

Cabinet – 17 December 2014

Emerging Corporate Plan 2015 -19 - “Shaping a Fairer Future”

Portfolio: Councillor S Coughlan, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

The emergence of a new Corporate Plan for 2015-19 enables the Council to clearly articulate its priorities and vision - setting the context for the extensive public service delivery that will continue as well as the difficult decisions that will be necessary given the unprecedented reductions in government funding. A set of emerging priorities were approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 29 October 2014, alongside the draft budget, and work has continued since then to develop the purpose, vision and values for the organisation.

The Corporate Plan has been given the working title of ‘Shaping a Fairer Future’ which aims to capture the overall spirit of the plan in an accessible and memorable phrase.

The latest draft is attached for approval; the final section, delivering our priorities, remains to be completed. This is formed of two elements, the resources available and the change needed. The resource section will be a high level summary of the budget and can be incorporated once this is agreed. The change needed will be a high level summary of the corporate change programme and, again will be incorporated once this programme is finalised and agreed with Members. It is anticipated that the Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2015 will approve both a full draft Corporate Plan and a draft financial plan for the same four year period. This more medium term perspective is considered crucial to meeting the challenges of coming years in an effective and responsible manner.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees an emerging draft Corporate Plan 2015-2019, ‘Shaping a Fairer Future’ which will continue to be developed, with the intention of recommending a final Corporate Plan to the Council on 26 February 2015 as the context for a four year financial plan.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan provides a clear focus to plan activities and target improvements, ensuring we get the best out of diminished resources.
- 3.2 It is an articulation of the aspirations of the Council, expressed as a strategic plan that can be delivered over a four year horizon, aligned to the budget.
- 3.3. As well as high level priorities, the plan also makes a number of firm commitments for which Members and Officers can be held to account. Regular reporting on delivery of these commitments, along with the difference they are making will help promote transparency.
- 3.4 The plan has been informed by intelligence from the 2011 Census, Index of Deprivation 2010 and the three key thematic needs assessments: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA); Economic Needs Assessment; and Safer Walsall Community Safety Assessment.

4. Council priorities

The Corporate Plan establishes the following priorities for the Council-

With fewer resources available we will concentrate on protecting the most vulnerable and reducing inequalities through:

- Support with Cost of Living
- Creating Jobs and helping people get new skills
- Improving Educational Attainment
- Helping local high streets and communities
- Promoting health and well-being
- Helping create more affordable housing

5. Risk management

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

6. Financial implications

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

7. Legal implications

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

8. Property implications

There are no direct property implications associated with the approval of this plan, however the priorities expressed in the plan will inform decisions on how to get the best use out of the Council's existing property portfolio, along with wider community and partner assets.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

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

10. Staffing implications

The Corporate Plan provides staff with a clear vision and purpose for what the Council is trying to achieve as well as a set of values that underline how we approach our work. This clarity is important for both governance and morale, providing a positive focus with clear expectations.

11. Equality implications

The Corporate Plan fully recognises the diverse needs within the borough and acknowledges the different approaches needed to meet these needs. Its central premise is reducing inequalities through focussing on those most in need.

12. Consultation

The plan has been informed by intelligence gathered from numerous consultation processes including budget setting. In drafting the plan colleagues from across services have been engaged.

Background papers

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rory Borealis'.

Rory Borealis
Executive Director (Resources)
5 December 2014

Councillor S Coughlan
Leader
5 December 2014

Corporate Plan 2015-2019

“Shaping a Fairer Future”

Foreword

<from the leader>

DRAFT

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Our Purpose

Walsall Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall, by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable.

Walsall Council will provide strong, fair, open and honest leadership for the borough and its people and work with any organisation willing to work in the best interests of Walsall.

We do this with limited resources and so must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible.

We are led by the communities we serve who help shape the services we provide and we help those communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement and cooperation.

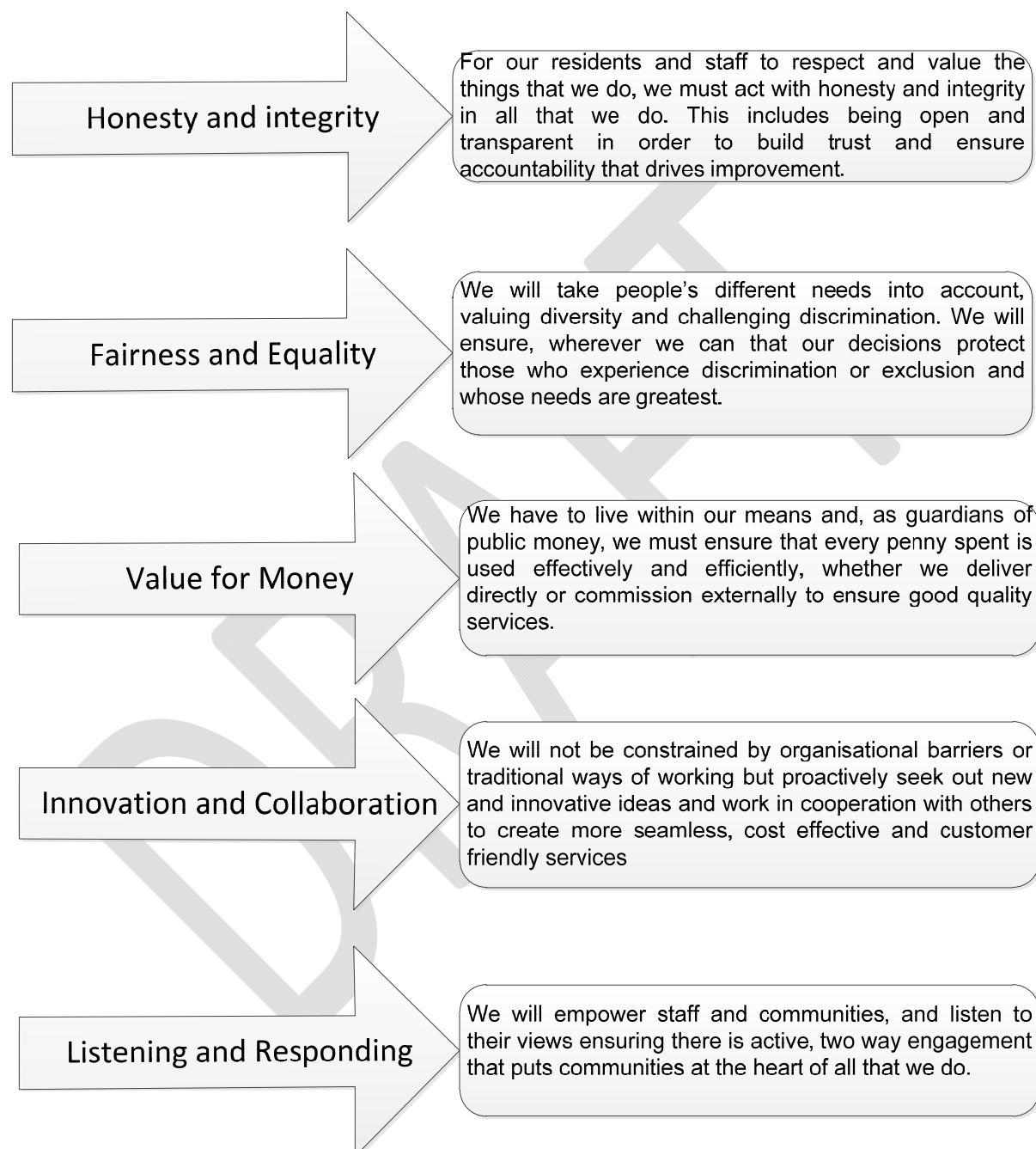
Walsall in 2019

In 2019 the Council will be a key enabler of improvements to Walsall and its' Districts as a place to live, learn and work; working innovatively and collaboratively with strong and resilient communities, public sector partners, schools and businesses to shape services that deliver real and sustainable improvements to people's lives.

The Council will by necessity be smaller, doing fewer things, and those services that we continue to provide will be delivered in a very different way to how they are now. Our efforts will be focussed on protecting the most vulnerable: ensuring people are safe, and narrowing the gap in life chances by helping them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, increasing aspirations and remaining independent for as long as possible. In doing this we will help to shape a fairer Walsall.

Our Values

Our values will help us to achieve the [Council's purpose and objectives](#). They will help to shape a fairer future for Walsall. Our values underpin the way we operate as an organisation. They influence our choices and our behaviours - they are the thread running through everything we do.

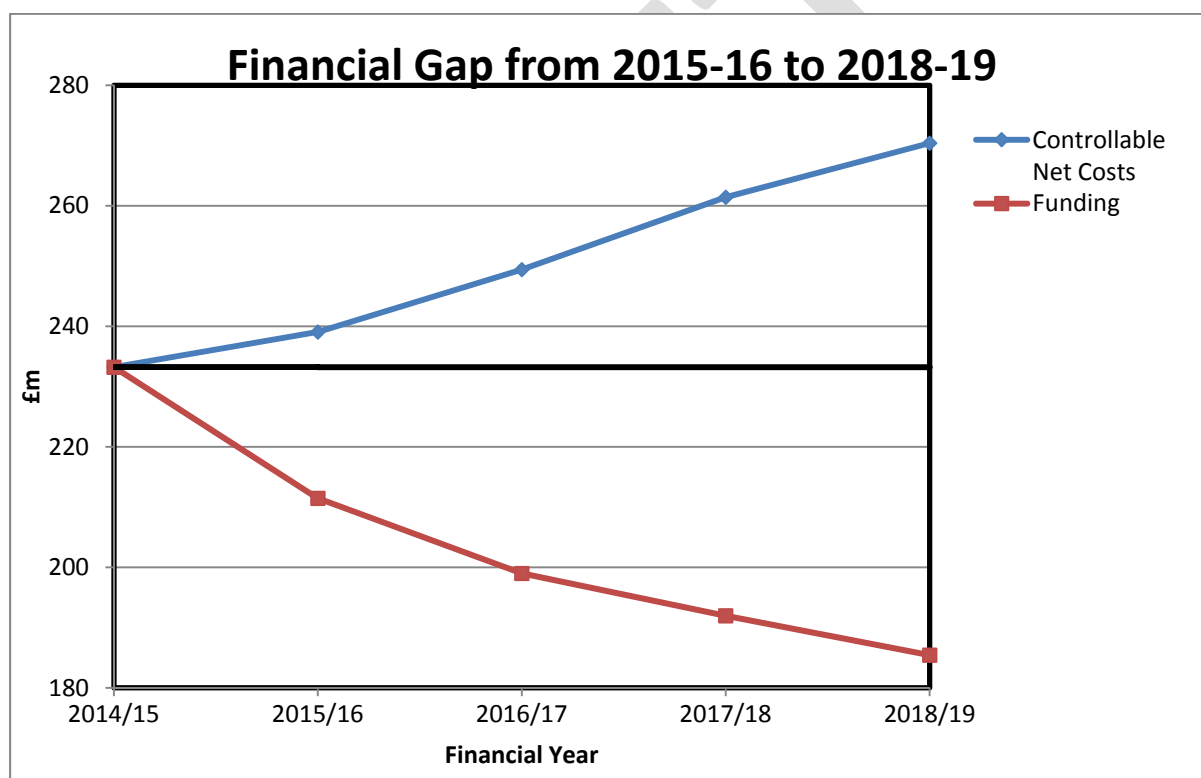


Our Challenges

Finances

Over the last four years (2010/11 – 2014/15) the council has reduced its spending by £79.67m but will need to save a further £86m over the next four years to be able to balance the budget in 2018/19.

The graph below illustrates the projected widening gap in finances, as a combination of reducing funding and increasing costs. It is clear that funding for key priorities will be significantly diminished and the council will not be able to sustain services at the current level.



We, like all other public sector bodies, have seen government grant funding reduce since the Emergency Budget of 2010 when the Government set out its initial plans to reduce the overall Government deficit, quoting a 28% reduction in funding to local authorities. This has continued following government spending reviews in 2010 and 2013, with a one year spending round in June 2013 setting out spending plans for 2015/16.

The Borough of Walsall

The profile of Walsall shows a borough with particular challenges and pressures which in many cases are increasing:

- Walsall has an increasingly dependent population; overall Walsall's population is ageing and this will impact on demand for local public services, with the need to plan for a growing number of older people being a key priority for all partners.
- 'Healthy Life Expectancy' (the proportion of life lived in a healthy state) in Walsall is about 60.3 years, this is 2.3 years lower than the West Midlands and 3.4 years lower than England averages. This is a significant demographic pressure on health and social care services in the borough.
- Walsall's population is becoming more ethnically diverse and by 2011, 23.1% of Walsall residents come from a minority ethnic background; a significant increase from 14.8% in 2001.
- Deprivation is deeply entrenched in Walsall and has worsened with the recession. There are extremes of deprivation, with central and western areas typically much more deprived than eastern areas, though pockets of deprivation exist even in the more affluent parts of the borough.
- Large numbers of Walsall children (16,100 under 16's) are living in families that are experiencing poverty (29.2%, compared with 20.6% nationally). Growing up in poverty, or with no adults in their household in work, has an impact on young people's aspirations and future life chances, particularly their educational attainment and health.
- Walsall fares particularly badly in terms of education, income and employment and many of the issues that challenge the borough mirror the picture of deprivation nationally.
- Walsall experiences slower than national population growth though this is in line with regional trends.
- The private sector in Walsall has suffered from long term decline, and despite recent improvements in productivity, the growth in local economic output has failed to match the improvements seen nationally – this has resulted in an increasingly widening gap between Walsall and the UK.

Our Partners

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

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

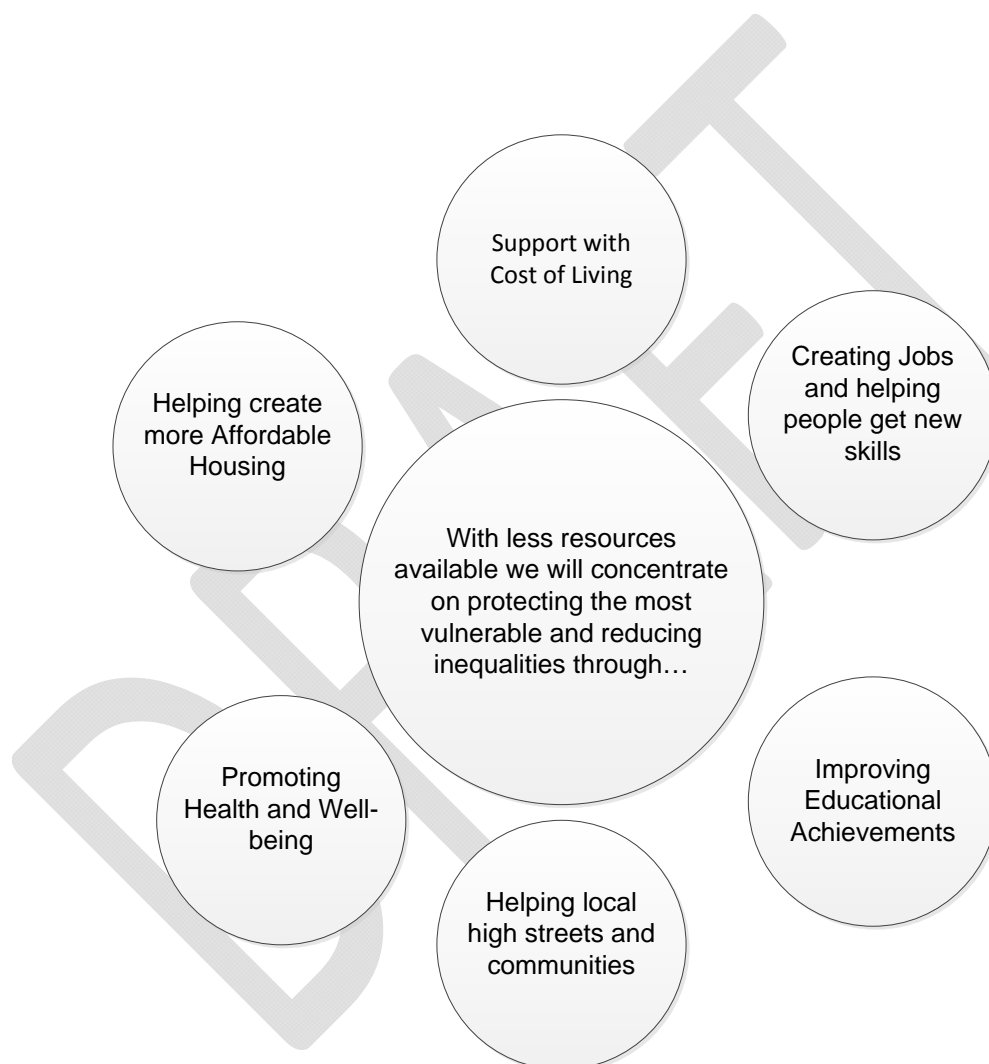
Agencies in the Borough have developed a partnership infrastructure which enables each representative body to bring their resources together with others on the things that matter the most, with a shared vision to make Walsall ***a great place to live, work and invest.***

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

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

Our Priorities

In order to meet our purpose and vision, the Council will be focussing its' energy over the next four years on the following key priorities, recognising that we must do so with decreased and decreasing resources and concentrating our efforts on those most in need:



The financial constraints we must operate within mean that, in the short term difficult decisions have to be made, with cuts to some services that we would otherwise wish to protect. However the commitments we are making in this plan are achievable over four years.

Cost of Living

Low wage growth, cuts to welfare and spiralling costs of essentials such as gas and electricity have severely impacted on the living standards of many of our residents. Doing what we can to ensure the people have enough money to live on will help ensure a fairer society, improve the life chances of children and young people and boost the local economy.

Key Facts:

- The average weekly full-time earnings of Walsall residents is £42 less than the national average
- 29.2% of under 16s are living in families who experience poverty (compared to 20.6% nationally)
- Over 1 in 7 Walsall adults are out of work and dependent on key benefits (compared to 1 in 10 nationally)
- 17% of those who receive housing benefit in Walsall are in work

We
will

Introduce a Welfare Reform Forum with partners to seek ways to minimise the impact of changes to welfare on local people.

Review support and advice for residents suffering with problem debt to reprioritise and better coordinate across the range of advice services, including improved collaboration with the voluntary sector

Help residents address problem debt by promoting the use of credit agencies and alternative forms of responsible lending, whilst taking action against payday loan companies by restricting their access to advertising on billboards and bus stops.

Introduce the Living Wage for Council employees and work toward and encourage the Council's sub-contractors and partners to do likewise.

Do what we can, within financial constraints, to help those most in need through a [tbc%] subsidy to council tax

Creating Jobs and helping people get new skills

Economic prosperity has a fundamental impact on a number of aspects of people's lives, including health, community safety and the life chances of our young people. We know that the economic divide between the east and west of the borough corresponds with poorer health, lower educational attainment and higher crime rates. Creating jobs, and ensuring that local people have the rights skills to fill those jobs is essential to improving outcomes for our residents.

Key Facts:

- There are just 0.59 jobs per working age adult in the borough
- 1 in 2 Walsall Adults have a literacy standard below level 2 (equivalent to Grade C at GCSE), with 4 in 5 having numeracy standards below this level.
- The number of active business enterprises in Walsall is 4% lower than the national average for an area of this size
- Only 3 in 10 Walsall companies have their main supply chain in the Black Country meaning a considerable amount of potential spending is lost to the local economy

We
will

Spend more of our money with local firms, boosting the local economy and helping local businesses.

Review Council contracts and procurement practices to ensure that contracting decisions have a positive impact on local jobs and skills, with rules favouring organisations with a smaller gap between the highest and lowest paid staff, social enterprises that put profits back into creating more jobs, and firms that demonstrate clear local added value benefits.

Require that companies who want Council contracts do not participate in the illegal practice of “blacklisting”, and will give opportunities, apprenticeships and training to local people.

Work with local businesses and colleges to create more opportunities for our young people

Offer a guaranteed interview for all available jobs in the council to former service personnel

Improving Educational Achievement

Raising educational attainment across the borough is vital to the future success and wellbeing of our young people as well as to our economy. We are determined to provide all our children with an education that allows them to get the best possible start in life as well as helping Adult learners to improve their own prospects.

Key Facts:

- Walsall has fewer adults with qualifications than nationally: 17% of residents have no formal qualifications
- In Walsall, only 68% of Primary pupils and 57% of Secondary pupils attend a school judged as good or better by Ofsted; less than the national averages of 79% and 73%.
- Children from poorer families are 30% less likely to achieve 5 GCSEs including English and maths at grade A*–C

We
will

Use an independent Performance Board to oversee, monitor and robustly challenge educational attainment across the Borough, paying particular attention to schools and academies whose key stage results fall below an acceptable level.

Undertake a comprehensive review of school support and school to school support arrangements to produce a more challenging and school focused improvement service, to work with all schools and particularly those facing challenges.

Review and improve universal and preventative early years services across the Borough, ensuring that those families and children most in need of help receive targeted support, including much closer joint working with NHS colleagues.

Adopt a whole family approach to education and learning, including supporting parents back into work via programmes of education and training.

Helping Local High Streets and Communities

We recognise that strong and resilient communities have a vital role to play in shaping services to their own needs and supporting the most vulnerable. A cooperative approach that is integrated and tailored to local need and demand can help us to deliver more with less by getting the best out of the assets and potential that already exist in the community to improve the social and economic prosperity of local areas, address equality gaps and help fight crime and antisocial behaviour. We recognise that local high streets and district centres provide an important focal point for communities, act as a boost to the local economy and help generate pride and a sense of belonging.

Key Facts:

- More than a quarter of shops in Walsall town centre are empty, the 3rd highest rate in the country
- Incidences of police reported Anti-social behaviour have increased by 30% compared to the same period last year

We
will

Listen to the voice of the community, putting Walsall residents and businesses at the heart of decision making

Work with the third sector on a Trust-based approach to ensure our parks, green spaces and leisure facilities have a bright future

Address anti-social behaviour through more integrated work with partners including the police, trade associations and the third sector

Continue to seek out new sources of income to support regeneration of district centres

Review existing council, partner and community assets to find options for greater integration and improved access to services.

Improving Health and Wellbeing

There are stark health inequalities within Walsall and we know there is a strong association between poorer health and the social and economic conditions that differ across the borough. As well as being determined by social inequalities, poor health also perpetuates these by being a barrier to work (including for those acting as carers.) As well as steps to tackle wider social inequalities that may help improve health and wellbeing, the Council must also ensure effective preventative health and social care services are targeted at those most in need, recognising the detrimental impact on the quality of residents' lives caused by issues of mobility, social isolation and children being at risk of harm or sexual exploitation.

Key Facts:

- Men living in the most deprived wards in the borough die on average 10.8 years younger than those in affluent areas.
- There is a high prevalence of a range of preventable conditions such as diabetes for which Walsall has the 7th highest rate in the country
- Less than half (44%) of adult social care service users said that they have as much social contact as they would like
- Walsall has a higher rate of children with a child protection plan and more Looked After Children than expected for the level of poverty
- Walsall has the 7th highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country
- 23% of Year 6 Children are considered obese, compared to 19% nationally

We
will

Maintain a clear and committed approach to safeguarding for vulnerable adults and children, with a particular focus on tackling the underlying causes of Child Sexual Exploitation

Develop a genuine integrated approach to the delivery of services alongside our partners, including the NHS

Ensure a focus on the most vulnerable, recognising the major detrimental impact of mobility problems and social isolation

Use Council powers to hold local care providers to account for their performance

Pilot a free school meals service for 8-11 year old in areas where deprivation is highest

Affordable Housing

There is a pressing need for an adequate supply of good quality and affordable housing to meet both the current and future needs of Walsall's population. A lack of quality housing supply has a real and substantial effect on the quality of life for residents, as well as their future aspirations, with areas of poor housing experiencing higher crime, poorer health and lower educational achievements. There is also a strong economic argument for house building with the ability to boost spending, attract and retain workers and enable residents to be more productive and to participate in society.

Key Facts:

- 12% more Statutory Homelessness Acceptances per 1000 Households in Walsall compared with nationally
- An estimated 1500 new properties are expected to be built over the next three years, but the 2010 Housing Needs Survey highlighted a need for over 1000 affordable properties per annum

We
will

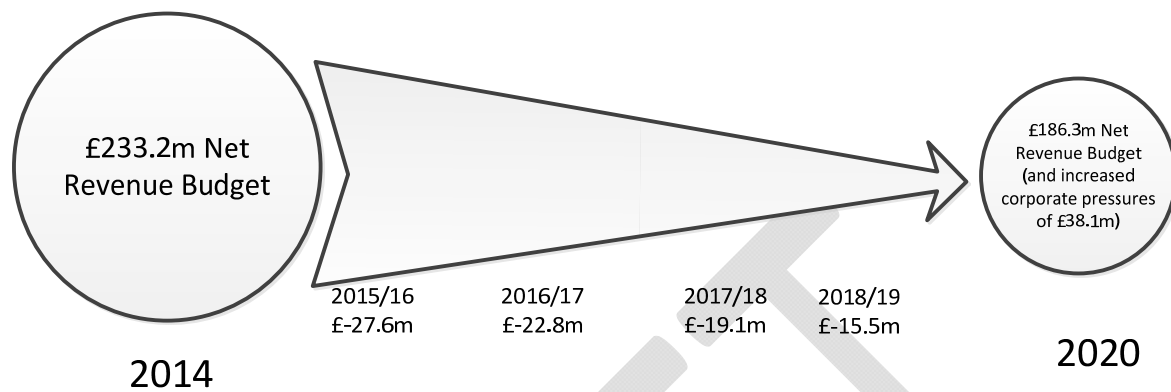
Use Council powers to force owners of long term vacant properties to sell up to create new homes for people in housing need

Introduce a borough wide licensing scheme for private landlords to give tenants assurances that their landlord is reputable and able to carry out their duties

Work with social landlords and private developers to create a housing market which provides good quality affordable homes

Delivering our priorities

Resources available



<outline high level budget- this will be inserted once budget is more finalised>

Change needed

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Monitoring Progress

We are committed to transparency and will be honest and open about our progress, publishing regular updates on how we are doing in delivering this plan. Progress will be monitored through reporting on delivery of the commitments outlined along with measures of the impact that work is having.

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

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