financially and materially secure - achieving economic well-being
- Free from discrimination or harassment

These citizen outcomes are customer facing, and are backed up by **three internal drivers** to provide the momentum to deliver the council's commitment to the SCS, the shared vision, and our citizen outcomes. These are:

- Effective use of resources
- Delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations
- Taking forward the transformation agenda

Our pledges for 2009/10

Together with the shared vision, this ten part outcomes framework provides clarity of purpose to our directorates, services, teams and to individuals working for the council, whether in front-line or back office. It provides a tightly drawn framework through which the council can develop directorate, service and team priorities, and ensure that we deliver our important contribution to the outcomes of the SCS. Accordingly, these seven citizen outcomes and three organisational drivers, supportive of the new vision, provide the cornerstone for our performance planning processes, reflecting the Corporate Integrated Planning & Performance Framework (CIPPF), set out in more detail in chapter 7. In addition, they are supported and 'made real' by a set of 20 pledges, each of which provides tangible evidence of the priority given to one of the outcomes or drivers. Delivered via directorate plans and service action plans, the pledges are monitored throughout the year via the Beacon Index. The council's 2009/10 pledges are set out below:

Citizens are healthy

Despite extensive work carried out in the borough in recent years, the scale and persistence of health inequalities in Walsall remain major challenges to the council and our partners. The Walsall Health Inequality Strategy seeks to reduce health inequalities by building on the

work already established in the borough and to address the significant geographic divide between the health experiences of those living in the east of the borough and those in the west. Also, through our Children & Young People's Plan we are developing services for children and young people and families such as the network of children's centres that provide a 'joined up' point of contact for many health needs.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will raise the levels of physical activity

Citizens are safe and secure

Despite recent decreases in recorded crime, the fear of crime remains a key issue for local communities. The Safer Walsall Partnership is the key agency tasked with ensuring a multi-agency approach to tackling crime and the fear of crime, and through this partnership, the council works to support both local people who are vulnerable and those at risk of being drawn into crime, particularly through drug and alcohol abuse. In transforming our town and district centres we want to create an environment that reduces crime and enables people to feel safe. We will also work to reduce business crime and to make our streets feel safer by tackling anti-social behaviour.

Safety is central to all our services. We will focus on families - the bedrock of society and the place for nurturing happy, capable and resilient children - and will work to support parents in meeting the challenges of family life. We will protect vulnerable children, and help vulnerable adults to live safe and independent lives.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will assist more vulnerable adult people to live safe and independent lives within the community

Citizens are aspiring and achieving

The key to the future success of our children and young people, and for Walsall to be a successful economy that attracts investment and employment, is well educated, qualified and skilled young people who are ambitious to improve themselves and their communities. Increasing aspiration and attainment is a priority which we will address by improving school standards and working with our partners across the borough. We will encourage our young people, parents, families and communities to have higher aspirations and help them to achieve qualifications and access higher education. We will promote life-long learning and widening participation into training, learning and educational opportunities in local areas. We recognise that some families and communities find it hard to access all the benefits of living in Walsall, and therefore we will strive to ensure equality of opportunity and community cohesion and to reduce health inequality.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will improve the aspirations and attainment of underperforming groups, in particular white boys, looked after children and Pakistani / Bangladeshi students

Citizens are enjoying a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile

A high-quality environment improves our quality of life and helps to make us feel proud of where we live. Local people want to take pride in their environment, their parks and open spaces, their streets, and their public buildings. Concern about litter and graffiti is matched by concerns on a national and global level, and the council will work to reduce our impact upon the environment to more sustainable levels. Mobility is a key factor and the council's aim is for Walsall to have an efficient and reliable transport system that is able to adapt and respond to future demands, meeting the challenge of safeguarding our mobility and our economic development, while managing demand for transport and maintaining or even improving quality of life.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will increase household recycling

Citizens are active - contributing to their communities

Strong and prosperous communities are created by active citizens who engage with local democracy to help shape places and lives. Walsall communities have laid the foundation for building a borough where everyone can have a great life and a prosperous future. We will work with local people - individuals, families, groups, neighbourhoods and communities - enabling our citizens to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and to shaping their future. We acknowledge the immense value – in time, experience, and commitment - that volunteering brings to economic, social and environmental regeneration of our borough.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will support residents to be more actively involved in their communities

Citizens are financially and materially secure - achieving economic well-being

Walsall's future depends on developing our people. Our aim is that all of our residents, families, communities and neighbourhoods reach their potential and become confident, self-motivated learners who will enable the borough to be a great place to live, work and invest. We

will improve the facilities and opportunities available in schools and encourage life-long learning for everyone, to ensure that we have a local workforce with the right skills, expertise and knowledge for the local economy. Working with a range of partners, we will link new job opportunities to local residents and communities. We aim to procure products and services locally to enable local businesses to take advantage of expenditure taking place in the borough. A more prosperous economy will lead to other improvements such as better health and improved well-being, lower levels of crime and greater educational achievement.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will actively support local businesses and local people, with the aims of sustaining / creating employment and training opportunities; and we will continue to encourage inward investment despite the economic climate

Citizens are free from discrimination or harassment

Walsall is a borough of contrasts: there are particularly deprived areas in the western and central areas of Walsall, whilst generally, the east is more affluent. The borough has made significant steps in recent years to address inequalities through, for example the quality of housing, health improvements, education standards and crime reduction. Regeneration in neighbourhoods and our town centres can improve the quality of life of Walsall residents and to bring more skilled employment opportunities to the borough. Whilst our borough is seen as a place where people get on well together, our Community Cohesion Strategy sets out a range of far reaching and cross cutting issues which the council, and our partners, must address, to ensure that all residents – individuals, families, communities - are free from discrimination or harassment, and able to share in our common vision for the future.

Towards the achievement of this outcome, the council has pledged that, in the year 2009/10:

- We will address discrimination and harassment through our approach to community cohesion

Effective use of resources

Effective use of resources is about achieving value for money, ensuring that council services are provided in a cost effective manner, and that the council makes best use of its resources – in terms of employees, buildings and other assets, and finances, whether from council tax, fees and charges, or government grant. This requires good governance structures – financial, legal, risk management, performance, partnerships – and a thorough understanding of the needs of the community, now and for the future, based upon technical expertise and an up to date knowledge of the views, concerns and expectations of local people.

To demonstrate our commitment, our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will reduce our energy use and town centre office accommodation footprint

Delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations

Local people want council services to be available in the right way, the right place and at a time to suit them. Our citizens want to sort out their business with the council simply and quickly - with one visit to the council's offices, or one phone call, rather than several, and without being passed from pillar to post. We need to redesign how we provide services so that we put the customer at the heart of what we do. Our Customer Services Strategy will ensure that we meet our goal of providing high quality customer services through an organisation that listens, respects and values local people – our 'customers', protects their privacy, and provides information at the right time. To meet citizens' expectations of our services, we need to work with people who use our services, listen to their concerns, and set standards which reflect local needs and priorities.

To demonstrate our commitment, our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will respond to complaints more quickly (reducing the time scale for handling complaints across all services)

Taking forward the transformation agenda

The council will be a lean, flexible, responsive, forward looking organisation, successfully meeting the needs and expectations of the citizens and community of Walsall. Central to our transformation agenda are three programme, focussing on the *customer experience*, working with services to develop standards for customer care and service level, and delivering improved processes and front-line systems focussed on the needs of our customers; on *adaptive working*, focussing on our working practices, and the *people and change* programme focussing on our workforce, ensuring that our employees have the right skills for the council's future needs

To demonstrate our commitment, our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will reduce the council's operating costs.

4. Holding fast to our values

As we move forward, working towards our shared vision for the borough of Walsall, to 2021, seeking to transform our services to meet the needs and expectations of citizens and service users, we continue to hold fast to our core values of **respect, integrity, equality, listening** and **excellence** to guide us in our day-to-day work – both externally, in our contact with citizens and customers, and with partner organisations, and internally, both council members and employees, in working between and across directorates and services, and with our contractors and suppliers.

Through our commitment to these values, we signal to everyone the beliefs, behaviours and principles that underpin all that we do. These shared and agreed values set out what the council stands for and how it will behave:

Respect

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

Integrity

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

Equality

- We will, through our policies, statements and actions, include, promote and celebrate the great diversity of individuals and cultures across the borough
- We will gear our resources to ensure that our citizens and staff will see and feel real fairness and equality for all
- We will make council services accessible, and tailored to the needs of all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle or disability

Listening

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

Excellence

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

5. Effective consultation and engagement – acting on the views of local people

Walsall Council is committed to working with, listening to and involving local people in our decision making, and citizens and communities are at the centre of what we do and the services we provide. Effective consultation and engagement activity ensures that our focus, in our policies, our plans and service strategies, and our budgets, is firmly on the issues and concerns of our communities, our stakeholders, and our citizens.

Consultation is essentially about two-way communication. It's about involving people to gain an understanding of ideas, concerns and opinions. By seeking the views of residents and then acting on the results, the council can ensure that its services better reflect needs and aspirations of people who live and work in the borough.

Within the council, consultation and engagement currently happens in many ways. At the centre of our approach are the nine Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs), each covering either two or three of our electoral wards. These bring together ward councillors, other public service providers, and local people and groups, and provide a forum for discussing, and shaping local service provision. Each LNP is supported by a framework of community based groups reflecting local issues and priorities.

Our approach to consultation reflects the Community Engagement Strategy, agreed by all the partners in the Walsall Partnership. We also respect the principles of the Local Compact (see chapter 7).

Duty to inform, consult and involve

The Audit Commission have published *Focusing on Citizens, Users and Diverse Communities – Learning from CPA and Inspection 2006/7* and this highlights the greater emphasis that will be placed on citizens, users and diversity in Comprehensive Area Assessment to ensure that councils and their partners are meeting the needs of their communities and a new duty to inform, consult and involve.

Furthermore the Communities and Local Government White Paper 'Strong and prosperous communities' clearly states that 'local authorities must 'involve and consult service users more fully' and that partners need to 'focus on the needs of citizens and communities'.

Essentially, the duty to involve will ensure that local people have greater opportunities to influence decision-making and get involved. Walsall Council is fully committed to fulfilling this duty.

In the coming year and those that follow, we will be working hard to make it easier for local people to have their say, using innovative consultation methods as well as more traditional channels. We will focus on ensuring that those who are most vulnerable or traditionally

'hard to hear' are given a voice and encouraged to have their say. We will continue to work with established groups and organisations and the growing community and voluntary sector or '3rd sector' in Walsall.

Each year the council undertakes a wide and varied programme of consultation and community engagement activity. We do this in order to:

- Obtain valuable feedback about our services to enable us to tailor those services to meet the needs of all our users and citizens
- Gather citizen intelligence to enable us to identify the changing needs and priorities of local communities, ensuring that we can move fast to change our services accordingly, and develop services to meet local needs
- Generally, plan our services better, and ensure that we use our resources appropriately and effectively.

Consultation and engagement for the council covers a wide range of activities, and includes the use of a wide variety of different approaches, tools and techniques including:

- Postal questionnaires
- Focus groups and residents' workshops
- Public meetings and events
- Telephone and face to face interviews
- Online web surveys and polls
- Comments, compliments and complaints forms
- Mystery shopping
- Use of creative arts techniques and other innovative methods

The New Place Survey 2008/09

During September and December 2008, Walsall Partnership carried out a postal survey to find out what residents think about Walsall as a place to live and on the service provided by local public services i.e. Walsall Council, the Police and Fire services, NHS Walsall, housing providers, businesses and the community and voluntary sector.

The 'Place Survey', which was carried out at the same time by all local authorities in England and Wales, was sent out to a random sample of 5,000 households in the borough. Results from the survey will be used locally to identify what residents think we are doing well, where we need to improve, as well as thoughts on what the priorities are for the services we provide. Importantly it will help us track our progress against the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA represents a commitment by partners and the council to work together to deliver on key priorities towards making Walsall a great place to live, work and invest. Furthermore these results will be used by central government to check out Walsall's progress from residents' perspective.

Building Schools for the Future

Transforming Learning in Walsall is the joint name for Building Schools for the Future, the Primary Capital Programme and Walsall Academies. These exciting new projects will transform the way children and young people learn in Walsall and the way school buildings are used to make schools truly a part of the community.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was launched by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in February 2003. BSF is a new approach of investment in secondary school buildings that will transform where and how children learn. They will not only be provided with improved buildings, but also high quality facilities and integrated information technology that will allow students to learn in a way that is personalised to their skills, interests and abilities.

Walsall will share a total of £625 million with seven other local authorities.

Primary Capital Programme

The Primary Capital Programme (PCP) is the Government's commitment to renewing at least half of all primary school buildings by 2022/23. The aim is to create primary schools that are equipped for 21st century teaching and learning, and are at the heart of their communities with a range of services in reach of every family.

The primary capital investment will support a wide range of policies with the Children and Young People's Plan at its heart. The investment will support the transformation of education, including raising standards and improving the life chances and well being of all children, the removal of surplus places, inclusion, Every Child Matters, and services for the local community.

BSF and PCP is an enormous investment and will be delivered through council services working in partnership – education and children's services alongside services including regeneration, libraries, sports and leisure and housing. We will also be involving other partner agencies such as health, the voluntary sector and local businesses. It will be an approach that brings the whole community together. We will consult widely throughout the community seeking the views of local people young and old, parents and pupils, head teachers and school staff, faith groups, social and sports clubs and many many more. Transforming learning in Walsall will touch the whole community and we will work hard to ensure that those communities are heard and listened to throughout the process. We will use a wide range of consultation methods to consult with communities including; workshops and special locality events, focus groups, web and postal questionnaires, interviews and roadshows. We will also use innovative techniques and engage people in new and interesting ways.

The outcomes of consultation from BSF, PCP and other data will support this once in a lifetime opportunity to transform teaching and learning in Walsall to create world class 21st century learning environments.

Budget consultation

Between September and October 2008, Walsall Council undertook its annual programme of budget consultation. In order to develop our future plans we consult widely to find out what issues are important to local people, what most needs improving and what local communities think we need to concentrate our resources on. Findings from budget consultation are combined with other information which is then used to help inform and agree a budget for the financial year ahead.

Using a variety of research methods, residents, younger and older people, community and voluntary organisations, service user groups and many more were consulted.

Appropriate consultation methods were used for specific groups. Methods used included:

- 1,148 face to face household interviews
- Presentations and meetings
- Focus groups
- Web surveys
- Attendance at specific events and meetings
- Briefings and presentations at Local Neighbourhood Partnership meetings

Key findings from budget consultation are outlined here. Full details and results from budget consultation are available on our website www.walsall.gov.uk/budget_consultation

*Comments board at Walsall Carers Event, September 2008.
Members of Youth Opinions Unite decide their spending priorities.*

The great majority of residents speak positively about their local area (78% satisfied). However, people are less favourable with the way the Council is running things: half (52%) say they are satisfied with the Council overall, while a quarter (27%) are dissatisfied.

Clean streets (38%) and activities for teenagers (37%) are regarded as the top priorities for improvement in the Borough, followed by road and pavement repairs (28%) and reducing the level of crime (27%). Traffic is a key theme: 15% would like to see a cut in the level of traffic congestion.

Of the Council's 10 Priorities for 2008/09, the most important in the eyes of residents is to ensure citizens are safe and secure (68%). Ensuring citizens enjoy a high quality of life (31%) and are free from discrimination or harassment (28%) are also key priorities.

Local people feel that more needs to be done to tackle crime and community safety in the area. Some residents, particularly older people, do not feel safe outside in the evening, with some not feeling safe in their own homes. Anti-social behaviour and young people hanging about on the streets as well as local and national media coverage on knife crime and job culture make local people feel unsafe.

Local people want to see a greater police presence, harsher sentencing and greater provision of facilities and activities for teenagers and young people.

'Lack of police on the beat.' (Local resident)

'More leisure facilities for young people up to the age of eighteen. If they have things to do there would be less problems on the street.' (Local resident)

Consistently local people identify clean streets, removal of litter and graffiti, tackling fly tipping and cleaning up derelict areas as a key priority for the borough.

'Sad to see so much litter all over our street and also our parks and water sides e.g. canals.' (Local resident)

People believe that tidying up the local area, improving buildings and tidying up eyesores will encourage more people from further away to visit the town, use our facilities and spend money in our shops. Some thought that having pride in the areas where you live supports a prosperous borough, one where people are aspiring and achieving and achieve overall economic well-being.

'No one will come and visit you if you have a grotty neighbourhood, so it is important'. (Young person)

'There is not enough pride in Walsall'. (Local resident)

Being able to easily get around is critical for many groups, particularly younger and older people and those with caring responsibilities and disabilities. It is important for everyone to be able to get around and maintain independent lives therefore good, reliable and affordable transport is essential.

Residents stress it is important that the council spends its money wisely, providing good quality services that are value for money and ensuring money is not wasted. People appreciate the difficult decisions that have to be made, and understand that resources are limited, but still want more services for less money or free.

'Let local people have a say in local expenditure to save waste and unnecessary spend.' (Local resident)

'If the council didn't spend money wisely, none of the other stuff would be possible.' (Young person)

Carers highlight the importance of quality care facilities for people with special needs (children and adults), and those with mental health difficulties. Equally important for this group is provision of sufficient support (including financial) and respite care.

Younger people recognise that a healthy population ensures a healthy workforce and economic prosperity. There was feeling that more needs to be done and the council can play a key role, working with the NHS and schools to tackle obesity, smoking, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse.

'Healthy people means more people to work' (Young person)

Cheaper sports and swimming and introducing local bicycle recycling initiatives were two suggestions to help improve the health of local people.

Young people specify a need for improved schools, better facilities and quality teachers, linking good education with a good quality of life and a prosperous future.

'Our school might be getting shut down because of bad GCSE results. I think good quality teachers are really important, and you need good equipment too.' (Young person)

'Good grades = good job = more money = good life.' (Young person)

Consultation in 2009/10

In 2009/10, consultation and community engagement remain a key priority for the council.

We will:

- Contribute fully to the Partnership Engagement Forum established in 2006 by the Walsall Partnership as a means to coordinate consultation activity across the range of partners, and to share our results
- Continue to work closely with the nine Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs)
- Make full use of our Citizens' Panel of 1,250 residents, undertaking another programme of surveys providing strategic information on current issues and priorities
- Ensure that consultation towards the council's 2010/11 budget is inclusive and that results feed into the budget setting process at the earliest stage possible
- Use findings from the New Place Survey and work with our partners to implement action plans to manage improvements and ensure that our services address the views and meet the expectations of residents
- Consult widely on Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programme and other issues that affect the community
- Walsall Local Involvement Networks (LINK) works to give local people a greater voice in the provision of local care and health services. We will continue to support the development of the Walsall LINK and monitor the contract that is put in place
- Continue to build upon the existing strong links with existing groups including Youth Opinions Unite (YOU), the Over 50s Forum, Service Users Empowerment and Making Our Choice
- Work to improve the way we feedback consultation findings and outcomes, ensuring that the feedback given is timely, appropriate, accessible and representative
- Continue to develop e-consultation methods and maximise the use of the council website and other e channels for obtaining views and opinions and feeding back results and outcomes of consultation
- Use a variety of channels to feedback consultation findings, including the local press and council publications (magazines and newsletters) and maximise the use of electronic communication channels for customer feedback.
- Use Walsall Viewfinder to log all past, current and planned consultation so that the council as a whole and our partners can better coordinate consultation, identify opportunities to join up and share results. Walsall Viewfinder will be publicised to the public via a range of means ensuring the public can find out about and get involved in consultation

6. Making best use of our resources

Our budget and capital programme are constructed in accordance with the principles set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), an integral aspect of our Corporate Integrated Planning & Performance Framework (CIPPF). This robust way of working has been in place for several years and governs our policy-led, medium term approach to financial planning and management. The MTFS contains eight key objectives that demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that financial activities contribute to the transformation, development and improvement of the organisation and that the budget enables delivery of our vision, priorities, and pledges, and of stable, sustainable, financial health. Once again, even with the harder test, the Audit Commission has scored the council 3 out of 4 for use of resources in the corporate assessment. The Audit Commission has also identified best practice within our financial standing, risk management and financial reporting and management arrangements.

Consultation

Managers are accountable for delivering services to standard, on time and within budget, and are involved in constructing the base budget, bidding for investment and in working up savings options. Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team lead the budget process and fully participate throughout. Budget consultation takes place with a wide range of stakeholders, residents, service users, business and third sector representatives, employees and unions, and the outcomes inform the process. Scrutiny panels examine the draft budget twice and their views are taken into account by cabinet before making a final recommendation to full Council. Risk management principles are followed throughout the process.

Delivering the vision

The budget and each investment and efficiency option are assessed as to their contribution and impact on delivery of the council's shared vision, our priorities and pledges and on service performance and quality. Capital investment is determined from the appraisal of capital proposal forms submitted by services and assessed against a similar framework and in accordance with the capital strategy.

2009/10 Budget Headlines

The budget has been constructed in accordance with the MTFS and all relevant corporate financial protocols and presents a balanced draft budget, resulting in:

- A focus on a policy-led, medium term, risk assessed budget setting approach using corporate priorities established by cabinet
- A total net budget of **£237.194m**
- Provision for pay awards, routine and contractual inflation and currently estimated demands and legislative changes of **£17.095m**
- Contribution to balances of £2m ensuring opening reserves of c. **£6.99m**

- Full year impact of investment choices from 2008/09 is **£1.219m** and savings **£0.704m**
- Additional investment of **£4.344m** focussed at front line services, corporate core infrastructure and key developments
- Savings, fees and charges increases and efficiencies of **£13.412m**
- Appropriate use of prudential borrowing to support capital investment where affordable and sustainable with revenue costs being reflected in this report.

Efficiency and value for money

Despite the harder test, the Audit Commission has once again scored the council 3 out of 4 for value for money in the corporate performance assessment. Through the Comprehensive Spending Review the council is expected to achieve 3% cashable savings. The government is yet to issue the targets but the council has significant efficiencies included in its budget for 2008/09.

More information

The CIPPF, MTFS, capital strategy, revenue budget and capital programme provide extensive details on the issues summarised in this section of the plan.

Statement on contracts

Set out below are details of contracts during the past financial year which have involved a transfer of staff under TUPE. All transfers complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

Transfers out of the authority are as follows:

Social Care & Inclusion: 367 employees to Housing 21 on 9 April 2008

Children's Services (Sheffield Sports & Community College): 214 employees to Sheffield Community Academy on 31 December 2008

Transfers into the authority are as follows:

From Serco to Children's Services: 26 employees on 1 August 2008

7. Making it count – our performance management framework

We recognise that robust and comprehensive performance management is essential in delivering service and corporate excellence. The purpose of performance management is to raise and maintain at a high level the performance levels of individuals, services and the authority as a whole to ensure that we deliver high quality, cost effective services. Effective performance management makes a significant contribution to the delivery of the shared vision for the borough, identifying the council's role in this respect, and monitoring achievement.

The council's corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF), shown below in diagrammatic form, presents key elements of our performance management process, clearly and simply. This framework has been refined and developed over time with the assistance of our partners.

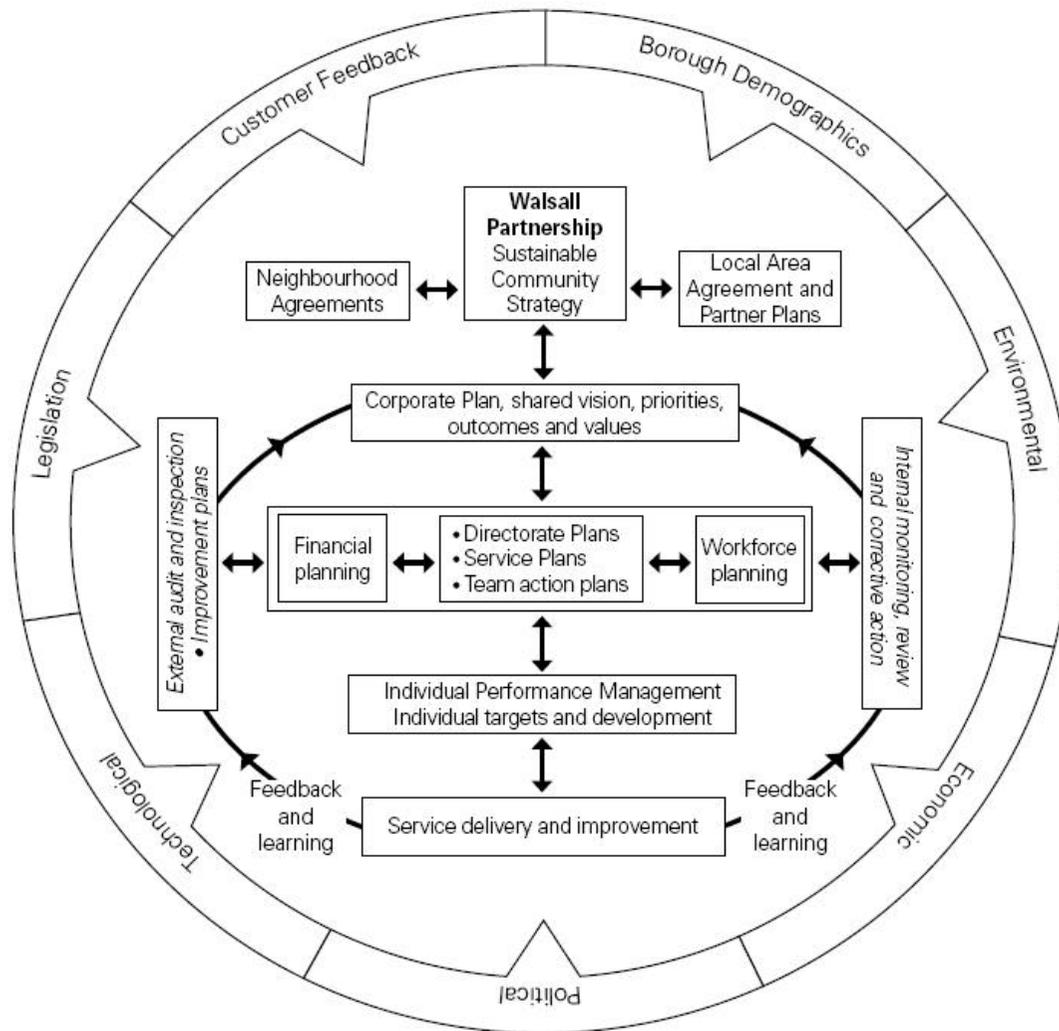


Figure 1. Components of the CIPPF

It is recognised that strategic risk management, as a corporate self diagnostic tool, provides demonstrable evidence of the organisation’s capacity to improve. Hence risk management is an integral part of every planning process within this framework – including the development of this plan, and the priorities and the pledges set out within it.

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

As with all council functions and policies, our performance management framework reflects the council's commitment to equality, and the Equality Standard for local government, and features within our service planning and individual performance management processes.

Performance management processes

1. Sustainable Community Strategy

The overarching influence is the Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough, formerly known as the community plan and our relationship with the community and our partners. The Sustainable Community Strategy which has been developed jointly with our partners through the Walsall Partnership sets out a shared vision for the borough, through to 2021, based on the aspirations of the communities of Walsall. The council has signed up to this vision – it is our vision for the borough.

The SCS provides the focus for the LAA, and for the plans and strategies of the partner organisations, including the council, which make up the Walsall Partnership.

Neighbourhood agreements

These are plans developed by each of the nine local neighbourhood partnerships to address local issues and needs. They are intrinsically linked to the SCS as they represent the aspirations and priorities of local areas within the borough.

LAA and partner plans

Local Area Agreements pave the way for local authorities to look more to the communities they serve when deciding priorities. The new LAA framework provided a dramatic reduction in targets set centrally. The new national indicator set (NIS) of 198 performance indicators has been developed to represent national priorities for local authorities and their partners. Of those, 25 main indicators and 5 local indicators were selected for inclusion in the LAA for Walsall, with targets being negotiated to really focus on the priorities that matter to local people whether that is housing, crime, or services for the elderly..

Walsall's LAA was signed off by Ministers on 30 June 2008. This was a key milestone in an on-going LAA process which allows for an annual

review to identify the contribution being made in developing better outcomes for Walsall.

LAA's give local authorities the flexibility to direct funding to meet those priorities. They also put an emphasis on partnership working, because we know that delivering for the people we serve means working closely with all our partners - the businesses, hospitals, schools, charities – who play a role in making Walsall stronger, safer, and greener.

2. Corporate Plan, vision, priorities, pledges and values

This document, the council's own Corporate Plan, sets out, at a strategic level, the council's commitment to deliver its own contribution to the work of the wider partnership to take forward and implement the Sustainable Community Strategy, and achieve our **shared vision for the borough** of Walsall.

The Corporate Plan is focussed on the shared vision and on tangible, significant outcomes for the people of our borough, which address the key priorities and concerns for our community.

In addition, to ensure that the council as an organisation is fit for purpose and able to deliver its share of the citizen outcomes, the Corporate Plan has a complementary focus on internal priorities: our continuing transformation agenda, focus on meeting customer expectations, and commitment to the effective use of resources.

Reflecting this, the council has developed and adopted the **Walsall Outcomes Framework**, comprising seven citizen (or customer) outcomes, and three internal drivers, to ensure that we have the capacity, expertise and momentum to drive forward, and to achieve our goals.

Our **seven citizen outcomes** are focussed on action to ensure that citizens are:

- Healthy
- Safe and secure
- Aspiring and achieving
- Enjoying a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile
- Active - contributing to their communities
- Financially and materially secure - achieving economic well-being
- Free from discrimination or harassment

Our **three internal drivers** are:

- effective use of resources
- delivering quality services and meeting customer expectations
- taking forward the transformation agenda.

The Corporate Plan also includes a set of **pledges** – key actions to be undertaken and achieved during 2008/09 – each of which supports those outcomes and drivers, and which will be monitored through the year in the Beacon Index.

Our **core values** remain unchanged. Whilst we move ahead, and seek to transform all of our services to the benefit of the community and our service users, we are holding fast to our core values which will continue to guide us in our day to day work and support the council's vision of building a better borough. Our five core values of respect, integrity, equality, listening and excellence signal to everyone the beliefs, behaviours and principles that underpin all that we do. They are central to our approach, and will guide us towards our shared vision for the borough and its people. These shared and agreed values set out what the council stands for and how we will behave.

3. Resource Allocation

This encompasses all financial decision making processes from the medium term financial strategy, decision conferences, and strategic choices exercises through to the formal annual budget setting process and the individual management of budgets at service level. The various elements that jointly inform and deliver our financial planning and management are illustrated below:

Figure 2: Financial aspects of the CIPPF

The Financial Framework Within The CIPPF					
Category	Overall	Revenue	Capital	Treasury Management	Risk Management
Strategies	MTFS				
			Capital Strategy	Treasury Management Strategy	Risk Management Strategy
Guidance	CIPFA and technical guidance	Budget Guidelines	Capital Guidelines	CIPFA Code of Practice for TM	Risk Management Toolkit
Plans	MTFP	Annual Budget	Capital Programme and AMP	Treasury Policy Statement	Risk Management Action Plans
Governance	Constitution	Budget Management and Control Manual and Annual Governance Statement		Prudential Indicators and Annual Report	Risk Register reporting and regular review
	Contract and Finance Procedure Rules				Audit Cttee Reports and annual report
	Internal and External Audit Plans and our response to inspection and audit				

4. Operational delivery plans - directorate plans, service plans and team plans

These detail the actions being taken to deliver the priorities. They are detailed plans for individual council services and teams, setting out specific targets and improvements to be achieved over a three year period but focusing on the current year. They also incorporate other planning requirements such as workforce planning and equalities, set out below in greater detail.

5. Workforce Planning

Major improvements in performance come when the right people with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours are deployed appropriately. Workforce planning is the process of analysing the future skills and competencies that are needed to deliver new and improved services, and assessing the strengths and development needs of our current workforce against these requirements. This element is informed by the Individual Performance Management (IPM) process and includes both corporate and directorate workforce development plans and training programmes. It is closely linked to the council's organisational development and human resources strategies and is influenced by external and internal factors in the same way as other parts of the planning framework.

6. Individual Performance Management plans

The IPM process provides a framework for managers and staff to meet and discuss work performance for the previous year, and agree targets and personal development needs for the coming year. It allows managers to give constructive feedback on employee performance and is the forum through which priorities are translated from service and team plans into individual actions. IPM is an integral element of the CIPPF and applies to all employees.

7. External audit and inspection

Audit and inspections are key processes for assessing the performance of a service or function and for identifying ways in which improvements can be made. External inspections (e.g. Comprehensive Area Assessment) also provide an opportunity to benchmark the performance of the council and its functions against other authorities in order to share good practice and learn from good examples.

8. Internal monitoring, review and corrective action

The continual monitoring, review and implementation of required corrective action is vital to ensure continuous improvement and is undertaken at every level of the financial, service and individual planning processes. In addition, this ensures that we take action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better than they would have otherwise been. It is recognised that both officers and elected members play key roles in the delivery of effective performance management to deliver continuous improvement. Key to this is the way services react and learn from the monitoring they undertake whether it is in the form of customer feedback or as part of a performance action plan. Internal monitoring is conducted by monitoring performance against targets, and as such, effective target setting and the use of benchmarking data is of fundamental importance.

9. Feedback and Learning

In order to continually build on the progress we are making, we constantly strive to capture feedback from users and other stakeholders to

enable us to learn from the outputs that we deliver. Improving outcomes to our residents matters most, and their feedback; through either formal consultation, inspection, periodic surveys or simple ad hoc remarks help us improve our way of working and ultimately deliver improved services. This information is constantly being sought and fed back into the organisation in order to help us prioritise our resources around the needs of our users. Walsall Viewfinder simplifies this process by providing an electronic, web-based system for recording, monitoring and storing consultation activity across the partnership.

10. Equalities

As noted in chapter 4 of this Plan, equality is one of the Council's core values and a desire to ensure equity in service delivery and in the workplace is embedded into every stage of our performance processes, including those undertaken jointly with partners. Equality Impact Assessments help identify any areas of inequality in our policies or service delivery and provide a framework to address these aspects of our work. Corporate and Directorate Equalities Boards help monitor and champion equalities issues within service areas. There is a recognition that equality does not mean 'the same for everyone' but is about respecting differences and ensuring no-one is unfairly discriminated against, whether that discrimination is based on age, gender, race, religion, sexuality or disability.

8. Sources of further information

The council produces a wide range of information, including other key plans and strategies, as described in chapter 8. Details of these plans can be found on the **council's web site**, www.walsall.gov.uk, or can be obtained from the directorate or service concerned.

Of particular note are the **Corporate Budget Plan**, covering the five years from 2009/10 to 2013/14, published each year, the document **'People & Place Perspectives: a picture of our community'** which is available on the council's web site and provides a detailed insight into the borough, and its people and their needs, through the provision and analysis of demographic and other statistical information, the results of consultation and other customer feedback. Also published each year is a set of key **Performance Data**, which is produced in June as a supplement to the Corporate Plan and contains a wide range of key performance information relating to our services. This is supplemented by the quarterly progress reports on key performance targets, including the council's pledges, which are presented to cabinet in our Beacon Index reports.

Also available are the borough's **Sustainable Community Strategy**, and the Local Area Agreement, described in more detail in chapter 3, both prepared by the Walsall Partnership. These are available in full on the Partnership's own web site at www.walsallpartnership.org.uk, along with a range of other information on the Partnership.

Available on the council's web site are full details relating to the **council's decision making processes**, including the council's **constitution**, and details of the role of the cabinet, the scrutiny & performance panels, the standards committee and regulatory committees for development control and licensing, and at a local level details relating to the nine local neighbourhood partnerships. Details of **forthcoming meetings**, as well as reports and minutes, are available on the web site, as are details relating to elected **councillors**, their electoral wards and their local 'surgeries'. Details can also be obtained from local libraries.

The council, along with other statutory partners, has signed up to a **Local Compact with the community and voluntary sector**. The Compact is an agreement between public services including the council, the local NHS, and others, with the community and voluntary sector, operating within the framework provided by the Walsall Partnership. It has been developed by joint working between the agencies, and helps ensure effective joint working towards our common goals and our vision for the borough of Walsall. The Compact provides standards and makes clear the way in which we should work together. It includes a set of detailed policy statements on effective joint working in terms of information and communication, consultation and engagement, funding issues, volunteering, learning and development, and in respect of disability organisations and black and minority ethnic community organisations. The council is committed to the Local Compact and will continue to work with partners to ensure that its principles are reflected in all that we do in particular the on-going work on the Local Area Agreement. The Compact is available on the Walsall Partnership web site www.walsallpartnership.org.uk.

The council operates in accordance with the **Freedom of Information Act** (FOIA) and related legislation. Information held by the council and by council services which is not already available publicly can be requested in line with the FOIA, and the council will respond within 20 working days. In those instances where the council may be unable to release information, a reason will be provided. For guidance on making an information request, visit the council web site at www.walsall.gov.uk.

Comments, complaints and compliments about council services can be made at any council service, by letter or using the council-wide Tell Us form, or by e-mail: there is an e-form on the council web site. Complaints will be acknowledged promptly, and a full response will normally be provided within 15 working days.