

Cabinet

Tuesday 19 May 2020 at 4.00 p.m. (*Virtual meeting*)

The Council House, Walsall

Portfolios

Councillor M.A. Bird,
Leader of the Council



Councillor G. Perry,
Community, leisure and
culture



Councillor A. Andrew
Deputy Leader and
Regeneration



Councillor C. Towe,
Education and skills



Councillor R. Martin,
Adult social care



Councillor S. Craddock,
Health and wellbeing



Councillor T. Wilson,
Children's



Councillor B. Chattha
Personnel and
business support



Councillor O. Butler,
Clean and green



Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: **Helen Owen** ☎ (01922) 654522 ✉ helen.owen@walsall.gov.uk
www.walsall.gov.uk

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

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

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

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

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

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

Agenda

Part I – Public session

1. Apologies
2. Minutes – 18 March 2020 7 -19
3. Declarations of interest
4. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
5. Questions

(Note: 30 minutes will be allowed for pre-submitted questions from non-executive members and the public. All questions will have been submitted at least 7 clear days before the meeting

Answers will be provided at the meeting - no supplementary questions will be allowed.)
6. Forward plan of decisions 20-25

Covid-19 pandemic related reports

7. Walsall Council response:
 - (a) Public Health 26 - 37
(Councillor Craddock) (*Non key decision*)
 - (b) Governance and decision making 38 - 43
(Councillor Bird) (*Non key decision*)
 - (c) Safeguarding response 44 - 60
(Councillors Wilson, Towe and Martin) (*Non key decision*)

(d)	Supporting shielded and vulnerable residents in Walsall (Councillors Perry and Andrew) (<i>Key decision</i>)	61 - 112
(e)	Business rate relief and grant programmes for Walsall (Councillor Andrew) (<i>Key decision</i>)	113 - 121
8.	Paying for community based commissioned care services during Covid-19 (Councillor Martin) (<i>Key decision</i>)	122 - 143
9.	Walsall Proud Programme – Managing delivery during Covid-19 (Councillor Bird) (<i>Non key decision</i>)	144 - 155
10.	Covid 19 and Corporate financial performance 2020/21 (Councillor Bird) (<i>Non key decision</i>)	156 - 171
11.	Post lockdown: Resetting and recovery of business (Councillor Bird) (<i>Non key decision</i>)	172 - 178
Other reports		
12.	Corporate Plan delivery – Quarter 4 update (Councillor Bird) (<i>Non key decision</i>)	179 - 187
13.	Review of achievements 2019-20 (Councillor Bird) (<i>Non key decision</i>)	188 - 204
14.	Internal Audit and risk management service contract (Councillor Bird) (<i>Key decision</i>)	205 - 211

Part II – Private session

15. Internal Audit and risk management service contract 212 - 218
(Councillor Bird) (*Key decision*)

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

16. Acquisition of property to support Waste Management strategies 219 - 391
(Councillor Butler) (*Key decision*)

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

17. Disposal of property at Broadway North, Walsall 392 - 402
(Councillor Andrew) (*Key decision*)

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

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Cabinet minutes

Wednesday 18 March 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

in a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Bird	Leader of the Council
Councillor Andrew	Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor Martin	Adult Social Care
Councillor Butler	Clean and green
Councillor Perry	Community, leisure and culture
Councillor Towe	Education and skills

3511 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillors Chattha and Craddock.

3512 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 copies having been sent to each member of the Cabinet be approved and signed as a correct record.

3513 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3514 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

3515 Petitions

No petitions were submitted.

3516 **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency**

At this point in the meeting, the Leader, Cabinet members and the Director of Public Health gave a series of briefings in relation to the situation both nationally and locally in relation to the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. In summary:

Councillor Bird explained the background to the situation, some facts about the virus itself, national guidance and links to useful information; and the local response (see briefing note annexed). He advised that he had invoked emergency measures and that all Council meetings would cease until after May, including the postponement of the Annual Council meeting. He confirmed that, in the meantime, emergency decision making arrangements were being put in place.

Councillor Perry commented upon the local response through the new Resilient Communities Model and added that a single telephone contact number, operated by West Midlands Fire Service and supported by One Walsall volunteers, would be released to enable residents to access community support and to get advice. He stressed that this would not be an emergency number. Councillor Perry then highlighted key measures being put in place to support the community sector, including community associations in receipt of community development funding, which provided flexibility for those organisations such as potentially suspending business rates payments. He said that work to keep communities safe was in place and included, for example, collation of data on non-English speaking communities, over 70's and people with disabilities; access to employment hardship benefits; and distribution of hygiene packs and food parcels to those in need.

Councillor Wilson and Councillor Towe reported briefly on the measures being taken to ensure children remained safe and it was noted that schools would continue to open for children of key workers.

The Director of Public Health, Mr S. Gunther, provided an update on the situation locally. He said that there had to date been thirteen confirmed cases in the borough and that sadly there had been two deaths. He reassured the Cabinet that the Council had stepped up its response and confirmed that arrangements were in place for strategic, tactical and operational responses; and that business continuity plans for critical and essential services had been reviewed.

It was noted that leisure centres would be closed from that evening with staff being diverted to support the organisation elsewhere and that a decision on closure of libraries would be made on 19 March.

Councillor Bird thanked all staff at the Council for their efforts, working over and above expectations. He stressed that the recent significant investment in IT had enabled the Council to operate by remote working more efficiently in ways that otherwise would not have been possible.

3517 **Question – Walsall Arboretum Bonfire**

A question was submitted by Dr. F. Macmillan, Walsall Arboretum User Group with regard to the bonfire at Walsall Arboretum. In the absence of Dr. Macmillan, Councillor Bird read out the question:

“Could we be advised as to the contribution of the bonfire at Walsall Arboretum in November 2019 to the deficit, increased by £25,000, given that this event has always made a modest profit prior to the staffing reorganisation in August 2019?”

Councillor Bird replied as follows:

“Overview

In 2019, the contribution to the total deficit of £53,465 is £23,433 for the Arboretum, which is 44% of the total deficit.

Breakdown over time is as follows;

In 2017, the costs for the Arboretum were £43,955 and income was £45,649 with a profit of £1,694

In 2018, the costs for the Arboretum were £54,662 and income was £57,239 with a profit of £2,577

In 2019, the costs for the Arboretum were £61,291 and income was £37,858 with a deficit of 23,433

Reasons

There was a significant rise in costs between 2017 and 2018 of 24%, but the increase between 2018 and 2019 was only 12%. Therefore it is unlikely that the increased costs were the major contributing factor to the deficit in 2019.

Moreover, the significant drop in ticket sales in 2019 compared to 2018 of 40% was the main cause of the fall in income. This was as a result of very poor weather leading up to and on the night of the Arboretum event. There was also some impact from late marketing due to delayed confirmation of the event schedule and from negative social media.

The Event at King George V in 2019 showed a much better return against costs, where better weather resulted in increased visitors and ticket sales.”

At this point, Councillor Bird reported the recent death of Jackie Cocken who had been a long standing member of the Arboretum User Group and who had been a long serving Head Teacher in the borough. He expressed his sincere condolences to Mrs Cocken’s husband and family at this sad time.

3518 **Forward plan**

The forward plan as at 2 March 2020 was submitted:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

3519 **Corporate Plan delivery Quarter 3**

Councillor Bird presented the report:

(see annexed)

In presenting the report, Councillor Bird commented that this year's budget would, of course, be more challenging with increased costs and reduced income from services as a result of the national Covid-19 emergency.

He also advised that with regard to the use of taxis and minibuses for home to school transport which would not now be required as schools had been closed, it was the intention to ask those providers to change their work patterns to now work in the Resilient Communities Model to assist with supporting the elderly and people in need; and that payments to them at current levels would continue for that purpose. Cabinet members supported this course of action.

Resolved

That Cabinet endorse the performance information provided in the appendix.

3520 **West Midlands Strategic Transport Settlement and Capital Programme 2020/21**

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet notes the West Midlands 2020/21 Block Allocations as set out at Table 1 in Section 4 of this report.
- (2) That Cabinet approves the Walsall Transport Capital Programme 2020/21 as set out at Table 2 in Section 4 of this report.

- (3) That Cabinet approves the utilisation of the Integrated Transport Block element of the grant funding for 2020/21 as described in paragraphs 4.36 to 4.40 of this report and Appendices A to H, including the allocation of any slippage from 2019/20 to the 2020/21 programme.
- (4) That Cabinet agrees to accept the Better Streets grant award for 2020/21 and 2021/22 subject to acceptance of business cases for each of the projects, and agrees the programme of works as set out in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9.
- (5) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy & Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to manage any required changes to the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Better Streets allocations, including amending individual scheme budgets (within the overall programme budget); revising project scope; and adding new projects (to replace or part-replace other projects that can no longer be delivered), in order to maximise the use of the grant.
- (6) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy & Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to manage any required changes to the 2020/21 Integrated Transport Block programme, including amending individual scheme budgets (within the overall programme budget); and adding new projects (to replace or part-replace other projects that can no longer be delivered), in order to maximise the use of the grant.
- (7) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy & Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to negotiate on its behalf with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, WMCA and government departments to maximise the values of future financial resources allocated to the Council in pursuit of its transport priorities, including signing relevant agreements and contracts for schemes which are approved within the Walsall Transport Capital Programme 2020/21.

3521 Dissolution of VIEW Board and allocation of funds

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet accept the offer from Walsall Housing Group from the Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall programme of £295,000 into the Inclusive Economic Growth Programme to sponsor Economic Development activities during 2020/21 and beyond.

- (2) That the Cabinet notes the £100,000 of support offered through the Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall programme in supporting the activities of One Walsall throughout 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- (3) That Cabinet accepts the proposals from the Walsall Housing Group Board for the dissolution of the current Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall programme, board and company and agrees to:
 - (a) End the current transfer agreement arrangements that relate to VAT sharing.
 - (b) The dissolution of the Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall (VIEW) Board.
 - (c) The transfer of all remaining funds held by VIEW to Walsall Housing Group.
 - (d) The payment of all further VAT savings to Walsall Housing Group.
- (4) That Cabinet approves the cancellation of the current Development Clawback Agreement with Walsall Housing Group, accepting a commitment from Walsall Housing Group to ring-fence all monies received from disposals for regeneration activity within Walsall Borough.
- (5) That Cabinet authorises officers to follow the statutory process and required procedures for the dissolution of the current VIEW and Development Clawback agreements with Walsall Housing Group.

To recommend to Council

- (6) That Council delegates authority to the Executive Director Economy & Environment to negotiate and agree the final terms of the Deed of Variation, to the 15th and 16th Schedules of the Stock Transfer Agreement (2003), to be entered into with WHG to record the changes set out in recommendations (3) and (4) above.

3522 Tackling long term empty dwellings

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Economy and Environment, to acquire the properties set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report, including by way of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), using either:
 - (a) New Homes Bonus Empty Homes fund for homes which are to be resold; or
 - (b) Affordable Housing Commuted Sums for those homes to be retained by the Council as affordable temporary accommodation.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Economy and Environment, in consultation with Portfolio Holder Regeneration, to consider the acquisition of the properties listed in Appendix 1, including by way of Compulsory Purchase Orders, which would be funded using either:
 - (a) the New Homes Bonus Empty Homes fund for home which are to be resold; and/or
 - (b) Affordable Housing Commuted Sums or those homes to be retained by the Council as affordable temporary accommodation.

3523 Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet approve the Walsall Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025 as set out in Appendix A.
- (2) That Cabinet delegates authority to make any future minor amendments to the Strategy, if and when required, to the Executive Director Economy and Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

3524 Provider Section 75 Agreement – Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

Councillor Martin presented the report:

(see annexed)

It was noted that the decision on this matter would be made in the private session following consideration of a report containing confidential information.

3525 Provision of residential and nursing care services for older people, complex care and mental health

Councillor Martin presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, to approve the extension of 2019/20 transitional contractual arrangements for the provision of the Residential and Nursing Care services for the period of up to 6 months from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.
- (2) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, to approve the award of and the ongoing application process for contractual arrangements for the provision of the Residential and Nursing Care services for Older People, Complex Care and Mental Health services for the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2030 and to subsequently authorise the sealing of deeds and/or signing of contracts and any other related documents for the provision of such services, as appropriate, including any agreement with the CCG to facilitate these services.
- (3) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for such services should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any contracts.

3526 Enhanced street cleansing activities

Councillor Butler presented the report:

(see annexed)

In presenting the report, officers in the Clean and Green team were commended for their work this year to ensure that the town was maintained to a high standard, contributing to visitors' feeling of wellbeing.

With regard to provision of the waste collection services during the current Covid-19 emergency, Councillor Butler advised that the brown bin (garden waste) collection service would cease until further notice in order that resources could be focused on maintaining the core household waste and recycling collection service

Resolved

That Cabinet approve additional funding on a time limited basis from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021 for:

- (1) An annual deep clean of the town centre at a cost of £26k.
- (2) A town centre reactive rapid response team at a cost of £66.2k
- (3) Continued pigeon control on a weekly basis at a cost of £7.8k
- (4) Eight Environmental Operatives in a mobile street cleansing 'Barrowman' role at a cost of £268k
- (5) An agency budget to cover holidays, sickness absence and training at a cost of £308k.
- (6) A budget for the supervision of a Community Payback Team at a cost of £20k
- (7) An annual deep clean of the five district centres at a cost of £19.3k

3527 Out of Borough care leavers and Council tax

Councillor Wilson presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Walsall Council matches the exemption for council tax relief to those care leavers residing outside of the Borough until they are aged 25 from 1 April 2020.

3528 High Needs Funding Formula

Councillor Towe presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet notes the outcome of working group exercise and approves the High Needs Local Funding Formula recommended by Walsall's Schools Forum at its meeting on 26 February 2020 (as set out at Appendix A and B).
- (2) That Cabinet approves the implementation of the one year Transitional Top-up Support for primary and secondary pupils without a statutory assessment (as set out in paragraph 4.11. to 4.15 and detailed in Appendix B).

3529 Early years funding formula for two, three and four year olds

Councillor Towe presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Cabinet approves the Early Years Funding Formula (Appendix A) recommended by Walsall's Schools Forum at their meeting on 11 March 2020.

3530 Goldsmith Academy revocation – School place planning and expansion

Councillor Towe presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Cabinet approve that the proposal to expand Goldsmith Academy be revoked.

3531 Falls prevention services review

Councillor Bird presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet approves the proposal to continue a remodelled falls prevention services (described at 4.10).

- (2) That Cabinet approves the proposed budget contribution of £137,000 from the Council for the falls prevention services for a period of 12 months from 1 April 2020 with continued funding under review, subject to any changes associated with the Public Health grant conditions for 2021/22 and beyond.
- (3) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director, Economy and Environment or their nominated officer to enter into fixed price contracts for the delivery of falls prevention services.

3532 Unauthorised Encampments (UEs)

The report of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was submitted, including a final report of the Unauthorised Encampments Working Group which had been established to consider the need for a long-term strategy to reduce the numbers of UEs in the Borough and to explore options for a transit site:

(see annexed)

Councillor Perry thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for what he said was a great piece of work and advised that officers were continuing to look at potential transit arrangements and location, followed by housing and education implications. He said that the recommendations of the working group would be considered during this ongoing work which would be reported to Cabinet in due course.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be thanked for their work.
- (2) That the report be received and that a full and comprehensive response be received in due course

3533 Private session

Exclusion of public

Resolved

That during consideration of the remaining item on the agenda, the Cabinet considers that the item for consideration is exempt information by virtue of the appropriate paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the item in private.

Summary of items considered in private session

3534 Pelsall Labour Club, Church Road, Pelsall

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That authority be granted to the Executive Director of Environment and Economy and the S151 Officer of the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to enter into an agreement with the owners of the Pelsall Labour Club and properties at Unity Drive, Pelsall empowering the Council to carry out necessary work on their behalf and assigning their right of action against the developer to the Council up to the value of £50,000.

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

3535 Land at Hatherton Road, Walsall

Councillor Andrew presented the report:

(see annexed)

Cabinet:

- (1) approved the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in the land edged on the EPMS plan 4682/6 and extending to approximately 0.5 hectares (1.237 acres) to Purple Platypus Property.
- (2) delegated authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to approve the final terms for the disposal to Purple Platypus Property Limited.
- (3) approved the Council works and associated costs (set out in section 4.10 and 4.11) be funded from the land receipt and the existing Regenerating Walsall capital programme.

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

3536 Provider Section 75 Agreement – Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

Councillor Martin presented the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Cabinet:

- (a) Authorises the Executive Director for Adult Social Care to enter into an agreement pursuant to Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 with Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for an initial term of 5 years, from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2025, with an option to extend the arrangements for up to a further 5 years.
- (b) Delegates authority to the Executive Director Adult Social Care, in consultation with the portfolio holder, to make minor amendments to the Section 75 agreement.
- (c) Approves any changes to the Section 75 agreement as part of future phases of the Walsall Together Programme.

[Exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

The meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

5 May 2020

FORWARD PLAN

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

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

Cabinet responsibilities are as follows

- Leader of the Council – Councillor Bird
- Deputy Leader and Regeneration – Councillor Andrew
- Adult social care – Councillor Martin
- Children's – Councillor Wilson
- Clean and green – Councillor Butler
- Community, leisure and culture – Councillor Perry
- Education and skills – Councillor Towe
- Health and wellbeing – Councillor Craddock
- Personnel and business support – Councillor Chattha

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

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

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

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £250,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

Dates of meetings

17 June 2020
15 July 2020
12 August 2020

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2020 (5.5.20)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
14/20 (3.2.20)	Review of achievements 2019/20: The report presents a review of some of the key achievements during the 2019/20 year in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2021	Cabinet (Non key decision)	Helen Dudson 01922 653732 helen.dudson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Bird	17 June 2020
27/19 (8.7.9)	A34 Walsall to Birmingham sprint scheme: To approve the sprint scheme	Cabinet (Key decision)	Matt Crowton 01922 654358 matt.crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
68/19 (2.12.19)	West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme for the A34: To approve a plan to improve bus travel in the A34 Walsall to Birmingham corridor through delivery of a new SPRINT service.	Cabinet (Key decision)	Matt Crowton 01922 654358 matt.crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
3/20 (6.1.20)	Strategic development at Moxley Road, Darlaston Private session: Report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person	Cabinet (Key decision)	Joanne Nugent 01922 654752 joanne.nugent@walsall.gov.uk Joel Maybury 01922 654748	Internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
43/18 (8.10.18)	Lighting Invest to Save: To consider proposals for a major investment in the highway lighting infrastructure by replacing all existing lighting with energy efficient LED lighting	Cabinet (Key decision)	Paul Leighton 07831 120871 paul.leighton@walsall.gov.uk	Public, Walsall Public Lighting Ltd., industry companies, internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020

Page 23 of 211

8/20 (3.2.20)	Black Country Transport Team Collaboration Agreement: To approve the agreement to facilitate the delivery of a strategic transportation function across the four Black Country local authorities	Cabinet (Non key decision)	Matt Crowton 01922 654358 matt.crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
19/20 (6.4.20)	Disabled facility lifts, hoists and associated works and services: To approve the award of new contracts for 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2025	Cabinet (Key decision)	David Lockwood 01922 658459 david.lockwood@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
21/20 (6.4.20)	Hollybank House: Grant occupancy of Hollybank House to Walsall Healthcare Trust for the provision of stroke rehabilitation beds	Cabinet (Key decision)	Kerrie Allward 01922 654713 kerrie.allward@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Martin/ Councillor Andrew	17 June 2020
17/20 (2.3.20)	Birchills Childcare: To seek approval of the preferred option following consultation on future provision	Cabinet (Key decision)	Julie Jones 07557 541064 julie.jones@walsall.gov.uk	Staff, service users (parents/carers)	Councillor Wilson	17 June 2020
12/20 (3.2.20)	Surveillance and access to communications data: To recommend to Council for approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: The Council's Corporate Policy and Procedures Investigatory Powers Act 2016 : The Council's Corporate Policy and procedures on the Acquisition of Communications Data To delegate authority to the Executive Director Economy and Environment to make minor amendments to the above policies	Cabinet/ Council (Non key decision)	Lorraine Boothman 07951 523523 lorraine.boothman@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Perry	17 June 2020
18/20 (2.3.20)	Safer Walsall Partnership: To approve revised Terms of Reference	Cabinet (Non key decision)	Paul Gordon 07792 920257 paul.gordon@walsall.gov.uk	Safer Walsall Partnership, internal	Councillor Perry	17 June 2020

21/20 (6.4.20)	Oakwood Special School: To approve additional Basic Needs Funding for Oakwood expansions following identification of increased pupil numbers	Cabinet (Key decision)	Alex Groom 07920 500528 alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk	School staff, governors, schools	Councillor Towe	17 June 2020
13/20 (3.2.20)	Fire Alarm maintenance: To award the maintenance contract Private session: Report contains commercially sensitive information	Cabinet (Key decision)	Ian Lister 07711 055113 ian.lister@walsall.gov.uk	Internal	Councillor Chattha	17 June 2020
20/20 (6.4.20)	Healthy eating in schools: Approval to seek a provider award a healthy eating programme in schools which will ensure a whole school approach to healthy eating and support schools to meet the Ofsted Inspection Framework, complement the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme of study for schools, and support the implementation of the Early Help Strategy. Private session: Reports contains commercially sensitive information	Cabinet (Key decision)	Esther Higdon 07885 307579 esther.higdon@walsall.gov.uk Vikki Tolley	Internal	Councillor Craddock	17 June 2020
59/19 (4.11.19)	Walsall's Allocations policy: To approve the policy which determines who is given priority for affordable housing	Cabinet (Key decision)	Neil Hollyhead 07943 500394 neil.hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public, Housing Associations, internal	Councillor Andrew	15 July 2020

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Public Health Update – Covid-19 Response

Portfolio: Councillor Stephen Craddock, Health & Wellbeing

Related portfolios:

Service: Public Health

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To provide members with an overview of the impact of Covid-19 across the borough of Walsall and a summary of Public Health Walsall's response to offer assurance to residents that we are working in partnership to assist the Government and the Council to put in place measures that will help to guide, advice and help protect them.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Walsall Council, Public Health England, and local NHS partners are working closely together to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak by having regular meetings at strategic, tactical and operational levels with the aim delaying and mitigating the impact on residents in the borough. The aim of our Council response is to '*Maintain the welfare of the community and mitigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 to Walsall*'.
- 2.2 The Public Health team's work is intrinsically linked to the Government's and Council's Strategy on COVID-19. Work priorities have been moved to 'business critical' in order to support the council's response to COVID-19, whilst maintaining support and safeguarding for some of our most vulnerable residents. The Public Health teams are involved in every objective of our Council response to COVID-19.
- 2.3 Health and care partnership working is primarily via Walsall Together. Some examples of activity are the provision and guidance regarding the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), assisting care homes with infection control, facilitating swab testing for staff and working with local communities to provide much needed support.

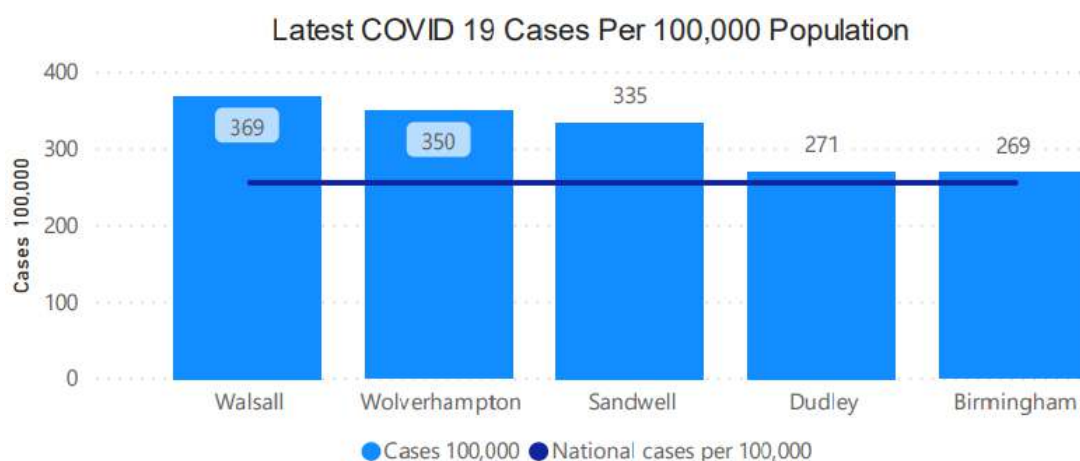
- 2.4 The contents of the report are based on circumstances that are changing frequently and therefore many areas are likely to become superseded by new information on an ongoing basis.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That members note the contents of this report and the measures being taken to assist the council in their response to the Covid-19 crisis and in the protection of Walsall residents.

4. Report detail – know

- 4.1 Walsall case figures, as at Saturday 9th May a confirmed rise of 2 cases brought the total to 1,046. Rises are also apparent across the Black Country (Wolverhampton, a rise of 2 cases; Sandwell a rise of 16 cases, Dudley a rise of 2 and Birmingham a rise of 15 cases). Walsall does have the highest rate per 100,000 population within the Black Country at 369 and above the national rate. This compares to Wolverhampton (350), Sandwell (335), Dudley (271) and Birmingham (269). However, this is based on those tested, the threshold of testing may vary between locations.



- 4.1.1 The hospital reported on the Sunday 10th May, 58 'confirmed Covid-19 inpatients', a reduction from 108 from two weeks ago. There have sadly been 183 deaths at the Manor Hospital. These deaths do not include those who died in the community, work is actively being undertaken to understand this in Walsall.
- 4.1.2 Further information on cases and comparison to other areas can be found at LG Inform¹ and the Government website².
- 4.1.3 As at 24th April 2020 the Council employed 3,087 people (this excludes Education). One person was off work with confirmed coronavirus with a further 61 (1.9%) ill with related symptoms and not working.

¹ https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/covid-19-case-tracker-area-quick-view-1?mod-area=E08000030&mod-group=AllMetropolitanBoroughLaInCountry_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup

² <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/#local-authorities>

- 4.2 The Public Health team's work is intrinsically linked to the Government's and Council's Strategy with the team are involved in every objective of our Council response to COVID-19. This has included providing business insight, guidance, deploying staff to support Public Health England and putting measures in place to protect the residents of Walsall. Some of the measures include:
- 4.2.1 Expanding the Infection Control team with the support of the wider Public Health team to respond to incidents, queries and calls for advice from professionals and the community, implementing actions from SILVER meetings and arranging visits to care homes to advise and assist in the control of infections.
 - 4.2.2 Implementing an on-call health protection team working 8am-8pm seven days per week, alongside Public Health England and offering guidance, specialist advice and signposting to further information and support services.
 - 4.2.3 Commissioned services (including Healthy Child programmes (Health Visiting and School Nursing); Falls prevention; NHS Health Checks; Smoking Cessation; Lifestyles; Sexual Health and Drugs & Alcohol) have been risk assessed and amended, realigned or ceased to ensure the protection and safety of staff and to continue support to the most vulnerable residents.
 - 4.2.4 The support for our most vulnerable groups has been facilitated via our resilient communities model and officers from Public Health have helped facilitated the development and ongoing delivery of activity via locality hubs and of the recent opened food distribution centre. This includes expanding the Making Connections Walsall programme which sees referrals via West Midlands Fire Service to the 4 main hubs across Walsall, including: Age Accord Matters, Bloxwich Community Partnership, Manor Farm Community Association and Old Hall People's Partnership who are now working together to lead the Community response for Covid 19 - COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk or call 0121 380 6690.
 - 4.2.5 A virtual team arrangement has been established providing invaluable assistance to communication activity ensuring all council services consistently support the cascade of key messages and guidance from Public Health England and NHS England. This ensures messages are updated as campaigns and guidance change. Activity has included developing a dashboard for monitoring of social media accounts to provide insight into the reach of messages and to support services in developing their use of existing social media platforms.
 - 4.2.6 Supporting the Reset objective to ensure that we keep everyone safe, improve health and wellbeing and revitalise our economy. Our plan will require a engagement with Walsall residents to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the community. Public health will be researching the impact this has had on our residents, particularly children and communities with a strong focus on mental health. The research will help inform our response on future actions, interventions and key messages for residents.
 - 4.2.7 The Public Health Intelligence team are actively working with partner colleagues across Walsall Together to support project work in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on the health and care system. This has led to changes in how the local health and care partners are putting their resources to where there is the greatest need.

Consequently there will be delays to the DPH report, PNA and JSNA as support to the Covid-19 response has been prioritised.

- 4.2.8 Coordinating swab testing for the Council which is currently being provided to all Adult Social Care Staff, including service users, Primary Care Staff and Pharmacists. The process involves care homes and domiciliary care agencies to identify staff who are self-isolating due to being symptomatic or where a member of their household is symptomatic. Time-slots are allocated with testing being undertaken Wolverhampton Science Park. This sits alongside the other ways that key workers can arrange a test more generally, i.e. national online booking and MoD swabbing happening in Walsall.
- 4.2.9 The Public Health team actively work with colleagues across Walsall Together and NHS STP partners supporting proactive swabbing in care homes; swabbing all residents and then staff. This is important as we have found many residents do not show signs of COVID-19 (around 25%) and allows us to ensure direct support to care homes through an enhanced support team (nurses, carers and volunteers). This is followed up with support from Public Health including additional staff, infection control advice and management of any outbreaks.
- 4.2.10 In addition, a pilot was run on the delivery of a Home Testing Kit service to those people who do not have access to a vehicle in their household or are too ill to make the journey to the testing site. This has informed future home testing.
- 4.2.11 There is an ASC lead for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) within the council who is coordinating the obtainment and distribution of PPE not only to council staff, but also to care providers. Supplies have been shared throughout the health and care system locally primarily through Walsall Together so any one provider does not go short. Advice and guidance on its use and distribution has been provided by Public Health.
- 4.2.12 The Healthy Spaces Team are continuing work on managing the safe and appropriate use of the borough's parks and open spaces as we continue to stop many flouting social distancing guidance.
- 4.2.13 Observations on the impact of COVID-19 appear to be affecting those with underlying health conditions³, from BAME communities⁴ and those from more deprived backgrounds^{5,6,7}. This provides an opportunity to work with the local community on improving wellbeing and reducing inequalities in the next phase of

³ https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.25.20079491v1#disqus_thread

⁴ <https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/bame-covid-19-deaths-what-do-we-know-rapid-data-evidence-review/>

⁵ https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.25.20079491v1#disqus_thread

⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolveingcovid19bylocalareasanddeprivation/deathsoccurringbetween1marchand17april>

⁷

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/chapter/are-some-ethnic-groups-more-vulnerable-to-covid-19-than-others/>

our response through our Resilient Communities model supporting those who need it the most, whilst continuing to build support networks in our community. Early development of a plan is currently underway.

4.2.14 Continued testing for COVID-19 is going to be important in the next phase of the COVID-19 outbreak, although tests will not detect all cases of COVID-19⁸. With the gradual opening of different services and businesses the implementation of contract tracing with testing is going to be critical to reducing the spread of COVID-19⁹. The local Public Health are in discussion with national teams and NHS partners on the best interface of the track, trace and treat model being developed and are advising appropriately.

4.2.15 As there is currently no vaccine, careful consideration of easement¹⁰ of restrictions will be need to be followed with appropriate advice from Public Health to residents and business to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on local residents as far as possible. Social Distancing and washing hands are still key Public Health messages to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

4.3 This is a unique situation with the potential to affect all age groups and across all denominations and cultures. As such the measures taken and the processes in place cross-cut all aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

Risk management

4.4 Appropriate measures have been taken to ensure continuation of services where needed and to safeguard vulnerable residents.

Financial implications

4.5 The financial implications in determining the costs of Covid-19 response in terms of staffing and resources is being monitored and will be off-set by emergency planning budget and Government funding.

Legal implications

4.6 Advice has been taken in terms of the legal obligations of contracts, mandated services and has been taken into consideration in any decisions made.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

⁸<https://www.sciencemediacentre.org/expert-comment-on-different-types-of-testing-for-covid-19/>

⁹<https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/pubhealthexpert/2020/04/06/testing-for-covid-19-in-nz-to-achieve-the-elimination-goal/#more-3996>

¹⁰<https://www.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/coronavirus-exit-strategies/>

- 4.7 Advice has been taken from the Procurement team and will be acted upon accordingly in terms of Public Health contracts. Where appropriate, services have been extended.

Property implications

- 4.8 None

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.9 In line with Government, PHE, Council and HR policies, all appropriate measures are being taken to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff and the population of Walsall.

Staffing implications

- 4.10 None

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.11 The implications of COVID-19 appear to be affecting those from areas of greater deprivation and therefore any response to COVID-19 in the medium to longer term will require a different approach to different communities in greatest need and will adapt as we know more.

Consultation

- 4.12 Due to the urgent nature of the response to the pandemic and the requirement to work in partnership, ongoing engagement and consultation with key partners is happening.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Following the measures put in place by the Government to introduce social distancing and reduce all non-essential travel in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, Public Health Walsall were required to undertake a review of service delivery. Circumstances are changing frequently and therefore many areas are likely to become superseded by new information and action on an ongoing basis.

6. Respond

- 6.1 In line with the above measures, Public Health Walsall reviewed all their programmes and service delivery to realign resources to support the management of the pandemic and by prioritising services to 'business critical'. By doing so, this has ensured that, where needed, services to our most vulnerable groups can continue (eg Drugs and Alcohol; Sexual Health) and maintains the safety of staff and safeguarding of service users.

As new information and changes in the Government strategy occur, the Public Health team will review its actions and respond accordingly.

7. Review

- 7.1 Regular reviews of the work the Public Health team are built into our response to ensure we are meeting the changing needs of our residents as the pandemic develops and the Government issues new guidance or changes its strategy.

Background papers

Background of COVID-19 and further details of PH response (Appendix 1)

Author



Stephen Gunther
Director of Public Health
✉ Stephen.gunther@walsall.gov.uk



Kerrie Allward
Interim Executive Director
Adult Social Care
11th May 2020



Councillor Craddock
Portfolio holder
Health and Wellbeing
11th May 2020

Background of COVID-19 and further details of PH response

Context

On 31st December 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, China. The cause is now identified as a Coronavirus, one of the family of viruses which caused the SARS (Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002-2003 across the world. These viruses are fairly common and can range from mild to very severe in effect. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that infect a wide range of different species including humans.

Before this new coronavirus, there were six different coronaviruses known to infect humans. Four of these cause a mild common cold-type illness. Since 2002 there has been the emergence of two new coronaviruses that can infect humans and result in more severe disease (Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) coronaviruses). Both SARS and MERS coronaviruses are thought to have originated in animals. They are transmitted via droplets in coughs and sneezes.

On Tuesday 10th February, the WHO named the disease caused by the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The virus itself has been named SARS-CoV-2, as the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) have determined that it is the same species as SARS but a different and milder strain of the species.

Spread

Because this is a new illness, we are still learning exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Droplets containing the virus can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

COVID-19 Level of severity

The death rate is not yet accurately known but based on the available data it is estimated to be around 1-2%. This varies by country, but that is at least partly due to the fact the populations in different countries vary in their age structures (e.g. Italy has a much older population on the whole than China). However, this number is likely to be an overestimate

since the figure is based only on the number of individuals who have been tested and confirmed to have the virus.

It is highly likely that more people have been infected but have not been diagnosed because their illnesses were milder and thus have not been counted in the number of those infected. Current estimates (though these vary) are that 81% of people infected will have the milder form of illness, with 14% more severe and needing greater care, up to 5% critically ill and needing very specialist care and 1-2% fatality rates.

Although the virus can infect anybody, those with more severe illness, those over 70 and those with weakened immune systems are more vulnerable to serious disease. A key priority therefore is protecting those most vulnerable from infection and ensuring that resources are there for treating and caring for them. The government with the NHS and Local Authorities have identified roughly 1.4million people in the English population most at risk of serious illness, and have contacted them directly to stay at home for 12 weeks. These are known as the “shielded” group.

Treatment

As this is a viral illness, antibiotics are of no use. The antiviral drugs that work against flu do not work. Several possible treatments are being evaluated in clinical trials, and a range of treatment options are being explored. Most cases will need little treatment and people will recover by themselves. Paracetamol will help reduce fever and muscle pains. In very severe disease treatment will be mainly supportive and is intended to keep people alive until they start to recover by themselves. In the most severe illness patients may be given oxygen or even artificial ventilation.

Since there is no vaccine or effective anti-viral drugs, the priority is preventing and slowing spread of infection, hence measures of social distancing being put into place.

The Government are working with Oxford University to develop a vaccine and pilot commenced on Thursday 23 April.

The Government Strategy

The Government's Strategy on COVID-19 has four phases:

- Contain: detect early cases, follow up close contacts, and prevent the disease taking hold in this country for as long as is reasonably possible
- Delay: slow the spread in this country. When the virus does take hold, lower the peak impact and push it away from the winter season either by a moderate delay strategy or a harder strategy to suppress the transmission (We are now in that suppression phase).
- Research: better understand the virus and the actions that will lessen its effect on the UK population; innovate responses including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines; use the evidence to inform the development of the most effective models of care
- Mitigate: provide the best care possible for people who become ill, support hospitals to maintain essential services and ensure ongoing support for people ill in the community to minimise the overall impact of the disease on society, public services and on the economy.

On the 12th March the government announced moving out of the Contain phase into the Delay stage of the strategy.

Social Distancing, Delay and Isolation Messages

The Prime Minister announced significant changes to the social distancing and other measures asked of people, especially those with symptoms or who are more vulnerable, on 16th March 2020. The latest information and guidance from government can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

National and local modelling indicates that the epidemic is moving faster than was thought, incorporates new data from Italy and the UK alongside information from China to model the potential scenarios applicable to the spread and impact of the virus. It appears that the peak has occurred in hospitals with cases in hospital steadily reducing.

Key Public Messages (as of 29th April)

The key public messages remain as follows:

- Stay at home
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- One form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Do not meet others, even friends or family. You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.
- Self-isolation of people with BOTH a new continuous cough AND a fever of more than 37.8 degrees (you feel hot to the touch front and back) following new guidance (7 days if you live alone, 14 days for households);
- Self-isolation or "shielding" for protection from infection of the most vulnerable 1.4million people most likely to become seriously ill

Frequently asked questions are can be found [here](#).

The Council's response

Walsall Council, Public Health England, and local NHS partners are working closely together to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak by having regular meetings at strategic, tactical and operational levels with the aim delaying and mitigating the impact on residents in the borough.

The aim of our Council response is to *Maintain the welfare of the community and mitigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 to Walsall*. The Councils tactical coordinating meeting (Silver control) will be delivering the seven objectives:

1. The Council Continues to support the people of Walsall through delivering essential services
2. Protecting our most vulnerable residents
3. Providing civic leadership and mobilising community assets

4. To provide advice and support to enable the continuation of health care support in the borough
5. Mitigating the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the local economy
6. Communicate regularly with staff, partners and public to mitigate impact to the borough
7. Planning and implementing action to recover from COVID-19.

Public Health Walsall

What we have done so far (PH)

- Public Health officer either leading or allocated to provide PH advice and support for each of the councils 7 objectives
- Developing local guidance for different services ie social care, waste collection and regulatory services
- Developed local PH communications campaign aligned with corporate communications
- Supporting or leading the emergency planning response for the Council and Walsall CCG
- Developed a re-prioritisation approach to key frontline services such as sexual health clinics, to ensure that 'life or death' services such as drug and alcohol provision are maintained for the most vulnerable of service users and if needs be nursing and other staff can be diverted to care for those most in need
- Continuing to provide key PH services such as drug and alcohol support, sexual health services, health visiting
- Provided epidemiological planning assumptions and modelling to support business continuity and demand for NHS and non NHS services
- Monitored the science and changing guidance around the virus
- Provided mutual aid to Public Health England by releasing a full-time members of staff to support contact tracing
- Worked with Care Providers and Homeless Shelter providers on infection control training and procedures
- Worked with Colleges and the University on their Business Continuity and infection prevention and control
- Supported Active Black Country, Sport England and a breadth of local stakeholders to run a local campaign in response to the Covid-19 virus. #stayInworkOut
- The PH Intelligence Manager continues to chair bi-monthly meetings of the 'Walsall Insight Group' (WIG). This brings together analysts from across the Council, as well as from partner organisations, to network and build positive working relations. Analysts from this network are actively working on Covid-19 analyses and project work
- PH staff are working remotely whilst supporting the COVID-19 response with Senior team members allocated to each of the work streams and the Health Protection team providing advice and support to the Community networks.

- School Games Organisers (SGO's) across Walsall are setting some specific personal challenges for children and young people at home. The aim is that these will eventually be banked/logged on a central page on our website
- Given detailed public health advice to a range of sectors and organisations including Fire, Police, social care, schools, offices, Coroner, Registrars, Funeral Directors, Cleaning and Facilities Management and updated this as national guidance or advice has changed
- Reviewed Business Continuity Plans with all internal teams and commissioned providers to establish priorities and plan for scaling down if required
- Carried out a health and care audit to understand which of our staff are in high risk groups or have responsibility for those that are
- Conducted a skills audit to identify staff with clinical skills who could be redeployed to support service delivery if required
- Supporting vulnerable and isolated groups across the borough through MCW Covid-19; ensuring links to services, food boxes etc
- Developed with PHE a specific local Health Protection Unit with a focus on care homes and care providers including guidance on PPE, testing and returning to work
- Supported the development, coordination, guidance and reporting for testing of key workers initially and then wider community testing with the NHS
- Developed more robust and timely process for community death reporting of COVID-19 with partners and coroner.

What Public Health is planning for

- Further support for council services and partners across Walsall ie Walsall Together
- Further information for the public ie longer-term mental wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 and mitigating action
- Prioritising work to support the 7 objectives and our own business continuity and being able to offer support to partners such as Public Health England through mutual aid
- Ensuring we can keep critically important services running (e.g. drug and alcohol services where people may die if they do not get care; critically important nursing services for young children including safe guarding) while diverting nursing, medical and other clinicians to coronavirus patient care during the epidemic
- Ensuring updated national planning assumptions are shared across departments and with partners
- Supporting the implementation of the national contact tracing service which is being established.

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Governance and Decision Making during Covid 19 emergency

Portfolio: Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: None

Service: Resources and Transformation

Wards: None

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide details of the governance that has been put in place in order that the Council can continue to manage its business in accordance with its Constitution and the law during the Covid 19 crisis in the absence of Council meetings.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The report sets out the decision making procedure the council has adopted as a consequence of the Covid 19 crisis, through the utilisation of officer delegations and the strong leader executive decision making function. The report also sets out how the council is implementing the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4th April, 2020 to enable remote council committee meetings to take place.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet note the report.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 In line with the continually updated Government advice concerning protecting the most vulnerable people in society and limiting gatherings of people, Walsall Council, following discussions with its political group leaders, and liaison with neighbouring authorities, decided that, following the Cabinet meeting on 18 March 2020, unless absolutely necessary, Council committee meetings would be suspended until the Annual Council meeting scheduled for 19 May 2020. All Elected Members were informed of this decision on 18 March 2020. As a consequence, the Council has utilised the emergency provisions in relation to delegated powers in the constitution in relation to Council decisions, in consultation with the relevant elected members, and has utilised the “strong leader” model in relation to executive decisions that have

needed to be taken. Where required the decisions have been published on CMIS and circulated to all elected members. The council is in the process of implementing the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to enable it to hold virtual meetings.

- 4.2 The constitution already empowers the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors to take all necessary decisions in cases of emergency. The definition of an emergency under the constitution means any situation in which the relevant officer believes that there is a risk of damage to property, a threat to the health or well-being of an individual or that the interests of the Council or the Borough as a whole may be compromised.
- 4.3 On 20th March 2020 Democratic Services issued guidance with regard to Executive decision making by the Leader and officers during the Covid-19 outbreak to assist Officers in making lawful decisions under their delegated powers to ensure the Council could continue to function in the absence of committee meetings. This guide to decision making was approved by the Corporate Management Team on 4 April 2020 and circulated to all the top four tiers of Council managers with an explanatory email on 7 April 2020. The document also explained the Leader's role in executive decision making throughout this period. This included a full explanation as to how urgent decisions would be made. The Council still followed its constitutional requirements in relation to the publication and recording of decisions. It was recognised that the Council was operating in a time of emergency and accepted that decisions may have to be made on an urgent basis to deal with the rapidly changing circumstances to prevent serious prejudice to the Council's or public interest. Where urgency existed in relation to executive decisions agreement from the Mayor was sought to deal with the issue as a matter of urgency which removed the requirement for such decisions to be subject to the call in procedure. Even where decisions were taken on this basis the council has tried to ensure that these have been informed decisions with relevant information provided to decision-makers. It has to be accepted due to the circumstances the council are operating in that this information may not have been as complete as it would be under normal circumstances.
- 4.4 In managing the crisis the council also established two senior management officer groups which met on a daily basis. The main strategic meeting was Gold Control which was established to manage the strategic impact of the Covid 19 crisis taking into account national, regional, and local issues that had an impact on the functioning of the Council and the welfare of its residents and employees. Gold Control was part of the decision-making insofar as issues were raised may require decisions and following discussion at Gold Control were referred for decisions to be made where it was felt to be appropriate. The other Silver Control met on a daily basis to discuss and determine operational issues at a local level.
- 4.5 Following the suspension of Council committee meetings Democratic Services and ICT were already in the process of upgrading Elected Members information technology with the rollout of Microsoft Office 365. This software program includes Microsoft Teams which it was recognised would enable Elected Members, Officers, and Members of the Public to participate in virtual team meetings once the

government enacted the necessary legislation to do so. This rollout was done in consultation with the Leader of the Council, opposition group leaders in order to effectively prioritise the decision-making functions that would need to be enabled as a priority. As a consequence the initial rollout included the opposition group leaders and all of the Council's cabinet members. This rollout has continued to all Elected Members. Training has been provided to all elected members, and continues to be provided to ensure that elected members can fully participate in virtual meetings of the council. Elected Members have fully cooperated with this process.

- 4.6 The Government introduced the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4th April, 2020 which will remain in force until 7th May, 2021. The regulations make provision to enable local authorities to hold meetings remotely including by (but not limited to) telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming. In addition, existing legislative provisions have been modified to remove the requirement for local authorities to hold annual meetings, and to enable requirements for the public and press access to local authority meetings and associated documents through remote means and website access.
- 4.7 Following extensive consultation with the Leader of the Council, Opposition Group Leaders, the Mayor, and Deputy Mayor it was agreed that:
- a) to allow for remote meetings to be introduced the Council begins to pilot virtual Committee meetings immediately with a co-ordinated roll out initially focusing on essential decision making bodies and the Scrutiny Overview Committee from April – September 2020 this initial pilot period will ensure that systems are tried and tested before a proposed wider roll out begins in September 2020;
 - b) the Annual Council Meeting scheduled for 19 and 21 May be postponed until such time agreed by Group Leaders and that all appointments, as agreed by Annual Council in 2019, continue until such time that it convenes with Group Leaders to review this position in September 2020;
 - c) a draft calendar of meetings from April, 2020 to September, 2020 be agreed, this will be put on the Council's Website under Decision making in Walsall;
 - d) Personnel Committee, scheduled to be held on 15 and 16 April, 2020 be the first decision making meeting to be held electronically;
 - e) That Council delegations continue to be used where appropriate due to the continuation of the emergency situation;
 - f) That admission appeal hearings do not convene until such time that the DfE release further guidance;
 - g) That communications are developed on the rollout of virtual meetings to raise awareness.
 - h) That a guide to virtual meetings be developed by Democratic Services and regular feedback taken from officers and elected members on the running of virtual meetings;
 - i) That training on O365 for Elected Members continues to be developed and delivered by ICT to enable them to participate in virtual meetings.
 - j) That a further report be submitted at the end of July 2020 with the view to proposing a wider roll out of remote meetings from 1 September 2020 if the Council is unable to commence actual meetings.
 - k) Changes to attendance requirements for Committee meetings

- 4.8 The council has piloted three virtual committee meetings to date. They were an Overview and Scrutiny Committee working group and two Personnel Committees as set out above. It was decided to start with these meetings as they did not include members of the public which meant that testing could start on a risk assessed basis to see how the technology could be best used to support the democratic process. These trials have progressed well and the next virtual meetings will be the Cabinet Meeting on 19 May 2020, and then Licensing and Planning Committees. It has been decided to re-introduce an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to ensure that there is the capacity for decisions of the Executive to be scrutinised. This also reflected concerns expressed by opposition group leaders that there should still be transparency and scrutiny of decisions. The Leader of the council was in full support of this proposal.
- 4.9 The Council's Chief Legal Officer has been meeting on a weekly basis with other Chief Legal Officer's across the Black Country to share learning in relation to the virtual meeting process and other governance issues. This has allowed for a level of uniformity across the region and reduced costs in relation to certain aspects of governance.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.10 Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. In ensuring that the Council's decision-making processes have continued to function throughout this crisis period the Council has been able to take decisions to ensure that the most vulnerable residents in the borough have been supported as well as possible throughout this difficult time. It has also allowed a level of scrutiny of the decisions that have been made which assists the council ensuring that public resources have been targeted to where they are most needed and used in the most efficient way possible.
- 4.11 In establishing virtual meetings which will be available for the public to attend we will continue to engage our communities who help shape the services we provide. This ensures greater transparency and scrutiny of the decision-making and democratic process.
- 4.12 This is part of our internal focus to provide high quality support services that enable Council business. In embracing the digital technology to hold virtual committee meetings the council is managing to maintain the democratic process in this time of emergency. It is important the Council builds on the learning that has been developed over this period of time and enhances its digital capability in supporting the democratic process. The Council had already recognised this in investing in technology to upgrade the facilities in the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms, and rolling out the necessary hardware such as the investment in laptops to permit remote working.

Risk management

- 4.13 It is recognised that decision-making during the Covid 19 crisis increases the risk of legal challenge in relation to the determinations that the Council has made throughout this period. It is also recognised that decisions have needed to be taken at pace to avoid the risk of damage to property, a threat to the health or well-being

of an individual or compromise of the interests of the council or borough as a whole. Such decisions will out of necessity be based on less information than is usually considered and that pace gives less time for the normal reflection and assessment of risk. The Council sought to minimise the risk to the council in decision-making by introducing the governance set out in this report, and has attempted at all times to follow the law and its constitution.

Financial implications

4.14 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

4.15 The Council will exercise all of its powers and duties in accordance with the law and its constitution. The purpose of the constitution is to enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively ensuring that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and are required to explain the reasons for their decisions. (Article 1) New Standing Orders in relation to virtual meetings have been drafted to append to the normal rules set out in the Constitution and provide clarity of certain procedures that will inevitably have to be different for virtual meetings, such as a voting, these can be found on Council's Website under Decision making in Walsall. Only the Council can change the Constitution and approve the rules of procedure set out in Part 4 of the Constitution. Although under the emergency powers that would allow the Chief Executive to make alterations to the Council's Constitution. This should only happen however in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the other political Group Leaders and the Monitoring Officer.

4.16 Councils have an obligation to make informed decisions in relation to the items of business they consider. The principles of good decision-making are set out in the case of R (Sky Blue Sports & Leisure Ltd) v Coventry City Council [2014] EWHC 2089 (Admin). The Council is doing all that it can in the current circumstances to provide sufficient information for informed decisions to be made even where decisions are having to be taken on an urgent basis.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.17 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Property implications

4.18 There are no property implications arising from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.19 There are no health or wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Staffing implications

4.20 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.21 In ensuring that a decision-making process has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 emergency the Council has ensured that equality issues have been considered as part of this decision-making process. It is also allowed the Council to ensure that resources have been directed support the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Consultation

- 4.22 Where changes have been made to support governance the Democratic services team have at all times consulted with Elected Members and Officers.

5. Decide

- 5.1 The Council will continue to review its governance arrangements as it has done throughout the Covid 19 crisis and will make changes after reviewing all the circumstances at this time of uncertainty to ensure lawfulness, openness, and transparency. A major review of the current arrangements are already scheduled to take place in July 2020. This review will take into account the views of all relevant stakeholders, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

6. Respond

- 6.1 The Council has already put in place a programme to hold virtual meetings.

7. Review

- 7.1 A review of the programme of virtual meetings has been scheduled.

Background papers

Guide to Executive Decision-making by the Leader and Officers up to 19 May 2020 during the Covid-19 outbreak

New Standing Orders for implementing virtual committee meetings

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Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council

19 May 2020

19 May 2020
Page 43 of 211

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Safeguarding Response during Covid 19

Portfolio: Councillor Wilson, Children's
Councillor Towe, Education and skills
Councillor Martin, Adult Social Care

Related portfolios

Service: Children's Services and Adult Social Care

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

To provide Cabinet with an overview of the response by Children's Services and Adult Social Care in ensuring that key services continue to be delivered to vulnerable children and adults in Walsall

2. Summary

Since 23 March 2020, the United Kingdom has been in a state of lockdown as part of the response to the current Covid 19 response. This report outlines the current safeguarding arrangements for children and vulnerable adults currently taking place across Walsall and highlights potential risks and vulnerabilities once the current lockdown is eased and/or lifted.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet note the changes in delivery of services to vulnerable children and adults as a response to the Covid 19 pandemic designed to ensure that the safeguarding of our most vulnerable members of society continues.

4. Report detail - know

- 4.1 In common with other local authorities and statutory bodies, Walsall Children's Services and Adult Social Care and their statutory partners had begun to plan to meet delivery requirements prior to the announcement of the current lockdown

Children's Services

- 4.2 In response to the lockdown and social distancing measures Childrens Social Care have had to make significant changes to the way that services are being delivered. Across Children's Services, staff teams have been split into smaller units, with small numbers of staff working on a rota basis from 2 key sites at Essington Lodge and Fallings Heath, with others working from home but still carrying out social work duties. The number of staff working from the office is kept under review in order that social distancing can be safely maintained.
- 4.3 In Children's Social Care, social workers have rag rated all cases using Practice Guidance developed by the Principal Social Worker which considered risks regarding unmet need, whether those risks can only be managed through on-going face to face contact, whether the child is at risk of coming into care or there is a risk of their placement breaking down and the Covid 19 status of both the child and their family and the allocated social worker. These risks and the status of the RAG are reviewed by Managers regularly.
- 4.4 Social workers are maintaining face to face contact with all Red ragged families and children, those which require face to face meeting; workers are making use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring that social distancing requirements are met where possible in carrying these out.

Where contact can be safely maintained virtually, workers are making use of both phone calls and the WhatsApp video facility. Where children are under 16yrs of age, guidance has been issued which states that the WhatsApp facility can only be used by contacting the parent or carer first.

Meetings continue to take place virtually, including child protection conferences, statutory reviews, core group meetings, child in need meetings and strategy meetings.

Case files set out the current situation and rationale for risk assessment decisions being taken so this is clear when case files are reviewed in the future. Case recording relating to all decision-making about how specific circumstances are managed in relation to Covid-19 all recordings begin with 'Covid-19:' to identify this. This is done in individual case records and at the start of each meeting.

Guidance is also in place in respect of all meetings, reviews and conferences all of which continue on a virtual basis using Teams 360, Skype and WhatsApp.

Services to children with disabilities have also been reviewed. This cohort of children are among the most vulnerable and social distance guidance has resulted in significant changes to the support that can be provided, including the cessation of overnight care and short- breaks. The staff teams continue to provide remote and virtual support to these families including, for example, the collection of prescriptions to support families who are shielding.

- 4.5 All statutory safeguarding responsibilities continue to be fulfilled during this period, although with a greater focus on these responsibilities being delivered virtually. This is in line with national guidance and responses from other local authorities. Covid 19 guidance from the Department of Education in respect of flexibilities accrued under Covid 19 legislation is disseminated on a daily basis.

One area that has had to be addressed which is outside of statutory guidance but is understood and being accepted by the courts is the cessation of the majority of family time/contact sessions between children in care and their families. It is clear that in line with current guidance that face to face contacts are not able to take place, unless in exceptional circumstances. The majority of contacts are now being managed virtually and these contacts are being supported by the child's carers and the Family Time Service. The courts are aware that this is the position being taken by local authorities across the country and although can't legally endorse this position, they are understanding of the current position.

- 4.6 Children's Services has not seen any significant increase in referrals since the lockdown commenced and since schools closed. Referrals in respect of children who are living in households where there is domestic abuse continue to be received from West Midlands Police; however, we have not seen the increase in referrals related to domestic abuse and violence that is generally being reported in the media nationally.

Referrals in respect of children who have been reported by parents to West Midlands Police as missing have also reduced significantly.

The service is preparing for a significant increase in referrals once current restrictions are lifted and schools start to re-open and individual children become visible again. We are preparing for increases of work at the front door but also new information coming to light on open cases which may require safeguarding action. We are also preparing for increased activity as the backlog of court cases need to be progressed when the courts re-open. Demand and capacity is likely to be a significant challenge for the service going forward. Our current planning will seek to mitigate against this impact.

- 4.7 Some of the possible additional implications for the current crisis is an increase in the number of looked after children. This will not only be as a result of new children coming into local authority care but also a reduction of children exiting the care system. Due to the current situation a high number of cases are not able to progress through court proceedings, including fewer Adoption Orders being made. We are also experiencing children in care remaining in placement for a longer period of time as movement between households is restricted and in line with national guidance children who reach the age of 18yrs. remaining looked after and in placement beyond their 18th birthday if this is what they want to happen.
- 4.8 Colleagues in Access & Inclusion have developed a similar set of guidance in respect of their work with children. As of Friday 24 April, 80% of Walsall schools were open at this time to support our children and families. There were nearly 600 children attending each day and the number of vulnerable Children attending has been slowly growing day by day. The attendance by this cohort of children is of particular concern nationally as well as locally and while it remains the responsibility of parents to ensure their child's attendance at school, social workers are actively encouraging parents to consider returning their child to their school.
- 4.9 Governor Services are providing a daily newsletter to all schools which collates national, regional and local updates in respect of Covid 19 for schools and education providers.

- 4.10 The Virtual School has continued to work with our looked after children and Young people have educational resources to help them complete their school Work. This has included:
- Providing 50 children/young people with laptops/tablets to enable them to Access their school's online learning platform.
 - Providing paper learning materials to children who do not like to use a Computer to complete their work
 - Providing games and puzzles to our children in early years and art Resources for our older young people
 - Sending regular updates to our parents/carers on new learning websites

Adult Social Care

- 4.11 Adult Social Care have made considerable changes to the way it is working due to Covid 19 ensuring that we observe social distancing requirements and prioritise those most in need of care and support. Most staff are now working from home with Goscote day centre open for a different purpose. Day services have ceased and the priority is to work flexibly with health and social care colleagues in the provision of PPE and practical support to care homes including the newly commissioned Hollybank provision.
- 4.12 Adult Social Care practitioners have been issued clear guidance concerning home visits and these should only take place if **absolutely necessary** following a risk assessment and use of appropriate PPE. Visits to care homes, hospitals and supported living have also been understandably restricted and there is increasing use of technology to support contact through office 365 teams, Skype and WhatsApp video.
- 4.13 Technology is also supporting contact within teams and with our partners facilitating daily conversations to co-ordinate and prioritise resources. A whole systems approach is facilitating timely discharges from hospital and practical advice and support to care homes is preventing hospital admissions through the newly developed Enhanced Support Team. The multi-agency Quality in Care Team are supporting with understanding and responding to the considerable challenges in residential and nursing home provision for older people.
- 4.14 Home care providers are also facing considerable challenges and being supported to be flexible through Care Act easements (see 4.15 & 4.16) and are able to access PPE as required from Goscote. Adult Social Care practitioners are RAG rating everyone in receipt of a package of care in their own homes, completing a wellbeing checklist and ensuring that care and support needs are continuing to be met, with weekly monitoring calls as required. Home care providers are also RAG rating as part of business continuity planning.
- 4.15 The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force on 1st April 2020 with Care Act easement guidance issued on 31st March 2020. This makes changes to the Care Act 2014 to enable local authorities to prioritise the services they offer in order to ensure the most urgent and serious care needs are met, even if this means not meeting everyone's assessed needs in full or delaying some assessments. The local authority should only take a decision to begin exercising the Care Act easements when the workforce is significantly depleted, or demand on social care increased and where to continue to try to do so is likely to result in urgent or acute needs not being met, potentially risking

life. A Framework which sets out how and when the Council will implement the Care Act Easements has been created to ensure clarity and transparency (See Appendix 1).

- 4.16 Adult Social Care have made the decision to move to stage 2 of the Care Act easements. This decision permits individual service types to prioritise short term allocation of care and support using current flexibilities within the Care Act. Home Care provider flexibility creates capacity to take on new packages of care and continue to delivery existing packages of care safely within reduced resources. The RAG rating assurance activity (4.12) ensures oversight and accountability of the providers.
- 4.17 Safeguarding referrals have not seen an increase currently and awareness about hidden abuse such as domestic abuse and self-neglect is being raised within Adult Social Care, with partners and the community. Weekly updates on legal and practice guidance are being communicated to all Adult Social Care staff and more often if required.

Safeguarding Partnership

- 4.18 The Head of Service for Safeguarding (Children's Services) and the Principal Social Worker (Adult Social Care) host a weekly meeting with partners from across the wider Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. This meeting includes West Midlands Police, the Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group, all the health care providers, National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company.
- 4.19 This provides an opportunity for all partners to update on their ability to continue to provide a safeguarding response across Walsall, highlight any local concerns or risks in order that these can be resolved within this meeting on a mutual support basis or escalated as necessary.

Thus far, all services report that they are able to continue to meet their Statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding activity.

- 4.20 This Partnership meeting also agrees a set of weekly Key Messages from the Safeguarding Partnership which are widely circulated. They have included Messages in respect of exploitation, domestic abuse and self-neglect.
- 4.21 All the partners have noted the potential for increase in demand once the lockdown is lifted and visibility of vulnerable children and adults is increased. Specifically, there are concerns in relation to children and vulnerable adults who may be living with domestic violence, substance misuse issues, self-neglect and/or mental health vulnerabilities which is hidden by the current lockdown and the changed way in which services are necessarily having to be delivered at this time.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.22 Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children from avoidable harm is one of Walsall Council's priorities under its "People" priority which seeks to ensure that the most vulnerable citizens are protected from avoidable harm, including treating and caring for people in a safe environment.

Risk management

- 4.23 There are significant risks associated with failing to implement the required social Distancing requirements in that this provides an opportunity for the coronavirus to Continue to spread across both our workforce and to vulnerable children and adults.
- 4.24 There are also risks to vulnerable children and adults in delivering services in this modified manner to ensure that staff and those with whom we work are protected from Covid 19.

Both Children's Services and Adult Social Care have sought to mitigate these risk through RAG rating the risks and vulnerabilities of those with whom we are working.

Financial implications

- 4.25 The total cost of any additional costs accrued by both Children's Services and Adult Social Care are unknown at this stage. These could include staffing, PPE, deep clean costs, food packages, and additional costs associated with children remaining in the cars of the local authority for longer than anticipated. The Council has received funding to help respond to the arising costs that relate to the Covid-19 outbreak. Any additional costs that are identified will go through the Covid-19 governance process where funding arrangements will be considered.

Legal implications

- 4.26 Covid 19 legislation introduced on 28 March 2020 provides both Children's Services and Adult Social Care with a range of flexibilities in relation to the delivery of services. These are designed to enable services to continue to be delivered at a time when there are significant travel restrictions and there is a potential for increased staff absence due to sickness.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.27 There are no procurement implications.

Property implications

- 4.28 There are no property implications

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.29 The effective delivery of high quality services to protect children and vulnerable adults from avoidable harm has a direct impact on the health and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 4.30 It directly links to the corporate priorities to that People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities and that Children

are enabled to have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

- 4.31 Providing a co-ordinated strategic response to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded is consistent with the Marmot Principles that we give every child the best start in life and enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.

Staffing implications

- 4.32 There are no direct staffing implications. The availability of staff is closely monitored by both Directorates and across the Partnership in order to ensure that key safeguarding and service responsibilities can continue to be met.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.33 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out below.
- 4.34 There is no evidence that the decisions taken to deliver services differently in order to comply with Covid 19 requirements will directly impact negatively for people with protected characteristics.

However, there is considerable concern the lack of visibility of children and vulnerable adults who may be living with domestic violence, substance misuse issues, self-neglect and/or mental health vulnerabilities is considerably exacerbated by the current lockdown and the changed way in which services are necessarily having to be delivered.

Consultation

- 4.35 In these extraordinary times, consultation as services have moved from direct to virtual has been limited, especially given the timeframe within which decisions have had to be made in order to comply with Government directives regarding work places, social distancing and the requirements to reduce and limit travelling.

Children's Services were able to consult with statutory Safeguarding Partners prior to Moving to virtual child protection conferences.

- 4.36 There has been no consultation undertaken with members of the public as the timescales within which delivery has had to be altered in order to address the public health challenges have not been conducive to this happening.

5. Decide

- 5.1 The Covid 19 pandemic guidance from Public Health England and the U.K. government in relation to maintaining social distancing and reducing travel has been clear. As a result, Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care have had no option but to decide to change service delivery in the manner outlined within this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 As the current Covid 19 pandemic has developed and guidance from Public Health England and the U.K. government as evolved and been shared, Children's Services and Adult Social Care have reviewed service delivery. This has ensured that services can continue to be delivered in a way that maximises staff safety and meets the identified needs of children and vulnerable adults.

7. Review

- 7.1 The delivery methodology of services to vulnerable children and adults will be kept under review as guidance in respect of the current lockdown evolves to ensure that staff and those citizens who use these services are kept safe during the pandemic. As the lockdown requirements change, services will be reviewed to facilitate a move back to a different style of delivery commensurate with Public Health England guidance.

Background papers

There are no background papers

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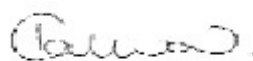


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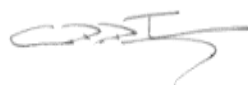


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Framework for the implementation of the Care Act Easements created as per the Coronavirus Act 2020

This document sets out how and when the Council will implement the [Care Act Easements](#) that came into force on 31 March 2020. The Government has put in place a range of measures to help the care system manage pressures to ensure the best possible care for people during this unprecedented period. This document encapsulates the national guidance and the [Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care](#) and the Council will ensure that all decisions it makes will be as per the above.

The Council will do everything they can to continue meeting their existing duties prior to the Coronavirus Act provisions coming into force. It should be noted that these easements can only be used by local authorities where it is essential to maintain the highest possible level of service. In the event that they are unable to do so, it is essential that they are able to streamline present assessment arrangements and prioritise care so that the most urgent and acute needs are met. The powers in the Act enable them to prioritise more effectively where necessary than would be possible under the Care Act 2014 prior to its amendment (referred to in this guidance as the Care Act). They are time-limited and are there to be used as narrowly as possible.

The overriding purpose of these easements is to ensure the best possible provision of care to vulnerable people in these exceptional circumstances. In order to help ensure that they are applied in the best possible way, with the greatest regard towards the needs and wishes of care users and their carers, the following protections and safeguards will apply.

Proposed Changes:

1. The Council will not have to carry out detailed care and support assessments in compliance with the pre- amendment Care Act 2014. Instead the Council will consider the implementation of a simpler care and support assessment and care and support plan. During this time, LA's will still be expected to consider people's needs and the easements will only apply when it is no longer possible for them to carry out the pre-amendment duties. This relates to people likely to be in need of care and carers.
2. Local Authorities will remain under a duty to meet needs where failure to do so would breach an individual's human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. These include, for example, the right to life under Article 2 of the ECHR, the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment under Article 3, the right to private and family life under Article 8 and the right to not be discriminated against under Article 14.
3. Duties imposed under the Equality Act 2010 also remain, including duties to make reasonable adjustments, the Public Sector Equality Duty and duties

towards people with protected characteristics. These should underpin any decisions made with regard to the care and support someone receives during this period

4. The law now permits the Council to provide services to meet care needs and complete a financial assessment at a later date and then charge retrospectively for the services that are provided but only if the person is informed that there may be a charge at when the service is carried out; or before it is carried out.
5. The easements relieve the Council of a duty to prepare pre-amendment Care Act care and support plans. Care planning should still be, Person led, Person centred and Proportionate to the complexities of the individual's needs.
6. The duties imposed on the Council to meet eligible care and support needs, or the support needs of a carer are now replaced with a power to meet needs. The Council will endeavour to maintain the status quo in respect of meeting needs but in the event they are unable to do so the Care Act Easements allow the Council to prioritise the most pressing needs and to subsequently reduce other care provisions.

Steps Local Authorities should take before exercising the Care Act easements

The Council should only take a decision to begin exercising the Care Act easements when the workforce is **significantly depleted**, or **demand on social care increased**, to an extent that it is no longer reasonably practicable for it to comply with its Care Act duties (as they stand prior to amendment by the Coronavirus Act) and where to continue to try to do so is likely to result in urgent or acute needs not being met, potentially risking life. Any change resulting from such a decision should be proportionate to the circumstances in a particular Local Authority.

Social care varies greatly across Local Authorities and the decision to operate the easements should be taken locally. It should be agreed by the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) in conjunction with or on the recommendation of the Principal Social Worker. The Director of Adult Social Services and the Principal Social Worker must ensure that their lead member has been involved and briefed as part of this decision-making process. The Health and Wellbeing Board should be kept informed. The decision should also be fully informed by discussion with the Local NHS CCG leadership.

There are 4 stages of easements:

- Stage 1 - Operating under the pre-amendment Care Act, therefore Business as usual.
- Stage 2 – Applying flexibility under the pre-amendment Care Act - Decision for individual service type to prioritise short term allocation of care and support using current flexibilities within the Care Act. For example changing, delaying or cancelling some service types.

- The relevant Director (reports to DASS) /Group Manager should consult the Principal Social Worker and should detail the reason the decision needs to be taken; impact of the decision on the people who ordinarily use the service; impact of the decision on families and carers of people who ordinarily use the service; and possible alternative sources of care and support and the likelihood of this being available. Appendix 1.
- Where the Principal Social Worker is satisfied, this position can then be presented to the Director of Adult Social Services (or alternate locally agreed senior) for a final decision about moving into stage 2
- Stage 3 – Streamlining services under the Care Act Easements – this allows the Council to create formal Care Act assessments, application of eligibility and review. There is an expectation that the Council will do everything they can do to continue to meet needs as per the Care Act 2014.
 - The relevant Director (reports to DASS) / Group Manager will need to consult the Principal Social Worker and be clear about the: reason the decision needs to be taken; impact of the decision on the people who ordinarily use the service; and impact of the decision on families and carers of people who ordinarily use the service.
 - If the Principal Social Worker is satisfied that the Care Act easements need to be enacted, a meeting of the Senior Management Board should be called for a final decision. The decision should also consider and be informed by a conversation with the local NHS Leadership.
 - The Director of Adult Social Services and the Principal Social Worker should ensure that their lead member has been involved and briefed as part of this decision-making process. Appendix 2.
 - DHSC should be notified
- Stage 4 – Prioritisation under the Care Act easements. The Council will make decisions about changing support for people after considering capacity across the whole of social care. This will include reallocation of resources from different service types that may not be under pressure to those that are.
 - In this situation, the relevant Director (reports to DASS) / Group Manager should consult the Principal Social Worker. They should detail the: reason the decision needs to be taken; impact of the decision on the people who ordinarily use the service; impact of the decision on families and carers of people who ordinarily use the service; possible alternative sources of care and support and the likelihood of this being available.
 - If a Local Authority decides it may need to move into stage 4, the Principal Social Worker should call an Emergency Decision Meeting of the Director

of Adult Social Services where a decision about whether and how to prioritise care across ASC will need to be made.

- Sufficient care and support will have to remain in place at all times in order to ensure that the Convention rights of all those in need of care and support, and of carers, are respected.
- The Director of Adult Social Services and the Principal Social Worker must ensure that their lead member has been involved and briefed as part of this decision-making process.
- DHSC should be notified.
- Any decisions taken to prioritise or reduce support should be reviewed every two weeks with the Principal Social Worker. Full service should be restored as soon as is reasonably possible.

Individual services are expected to collate data and information on a regular basis so as to allow them to understand and evidence any changes in demand or staffing capacity and the Assistant Directors are expected to be continually analysing this data across the whole of their service area. Any decisions made in relation to the Care Act easements should be informed by discussions with local partners. Recording remains a priority will ensure accountability and will provide evidence of the reasons behind their decisions.

Monitoring Risk

The Council has already mapped all existing known packages for complexity and need and should where possible have also mapped the care and support needs of those that self-fund.

It is important that mapping at this stage considers the complexity, risk and level of need within the care package and not just the current delivery. This should allow for a better understanding of the risk should there be an impact on care delivery. This includes considering unpaid carers. This will ensure Local Authority knowledge of an individual informs any prioritisation work needed, should the situation require it.

The Council has chosen to 'RAG-rate' (Red, Amber, Green) their packages of care and have them split between High, Moderate and Low needs. This overall well-being check assessment records the highest risk rating for any category considered that includes medication, personal care needs and nutrition. These assessments are recorded and clearly identify the most essential element of care for mapping purposes. As individual circumstances change so often, contact numbers are being provided so that urgent updates may be provided and there are weekly monitoring calls to those who require them. As part of business continuity plans, home care providers are also being asked to 'RAG-rate' care packages to support any future mapping that may be required.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding adults remains a statutory duty of Local Authorities to keep everyone safe from abuse or neglect. The Coronavirus Act 2020 does not affect the safeguarding protections in the Care Act, particularly at Section 42 of the Care Act. It is vital that Local Authorities continue to offer the same level of safeguarding oversight and application of Section 42. However, it is also important that safeguarding teams are proportionate in their responses and mindful of the pressure social care providers are likely to be under.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Safeguarding Response during Covid 19		
Directorate	Adult Social Care & Children's Services		
Service	All		
Responsible Officer	Carol Boughton		
Proposal planning start	March 2020	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	28 March 2020

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision												
	Show which category the proposal is and whether it is new or a revision.														
	Policy	Yes	Revision												
	Procedure	Yes	Revision												
	Guidance	Yes	Revision												
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Yes	Revision												
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	No													
	Other - give details														
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change? Since 28 March 2020, the United Kingdom has been in a state of lockdown as part of the response to the current Covid 19 pandemic. The changes put in place to ensure that the requirements of the lockdown are adhered to i.e. staff are kept safe, services continue and those who are most vulnerable are protected.														
3	Who is the proposal likely to affect? <table border="1"> <tr> <td>People in Walsall</td> <td>Yes / No</td> <td>Detail</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All</td> <td></td> <td rowspan="4">The proposal is designed to ensure that essential services to children and vulnerable adults continue throughout the pandemic while ensuring that staff remain safe.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Specific group/s</td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Council employees</td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (identify)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail	All		The proposal is designed to ensure that essential services to children and vulnerable adults continue throughout the pandemic while ensuring that staff remain safe.	Specific group/s	X	Council employees	X	Other (identify)	
People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail													
All		The proposal is designed to ensure that essential services to children and vulnerable adults continue throughout the pandemic while ensuring that staff remain safe.													
Specific group/s	X														
Council employees	X														
Other (identify)															
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics. The mid- year 2017 census data indicates the Walsall population is 281,293 of which 21.2% are under 16yrs of age and 17.8% are 65yrs and older. In addition there are residents who, at any given time may be vulnerable due to ill health, including mental ill health, living with substance misuse and those who are subjected to hidden harm crimes, including exploitation, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, modern slavery, cuckooing and being trafficked. Details in relation to exact numbers of														



	citizens vulnerable and experiencing this type of harm are unknown due to the hidden nature of these crimes.			
	Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).			
	<p>Due to the rapidity with which the nation moved into total lockdown, consultation with service users and the wider public has not been possible.</p> <p>Children's Services were able to consult with the statutory safeguarding partners prior to moving to virtual conferences.</p>			
6	Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation			
	<p>Due to the rapidity with which the nation moved into total lockdown, consultation with service users and the wider public has not been possible.</p> <p>Children's Services were able to consult with the statutory safeguarding partners prior to moving to virtual conferences.</p>			
7	How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.			
	Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
	Age	<p>There is no evidence that the decisions taken to deliver services differently in order to comply with Covid 19 requirements will directly impact negatively for people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Page 58 of 211</p>		
	Disability			
	Gender reassignment			
	Marriage and civil partnership			

	Pregnancy and maternity	However, there is considerable concern the lack of visibility of children and vulnerable adults who may be living with domestic violence, substance misuse issues, self- neglect and/or mental health vulnerabilities is considerably exacerbated by the current lockdown and the changed way in which services are necessarily having to be delivered.
	Race	
	Religion or belief	
	Sex	
	Sexual orientation	
	Other (give detail)	
	Further information	
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.	(Delete one) Yes
	Those living with domestic violence, substance misuse issues, self-neglect and/or mental health vulnerabilities may be experiencing more than form of harm and may well have more than one protected characteristic.	
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?	
A	No major change required	
B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality	
C	Continue despite possible adverse impact Given the national lockdown requirements to work from home, reduce travel and ensure social distancing in order to reduce the possible transmission of coronavirus there are no alternative arrangements at this moment which will ensure ongoing service delivery to vulnerable citizens.	
D	Stop and rethink your proposal	

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome

Where the assessment indicates a potential negative impact (B, C or D in question 7), identify how you will reduce or mitigate this impact. The full impact of a proposal will only be known once it is introduced, so always set out arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of the proposals e.g. 6 month or 12 months after implementation.

Identify who the monitoring will be reported to and what it is part of e.g. service monitoring or project monitoring. Then ensure the outcome of each action is added, this is just as important as identifying the potential impact.

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail
	Use this section for updates following the commencement of your proposal.

Contact us

Consultation and Equalities
Change and Governance

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Email equality@walsall.gov.uk

Inside Walsall: http://inside.walsall.gov.uk/equality_and_diversity-7.htm

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Supporting Shielded and Vulnerable residents in Walsall – Covid 19

Portfolio: Councillor Gary Perry – Community, leisure and culture
Councillor Adrian Andrew –Regeneration

Related portfolios: All

Service(s): Resilient Communities and Money Home Job

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

- 1.1 To ensure a strong support network for shielded and vulnerable people in the borough of Walsall during Covid-19, and to support residents in self-isolation to stay safely at home and to support vulnerable residents in hardship.
- 1.2 To do this through application of a resilient communities approach so that Walsall MBC support our vibrant voluntary and community sector, in recognised localities and through recognised community associations.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The Council is working with a wide range of partner organisations, in an attempt to help to minimise the spread of COVID-19. To achieve this, the Council has applied a resilient communities approach, providing civic leadership, to mobilise a public response through our vibrant voluntary and community sector, in recognised locality 'hub' areas. The approach supports shielded or vulnerable residents in self-isolation to stay safely at home and provides essential food to individuals and families in financial hardship, without building long-term dependency on the Council. It also aims to build long lasting connections between local residents, enhancing cohesion, neighbourliness, and reducing social isolation for vulnerable people.
- 2.2. To achieve this, it is recognised the Council needs to provide an additional £300,000 in grant funding, to be awarded to Community Associations, and other key voluntary sector organisations, in order to provide emergency support to shielded and vulnerable residents required to self-isolate due to the COVID-19 crisis. To also enable the Council to enter into contracts for the procurement of essential services, equipment and food, needed to support vulnerable individuals and families experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 emergency in the months ahead, the Council needs to identify funding to a maximum of £733,000 to support such efforts.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet approves:

1. The Director of Resilient Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure, to distribute additional grant monies totalling £116,925 to community associations, or other key voluntary sector organisations, needed to facilitate the mobilisation of a public response to support vulnerable people to remain safely at home during the COVID-19 crisis (for the 12 week period from 23 March 2020 to 15 June 2020).
2. Retrospectively £183,075 in additional grant monies, which has already been committed to support community associations and other key voluntary sector organisations, needed to facilitate the mobilisation of a public response to support vulnerable people to remain safely at home during the Covid-19 crisis since 23 March 2020.
3. The Director of Resilient Communities entering into contracts for the procurement of essential services, equipment, and food, needed to support vulnerable individuals and families experiencing hardship, due to the COVID-19 emergency, up to a maximum of £733,000 for the 12 week period from 23 March 2020 to 15 June 2020.
4. The Director of Resilient Communities, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders, to use any remaining balance of funds to extend the activities detailed in recommendation 1 and 2 beyond the initial 12 week period (should the need arise).
5. That a future report is brought to Cabinet on any extension of time and/or change to the operation of the model which might have amended and/or new resource implications for the Council.

4. Report detail - Know

- 4.1 The Council is working with a range of statutory and voluntary sector partner organisations to help minimise the spread of COVID-19. To achieve this, the Council has applied a resilient communities approach, providing civic leadership to help mobilise a public response via the voluntary, and community sector, in four locality areas.
- 4.2 The existing 'Making Connections Walsall initiative' has been expanded, to offer additional support for vulnerable residents and families who need to self-isolate during the COVID-19 emergency. Four Community Hubs are now operating across the following areas:
 1. **NORTH** - Bloxwich Community Partnership, (Bloxwich East, Bloxwich West, Birchills Leamore, Blakenall);
 2. **EAST** - Manor Farm Community Association (Walsall Pelsall, Brownhills, Aldridge North, Rushall-Shelfield and Walsall Wood, Aldridge South, Streetly, Pheasey Park Farm);
 3. **SOUTH** - Accord Age Matter's (St Matthews, Paddock, Palfrey, Pleck);

4. **WEST** - Old Hall Peoples Partnership (Bentley and Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Willenhall North, Short Heath, Willenhall South).
- 4.3 The Community Hub buildings are not open to the public. They receive referrals via email or via the Making Connections telephone line (which is answered by the West Midlands Fire Service). The main types of support offered by the 4 Community Hubs are:
- Befriending (telephone calls to people who need support or are lonely);
 - Shopping (which residents pay for)
 - Collection of prescriptions
 - Delivery of food parcels (only for individuals in significant financial hardship)
 - Other types of support for individuals in crisis e.g. collecting and delivering of free school meals for families self-isolating, arranging emergency boiler repairs, welfare benefits and financial advice are also offered (where appropriate).
- 4.4 The Community Hubs are being supported by a network of other community sector organisations, public and private organisations operating within locality areas. A team of dedicated volunteers are giving up their time to help and staff have also been deployed from the Council and from other partner organisations to support the civic response. One Walsall has been involved in the recruitment and selection of new volunteers and the Community Hubs have also used their existing volunteer databases.
- 4.5 The approach has been designed to support shielded or vulnerable residents in self-isolation to stay safely at home, without building long-term dependency on the Council. It is hoped that taking this approach will help to build long lasting connections between local residents, enhancing community cohesion, neighbourliness and helping to reduce social isolation for vulnerable people. The service is primarily aimed at individuals aged over 70 who have been advised by the government to self-isolate for 12 weeks. It also provides support to other vulnerable people believed to be at significant risk of contracting Covid-19 and individuals and families who are required to self-isolate due to a family member contracting the virus. Where individuals have family members or friends who can offer practical support with collecting food or prescriptions they are encouraged to access that help in the first instance.
- 4.6 On the 21 March 2020, the Government asked the NHS to write to 1.5m people nationally who were considered medical vulnerable. In that letter those vulnerable people, termed “shielded” were informed about the need to self-isolate themselves at home for a period of twelve weeks. Recipients of the letters were also offered the option of registering for a non-means tested free food delivery service to support them to remain in their home. The Council understands that 5,045 individuals have received an NHS shielded letter in Walsall. It is not yet known how many of these have or will formerly register with the national food assistance scheme.
- 4.7 The initial indication given from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) was that Local Authorities would be responsible for delivering food parcels to NHS shielded individuals who receive a letter. Accordingly, Council officers took urgent action to set up Sneyd Community

Association as a food distribution hub, with 24 hour access to the building and security on site. The Government then changed the design of the national food distribution scheme and instead arranged for home deliveries to go directly to shielded individuals homes (via two major commercial catering suppliers Brakes and Bidfoods).

- 4.8 Whilst the Council is not now responsible for delivering most of the food to the individuals on the NHS 'shielded' list, we have been asked to supply and deliver emergency food parcels directly to shielded individuals who do not receive their food parcel when expected from the government suppliers. Due to the level of failure in the national food distribution system, Council officers are therefore spending a large amount of time monitoring and responding to issues raised by shielded individuals to ensure that they are not placed at risk. It should be noted, that the experience in Walsall, mirrors issues being voiced across the country, so we are not unique.
- 4.9 Local residents on the NHS shielded list are raising concerns about the quality and quantity of food contained in the national food parcels from Brakes and Bidfoods. The Community Hubs are regularly now being asked to provide individuals on the NHS shielded list with supplementary food to sustain them between government deliveries. In some cases, this is because residents run out of food before their next delivery date, in other cases, it is because the standard parcels do not meet the special dietary requirements of the recipients.
- 4.10 On 18 March 2015, Cabinet approved a local Crisis Support Scheme that offers emergency assistance to individuals impacted by financial crisis and hardship. The scheme is usually administered by the Money Home Job team via the First Stop Shop or via the Housing and Welfare Support telephone line and delivered with significant support from the local voluntary and community sector. The closure of the First Stop shop has meant that many requests for emergency crisis assistance are now going through the Making Connections system and into the Community Hubs. Whilst there is already a non-recurrent grant budget aligned to the Crisis Support fund, which has been used to help support the Community Hubs to date, the unprecedented increase in demand for food during Covid-19 means that this money will soon run out. If the existing Crisis Support budget is not replenished, and no additional funds are identified to meet the increased demand due to Covid-19, the Council will have no way of supporting vulnerable people in hardship in the future. As a result many vulnerable families and homeless people could be placed at risk should they face a crisis that leads to a sudden loss of income. This in turn may place demand risk on other Council services without crisis funding being available.
- 4.11 Due to the unprecedented and increasing level of demand for emergency food parcels through the Community Hubs, a decision was taken on 14 April 2020, to re-open the central delivery and distribution hub at Sneyd Community Centre. It was felt that this was essential to support our local efforts to help people in financial hardship and to encourage the public to remain safely at home to prevent the spread of the virus. The decision also took account of the fact that local Food Banks had seen a 30% increase in demand for food parcels and were struggling with food supply themselves (due to a drop in the number of donations received). Removing the need to shop and build food parcels from the Community Hubs has enabled them to focus their efforts on other essential activities. Local and National data supports the local experience that financial hardship is significantly increasing

amongst local Walsall residents as the Covid-19 crisis goes on and the government lock down measures remain in place. A report detailing the increasing numbers of local residents accessing welfare benefits and other financial support is included as **Appendix A**.

- 4.12 The Community hubs were set up at pace and were developed in a “live environment”. One of the challenges to making this work has been the significant pressure on the financial resources of the Community Associations involved in operating the Hubs and their associated partners. The resilient community model relies on there being a vibrant voluntary and community sector and there has been significant concern about the sectors ability to continue to mobilise to meet the needs of vulnerable people as the lock down extends. Many of our local organisations have faced the unenviable decision of ceasing activities, to take advantage of the government’s furlough scheme, so that they can ensure the long-term viability of their organisations after the Covid-19 crisis. Although the government has recently responded by announcing new government grant money for the voluntary and community sector, there is still a lack of clarity about who will be able to successfully apply and when it will become available to be spent by the sector. In the interim period, the Council has needed to step in, to meet the additional costs of essential staff, to avoid the closure of the Community Hub infrastructure – which would have a damaging long term impact on the Borough. Although some staff have been, and others will be furloughed, the additional £300,000 grant funding will ensure that essential workers and buildings remain in place. This will enable volunteers to continue to turn up and be coordinated to support vulnerable people in the community to stay at home. Taking this approach will keep more people safe by helping to reduce the spread of Covid19 and lessen the impact on the NHS and colleagues working in social care settings. Council staff and staff resources from partners including West Midlands Fire Service and Walsall Housing Group (whg), have also been deployed to support the Community Hub and Sneyd food distribution activities.
- 4.14 The process for referrals to a hub has now been mapped. Referrals are received either by telephone to the West Midlands Fire Service or through e-mails to a COVID-19 e-mail address. Requests for support are then sent to one of the four community hubs for action.
- 4.13 The additional funding to the voluntary and community sector, will be used to:
- Initially kick start the hubs and other food providers to meet the initial capacity for food.
 - To support the infrastructure of key hub organisations.
 - To provide food provision based on dietary need.

Commitments to date has been £183,075.00.

Initial Kick start - The initial design phase of the community response to Covid-19 saw food provision being sourced through the Community Hubs. Three of the four hubs had capacity to prepare and distribute hardship food parcels but not the funding available. In the case of the fourth hub, Accord Age Matters, a partner organisation, Nash Dom, was identified who could prepare and distribute hardship food parcels.

Key Hub Organisations – The Council has been in discussions with all of the Community Hubs to understand and agree the additional resourcing required to support them during the lockdown period. Issues such as the need to furlough staff, ongoing viability of organisations in relation to the period of lockdown and the capability of staff and volunteers were all taken into account when agreeing a funding package to ensure the delivery of the expanded hub service.

Specialist food providers – Funding has been agreed with some community groups providing different dietary provision.

During the Covid-19 lockdown many local organisations have sprung up outside of the Making Connections Walsall infrastructure. These organisations are providing a valuable service but many are using diminishing donations or reserves to fund the provision of food to vulnerable people in their communities. It is expected that additional grants will be required to support these organisations which complement the main response to the Covid-19 crisis.

- 4.14 A West Midlands group meets, initially on a daily basis, to discuss Council's responses to supporting vulnerable people. This allows for the sharing of best practice, ideas and issues relating to the emergency food response to COVID-19. For the 2nd tier of vulnerable people, those not on the Government's shielded list but vulnerable or in self-isolation, Council's in the West Midlands have applied local solutions to the same issue and the current position is as follows:

- Birmingham City Council issue approximately 10,000 food parcels a week;
- Dudley have a model which delivers approximately 800 food parcels per week through a combination of VCS, community, foodbank and council provision. Dudley also provide a "shopping service" similar to that provided through Making Connections Walsall;
- Wolverhampton deliver approximately 2500 food parcels per week from a central hub;
- Sandwell are delivering approximately 800 food parcels per week:

West Midlands Councils, through the regional Vulnerable People forum are discussing a shared approach to food supply.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.15 This proposal supports the Council's urgent and emergency response to the Covid 19 pandemic and the role the Council plays in providing Civic Leadership and mobilising the public to support our community response to Covid-19.
- 4.16 This proposal links to the Council's corporate priority 'Communities are prospering and resilient'. It supports the most vulnerable to be protected from avoidable harm, by enabling them to stay safely at home, and takes pressure off the NHS and social care colleagues. It will also enhance the quality of life for many people who are suffering ill-health and are socially isolated.
- 4.17 The proposal also links to emergency planning and resilience. By taking action to mobilise the voluntary and community sector to be part of the Covid-19 response, we are seeking the best set of outcomes for local residents, achieving cost effectiveness and delivering sustainable outcomes.

Risk management

- 4.18 There are no alternative options currently for local people requiring support to remain safely self-isolating where they do not have family or friends to help them. If the supply chain in food is eased by regional / national initiatives then our local food banks may be able to scale-up their support to local residents in hardship, which may reduce the pressure on our centralised food distribution hub at Sneyd. The amount requested is based on upper, and lower, thresholds modelled from past and future estimated costs. It is also based on existing cohorts of Walsall residents who have received NHS shielded letters.
- 4.19 The monitoring of the expenditure will continue to be overseen by both the Resilient Communities, and MHJ team, procurement and finance colleagues. The agenda is also discussed regularly as part of the COVID-19 chain of command groups (SILVER and GOLD), which has representatives of all internal Stakeholders responsible for delivering safe outcomes as a result of COVID-19.
- 4.20 Failure to provide additional grant funding to the Community and Voluntary Sector to support the mobilisation of the public response through the use of volunteers is likely to mean that they have to furlough their staff which would significantly impeded their ability to provide ongoing support to the Council as part of the Resilient Communities model during Covid-19,

Financial implications

- 4.21 The report recommends that additional **£300,000** grant funding is made available to award to Community Associations and other key voluntary sector organisations needed to provide emergency support to shielded and vulnerable residents required to self-isolate due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- 4.22 The report also seeks approval for the Council to enter into contracts for the procurement of essential services, equipment and food, needed to support vulnerable individuals and families experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 emergency, up to a maximum of **£733,000**. The figure included in this report is based on the Sneyd distribution Centre needing to provide 18,000 free food parcels over a 12 week period (approximately 1500 per week).
- 4.23 Demand for food parcels in the week ending 24 April 2020 in fact was only 900, but demand is gradually going up as the long-term financial impact of the crisis continues and more referrals are received into the Making Connections service. Many residents appear to need on-going weekly parcels for a number of weeks until their welfare benefits begin to be paid (which means we predict there will be a cumulative weekly increase in demand for food parcels). If demand for food parcels remains at current levels the costs would reduce to approximately £481,000.
- 4.24 The government has agreed in principle that costs associated with the Covic-19 crisis will be covered centrally, but there is currently no certainty that the Council will be able to recover the full cost of this type of initiative.

- 4.25 On 08 April 2020 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £750 million to assist charities in their response to the Covid-19 outbreak. It stated that “£360 million will be directly allocated by government departments to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people during the crisis. As well as this, £370 million for small and medium-sized charities, including through a grant to the National Lottery Community Fund for those in England, will support those organisations at the heart of local communities which are making a big difference during the outbreak, including those delivering food, essential medicines and providing financial advice.” It is therefore possible that local charities may be able to make a claim from the £370m portion of the funding, for some of the food / shopping / prescription / befriending services mentioned in this report. However, as stated earlier in the report, the Council had to put these services in place in March 2020, at the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak and prior to the 08 April announcement, and the subsequent timelag for an application process to be put in place. The report therefore seeks approval to provide additional grant funding in the short term, prior to any confirmation of external grant funding being successfully allocated to local community and voluntary sector charities.
- 4.26 Council officers will continue to encourage local charitable organisations to apply for the government announced funding package, and if appropriate, will seek reimbursement of the additional grant funding provided by the Council (up to a maximum of the extra grant aid awarded). The Council and One Walsall are already providing support to local organisations to help them to maximise their chances of gaining additional external funding to support local people.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.27 The Value of the contracts referred to in this report will in the main fall below the current EU Threshold for Supplies (£189,330). If crisis demand for food continues at the unprecedented rates currently being experienced, or increases further, it is likely that costs would exceed these thresholds. Expenditure on food supply as part of the COVID-19 response, in these exceptional times are covered by specific regulations and procurement will work with the service area to ensure that expenditure is compliant with those regulations.

Legal Implications

- 4.28 The Council already has a Crisis Support Scheme, which was approved by Cabinet on 19 March 2015. Provision of crisis support through the Community Hubs is currently being given in accordance with that scheme. The MHJ team will continue to work with the procurement section to ensure that it secures best value in relation to ongoing purchases of food and that this is done in accordance with the council's financial and contractual rules.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.29 Taking a proactive approach to support vulnerable and shielded individuals to remain safe at home during the Covid-19 pandemic will reduce the risk of harm experienced by community members and take the pressure off the NHS and social care colleagues.

- 4.30 It is not in the public interest, nor that of the Community and Voluntary Sector Providers, not to support the ongoing public or civic response to Covid-19 that has been mobilised through the Community Hubs.

Staffing implications

- 4.31 There are no staffing implications arising out of this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.32 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and can be found as Appendix B to this report.

Consultation

- 4.33 Due to the scale and speed of the Covid-19 emergency, the Council and partners have had to set up the Community Hub infrastructure in a live environment. As a result, it has been very difficult to do formal consultation. That said, there has been many discussions with customers and key partners during the co-design process and the result is a service that is currently receiving and meeting high levels of demand effectively.

5. Decide

- 5.1. Cabinet is requested to consider the content of this report and to agree the recommendations as outlined in section 3.

6 Respond

- 6.1. It is recognised this agreement takes us to mid-June and not beyond. It may be that a future Cabinet report is needed to consider any extension or reduction of this model. In the meantime, plans are in place to continuously review the operation of this model to ensure it reflects need, and can respond to government changes that might arise as a result of national recovery plans
- 6.2. Discussions will continue with the MHCLG, and with the charities, with the aim of trying to secure full clarity and agreement about recovery of costs associated with supporting people impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

7. Review

- 7.1. The arrangements with regards to the Community Hubs and Food Distribution Centre will be managed and reviewed in line with ordinary Council procedures. The monitoring of the expenditure will continue to be overseen by Resilient Communities, MHJ, procurement and finance colleagues.
- 7.2. The existing grant arrangements with the voluntary and community groups who receive the additional grant money will be amended (to reflect the change in their duties). The specifications and performance frameworks will also be amended to ensure that Community Hubs respond effectively to the needs of local residents and that data is shared with the Council in a timely way, so that officers can respond to emerging needs.

- 7.3. The agenda is also discussed regularly as part of the COVID-19 chain of command groups (SILVER and GOLD), which has representatives of all internal Stakeholders responsible for delivering safe outcomes as a result of COVID-19. An operational group also meets twice a week, which acts as a Civil Leadership operational steering group (bringing together external key partners including representatives from the community and voluntary sector, whg, the Police, One Walsall and colleagues from various Council departments).
- 7.4. The Council is also sharing our experiences and thoughts through the Local Government Association to help shape future Government approaches.

Background papers

Appendix A – Covid-19 Impact, Financial Hardship Indicators for Walsall

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

Author

Elise Hopkins

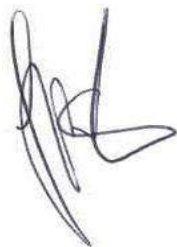
System Leader, Money Home Job

☎ 07967639334

✉ elise.hopkins@walsall.gov.uk

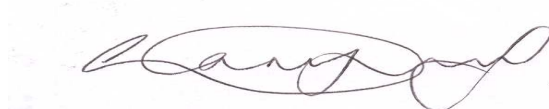
Paul Gordon

Director of Resilient Communities



Simon Neilson
Executive Director

6 May 2020



Councillor G Perry
Resilient Communities

11 May 2020



Councillor A Andrew
Deputy Leader &
Regeneration

11 May 2020

Covid-19

Impact on benefits, finances, housing and jobs



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR **PAST** OUR **PRESENT** AND FOR OUR **FUTURE**

Summary: 1

The new schemes introduced by Government do provide some support.

There will be many customers financially disadvantaged that will require additional support.

Since the 16 March 2020 both DWP and Councils have seen dramatic increases in demand.

- **Universal Credit (UC):** Nationally 950,000 new universal credit claims submitted in the past fortnight (800% to 900% higher than normal rate), Walsall is getting around 3,000 claims per week
- **Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Reduction (CTR) applications:** 60% increase in March 20 (1,005) compared to Jan / Feb in Walsall.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs):** Walsall Applications increased by 10% (March 2019 to March 2020) Spend March 2020 is 12% higher than March 2019. We expect further increases in applications and spend as we have identified 9,779 households who potentially have been affected and will need additional support in addition to the new claims from people who were not claiming prior to COVID 19.

Summary: 2

Increase in homeless presentations / applications: combination of economic and social issues are expected to dramatically increase demand for help especially post lockdown

Housing Evictions – 3 month eviction ban commenced mid March which mean that there is likely to be significant demand for help from end June onwards:

- More council tax reduction applications and spend and or
- Housing support (emergency accommodation and homelessness applications)

Rogue landlords will continue to be rogue! Covid-19 won't improve their behaviour and there are likely to be many vulnerable tenants impacted by their actions over the coming weeks.

Domestic Abuse:

- More women and girls will be abused and are at risk in this period. Every pandemic and major disaster has found this.
- Nationally deaths have doubled.
- Expected to be a surge in demand for help when lockdown lifts.

Summary: 3

Impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable children

- **in temporary accommodation in UK – Lancet article.** We are seeking to provide additional support to families with young children especially the most at risk (the under 5-year olds). National data suggests that 34% of children live in poverty in the UK (Social Metrics Commission, 2019). It is estimated that 41% of children in Walsall live in poverty once housing costs are taken into account, equating to around 30,551 children (End Child Poverty, 2019)

Impact of Covid-19 is NOT equal: Impact on residents and communities from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds is higher. Impact in Walsall expected to be higher as a result than many councils.

One of the main risks for vulnerable customers is access to food:

Inequality of access to food and healthy food for vulnerable families: for example;

- Ø how do you get online shopping when you have no ICT, no WIFI and or no credit or debit card!
- Ø The pressures we all face getting our shopping are exacerbated for vulnerable families

Impact on foodbanks: many of our vulnerable customers rely on foodbanks, and there is a major concern that access to food through this route will be severely impacted by less contributions received, and the ability to retain enough volunteers

Government measures to support customers in the coronavirus crisis - 1

Customers on benefits

- £20 per week increase to Working tax credit basic amount
- £20 increase to Universal Credit standard allowance
- Local Housing Allowances increased to the lowest 30th percentile of market rents
- Housing Benefit additional earnings disregard increased by £20 per week
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) now payable from day 1 instead of day 7
- Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) have stopped all overpayment recovery action
- There has been a number of changes to definitions within various benefits/tax credits to ensure customers effected by coronavirus can either claim or continue to receive benefits if they are now unable to work

Universal credit customers not in unemployment or those continuing with their employment as normal during Coronavirus outbreak will not be financially disadvantaged. The impact for these customers will be the following:

- Have they been maintaining payment of bills during the crisis?
- How is their mental health following periods of lockdown?

These are predicted to be future demands for help when landlords etc will re commence proceedings for arrears, every year Walsall spends it's full allocation of DHP funding from the DWP without a national crisis such as Coronavirus.

Measures - 2

Employed

- Coronavirus Job retention scheme
- Statutory sick pay payable from day 1 not day 4

Self-employed

- Self-employed income support scheme
- Minimum Income Floor suspended in Universal Credit

Other initiatives

- £500 million Council Tax hardship fund
- Free school meal voucher scheme
- Social/Private landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict tenants for at least a 3 month period – and 3 month mortgage payment holiday
- £750 million support package to charities
- £3.2m emergency fund for rough sleeping – Walsall allocated £4.5k
- £1.6bn for local authorities – mainly for social care but also for homelessness and rough sleeping – Walsall allocated £9.6m
- £3m for food redistribution organisations

Customers still dramatically impacted

- Low paid workers are most vulnerable
- Workers on zero hour contracts, temporary workers and self-employed are most likely to be affected economically by coronavirus
- Customers with no recourse to public funds – there are calls to allow those who are now unable to work because of covid19 to have immediate access to welfare support
- Charities call for the government to temporarily remove legal barriers to homelessness provision and make clear that everyone who is homeless is eligible for assistance - regardless of priority need, intentionality, local connection, or immigration status
- Resolution Foundation say that despite measures put in place a huge number of people are still going to lose their jobs and need immediate income support to avoid hardship

Impact - 1

8 April **Government stated**

- Coronavirus has had profound effects on the UK economy and on household finances
- Up to one fifth of employees may be absent from work during the outbreak
- Existing data suggests inactivity and unemployment will rise quickly – there are already signs of a spike in unemployment
- This will translate into a rapid upsurge in benefit claims and an increased reliance on the social security system

1 April **Departments of Works and Pensions (DWP) disclosed there had been:**

- 1.8 million declarations for new claims received in last 6 weeks up to 12.4.20 for universal credit claims – this is 5 times higher than the average
- Many customers have spent hours trying to phone welfare staff, many gave up after long phone queues and then being rejected by the system. One user reported spending more than 15 hours in total over three days waiting to speak to a benefits official. A report on 9 April confirms
- 30 March 2.2M telephone calls made to DWP
- 31 March 1.8M telephone calls made to DWP
- A user posted a screenshot showing there were 105,563 people ahead of them in an online queue to verify their identity

Impact - 2

- Resolution Foundation predicts that the eventual rise in unemployment will be at least as large as, and much swifter than, that seen during the financial crisis.
- Another report highlights that a quarter of those eligible for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme will need financial help before the grant arrives in/or after June 2020
- British Chambers of Commerce survey - More than a third of firms have said they plan to furlough most or all of their staff over the next week.
- Findings suggest that at least a third of the private sector workforce will be furloughed and paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, costing as much as £40bn over the next three months

Impact - 3

- The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said on 15 April it is worried companies will be forced to start redundancy procedures this Saturday to comply with the minimum 45-day consultation period.
- Food banks are coming under severe strain
- Charities are also under severe strain
- 27% of businesses reported reduced staffing levels
- New weekly job vacancies have fallen by about a third

Impact on Food Banks

- Food Banks operate independently to the four Hubs in Walsall and referrals are received from a number of locations such as the Beacon Centre, Housing First, Crisis Support, and Social Workers
- The Black Country Food Bank has seen a 30% increase in Food Bank usage based on the two weeks prior to lockdown
- They have had to limit vouchers to one per week (this provides 3 days worth of food) and limit to a maximum family size of 4.
- There has been an increase in usage by single people that could be attributed to families receiving Free School Meals vouchers or support via the Hubs instead



- The chart on the left predicts the increase in foodbank vouchers requested based on those issued in February and March 2020
- It is anticipated there may be a reduction the following week as those who claimed Universal Credit in March start to receive their first payment
- 335 people have been helped via Ablewell food bank since 1st April 2020
- Restrictions at supermarkets have hampered attempts to keep Ablewell stocked and they are still low on fruit juice and various tinned goods
- Ablewell have advised if people can get to a Food Bank they should to relieve pressure on the Hubs to help those who are vulnerable and housebound

Economic Impact Nationally

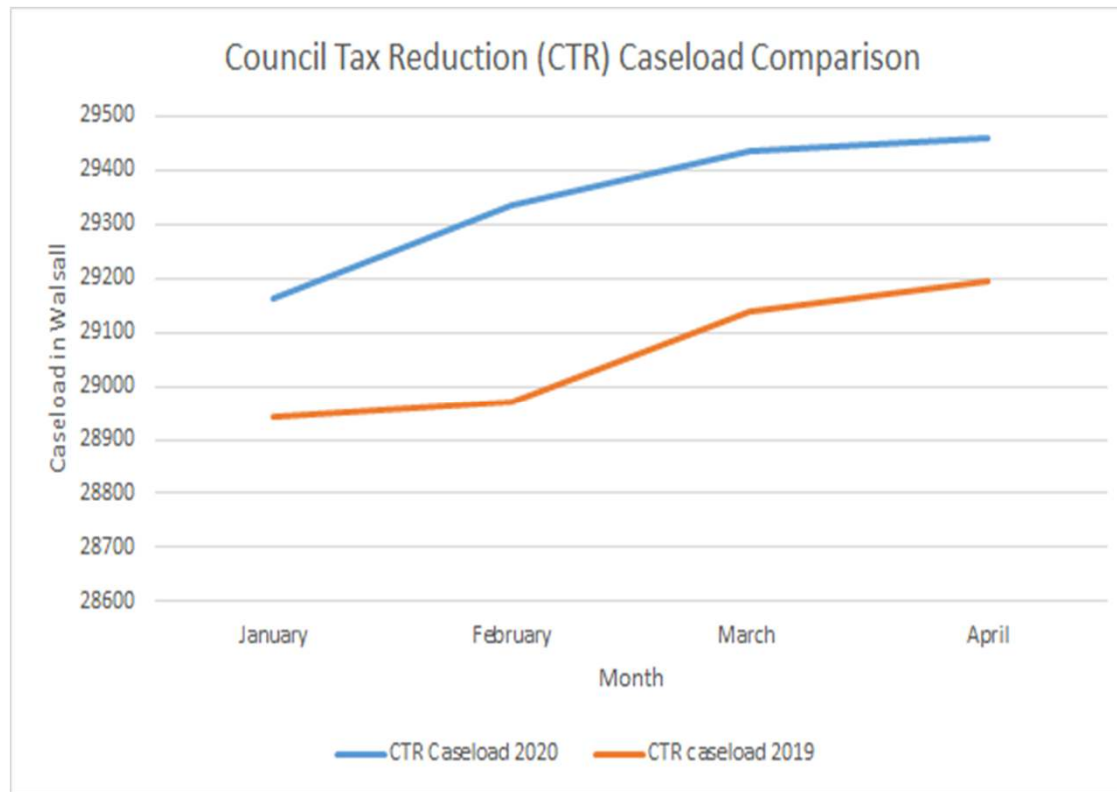
There are currently limited figures available.
Those that are, are from a few weeks ago.

A House of Commons briefing (1 April 20) quoted data collected on 25 March 20:

- 57% of workers were engaged in less paid work over the past week than usual
- 8% of workers had already lost their job due to coronavirus
- Expected probability of job loss within next 4 months is 33%
- Workers expect to earn 35% less in the next 4 months on average
- There is a 49% chance of them having problems paying their bills
- The young and low-income earners have been hit the hardest

It is predicted things will continue to get worse while restrictions continue to remain in place.

Impact on Council Tax Reduction caseload



- The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) costs have increased by £360,000 since 1 March 2020 due to the requests for additional support and change in circumstances associated with the Coronavirus outbreak
- CTR caseload has risen by 1% since January 2020
- The impact on CTR caseload is not reflective currently, there is a high number of applications outstanding with Universal Credit and this will increase over the coming weeks.
- This will be monitored weekly to measure the impact of the high increase in new applications
- The total cost of the CTR scheme for 2020/21 is £13.3 million

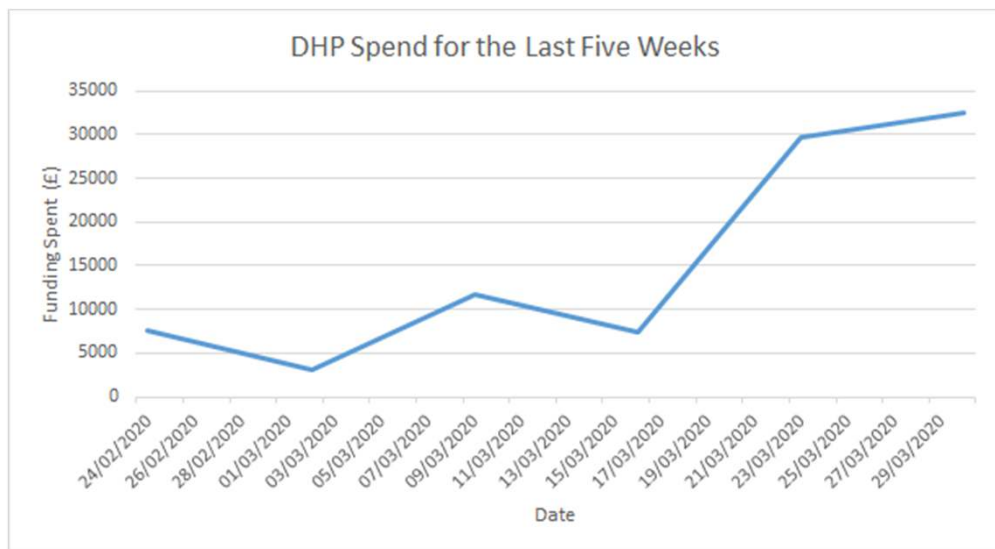
Slide 13

DL2

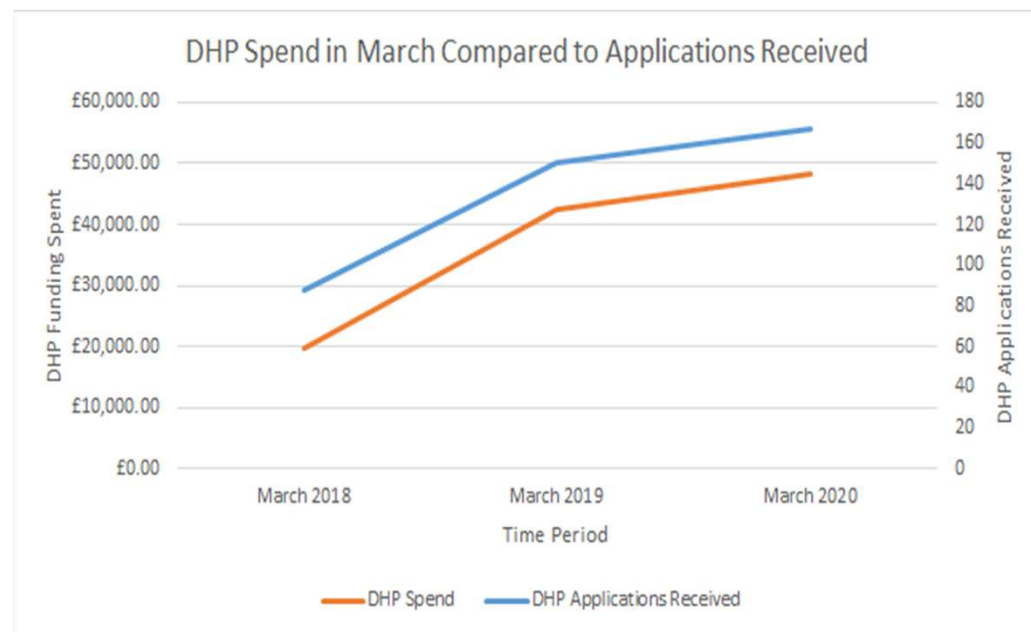
1% and 0.88% are almost the same - what are the caseload numbers? i e how many addiotnal cases

David Lockwood, 15/04/2020

Impact on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)



- DHP spending has increased significantly since 19 March
- Funding for the financial year 2020/21 has increased to £988,560 which is a 18% increase on previous year's funding



Data shows for March year on year increase in:

- the amount of DHP funding spent and
- number of applications received

We will continue to monitor weekly spend and number of applications received to help understand the ongoing impact of the pandemic.



Slide 14

BC1 Not sure if It would be pertinent to know how many are a result of UC
Bernard Cysewski, 16/04/2020

Effects on Housing Evictions in Walsall: 1

The new rules implemented by central government regarding evictions do two things:

1. Extend the notice period for evictions
2. Suspend eviction court action until at least 25 June 2020

All court proceedings for eviction are on hold regardless of when the landlord applied to court. This means most tenants can't be evicted before the end of June at the earliest.

There are implications that Walsall Council may face if customers do not:

- clear the arrears themselves,
- or notify us they need help.

We expect closer to 25 June:

- an increase in DHP requests and or
- an increase customer demand for Housing support from those facing eviction.

Effects on Housing Evictions in Walsall: 2

Quote from a registered social landlord (RPs) in Walsall

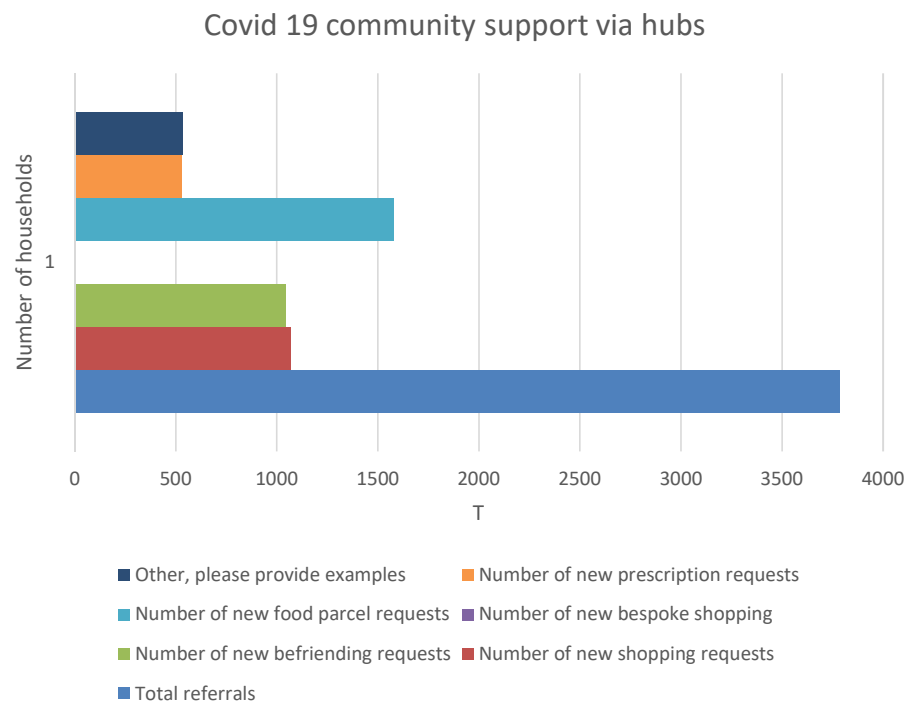
‘Early analysis shows that we have seen a sharp rise in cases where Tenants are self-employed or never claimed out of work benefits and now are unable to pay rent’

As of 16th April, a number of RPs have confirmed that they have seen arrears rising, although it is too early to fully analyse the trend and impact.

We will also need to model the potential impact on PRS legal (and illegal) evictions and homeowner repossessions as both will be expected to increase.

Rogue landlords are unlikely to get better – they will continue to ignore tenants needs, break the law and undertake unlawful evictions. Many will use the lockdown as an excuse to do even less to help their tenants.

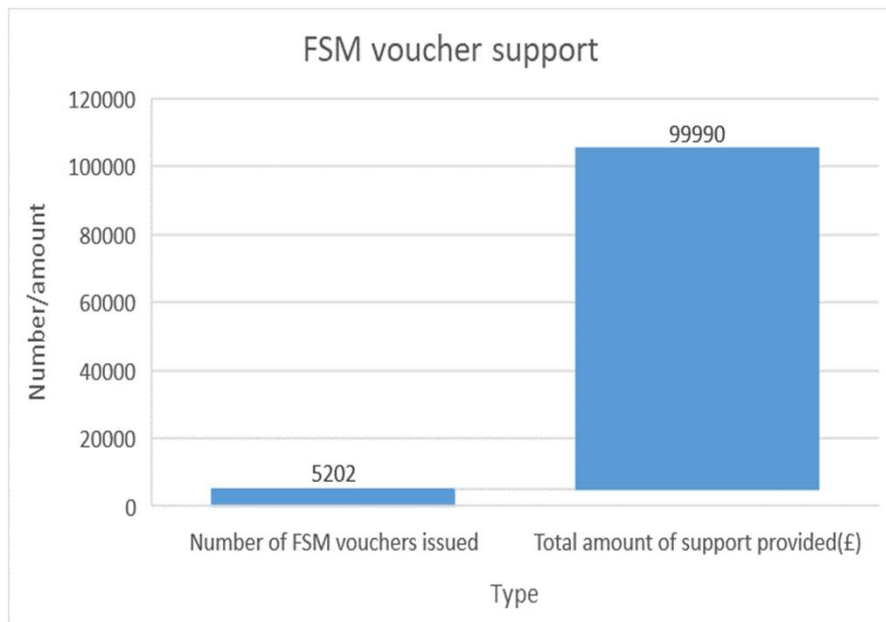
Community impact and support



Since the commencement of lockdown on 23.3.20 the 4 community hubs have been providing support for households affected by COVID 19 outbreak

- 3786 households have requested help and support (data 21.4.20)
- 1577 households have requested food parcels, this is in addition to NHS food parcels
- 1068 households have requested help with shopping
- 1043 requests for befriending due to isolation
- 526 requests for help with prescriptions
- 533 other requests which include financial advice
- The number of requests per week are consistently around 800 – 900

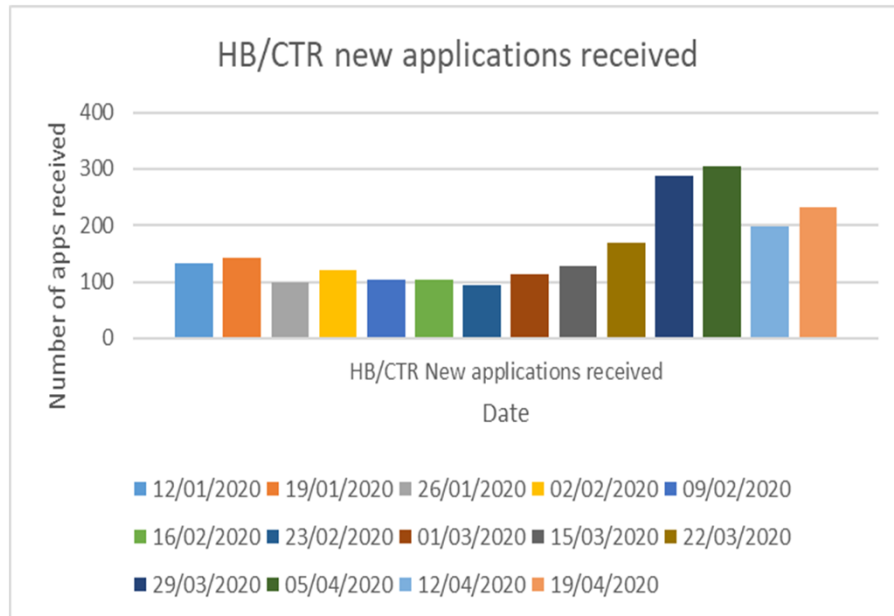
Free School meals impact



Impact since schools closed on 23.03.2020:

- 440 new FSM on-application forms/enquiries from parents received and processed
- 660 new potential eligible cases are being assessed
- Issues with school's authority does not cater for, increased contact – proactively supporting schools
- Problems with national voucher scheme leading to schools asking for help directly from the authority
- In addition to this we have issued 5202 vouchers through our own scheme providing £99,990 of support to households in Walsall

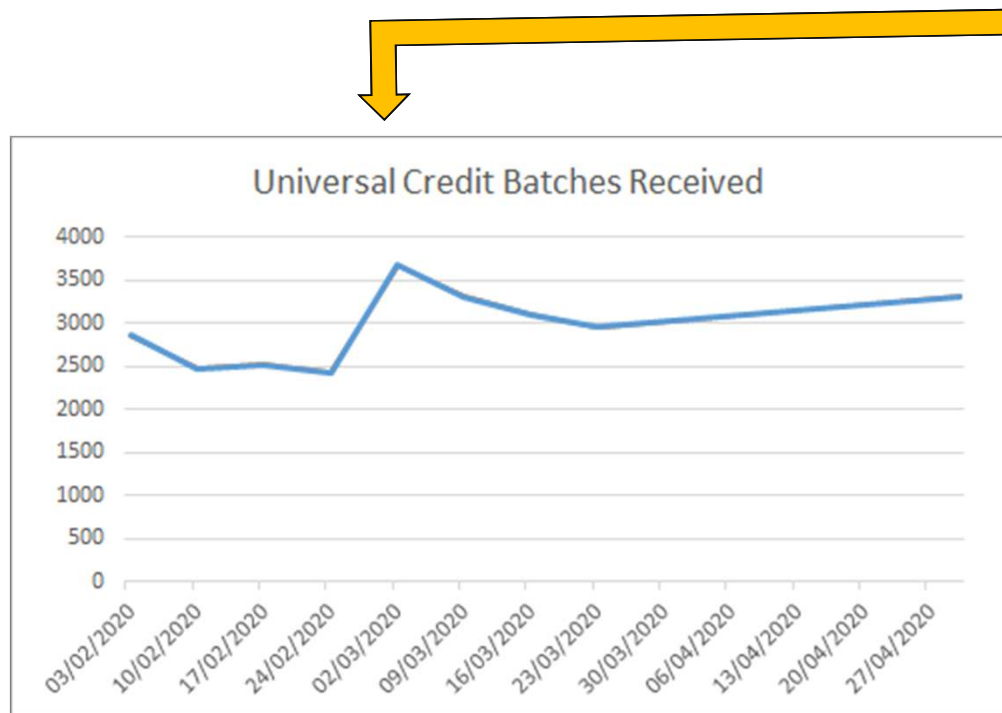
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction New Applications Received



Key Facts:

- For Jan and Feb 2020 the average number of new claims received was 397
- This increased to **1,005 in March 2020 a 60% increase**
- The number of claims have continued to increase week on week since 1/3/2020 and are continuing to be higher than normal intake and is expected to continue
- Within these new applications are customers who have never claimed benefits before and their lifestyle and monthly expenditure will be higher – resulting in a dramatic reduction in income, this will be a cohort that will require additional temporary support.

Universal Credit (UC) notifications received



UC notifications received **increased the week following the announcement of lockdown**, this shows customers were starting to report changes or make new applications following being financially affected.

These notifications will have an impact on the cost of the CTR scheme, dependent on their circumstances a need for additional support to meet their monthly expenditure may also be required.

We are now receiving on average **3,000+ notifications per week** and are expecting this figure to continually rise as DWP have more staff processing the increase in Universal Credit claims.



DL1 do we have data for same period last year?
David Lockwood, 15/04/2020

Understanding our current CTR caseload

Our proactive action

We have analysed earnings and self-employment claims to predict the percentage of our caseload that may be affected financially by the Coronavirus outbreak:

We have an overall CTR caseload of 29,474

As pensioners should not be financially affected, we have deducted this element from our potential caseload –

This leaves us with a **working age CTR caseload of 18,486**

Understanding our current CTR caseload – Analysis of Income Types

We have analysed income types and this indicates the following will be financially impacted:

- **3,277 Universal Credit households with earnings**
Potential change to income each month if not on maximum amount of Universal Credit
- **5784 Claims with earnings**
Potential furloughed cases (only receiving 80% of pay) or new Universal Credit claims
- **718 Self-employed claims**
A high proportion of our self-employed caseload will not qualify for SEISS due to not completing tax returns. This will mean making a claim for Universal Credit.
Note: Self-employed customers who do qualify for SEISS will have to wait until June 2020 to receive income from this scheme, Many will need help during this time.

9,779 households potentially financially affected by lockdown restrictions

This results in 53% of our Working age CTR caseload.

In addition to this there is also an increase in new applications being currently received. .

Domestic Abuse – Expected increases being felt already

“Services must prepare for the “inevitable surge” of domestic abuse victims seeking support when the lockdown lifts.”

Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

“The mass experience of isolation measures, the diversion and repurposing of public services to respond to Covid-19, and the existing vulnerability of many women and girls at a time of less protection is a potential crisis. More women and girls will be abused and are at risk in this period. Every pandemic and major disaster has found this.”

Excerpt from open letter to Prime Minister from the Women's Aid Federation of England:

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-an-open-letter-to-the-prime-minister/>

Domestic Abuse – Deaths Double Nationally

“Coronavirus may exacerbate triggers, though I might prefer to call them excuses. Lockdown may restrict some women’s access to support or escape and it may even curtail measures some men take to keep their own violence under control” Karen Ingala Smith, the founder of Counting Dead Women,

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/15/domestic-abuse-killings-more-than-double-amid-covid-19-lockdown>



Homelessness – Increases expected to be slightly masked

We are finding that numbers are not 'spiking yet' for a range of reasons:

- Ability for landlords (private and social) to issue Section 21 evictions has been suspended until June 2020 – this has halted demand for re-housing from this source
- The block on Section 21 is also unfortunately likely to lead to an increase in rent arrears as households either choose or struggle to make regular rent payments
- Some people are tending to 'stay put' through these very 'new times'
- Government mortgage holiday whilst helping some initially to avoid loss of home it is expected that when this ends there will be an increase due to those who have struggled to maintain payments / agree payment terms
- Increase in domestic violence cases during lockdown is likely to lead to a surge in applications when lockdown is lifted

Impact of Covid-19 on Vulnerable children in temporary accommodation

Lancet article 31 March 2020. Significant extra risks to children 5 years of age and younger. "Many children already do not reach development potential or struggle to grow and develop because of multilevel barriers, including those resulting from poverty or homelessness. However, COVID-19 has added a whole new layer of risk. "

Article identified range of areas of concern. Many are not as relevant for Walsall as we continue to provide temporary accommodation for families principally in self-contained properties some concerns remain including:

- Critical need to ensure sufficient additional resources for soap and disinfectants for families;
- No face-to-face contact with general practitioners and health outreach services is available, including health visitors, limits routine checks such as early identification of need and risk, health and development reviews with screening assessments, immunisations, promotion of social and emotional development, support for parenting, promotion of health and behavioural change, prevention of obesity, and promotion of breastfeeding
- For these families, access to basic essentials (eg, food, nappies) is scarce, with no resources to shop online and many charities and dropins now closed.
- Risks to parental mental health are increased, especially among single mothers, given that housing instability is associated with an increased risk of depression in mothers.

Inequality of access to food and healthy food for vulnerable families

Online shopping: Most vulnerable families have no / limited access to online food and essentials shopping facilities which require:

- ICT
- Internet / WIFI
- Credit or debit cards or similar via online banking
- ICT skills to navigate systems

As many vulnerable households will not have previously made use of on-line shopping even if they have all the above their ability to quickly access / benefit from it will be limited due to the significant growth in demand from other households and the competing demands upon their time.

Access to shops: Vulnerable households especially single parents will have been more severely impacted by the changes in retailing. The pressures that all of us have faced to access food shopping will have been exacerbated for those who must also consider / have to take their children with them to que to access shops for food.

Food banks: Demand is significant

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents and communities

There's a disproportionate percentage of BAME people getting ill.

“We have heard the virus does not discriminate between individuals but there's no doubt there appears to be a manifest disproportionate severity of infection in BAME people and doctors. This has to be addressed – the government must act now.”

Statement by Chair of British Medical Association

Not only are BAME communities disproportionately impacted by health inequalities, the economic impact is likely to hit them harder too, with [rates of poverty in BAME communities being twice that of their white counterparts](#).

BAME residents in Walsall comprise 23% (2011 census) compared to 14% of the population of England and Wales.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Providing Civil Leadership and Mobilising the Public – Covid 19		
Directorate	Resources and Transformation		
Service	Money Home Job		
Responsible Officer	Elise Hopkins		
Proposal planning start	March 2020	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	March 2020

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Show which category the proposal is and whether it is new or a revision.		
	Policy	Yes	New
	Procedure		
	Guidance		
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Yes	New
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	Yes	New
	Other - give details		
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?		
	<p>COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus and has affected the UK considerably since early 2020. National government policy has steered towards a range of measures including social distancing and recommending for those showing symptoms to isolate up to 14 days and those who are vulnerable/elderly to self-isolate in their homes for up to 12 weeks. As a result of these measures a number of vulnerable and elderly residents in the borough will need help with accessing basic food and medical supplies.</p> <p>The Council is working with a wide range of partner organisations, in an attempt to help minimise the spread of COVID-19. To achieve this, the Council has applied a resilient communities approach, providing civic leadership, to mobilise a public response through our vibrant voluntary and community sector, in recognised locality 'hub' areas. The approach supports shielded or vulnerable residents in self-isolation to stay safely at home and provides essential food to individuals and families in financial hardship, without building long-term dependency on the Council. It also aims to build long lasting connections between local residents, enhancing cohesion and reducing social isolation for vulnerable people.</p>		



3	Who is the proposal likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
	All	Yes	Covid-19 can affect all residents, key front line workers and more so who come into contact with infected people such as those in the care sector. Research suggests those that are elderly or with underlying health issues are often more susceptible to the virus and can have more long-term issues and medical complications. Source: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/ , accessed 28/4/20)
	Specific group/s		
	Council employees		
Other (identify)			
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.		
<p>Context: Walsall is a metropolitan borough consisting of a mix of urban, suburban and semi-rural communities. The borough covers 40 square miles, is located to the north-west of Birmingham, and is one of the four local authorities that make up the Black Country sub-region (with Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton). Walsall town centre lies at the heart of the borough surrounded by Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall district centres.</p> <p>Population: Walsall has an overall estimated population of 281,300 (ONS, mid-2017). It is predicted to increase by 5.9% over 10 years, from 274,200 in 2014 to 290,200 in 2024. Like many areas, the predicted growth of Walsall's older population (> 65) is higher than this at 12.4%.</p> <p>Ethnicity: Walsall is a culturally diverse town with a 24% non-white British background, where people of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi background form the largest minority ethnic groups. The number of non-UK born residents in Walsall increased by 3.7% (or 9,900 people) between the 2001 and 2011 censuses and Walsall now has a small Eastern European population who make up about 1% of residents (2,700 people in total). In terms of children and young people aged 0-17, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased to 37.4% of all pupils living in the area from 36.7% in 2016 and 24% Primary pupils have English as an additional language. (School Census, January 2017).</p> <p>Households: As at April 2019 there are approximately 116,261 households in Walsall which is an increase of 8% or 8439 households since 2011. (Source: Walsall Council). However, between April 2018 and April 2019 there was a small increase in the number of households from 115,501 to 116,215.</p> <p>Housing and Tenure: Census 2011 shows 63% of properties in Walsall are owner-occupier, 24% social rent and 11.7% are private rented. The Walsall Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2019 has since shown there has been a significant increase in the size of the private rented sector since Census 2011 from 11.7% to 16%, and subsequent decrease in owner occupation from 63% to 59%, and social housing has remained at around 25%. Average House prices in the borough between December 2018 and December 2019 are £166,532 and the mean annual gross pay for October 2019 is £24,014. This means the ratio of income to house prices is unaffordable for many, with average house prices being around 7 times of annual gross pay.</p> <p>Deprivation: The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) now ranks Walsall as the 22nd most deprived English local authority (out of 326). Since 2015, Walsall has seen an increase in deprivation where it previously ranked 33rd. The 2019 IMD shows 20% of</p>			

Walsall's population living in income deprived households. There are two supplementary indices, which are a sub-set of the Income Deprivation Domain.

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI 2019) is one of the sub sets measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income-deprived families and shows 26.1% of children in Walsall are living in income-deprived families.

There are extremes of deprivation, with central and western areas typically much more deprived than eastern areas although pockets of deprivation exist even in the more affluent parts of the borough.

Health and life expectancy: 2011 Census results show that overall health is poorer in Walsall than in England and Wales. One in five residents have a limiting health condition: 10.4% are limited a lot, and a further 10.3% limited a little. 77.3% of residents say their health is good or very good – lower than the 81.2% nationally – with 7.3% experiencing bad or very bad health (5.6% nationally).

Overall life expectancy is gradually increasing for both males and females and the gap with comparator areas has shown positive signs of narrowing. However, the focus continues to be on prolonging a healthy life expectancy and understanding and planning for the implications that will have on service need and provision. Walsall has a lower healthy life expectancy age compared to regional and national comparators. Female healthy life expectancy is lower than males.

Age: The Joint strategic Needs Assessment showed in 2018 that the age of the population is geographically divided: the urban, more deprived areas of the borough are generally younger. The more affluent, least deprived & more rural areas towards the east & south-east are older. This is important to understand the relative demand for services by area.

Walsall has proportionately more young people (under 15) & older people (over 75) population than the England average. In contrast, the working age population is lower than England in most age groups. The net result is a high dependency ratio of 0.64 (dependents : working age), which increases demand for the provision of services.

Walsall's population is aging & will see a significant increase in those aged 65 & over - particularly in the 90+ age band. This will be important in determining the future demand on services.

Characteristics of the four hub areas:

Our locality areas have a number of differences in demographics (sourced at Census 2011) and challenges and we have taken these factors into consideration and provided locality based community service which is able to meet the needs of our diverse communities. (Locality Profiles Walsall Council 2020

<https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/home/profiles/locality-profiles/>)

The North locality population is 56,500 and has:

- A younger age profile than borough overall
- High proportion of younger children under 10
- Fewer working age and older people
- 14.2% minority ethnic residents which is lower than the borough (Walsall average 24.1%)
- Asian: Pakistani is the largest minority group – 4.1% (Walsall average 5.3%)
- A mix of all other minority groups living in the locality in smaller numbers
- Very high proportion of socially rented properties (37.8%) and below average owner occupation
- Above average proportion of lone parent families and people living alone
- Cancer prevalence within the wards of the North locality is lower than the borough average.

The South locality area has a population of 64000 and with:

- 55.5% minority ethnic residents is well over double the borough average (24.1%)
- Asian groups comprise the largest minority group at 42.2% (Walsall 15.2%)
- All ethnic groups are above Walsall average except White British
- Above average number of people over 65 living alone
- Significant pockets of relative deprivation in areas such as Alumwell, Birchills and Caldmore
- A significant number of unpaid carers in Paddock.

The East locality has a population of 88900 and with:

- 9.0% minority ethnic residents is less than half the borough average (24.1%)
- Asian Indian is the largest minority group at 2.8% (Walsall 6.1%)
- All ethnic groups below Walsall average except White British
- Above average number of people over 65 living alone
- Significantly less deprived than the borough overall
- East locality has high proportions of residents providing unpaid care (12.9% in Pelsall and 11.8% in Brownhills) compared to the borough average (11.4%).

The West locality has a population of 71600 with :

- 19.8% minority ethnic residents is lower than the borough (Walsall average 24.1%)
- Asian: Indian is the largest minority group at 7.4% (Walsall average 5.3%)
- A mix of all other minority groups but in smaller numbers
- Above average proportion of lone parent families (13.9%) than Walsall average (12.0%)
- Slightly more deprived than the borough overall
- Pockets of neighbourhoods to the north less deprived (Coppice Farm North & Coppice Farm South)
- Significant pockets of relative deprivation do exist –New Invention Central; Lodge Farm North; Little London South & King's Hill.
- The highest proportion of Walsall residents providing unpaid care within the West locality are within the wards of Short Heath, Willenhall North, Bentley & Darlaston North.

5 Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).

	Type of engagement/consultation	Internal and external partner dialogue via emails/telephone calls and online meetings	Date	Feb – April 2020
	Who attended/participated?	Voluntary and community interest groups, partner agencies, third sector representatives, stakeholders and statutory agencies, internal council services, and elected members.		
	Protected characteristics of participants	Representatives from different sector communities were engaged with via emergency and business planning processes.		
	Feedback The level of consultation included sharing of key priorities actions and feedback from agencies on the current crisis and resulted in the delivery of a community sector led service.			
6	Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation			
	<p>Due to the scale and speed of the Covid-19 emergency, the Council and partners have had to stand up the Community Hub infrastructure in a live environment. As a result, it has been very difficult to do formal consultation. That said, there have been many discussions with customers and key partners during the co-design process and the result is a service that is currently receiving and meeting high levels of demand effectively. However, internal intelligence and data along with communication with the community and voluntary sector we have launched this scheme.</p> <p>The Council is working with a range of statutory and voluntary sector partner organisations to help minimise the spread of COVID-19. To achieve this, the Council has applied a resilient communities approach, providing civic leadership to help mobilise a public response via the voluntary, and community sector, in four locality areas.</p> <p>The existing ‘Making Connections Walsall initiative’ has been expanded to offer additional support for vulnerable residents and families who need to self-isolate during the Covid-19 emergency. Four Community Hubs are now operating across the following</p>			

	<p>areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NORTH - Bloxwich Community Partnership, (Bloxwich East, Bloxwich West, Birchills Leamore, Blakenall); EAST - Manor Farm Community Association (Walsall Pelsall, Brownhills, Aldridge North, Rushall-Shelfield and Walsall Wood, Aldridge South, Streetly, Pheasey Park Farm); SOUTH - Accord Age Matter's (St Matthews, Paddock, Palfrey, Pleck); WEST - Old Hall Peoples Partnership (Bentley and Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Willenhall North, Short Heath, Willenhall South). <p>On the 21st March 2020, the Government asked the NHS to write to 1.5M people nationally who were considered medically vulnerable. In that letter those vulnerable people, termed "shielded", were informed about the need to self-isolate themselves at home for a period of twelve weeks. Recipients of the letters were also offered the option of registering for a non-means tested free food delivery service to support them to remain in their home. The Council understands that 5045 individuals received an NHS shielded letter in Walsall. It is not yet known how many of these will formerly register with the national food assistance scheme.</p>			
7	<p>How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.</p>			
	Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
	Age	Positive	<p>The over 65 population is increasing in the borough (Census 2011). Streetly ranks top of the over 65s category, closely followed by Aldridge, then Pelsall: the distribution of this age group is very much focused in the East. These are the more affluent areas of Walsall.</p> <p>In contrast, the younger population is focused predominantly in areas within the North, South & West: Palfrey, Blakenall & Pleck - typically more deprived wards.</p> <p>As a result Hubs have been provided in 4 different localities by specialist third sector agencies who are able to more fully understand their local communities.</p>	N
	Disability	Positive	2011 Census results show that overall health is poorer in	N

			<p>Walsall than in England and Wales. One in five residents have a limiting health condition: 10.4% are limited a lot, and a further 10.3% limited a little. 77.3% of residents say their health is good or very good – lower than the 81.2% nationally – with 7.3% experiencing bad or very bad health (5.6% nationally).</p> <p>The needs of those with a disability have been looked at by ensuring accessible services and ensuring we are able to understand this group and have flexibility to deliver the service with partners if requires.</p>	
	Gender reassignment	neutral	<p>Some information is available nationally however local data is currently unknown. Given the pressures that NHS services are facing in light of COVID-19, the NHS are advising no changes or increases in doses for hormone therapy, until the COVID-19 outbreak is over, as further blood tests cannot be guaranteed at this time. (Source https://gic.nhs.uk/info-support/hormone-therapy-during-the-covid-19-outbreak-patient-information/ Accessed 29/04/20)</p> <p>The service will be delivered irrespective of gender type and will deliver services in a professional manner but do note nationally there is unlikely to be customers from this group with an urgent prescription need.</p>	N
	Marriage and civil partnership	Positive	<p>Census 2011 shows 46.5% of people are married, 11.3% cohabit with a member of the opposite sex, 0.7% live with a partner of the same sex, 24.6% are single and have</p>	N

			<p>never married or been in a registered same sex partnership, 8.2% are separated or divorced. There are 12,727 widowed people living in Walsall.</p> <p>The service will deliver services to this group and understands in some cases the households may have more than 1 person who may be isolating but also will understand the pressures of single person households.</p>	
	Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	<p>In 2018, there were an estimated 839,043 conceptions to women of all ages in England and Wales compared with 847,204 in 2017, a decrease of nearly 1.0%. The conception rate for women under 18 years decreased for the 11th year in a row, the longest continued decrease since records began. (source https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/conceptionstatistics/2018 Accessed 29/04/20)</p> <p>Where a service user is pregnant, priority is given to the household as this is one of the high risk groups identified by government account.</p>	N
	Race	Positive	<p>Walsall has a 24% BAME population (Census 2011), and we aim to ensure the service provides flexibility in the food parcel type and service they deliver taking into account cultural issues particularly as many of our BAME resident live in the west of the borough. Origins data as at 2020 shows a large non –White British increases in most of Walsall</p>	N

			Specifically WS5 postal sector (12% increase in non – white British) and a big concentration of Sikh arrivals into Walsall.	
	Religion or belief	Positive	The religious make up of Walsall as per Census 2011 is 59.0% Christian, 19.7% No religion, 8.2% Muslim, 4.3% Sikh, 1.7% Hindu, 0.2% Buddhist. 16,174 people did not state a religion. Based on these figures we are able to ensure we understand the dietary and religious requirements such as those requiring vegetarian/Vegan, Halaal and Kosher products and ensure we are flexible in the type of food parcel we deliver to people.	N
	Sex	Positive	In the 2011 census the population of Walsall was 269,323 and is made up of approximately 51% females and 49% males. The average age of people in Walsall is 39, while the median age is also 39. 89.0% of people living in Walsall were born in England. Regardless of gender we will offer a service to all residents who require help and support. However, where there are cultural issues these will be taken into consideration.	N
	Sexual orientation	Positive	National statistics show the proportion of the UK population aged 16 years and over identifying as heterosexual or straight has decreased from 94.4% in 2012 to 93.2% in 2017. Over the last five years, the proportion of the UK population identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual	N

			<p>(LGB) has increased from 1.5% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2017, although the latest figure is unchanged from 2016. In 2017, there were an estimated 1.1 million people aged 16 years and over identifying as LGB out of a UK population aged 16 years and over of 52.8 million. Males (2.3%) were more likely to identify as LGB than females (1.8%) in 2017. People aged 16 to 24 years were most likely to identify as LGB in 2017 (4.2%). Source: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2017, accessed 29/04/20)</p> <p>With the figures taken into consideration we will ensure the partners who are at the front line of our service have the right ethos and commitment to serving all of our communities.</p>	
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.			(Delete one) No
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?			
	A	No major change required When no potential for discrimination or adverse impact is identified and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.		

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
2021	Collate Service user data on	LA/delivery partners	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand who has accessed

	protected characteristics and ensure consultation with third sector on the key lessons learnt			<p>service and what needs and demands are of different communities with regards to Covid 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure this information is used to ensure communities are represented at future consultation opportunities and intelligence is proactively used to target service delivery.

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail
Use this section for updates following the commencement of your proposal.	

Contact us

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Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Update on the: Implementation of Governments Business Rate Relief and Grant Programmes for Walsall.

Portfolio: Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader and Regeneration.

Related portfolios: Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of the Council.

Service: Economy, Environment and Communities

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to set out for Cabinet the successful work completed so far by Walsall Council in its administration of the governments; Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Funds. To ensure that these grants reach all eligible Walsall Businesses as soon as possible. Together with an update on the new; Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund released on the 2 May 2020.

2. Summary

- 2.1 As part of the government's response to Covid-19, during March 2020 the chancellor announced a range of support for small businesses, and those businesses operating in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This included both tax relief and grant funding during the 2020-2021 financial year through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. Walsall Council received around £53million in April 2020 to cover costs associated with these programmes.
- 2.2 In addition as part of the COVID19 daily announcements, on the 17 March 2020 a 100% business rates holiday was announced for the whole of the 2020/21 financial year to all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.
- 2.3 On the 2 May 2020 government released details of the new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, followed by initial guidance on the 6 May 2020, to accommodate certain small businesses that previously fell outside the scope of the initial business grant funds scheme.
- 2.4 This report sets out the details of these government programmes, together with how Walsall Council officers have and continue to put into place the required processes, procedures and operating arrangements, to ensure that we get the funding out to local eligible businesses as quickly as possible.

- 2.5 Details of the new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund programme known at the time of drafting, taken from the initial guidance dated the 6 May 2020 have been included within this report. The Deputy Leader will provide Cabinet with an update of the latest position at the meeting itself on the 19.05.2020.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of this report and the progress that is being made to ensure that local businesses benefit from these programmes.
- 3.2 To ensure swift prosecution of the new discretionary grant fund scheme, that Cabinet delegate's responsibility for agreeing the administration processes, approval criteria and payment approvals to the Executive Director Economy Environment and Communities in consultation with the Deputy Leader for the new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 As part of the government's response to Covid-19, during March 2020 the chancellor announced a range of support for small businesses, and those businesses operating in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This includes both tax relief and grant funding during the 2020-2021 financial year through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. Walsall Council received around £53million in April 2020 to cover the costs associated with the above programmes, with the estimated cost being £46million.
- 4.2 Under the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) all eligible businesses (as set out within government guidance) in England in receipt of either Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rates Relief (RRR) in the business rates system will be eligible for a payment of £10,000.
- 4.3 Under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (RHLG), all eligible businesses (as set out within government guidance) in England that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) on 11 March with a rateable value of less than £51,000, are eligible for the following cash grants per property.
- 4.3.1 Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to and including £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000.
- 4.3.2 Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000.
- 4.4 It must be noted that for businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or over that they are not eligible for this scheme. Businesses which are not ratepayers in the business rates system are also not included in this scheme.

- 4.5 In addition to grant programmes as part of the COVID19 daily announcements, on the 17 March 2020 a 100% business rates holiday was announced for the whole of the 2020/21 financial year to all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.
- 4.6 On the 2 May 2020 Government released details of the new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, followed by initial guidance on the 6 May 2020, to accommodate certain small businesses that previously fell outside the scope of the initial business grant funds scheme. Detailed guidance is expected during week beginning 11 May 2020, the Deputy Leader will update cabinet with on this and any further operational details etc.
- 4.7 Government is asking Local Authorities to prioritise the following types of businesses for grants from within this new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund:
- 4.7.1. Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces. Examples could include units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment;
 - 4.7.2. Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
 - 4.7.3. Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
 - 4.7.4 Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.
- 4.8 The list set out above in 4.7 is not intended to be exhaustive, but is intended to guide Local Authorities as to the types of business that the Government considers should be a priority for the scheme. Authorities should determine for themselves whether particular situations not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, whether they should be eligible for grants from this discretionary fund. The precise design of the discretionary fund will be up to each Local Authority.
- 4.9 Government have also set national criteria for the funds which must apply to all grants made from this Local Authority Discretionary Grant. These grants can only go to:
- 4.9.1 Businesses with ongoing fixed building-related costs
 - 4.9.2 Businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the Covid-19 crisis
 - 4.9.3 Business with fewer than 50 employees
 - 4.9.4 Businesses that were trading on 11th March.
 - 4.9.5 In addition, businesses which are eligible for the existing grant schemes or Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not eligible.
- 4.10 Grants are capped at £25,000. The next level of grants is £10,000, with Local Authorities having discretion to make payments of any amount under £10,000. It will be for Local Authorities to adapt this approach to local circumstances. Government expects decisions on the appropriate level of funding to reflect the relative costs borne by businesses and to align with the Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Funds.

- 4.11 As this is a discretionary fund, Government expects that Local Authorities will want to use an application process and that it may take some time for this to be established. At the same time, it's understood that there are businesses that need this funding and Government asks that Local Authorities make every effort to make this process effective and quick.

Programme Development and Administration

- 4.12 The Initial Small Business Grants Programme represents a significant programme for Walsall, with an estimated 4360 local businesses eligible for the initial grant payments, together with 901 businesses qualifying for full Business Rate relief as they fall within the; Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors. To support local companies the need to get this up and running quickly became paramount.
- 4.13 The first task was to ensure that we have the correct contact details for all qualifying businesses so that we can ask them to make their applications through the automated process. A call to arms was made by the portfolio holder who reached out to all small businesses through communications on our web platforms and the media. Complemented by formation of a small team of skilled staff from a number of directorates seeking out and recording verified contact details.
- 4.14 This was quickly followed by the council's business rates team installing, debugging and setting into place the two stage portals and the back office payment systems provided by Northgate, one of the recognised software providers. This was completed successfully and went live on the 14th April 2020.
- 4.15 The government stated that all participating Local Authorities must utilise appropriate procedures and safeguards to limit the opportunities for fraud, in line with their detailed guidance. Stating that government will clawback funding from councils where funds have been paid to organisations who are not eligible, or have submitted fraudulent applications.
- 4.16 To protect Walsall Council from the potential for fraud, and mitigate the potential for clawback action against Walsall Council by Government. So to move quickly and minimise fraud and clawback potential, officers set into place the following processes and procedures for the grants programmes:

Stage 1 – Contacting Business Quickly

- 4.16.1 All eligible businesses have been identified from the Council's Business Rates register, to move quickly and provide the best chances of successful contact, as company venues, shops etc. will most likely be closed now. A small team of cross directorate officers was established on the 1st April, with the aim of seeking out a mix of contact mediums (letter, email, text etc.) for each business to prompt and chase their applications.

Stage 2 – Putting into Place the Automated Portals

4.16.2 Two stage on-line application portals set into place from the 6th April, allowing companies to provide and verify their eligibility and payment details, by uploading evidence that proves who they are, for example; company registration documents, proof of ownership, utility bills for its premises, bank account details etc.

Stage 3 – Combatting Fraud

4.16.3 Utilisation of the government's Grants Management and Counter Fraud digital assurance tool, 'Spotlight' to compliment checks conducted by Walsall Council, including; Ascendant Solutions contracted to carry out additional on-line checks of applicants' details, helping to ensure that applicants for these funds are who they say they are. Once checks have been completed, and many of these are automated, payments will be made directly into businesses bank accounts.

Stage 4 – Automated Payment Processes

4.16.4 Following some delay the software provider released (9th April) the necessary software updates for installation to support automated back office payments. Following testing and the Easter break, this was up and running from the 14th April to get payments out to qualifying businesses quickly.

Stage 5 – State Aid Compliance

4.16.5 All grant recipients are required to fulfil State Aid Regulations as published by government. Utilising good practice developed by Walsall Council's Accountable Body team (part of the Programme Management Team's functions), as part of their administration of the Black Country LEP's funding. Included within the on line portals, and within associated correspondence, clear notification places responsibility with all applicants and grant recipients. Further details included in the Risk Management section of this report.

4.17 Once the details have been received regarding the administration of the governments new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, officers will draw up proposals for administering the discretionary elements for consideration by Executive Director Economy Environment and Communities in consultation with the Deputy Leader

Council Corporate Plan priorities

4.18 The resources received from the governments Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Funds will be administered and paid to qualifying businesses as soon as possible to help support their transition through the COVID19 lockdown period. This will help to protect jobs and employment opportunities for local people, contribution towards the Economic Growth theme of the Corporate Plan.

Risk management

- 4.19 Having the processes to mitigate the potential for applicants breaching State Aid rules, placing Walsall Council with possible clawback responsibilities and associated costs is a key risk. To manage this we ensure that it is the applicant's responsibility to understand and ensure compliance with all State Aid requirements associated with the grants they are applying for and subsequently receive.
- 4.20 Failure to do so, together with any claims that are found to be fraudulent, will result in non-payment, or where payment has been made, legal action to reclaim all grant payments. To complement this we have placed links into the notices that applicants can use to view and understand all appropriate State Aid requirements as posted / updated by Government, together with the following statement that relate to the Walsall scheme;

Applicants for Small Business Rate Relief Grants are subject to State Aid rules and regulations as set or administered by Government, further details of which are available for all applicants through posted hyperlinks etc.

For the Walsall Small Business Rate Relief Grants programme, prior to any payments being released all applicants will be required as part of the stage 2 web portal to tick a box that states;

'In ticking this box you confirm that you understand and will comply with all State Aid responsibilities associated with this grant payment and that, should your claim be found to be fraudulent, or that you have made any misrepresentation in making your claim, you will make a full repayment or be subject to legal action to reclaim all funds.'

- 4.21 The measures proposed in this report are considered proportional and robust, however it must be recognised that fraud may still take place. These measures will help to provide mitigation to avoid clawback from Government, and a route through which we can reclaim them from proven fraudulent applicants.
- 4.22 Similar processes and procedures will be accommodated into and utilised where appropriate as part of the new Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund programme.

Financial implications

4.23 The financial risks identified at the time of drafting are;

4.23.1 Failure to ensure that all payments are made to eligible applicants, ensuring that no fraudulent activity takes place.

4.23.2 Not putting into place procedures that ensure where-ever possible State Aid compliance.

These risks are being mitigated through the use of the government's Grants Management and Counter Fraud digital assurance tool, 'Spotlight' together with checks conducted by Walsall Council, including; Ascendant Solutions contracted to carry out additional on-line checks of applicants' details, helping to ensure that applicants for these funds are who they say they are. Together with the necessary State Aid notifications and the self-declaration process by all applicants that they will comply with all appropriate 'State Aid' regulations and requirements, before the release of any grant payments.

Legal implications

4.24 Colleagues from Legal Services have been involved in the development and drafting of all legal statements included as part of the compliance and State Aid processes and declarations.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.25 There are no identified Procurement implications

Property implications

4.26 There are no identified Property implications

Health and wellbeing implications

4.27 No relevant issues or implications have been identified.

Staffing implications

4.28 There are no implications to staff as a result of the administration of this grants programme, as it is being administered by skilled staff from within the business rates teams assisted by others from across the council as required through the current staff deployment programme.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.29 There are no implications as a result of this report / programme.

Consultation

- 4.30 No consultation has been required or delivered as part of the administration of this grant programme.

5.0 Decide

- 5.1 Government has set out the majority of the financial and administration rules associated with the grants and tax relief programmes, which are now in operation. Discretion is being offered in relation to parts of the new discretionary Top-up to local business grant funds scheme, the next steps will be for officers to present options for consideration and approval by the Executive Director Economy Environment and Communities in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

6.0 Respond

- 6.1 Officers have responded to this call for action by government through the swift prosecution and administration of the governments; Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Funds. To ensure that these grants reach all eligible Walsall Businesses as soon as possible. Officers will continue to respond quickly in the administration of future approved programmes in support of local businesses.

7.0 Review

- 7.1 Implementation will be monitored through existing and newly established systems and procedures. Lessons learnt and any good practice developed will be captured and shared so that officers and indeed the council can benefit.

Background papers

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund; Guidance for Local Authorities.

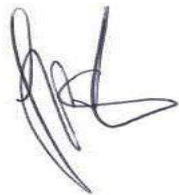
The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Business Rates: Expanded Retail Discount 2020/21: Coronavirus Response; Local Authority Guidance.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Small Business Grant Fund / Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund; Guidance for business.

Joint Ministerial Guidance - Covid-19 Business Support Grants: Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, dated 6 May 2020

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Simon Neilson
Executive Director
Economy, Environment and Communities

11 May 2020



Councillor Andrew
Deputy Leader and Regeneration.

11 May 2020

Paying for Community Based Commissioned Care Services During the COVID-19 Period

Portfolio: Councillor Rose Martin, Adult social care

Related portfolios: All

Service: Adult Social Care

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's approval for the Council financially support or provide financial relief to Adult Social Care providers and ensure continuity of care for service users, to do this the Council will make payments outside of usual contracted arrangements, during the period of COVID-19. Thus, meaning an additional expenditure of approximately £319k for a period of 14 weeks (23 March 2020 – 28 June 2020).
- 1.2 This report also highlights the potential risk of additional expenditure if demand, complexity or staff absence changes at short notice and highlights the ongoing work to support the residential care market.

2. Summary

- 2.1. In line with Government guidance and as part of the Adult Social Care's response to COVID-19, a number of measures have been adopted, to enable providers of commissioned care services to be paid in a way that supports their cash flow and sustainability.
- 2.2. An Adult Social Care provider payment option was agreed by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care on 20/03/20, which meant domiciliary care providers are paid in accordance with financial values contained within individual service users' support plans rather than paid on actual care delivery as per the existing payment arrangement.
- 2.3. Since these measures were introduced, the number of people waiting for care has reduced from 90 to 15. The number of people who were awaiting discharge from Walsall Manor has reduced from 90 to 24 (with only 3 of these awaiting care). Care providers have absorbed high numbers of staff absence and there has been no provider failure.

- 2.4. The arrangements put in place to date are currently expected to cost an additional approx. £319k for a period of 14 weeks (23 March 2020 – 28 June 2020). This calculation is based on available data for the four week Covid-19 period from 23 March, which highlighted a significant reduction in overall care calls. There is a risk that costs will increase as families return to work and care is reinstated.
- 2.5. Adult Social Care commissioners are considering additional financial relief arrangements to support other commissioned services and have requested feedback from the Adult Social Care market as to the nature of additional expenditure at this time. Any additional arrangements will be subject to approved governance, via the Supplier Action Payment Group and approval sought from Silver or Gold, dependent on the financial implication, and approval of Cabinet if the arrangements being considered total more than £250k. Arrangements will only be introduced on receipt of this approval.
- 2.6. In accordance with the Councils Constitution, this is a Key Decision for the following reasons:
- The decision will incur 'significant' expenditure of greater than £250,000
 - The decision is likely to have a significant impact on two or more wards of the borough as the proposed alternative model is a change to the way in which service is delivered

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1. Notes the revised Adult Social Care provider payments arrangements put in place on 23 March as set out in this report.
- 3.2. Approves the continuation of the ASC recommended provider payment option of payment by plan (except where there is no evidence of care having taken place) at an estimated cost of £119,000, noting that this may increase significantly and at short notice if demand, complexity or staff absence changes.
- 3.3. Approves funding of £200,000 for additional supplier relief to contracted and non-contracted Adult Social Care providers following a task and finish analysis of provider Covid-19 related additional expenditure. This will be subject to agreed governance, as set out in this report.
- 3.4. Approves delegated authority to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care in consultation with the Portfolio Holder of Adult Social Care to enter into any necessary contractual variations to enact these recommendations.
- 3.5. Notes the plans to address the financial sustainability of the Care Home market through a task and finish project of open book accounting.

4. Report detail

Know

- 4.1. On the 13th March 2020 with the emergence of the magnitude of Covid-19 pandemic the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association for the Directors of Adults Social Services (ADASS) released local authority commissioner guidance to summarise pressures on social care providers arising from COVID-19, and to put forward ways in which commissioners can alleviate these pressures¹. The guidance listed a range of pressures and actions that commissioners may take to address them it described these actions as what commissioners “can” do: our shared expectation is that commissioners actively consider all these issues and possible mitigating measures and do what is necessary to support their local providers.
- 4.2. The guidance note, advised consideration of payment on plan as a way to reduce delays in usual invoice processing time lines to support provider cash flow. The priority being to ensure providers of care in the community have access to a cash flow in order to sustain service delivery during this period.
- 4.3. On the 18th March, the Coronavirus Bill was introduced, which set out the intention of the Government to make changes to the Care Act 2014 to enable local authorities to prioritise the services they offer in order to ensure the most urgent and serious care needs are met, even if this means not meeting everyone’s assessed needs in full or delaying some assessments².
- 4.4. Additionally, on the 18th March, the Department of Health and Social Care issued the COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements³, which set out how health and care systems and providers should change their discharging arrangements and the provision of community support during the coronavirus situation and that implementing these Service Requirements was expected to free up to at least 15,000 beds by Friday 27th March 2020, with discharge flows maintained after that. This guidance was accompanied by a letter addressed to Directors of Adult Social Care, which detailed that *“one of the most important tasks will be to ensure we have the capacity to support people who have acute healthcare needs in our hospitals. To do this we need to organise the safe and rapid discharge of those people who no longer need to be in a hospital bed. The new default will be discharge home today”*.
- 4.5. On the 20th March, a letter received from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG), set out the funds that would be made available to Councils to amongst many other essential council services *“Meet the increased demand for adult social care and enable councils to provide additional support to social care providers”*. A copy of this letter is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.6. In the week of the 18th March, Adult Social Care (ASC) providers were reporting staffing issues in relation to isolation/illness through Covid 19, anecdotally; up to 20% of the care workforce were absent. This was creating issues in maintaining the capacity required to meet the existing Adult Social Care demand. In addition, there were 90 packages of care in the community waiting to be picked up by ASC

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-councils/social-care-provider-resilience-during-covid-19-guidance-commissioners>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-bill-what-it-will-do/what-the-coronavirus-bill-will-do>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-2019-hospital-discharge-service-requirements>

providers and 90 people in hospital that were deemed medically fit for discharge, most of whom would require care to facilitate discharge.

- 4.7. On the 19th March the Department for Health and Social Care released the Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care⁴ during COVID-19 and emphasises decision making should be principled on reasonableness; minimising harm; inclusiveness; respect; flexibility; accountability; proportionality and community. It states that, *“Recognising increasing pressures and expected demand, it might become necessary to make challenging decisions on how to redirect resources where they are most needed and to prioritise individual care needs. This framework intends to serve as a guide for these types of decisions and reinforce that consideration of any potential harm that might be suffered, and the needs of all individuals, are always central to decision-making”*

Decide

- 4.8. In order to respond to the immediate capacity issues and the challenge, as set out in the DHSC guidance, the Council engaged with ASC providers to develop a plan to maintain the essential care and support to existing adult social care eligible service users and to respond to anticipated increased demand.
- 4.9. ASC Providers indicated that by enabling them to utilise their local knowledge and insight of our vulnerable adults (based on their day to day contact), during this unprecedented period, that they would be able to work flexibly, innovatively and prioritise their resources to meet clients’ needs, which in turn would better manage existing demand and create additional capacity.
- 4.10. The option of payment by plan and a number of alternative payment options were considered on their merits, and on 20th March 2020, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care agreed the new model of paying providers on a ‘payment on plan’ basis rather than paying providers on actual care delivery, which was the existing payment arrangement. For illustration, if Provider x currently supports 50 service users each with 10 hours of care, this would equate to a guaranteed payment of 500 hours being paid. We would then ask providers to meet the needs of those individuals flexibly within those 500 hours, and in doing so utilising those resources more effectively, thereby releasing additional capacity.
- 4.11. The other options that considered were:
1. Do nothing, pay against actual care delivery
 2. Payment against support plan value
 3. 3. Payment against the support plan value (except where there is evidence that no care has been delivered) – **Preferred**
 4. Payment by actual care delivery + 10%

Whilst the preferred option does not have the lowest cost, it is considered to be the most cost effective and has the strongest rationale in terms of maintaining service delivery and protecting the market. The rationale for choosing option three

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care/responding-to-covid-19-the-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care#reasonableness>

is that options two and three are the only options where additional capacity could be expected, which is a critical factor. All of the other options are reliant on care providers continuing to deliver care, as they were previously to safeguard themselves from a drop in income, there is no incentive for a provider to deliver care and meet assessed need in a more innovative way in a shorter duration if they are penalised for this financially. The rationale for choosing option three over option two is that, unfortunately, providers have not demonstrated full compliance with notifying the local authority of reasons for 'no care delivery' and therefore in order to safeguard against fraudulent behavior it is prudent to assume that care delivery has not been attempted or is not required where there is no evidence of care being delivered. Providers have the facility to evidence where there are other reasons why a care call has not been recorded and on receipt of this evidence, the council can make payment for this activity.

A further rationale for selecting Option three is that seven of our nearest neighbouring local authorities have adopted a 'payment by plan' payment option and the risk if Walsall adopted a less favourable option is that care providers would choose to deploy their resources in other Local Authority areas with more favourable payment terms.

Respond

- 4.12. The above actions were implemented on 23rd March 2020 and was followed by formal notification to the market, on the 9th April, alongside assurance around financial payments, to support their immediate cash flow pressures during this time.
- 4.13. Internal systems were also reconfigured to enable all of the above to be actioned; this included changes to payment processing schedules and the removal of business as usual validation processes. Providers were issued with extensive details on how the interim arrangements were to be mobilised and the requirements of them during this period.
- 4.14. The recommendation of the Cabinet Office procurement note (PPN 02/20)⁵ issued on the 20th March was that any provider relief should remain in place until the 30th June 2020. The projected financial implication for the 'payment on plan' for a 14-week period would amount to **£119k**; however could be substantially more; this is detailed more fully at 7.3 and 7.4. in the finance section of this report.
- 4.15. As an interim measure, whilst Cabinet approval is being sought Providers have been paid ahead of schedule for actual care delivered, and an 'on account' payment to bridge the difference between actuals and plan. This has allowed the Council to ensure continuous cash flow across the provider market. This arrangement does not fully fulfil the Council commitment to the Market and therefore there is a risk of reduced confidence in the Council to support the ASC market.
- 4.16. Adult Social Care have duties under the Care Act 2014, which include market management and market shaping, specifically:
 - local market shaping to encourage quality, choice and sufficiency of provision;
 - local contingency planning in case of provider failures;

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>

- ensure care is maintained where provider fails financially and services cease – for everyone, including self-funders, to ensure people’s needs continue to be met;

With the above in mind, a wider issue exists across the non-contracted community and voluntary sector market, specifically day care and social clubs, who have reported that due to enforced temporary closures, this is causing financial sustainability issues. This sector do directly support a number of our vulnerable adults across the community and will be required to resume this role post COVID-19.

- 4.17. It is for this reason that Cabinet agreement is also sought for a further financial commitment of **£200k** in order to swiftly respond to the wider ASC market as set out in 4.13. This is notwithstanding, an ongoing task and finish initiative, where we are considering the wider Covid 19 financial support available to providers through provider relief mechanisms, such as business grants, the furlough scheme etc.
- 4.18. Approval of any additional arrangements will be subject to approved governance, via the Supplier Action Payment Group and approval sought from Silver or Gold, dependent on the financial implication, and approval of Cabinet if the arrangements being considered total more than £250k. Arrangements will only be introduced on receipt of this approval
- 4.19. The Residential and Nursing market is experiencing a particular set of challenges in relation to COVID-19, some of these are similar to the wider market in that they have high numbers of absent staff, but some are different in that the new demand has decreased, but an enhanced response by the homes is required to deal with infection outbreaks and the tragic increased number of resident deaths.
- 4.20. In Walsall, the Quality in Care Team is working in partnership with health and public health teams to provide care homes with comprehensive support to meet some of these challenges. However, given the unexpected high number of vacancies that have now developed in care homes, there are also plans in formation to work with care home providers in relation to their financial sustainability and viability. This includes specifically, a refresh of the detailed residential and nursing market open book accounting exercise, which was undertaken 12 months ago. This individualised exercise may result in additional financial support required for this market.
- 4.21. The Walsall Adult Social Care Market is a fragile market in ordinary times; our Adult Social Care Commissioners have now flagged all provision as a significant risk and this has been escalated to the Council’s cross directorate Supplier Payment Group (set up in response to COVID-19 to provide governance role in relation to the additional monies issued from Government to support organisations to respond to COVID-19 increased financial burdens, administered by the Council).

Review

- 4.22. Since the 20th March 2020, a plethora of guidance has been produced nationally in relation to localised responses to COVID-19, including guidance on how social

care providers should be supported and paid during this period. Latest available information provided by the ADASS and the LGA highlights an approach to apply a percentage based uplift to existing unit costs, for care delivered. However, the approach being adopted by local authorities across the country varies and a number have adopted the approach, which was recommended by ASC commissioners in Walsall, including many of Walsall's neighbouring authorities. This in part was a significant factor, as many of our providers work across the Black Country region.

- 4.23. Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Local Government Association, published a briefing note early April 2020 on *Temporary Funding for Adult Social Care providers during the Covid-19 Crisis*⁶. This paper included a range of considerations that Local Authorities could and were exploring in relation to easing provider cash flow on an interim basis. There are references to approaches including payment to providers on plan, alongside other considerations including percentage base uplifts to contracted rates. The main thrust of this guidance was to shine a light the need to temporarily support providers to deliver care across communities in a way, which is not hindered by cash flow issues.
- 4.24. There has been a detailed analysis of how the Council could have considered paying providers who deliver community based care by ASC Commissioners. An options appraisal was developed on 9th April in relation to domiciliary care providers payments – this concluded a recommended approach was payment by support plan. Further options subsequently considered have been payment by support plan versus payment by actuals plus 10% as referenced in the *Temporary Funding for Adult Social Care providers during the Covid-19 Crisis* briefing note of April 2020. On consideration of these further options as set out at 4.9, ASC Commissioners continue to seek approval for payment by support plan values, with a minor variation, which includes, except where there has been no evidence that care has been delivered and a corresponding variation form has not been submitted.
- 4.25. The continuous analysis since implementation has also enabled ASC Commissioners to review the demand and capacity of the market. The analysis has lead Commissioners to recommend the return to previous payment arrangements for supported living and complex care providers from the 10th May as it was determined that capacity in this particular part of the market is no longer required and staff absence is improving as staff testing is becoming more prevalent.
- 4.26. Since these measures were introduced, the number of people waiting for care has reduced from 90 to 15. The number of people who were awaiting discharge from Walsall Manor has reduced from 90 to 24 (with only 3 of these awaiting care). Care providers have managed to absorb high numbers of staff absence and there has been no provider failure.

5. Council Corporate Plan priorities

⁶ <https://local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Provider%20fees%20-%20summary%20of%20the%20approach%20proposed%20by%20local%20government%20-%20ASC%20final.pdf>

- 5.1. This proposal links to the Council's corporate priority 'Communities are prospering and resilient. The most vulnerable are protected from avoidable harm, including treating and caring for people in a safe environment through working within the local community. It enhances quality of life for people with care and support needs and those with long term conditions; out of hospital, community based provision provides a safe and more appropriate environment for individuals recovering from ill health and/or injury or requiring long term care.
- 5.2. More specifically this proposal seeks to align to the Care Act Duty of Market Oversight.

6. Risk management

- 6.1. The monitoring of the expenditure will be overseen by the Adult Social Care directorate and the Supplier Relief Payment Group in conjunction with finance colleagues. This agenda is also discussed as part of the COVID-19 chain of control groups (BRONZE; SILVER and GOLD), which has representatives of all internal and external Stakeholders responsible for delivering safe outcomes as a result of COVID-19.
- 6.2. It is acknowledged that there is a risk that service user's individual needs may not be met because of providers' flexible approach and therefore additional operational safeguards have been implemented so that anyone who receives significantly less care than that detailed in their support plan is contacted by an ASC officer for a well-being check.
- 6.3. It should be noted that should care hours return to the levels provided pre-Covid-19, then this option would represent an enhancement to the level of payment which providers would have normally received of £47.3k per week. Over the remaining 7-week period this additional cost would be c£284k, resulting in potential total costs of £603k over the 14-week period, as opposed to the estimated £319k. Demand and capacity will continue to be monitored and mitigated where possible by Adult Social Care commissioners.
- 6.4. There is potential challenge in relation to the equity of impact/benefit of the preferred option on providers. This is understood and will be managed and mitigated as necessary.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The financial implication of this proposal is £0.319m. The impact of the proposal on providers financial sustainability, in creating capacity and ensuring good value for money will continue to be reviewed, by Adult Social Care commissioners. Dialogue across the region will also continue in relation to spend levels across a commissioned market where many providers deliver services across the region as well as in Walsall.
- 7.2. Cabinet are asked to approve the continuation of the ASC recommended provider payment option of payment by plan (except where there is no evidence of care having taken place) at an estimated cost of £119k, noting that this may increase for the reasons set out in section 7.3. It is expected that these additional costs will

be met through the additional Covid -19 grant. The financial implications of this course of action are set out in the tables below.

Table 1

Interim Payments Made To Date Across Adult Social Care Community Based Provision (complex care)		
Care Type	Period	Additional Costs
		£000's
Day Care	7 weeks commencing 23 March	31.5
Supported Living	7 weeks commencing 23 March	230.3
Total		261.8

Table 2

Interim Payments Across Adult Social Care Community Based Provision		
Care Type	Period	Additional Costs
		£000's
Extra Care	14 weeks (from 23 rd March subject to review)	30.7
Domiciliary Care	14 weeks (from 23 rd March subject to review)	(173.6)
Total		(142.9)

Table 3

Additional Expenditure Across the Voluntary and Community non-contracted ASC providers	
Period	Additional Costs
	£000's
14 weeks	200

- 7.3 For domiciliary care the proposed option is based upon payment of providers based upon service users' care plans with a deduction where no care has been delivered, based on evidence which has been submitted by providers for the four week period from 23 March 2020. It has been estimated this will cost £12.4k per week less than the average cost paid prior to Covid. For the 14-week period this is an overall reduction of £173.6k. However, this reduction is due largely to a significant reduction in care provided since the 'lockdown' as for example, family members have taken on responsibility of care for many service users. It should be noted that as family members return to work there is likely to be an increase in care required. This position will be closely monitored.
- 7.4 It should be noted that should care hours return to the levels provided pre-Covid-19, then this option would represent an enhancement to the level of payment which providers would have normally received of £47.3k per week as the payment is based on total planned care rather than actual care delivered. Over the remaining 7-week period since payment on plan was implemented, this additional cost would be c£284k, resulting in potential total costs of £603k over the 14-week period, as opposed to the estimated £319k.

8. Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 8.1. Payment terms and conditions are clearly set out within the existing contractual Agreements for the services referred to in this report, all of which have been awarded in accordance with Public Contract Regulations 2015. Decisions made prior to and as a result of Cabinet approval of recommendations made in this report constitute variations to existing contracts. In order to protect the interests of Service Users, the Council and ensure compliant variation of contracts in relation to any decisions that Cabinet may wish to make, ASC will seek Procurement and Legal advice and support in order to execute any associated contractual variations, in a lawful and compliant manner.
- 8.2. Cabinet Office procurement note (PPN 02/20)⁷ issued on the 20th March and updated on the 17th April states Local Authorities should: seek to support supplier cash flow through a pragmatic approach; no provider should seek to profiteer from COVID-19; there should be a particular focus on supporting providers who are considered at risk during this time in relation to cash flow; providers need to operate transparent book keeping in relation to their financial accounts during this period; any payment by results approaches should be considered in relation to temporary deferment and payments approaches considered which are based on payment over the past 3 months and that interim payment arrangements should be in place until June 2020.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Legal engagement has commenced in exploring and mitigating implications in relation to the action taken to date. These include:
 - 9.1.1. The practicalities for how any unilateral contractual changes will be documented (with reference to the contractual provisions that allow variations);
 - 9.1.2. The Council's exit routes, e.g. time limiting any variations, making them conditional etc.
 - 9.1.3. Mitigating any risks of providers challenging decisions taken in relation to payment arrangements;
 - 9.1.4. Mitigating any risk of challenge in other ways, if that unilateral change falls outside of - or has not considered - the possibilities allowed by: (i) the procurement regulations; or (ii) Cabinet Office supplier payment relief guidance.
- 9.2. Legal advice and support will be sought if any further variation of contracts are required.

10.0. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1 It is in the health and well-being interests of those supported by ASC services that the ASC market is supported to be financially sustainable and to flex its capacity so that it can continue to meet the assessed care needs of those who require them.

11.0. Staffing implications

- 11.1. There are no staffing implications arising out of this report.

12.0. Reducing Inequalities

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>

- 12.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and is appended to this report.

13.0 Consultation

- 13.1. All Social Care providers across Walsall and the Councils Health and Care partners are engaged in regular tele-conferences, by email, through a dedicated 'provider hotline' and through an ASC provider information and advice internet page.
- 13.2. Leaflets have been produced for providers to issue to service users when having discussions about their care delivery which sets out the 'new way of working' and addresses frequently asked questions. The leaflet also advises who to contact should they be unhappy with their new arrangements.

Background papers

20th March letter received from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG) setting out the funds that would be made available to Councils

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Kerrie Allward
Executive Director Adult Social Care

Date: 12th May 2020



Councillor Rose Martin
Portfolio holder – Adult Social Care

Date: 12th May 2020



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

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20 March 2020

Dear Colleague,

Local authorities are already playing a vital role in supporting our communities and local economies during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Prime Minister, my Cabinet colleagues and I are extremely grateful for this. I am writing to you to set out further detail on the Covid-19 emergency local government funding package announced today, and to confirm that my Department has now published guidance to local authorities on the implementation of the Expanded Business Rates Retail Discount 2020-21.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

You will have seen the announcement of £1.6bn of additional funding to support local authorities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding is intended to help you address the pressures you are facing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic across all the services you deliver.

In particular, this funding should enable you to do the following:

Meet the increased demand for adult social care and enable councils to provide additional support to social care providers. From what you have told us, we expect that the majority of this funding will need to be spent on providing the Adult Social Care services required to respond to the Coronavirus crisis.

CCGs will separately be funding additional costs of discharging and keeping people out of hospital, including social care costs - commissioned by the local authority unless existing local arrangements suggest otherwise. It is essential that 'boundary issues' do not cause delays. Therefore, we would expect the local authority to place an appropriate portion of the funding they choose to dedicate to adult social care from the £1.6bn into a pooled budget with the local CCG, to ensure that there is no risk of debates about which fund should pay.

Meet the cost of extra demand and higher business-as-usual costs of providing children's social care, including as a result of school closures and the need for increased accommodation to address the need for isolation, including for

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Paying for Community Based Commissioned Care During COVID-19		
Directorate	Adult Social Care Directorate		
Service	Commissioning		
Responsible Officer	Kerrie Allward		
Proposal planning start	Emergency plan commenced 23 March 2020 due to COVID-19	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	Retrospectively 23 March 2020

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Interim change to the way community based commissioned care providers are paid during COVID-19 – to pay providers against the value of service users support plan		
	Policy	N	N
	Procedure	Y	Y
	Guidance	Y	Y
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Y	Y
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	Commissioned	
	Other - give details	Interim proposal replacing current contractual payment arrangements	
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?		
	<p>In line with Government guidance and as part of the Adult Social Care's response to COVID-19, a number of measures have been adopted, to enable providers of commissioned care services to be paid in a way that supports their cash flow and sustainability. An Adult Social Care provider payment option was agreed by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care on 20/03/20, which meant domiciliary care providers are paid in accordance with financial values contained within individual service users' support plans rather than paid on actual care delivery as per the existing payment arrangement. The arrangements put in place to date are currently expected to costs an additional approx. £319k for a period of 14 weeks (23 March 2020 – 28 June 2020). This calculation is based on available data for the four week Covid-19 period from 23 March, which highlighted a significant reduction in overall care calls.</p> <p>The priority is to ensure as per Government guidance – community based commissioned care providers are supported in terms of cash flow and sustainability during this period. Thus ensuring our vulnerable service users continue to receive care to sustain their independence.</p>		

3	Who is the proposal likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes	Detail
	All	Y	All citizens of the borough who have received a statutory community care assessment, where it has been determined they have assess needs requiring services in the community within which they live. All staff who process payments to care providers will be required to change the way and the frequency of payments. Meaning payments will be paid at much greater pace. Systems development staff will be required to temporarily reconfigure social care systems to enable payment processes to temporarily change
	Specific group/s	Y	
	Council employees	Y	
Other (identify)			
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The vulnerable Adult Social Care service user group who receive community based services either directly commissioned through Walsall Council or via a Direct Payment by age banding are as follows:			
15	Day Care	18 - 65	
407	Direct Payment	18 - 65	
84	Direct Payment	66 - 75	
228	Direct Payment	76 +	
164	Dom Care – CM (CM electronic monitoring tool care recorded)	18 - 65	
130	Dom Care – CM	66 - 75	
542	Dom Care – CM	76 +	
43	Dom Care - Non CM	18 - 65	
40	Dom Care - Non CM	66 - 75	
131	Dom Care - Non CM	76 +	
269	Supported Living	18 - 65	
24	Supported Living	66 - 75	
7	Supported Living	76 +	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The vulnerable Adult Social Care service user group who receive community based services either directly commissioned through Walsall Council or via a Direct Payment by gender are as follows:			
9	Day Care	Female	
6	Day Care	Male	
394	Direct Payment - Client	Female	
325	Direct Payment - Client	Male	
540	Dom Care – CM (Care recording tool)	Female	
296	Dom Care - CM	Male	
132	Dom Care - Non CM	Female	
82	Dom Care - Non CM	Male	
104	Supported Living	Female	
196	Supported Living	Male	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The vulnerable Adult Social Care service user group who receive community based			

	services either directly commissioned through Walsall Council or via a Direct Payment by ethnicity are as follows:	
6	Day Care	Asian/Asian British
1	Day Care	Black/Black British
8	Day Care	White
133	Direct Payment	Asian/Asian British
30	Direct Payment	Black/Black British
		Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
6	Direct Payment	Other Ethnic Groups
5	Direct Payment	White
545	Direct Payment	Asian/Asian British
79	Dom Care – CM (CM electronic care recording tool)	Black/Black British
21	Dom Care – CM	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
8	Dom Care – CM	NULL
6	Dom Care – CM	Other Ethnic Groups
5	Dom Care – CM	White
717	Dom Care – CM	Asian/Asian British
12	Dom Care - Non CM	Black/Black British
3	Dom Care - Non CM	No ethnicity recorded
1	Dom Care - Non CM	Other Ethnic Groups
2	Dom Care - Non CM	White
196	Dom Care - Non CM	Asian/Asian British
33	Supported Living	Black/Black British
5	Supported Living	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
7	Supported Living	Other Ethnic Groups
2	Supported Living	White
253	Supported Living	
5	Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).	

Detailed engagement has taken place with all community based providers of commissioned care and with direct payment support agencies on the proposal to support their cash flow and sustainability during this COVID-19 period and to empower them to work with service users differently during this period to ensure care is delivered proportionality across our whole community based service user cohort.

There is ongoing engagement with our regional authorities to determine the approaches being undertaken by other local authorities in the payment of providers.

Engagement has taken place with Association of Directors of Adult Social Care to seek a steer and understand guidance being issued nationally.

Internal staff engagement has taken place for those staff who's work practices will be changed during this period, recognising this is now a dispersed staff cohort working remotely, which brings additional challenges.

Engagement and approval sought on approach being proposed and adopted via Gold Command.

Consultation Activity

Type of engagement/consultation	Affected staff engagement - face to face; conference calls 3 weekly conference calls to commissioned care providers Engagement and escalation of proposed approach through bronze to gold command	Date	Since 20 March ongoing Since 20 March ongoing Since 23 March ongoing
Who attended/participated?	Adult Social Care staff; Corporate Finance Payment Team; Community Based Care externally commissioned care providers (circa 65)		
Protected characteristics of participants	The officer participants are representative of the make-up of the council organisation The community based providers also represent the make-up of the local community and include both small scale independent provider and larger regional and more national providers		
Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provider feedback was overwhelmingly positive in response to the proposed interim change• Staff feedback was one of concern that usual validation processes would be deferred; limited timeline to mobilise all changes including significant system reconfiguration; concern the pace staff would need to work in order to deliver the refreshed payment timetable			

6	Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation			
<p>Continued routine engagement takes place each week; with briefings as appropriate and communication material issued to the market as required. The expectation was that providers would communicate directly with service users.</p> <p>Assessment and Care Management staff continue to engage with service users directly through safe and well checks – no concerns have been reported.</p> <p>Full Cabinet report and associated documentation that is linked directly to this EQIA.</p>				
7	How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.			
Characteristic		Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
Age		The intention of this interim change during COVID-19 was aimed at ensuring that community based service users receive a level of care, even though was unlikely to be at the usual level as per their individual care and support plan.	In addition to this during this period to ensure our citizens in receipt of community based care remained safe and well – a care call assurance exercise was initiated by our assessment and care management staff teams – so service user and/or family check in could take place.	
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage and civil partnership		It was anticipated that a number of service users and their families may decide to cease care during this COVID-19 period, making it more important that safe and well calls are conducted.	It was also intended that services users who contribute towards the cost of their care, would continue to make payments in line with the community based charging policy – meaning payment was against care received.	
Pregnancy and maternity				
Race				
Religion or belief				
Sex				
Sexual orientation				
Other (give detail)				
Further information				
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.			(Delete one) Yes / No
<p>This proposal is aligned to community based market supplier relief and as such aligns to wider organisational work package focusing on executing government directive on supplier payment relief. It is clear that individual providers of commissioned care should not profiteer from the current COVID-19 situation; however emergency funding has been passed down from central government to local authorities recognising an anticipated increase in spend by care providers to the value of 10%.</p> <p>Adult Social Care does recognise that our community based commissioned care market is varies in make-up from independent local provision, to regional and national providers of care and this in turn will have an impact on ability to be flexible in delivering care and financially stable. Adult Social Care recognises that payment by support plan will not benefit all provider equally, in part because different levels of scrutiny are internally applied to different sectors of the market. Adult Social Care accept this position of a disproportionate effect across a general market and we seek to continue with this</p>				

	approach, endorsed by all providers of care.
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?
A	A change required due to urgent needs
B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality
C	Continue despite possible adverse impact
D	Stop and rethink your proposal

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
12 May 2020	Consider and accept the EQIA alongside the Cabinet report and associated documentation the	To refresh as required		

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail

Use this section for updates following the commencement of your proposal.

Contact us

Community, Equality and Cohesion
Resources and Transformation

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Inside Walsall: [http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service information/Equality and diversity](http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service_information/Equality_and_diversity)

unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. We recognise the existing funding pressures on children's social care, and the additional pressures Covid-19 will make, and are in close contact with the Association of Directors of Children's Services. Furthermore, the Government is continuing to pay funding to local authorities for the free early years entitlements during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures, or where children cannot attend due to Covid-19.

Provide additional support for the homeless and rough sleepers, including where self-isolation is needed. This is on top of the £3.2m emergency fund announced on 17 March to help rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, to self-isolate.

Support those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, who may soon be asked to self-isolate in their homes for the duration of the pandemic. This funding is available to support initial costs incurred by LAs in their critical role in supporting those within the most clinically high-risk cohort who also have no reliable social network (i.e. who are both at high risk clinically and socially). The model for this support and the role local authorities will play in it has been discussed closely with the LGA and the 9 regional chief executives. We will keep costs closely under review.

Meet pressures across other services, as a result of reduced income, rising costs or increased demand.

We will pay the grant in full upfront, in line with the allocations set out in annex to this letter. I expect payments to be made on Friday 3 April. The grant will not be ringfenced. I will look to bring forward some other grant payments where possible to support cashflow.

I expect that this grant will cover all costs incurred in the first phase of the response, but we will keep this under review. To support this, we will be asking you to provide a high-level breakdown of how you intend to allocate this grant and we will send you further information on this in due course. This is purely for planning purposes, and to support our ongoing assessment of costs.

We will continue to monitor the costs of other schemes local government is being asked to deliver as part of the Covid-19 response. However, we must recognise that these are not normal times, and your support stepping up to deliver these vital services is both recognised and greatly appreciated.

THE EXPANDED BUSINESS RATES RETAIL DISCOUNT 2020-21

At the Budget the Chancellor announced that the business rates retail discount would be increased to 100% and expanded to cover the leisure and hospitality sectors, as part of the Government's response to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the 17 March the Chancellor confirmed that the Government would also be removing the £51,000 rateable value threshold for the expanded retail discount. I am writing to confirm that my Department has now published guidance to local authorities on the implementation of the expanded relief. The guidance has been shared directly with your officials and can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance

Given the importance of this additional support for local businesses, I would encourage you to do all you can to ensure that revised bills are issued as quickly as possible to qualifying ratepayers, to confirm that they will not need to pay any rates for this year.

Local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income associated with granting the expanded relief. My Department will be taking forward arrangements for payment of that

compensation, and for the provision of appropriate new burdens funding to cover the administrative costs of implementation.

State aid

I understand there have been questions from local authorities about the applicability of state aid limits to the provision of this relief. As set out in the guidance, the Government has notified the European Union of its intention to bring forward an immediate change to the UK's tax treatment of non-domestic property, in response to the ongoing Covid-19 emergency, and to seek clearance under Article 107(3)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Subject to this approval, the expanded retail discount scheme will become a notified state aid, which would allow authorities to award the discount ignoring de minimis state aid limits. My Department will communicate the outcome of the notification to local authorities as soon as it is known.

Nurseries

You may have separately seen that the Department for Education has also announced that to support nurseries, the Chancellor has decided that they will also now be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year. That means non-local authority providers of childcare will pay no business rates in 2020-21, from 1 April. Local authorities will also be fully compensated for the cost of this measure, and guidance for local authorities on the application of the holiday will be published by MHCLG shortly.

We will continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on local government, and would ask that any local authority contact MHCLG officials if faced with immediate unmanageable financial pressures.

Finally, I want to extend my personal thanks to you and all the staff working so tirelessly in local government during these difficult times. We must keep working together to protect and support the local communities we serve. We can get through this together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Walsall Proud Programme – Managing the delivery of the Walsall Proud Programme during the period of disruption as a result of COVID-19.

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Under the Council's response to COVID-19, the Council has reviewed the activities planned to take place within the Walsall Proud Programme over the next three months to determine those activities which can continue and those which should be delayed. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the Programme can continue to progress as best as practicable during the period of disruption.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Planned activities within the Walsall Proud Programme (the Programme) have been reviewed in order to determine those activities which can continue and those which should be delayed as the Council responds to the COVID-19 situation. Whilst it is possible to continue with some activity within the Programme, this review has also identified the potential impacts on the delivery of the Programme benefits, the most significant of these impacts being a reduction in the financial benefits to be delivered by the Programme in 2020/21.
- 2.2 The 2020/21 approved budget is predicated in delivery of £8.77m of cashable benefit from the Programme. As indicated above, it is anticipated that there will be a delay in the delivery of some of these savings. The minimum impact is expected to be c£2.15m with a monthly impact thereafter of £912k. It is important to note that the saving is still expected to be delivered, however it will now be delivered over two financial years, rather than one. The impact on 2021/22 is not yet clear, and will be dependent on both national and local factors.
- 2.3 The financial impact of Covid-19 is wider ranging than the delivery of 2020/21 savings, with significant additional costs predicted and loss of income from service and facility closures. A Covid-19 finance report is contained elsewhere on tonight's Cabinet agenda.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet note this update position in relation to the status of the Walsall Proud Programme that has arisen as a result of the Council's response to COVID-19 and its subsequent impact on Programme activities and benefits delivery.
- 3.2 That Cabinet note that this assessment is based on some key assumptions and that these will be monitored in the weeks and months ahead.
- 3.3 That Cabinet note that there will be a financial impact arising from this report, including a delay in delivery of programme benefits approved as part of the 2020/21 budget of £2.15m to June 2020 and £912k per month thereafter should the impact of lockdown continue. The implications of this and the Council's response to managing the financial impact is contained within a separate report on tonight's Cabinet agenda.

4. **Know**

Walsall Proud Programme

- 4.1 The Walsall Proud Programme is an extensive and ambitious programme of change designed to modernise the way the Council works and deliver improved services to customers. The launch of the programme in 2019 marked the beginning of a period of intensive activity designed to deliver sustainable improvements to the Council's existing ways of working and its long-term financial position.
- 4.2 The Proud Promise is a key feature of the Programme and is set out below:
 - Improve outcomes and customer experience
 - Improve employee satisfaction and engagement
 - Improve service efficiency and performance
- 4.3 A diverse range of activities have been completed in the first year of the Programme with transition to the second year of the Programme underway. For some projects this marks a transition into implementation requiring engagement with key stakeholders and the necessary capacity within service areas to implement change.

COVID-19

- 4.4 As with all public agencies, Walsall Council now has a key role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis on behalf of the residents of Walsall and in support of the NHS. In just a few short weeks, the Council has:
 - Issued over 300 IT items including tablets and mobile phones to enable more employees to work remotely to sustain front line services;
 - Introduced new software to support front line service delivery e.g. What's App for Business;
 - Designed new services to support the community response including providing access to the Government's business grant scheme, co-ordination of volunteers and working with community partners;

- Provided technology to enable call centre teams to work remotely ensuring continuity of service for customers answering 1000's of calls and responding to emails.
- 4.5 To achieve this, the Council has immediately redirected resources and prioritised the delivery of the crisis response activities. The Council is currently capturing examples of the changes made so far. Many of these are in line with the aspirations of the Programme, including introducing new ways of working, making the best use of technology, challenging existing processes and procedures, working in partnership and demonstrating the best of what our teams can achieve.
- 4.6 We are also finding new opportunities to support teams to work effectively in the current situation using tools and technology that we have brought forward and implemented as part of our new ways of working including MS Teams and Perform Plus.

Review of planned activities within the Walsall Proud Programme

- 4.7 The Programme is a medium-term commitment for the Council designed to deliver the Council's future financial sustainability and to enable the Council to deliver the priorities set within the Corporate Plan. As such, it is essential that over the term of the Programme we can still deliver the benefits aligned to it.
- 4.8 As part of the Council's response to COVID-19, we have undertaken a review of the activities planned in the next three months of the Programme to identify those activities which can continue (in particular where these support our response to COVID-19) and where activities need to be delayed. By conducting this review, we are seeking to adapt the Programme to the current circumstances whilst maintaining progress, even though reduced, towards realising the benefits as set out within the Proud Promise.
- 4.9 The following criteria have been used to conduct this review:
- **Care** - Employees and residents are already experiencing disruption to their lives and significant amounts of uncertainty. Therefore, the Council will identify and monitor the commencement and delivery of all programme engagement activities.
 - **Manage disruption** – The Programme leadership team will identify those activities which can continue over the coming months so that these can continue to progress towards delivering the Programme benefits where possible.
 - **Working remotely** – The Council and partner teams will work remotely and use the technology available to collaborate on projects and deliver outputs. Exceptions to this will be managed and the impact on progress monitored.
- 4.10 Given the dynamic and evolving nature of the response to COVID-19, this review has focussed on the period of the next three months. The Council will continue to monitor the situation and if there is a requirement to curtail or extend this period of changed activity, then this will be identified. The outcome of this review is set out in Section 5 of this report.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.11 The implementation of the Programme seeks to secure an operationally and financially robust future for the Council. This will enable the Council to continue to progress and achieve the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan.

Risk management

- 4.12 The Programme has an associated risk management approach. Risk is captured at Programme level and within individual work streams. This review seeks to identify and address the risk to the Programme and its associated benefits during the current period of disruption.

Financial implications

- 4.13 The 2020/21 budget is predicated on delivery of £8.77m from the Proud Programme, with a further £38.36m required to be delivered over the following two years from adopting new ways of working across the council, significantly enhancing our enabling technology capabilities, and improving our service efficiency and performance.
- 4.14 Following the review set out in section 4.7 onwards, an assessment of the financial impact has also been undertaken, the preliminary results of which are set out in Table 1 overleaf in relation to those work streams due to deliver savings in 2020/21 alone. It is important to note that these savings are still expected to be delivered, however they do have a one-off impact in relation to 2020/21. The overall impact is anticipated to be at minimum £2.15m, although clearly should the current Covid-19 situation last longer than the initial forecast, then this could increase by £912k per month.
- 4.15 In addition to the savings impact, there may be cost implications arising from the review of the Programme, for example in relation to costs of specialist interim support costs. A review of this is being undertaken by the PMO, supported by Finance, and any impact will be reported in the next update to Cabinet.
- 4.16 A full Covid-19 financial impact assessment and proposed response plan will be included within the Covid-19 and Corporate Financial Performance 2019/20 to 2021/22 report.

Table 1

Benefit Work Stream / Activity	Approved Saving 2020/21 £	Covid-19 Impact Delay in Delivery	Potential Impact / Delay £	Comments	Decisions Required
Adult Social Care					
Income Generation / Cost Recovery – Fee Collection & Debt Recovery	998,522	3 months	(249,631)	Current focus is on immediate Covid-19 response as opposed to debt recovery, however ensuring we have proper records in place so that when we do start to refocus on collection and recovery arrangements, we are able to do so, is a priority	N/A
Children's Services					
Customer Access Management Hub – Contact Centre	711,000	3 Months	(213,300)	Assumes consultation arrangements are delayed whilst a plan to re-engage with a primarily working from home workforce is put in place, resulting in an September go-live	Decision on timing of and consultation method
Economy and Environment					
Service redesign - Planning	476,000	Initial 2 months	(79,333)	as CAM	as CAM
Income Generation / Cost Recovery – review of existing fees and charges directorate wide (annual planned uplift)	249,040	3 months	(62,260)	This assumes closures of current facilities i.e. leisure centres continues for several months and that a decision to increase charges is not taken on immediate opening of these	Decision needed on timing of increases in fees and charges in consideration of impact of Covid-19 on users ability to pay
Income Generation – New Fee – Registrars change of name deed	10,890	Assumed None			N/A
Third Party Spend – Waste treatment and disposal	161,017	Assumed None			

Benefit Work Stream / Activity	Approved Saving 2020/21 £	Covid-19 Impact Delay in Delivery	Potential Impact / Delay £	Comments	Decisions Required
Resources and Transformation					
Enabling Support Services (Administration)	1,100,000	1 month	(275,000)	Assumes consultation arrangements are delayed whilst a plan to re-engage with a primarily working from home workforce is put in place, resulting in a January 2021 go-live (as opposed to December 2020)	Decision on timing of and consultation method
Income Generation / Cost Recovery – review of existing fees and charges	1,244	3 months	(311)		Decision needed on timing of increases in fees and charges in consideration of impact of Covid-19 on users ability to pay
Central					
Outcomes, Service Levels and Delivery Models – Service Transformation and linked to Customer Access Management Contact Centre, Rapid Process Improvement and Web work; and Resilient Communities	1,713,000	3 months	(428,250)		
Third Party Spend – Procurement and Contract Control	3,340,760	3 months	(835,190)		Decision needed on timing of start of any renegotiation of contracts in consideration of impact of Covid-19 on suppliers financial viability
Total Benefits / Savings	8,761,473		(2,145,998)		

Legal implications

- 4.17 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. If the reassessment of the project is agreed the council may need to consider if any contractual variations are required as a consequence. Where any changes to the programme have an impact on service delivery the council will have to consult in accordance with legal requirements and comply with its public sector equality duty through carrying out equality impact assessments.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.18 General advice has been sought from the Procurement Team, however at the time of reporting the exact procurement and contractual implications are unknown. Detailed procurement advice will however be sought when there is further understanding of the proposed changes. Any procurement and/or contractual matters associated with this report will be addressed in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules, Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Social Value Policy.

Property implications

- 4.19 None directly arising from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.20 None directly arising from this report.

Staffing implications

- 4.21 None directly arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.22 None arising directly from this report. Each Work stream is required to undertake appropriate Equality Impact Assessments as part of the development of relevant projects and associated activities.

Consultation

- 4.23 Consultation and engagement both internally with employees and externally with stakeholders and residents, are key activities within the Programme. Such activities must be carefully designed and implemented. The Council's ability to conduct these activities is constrained by the current circumstances and this has been considered during the review process. The Programme team will continue to keep this situation under review and will identify when such activities are required to be progressed in order to maintain progress within the Programme. Where it is not considered appropriate to progress, the impact of such decisions will be identified.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Using the criteria set out in Section 4 of this report, the Programme and each of its work streams have been reviewed. This review has sought to identify activities which it is anticipated will continue and those which will be delayed. This position together with the anticipated impact on delivery and benefit realisation is shown by work stream in Appendix A.
- 5.2 During the period ahead, work stream teams are working together to continue to progress planned activities where feasible. The completion of these activities will be monitored throughout the period together with the on-going impact of the period of disruption. The initial assessment set out in Appendix A suggests the following:
- 5.3 A medium to high impact on the anticipated financial benefits for 2020/21 due to constraints on planned activity in the following areas, as set out under the financial implications section above.
- Outcomes and service transformation
 - Customer access and management
 - Third Party Spend
 - Income generation and cost recovery
 - Enabling Support Services – Administration

6. Respond

- 6.1 Seeking to adjust the planned activity is a prudent response to ensure the continuity of the Programme during the COVID-19 period.
- 6.2 A further update is anticipated when the impact of the Council's response to COVID-19 and its implications on the Programme become clearer over the coming months. The Walsall Proud Programme Board will continue to meet virtually to monitor progress of the Programme.

7. Review

- 7.1 Progress against the revised work plans for each work stream will be monitored throughout and reported to Corporate Management Team and the Walsall Proud Programme Board monthly. This monitoring function is essential as it is unknown at this time how long the period of disruption will continue for. As well as routine monitoring, a fuller, periodic review will be completed in 3 months' time.
- 7.2 As part of the monitoring process, as well as identifying any issues with completing the tasks specified in each work stream, the Programme Team working with GOLD and SILVER Commands will also seek to capture, embed, and promote the positive changes in how teams work which have been delivered through the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis. This will help to ensure that such changes continue to support the delivery of customer experience, employee engagement, and financial benefits.

- 7.3 Routine corporate financial performance monitoring and reporting will continue to be undertaken monthly to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet, including the impact of Covid-19 on savings delivery, and the wider financial impact of our response.

Background papers

None.

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Deborah Hindson
Interim Executive Director
Resources and Transformation

19 May 2020



Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council

19 May 2020

APPENDIX A

Work stream	Summary of tasks to continue	Summary of tasks to be delayed	Estimated delay	Estimated impact
Outcomes and service transformation – all projects	1. Production of project documentation. 2. Internal and external consultation planning 3. Some service transformation planning	1. Consultation activities 2. Some service deep dive analysis and engagement activities	Up to 3 months	Medium
Customer access and management – developing the customer experience centre project	1. Complete business process mapping, operational scripts writing and development of training materials. 2. Planning for delivery.	1. Business process mapping and scripting for some service areas due to COVID-19 response requirements. 2. Organisational change process.	Up to 3 months	Medium
Customer access and management – rapid process improvement (RPI) projects	1. Complete delivery of existing RPI projects and document approach. 2. Continue with project team skills development and transfer.	1. Start of new RPI projects where resources are not available in service areas.	1 month and then review	Low
Customer access and management – web development project	1. Complete content sprints. 2. Complete COVID-19 activities. 3. Complete website information architecture and design specification.	1. Further content sprints.	1 month and then review	Low
Enabling and support services – all projects	1. Production of project documentation. 2. Continue with design activities in administration and IT.	1. Cross directorate workshops and other engagement activities if these cannot be done virtually. 2. Approvals	Up to 2 months	Medium

APPENDIX A Continued

Work stream	Summary of tasks to continue	Summary of tasks to be delayed	Estimated delay	Estimated impact
Corporate landlord – all projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Production of project documentation. 2. Continue with strategy development including capturing lessons learned during the COVID-19 period. 3. Continue with design activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation and engagement activities. 	Less than 1 month	Low to medium
Third Party Spend – all projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Production of project documentation 2. Identify savings due to building closures etc. 4. Continue with Contracts Oversight Committee and payment audit initiative. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curtailment of opportunities to implement quick wins. 2. Development and implementation of future Wave 2 and Wave 3 opportunities. 	Up to 3 months	High
Income generation and cost recovery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Production of project documentation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of new policy. 2. Implementation of some business cases. 3. Development of further income generation and cost recovery opportunities. 4. Current income generation as some services have been suspended or curtailed. 	Up to 3 months	High
Service productivity and performance – Perform Plus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roll out of Perform Plus technology to support prioritised services in remote working. 2. Continue to develop roll out plans. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wave 3 roll out. 	Up to 3 months	Low

APPENDIX A Continued

Work stream	Summary of tasks to continue	Summary of tasks to be delayed	Estimated delay	Estimated impact
Enabling Technology – all projects	1. Approval to enact review recommendations in key technology areas including payment systems.	1. Consultation and engagement activities.	Up to 2 months	Low-medium
Culture, Change and Communication – all projects	1. Complete project documentation. 2. Continue with Programme communications 3. Continue with Support and Challenge Groups. 4. Capture lessons learned and best practice examples as a result of rapid deployment of new ways of working.	1. Employee survey 2020. 2. Thrive accreditation.	Up to 3 months	Low-Medium

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Covid-19 and Corporate Financial Performance 2019/20 to 2021/22

Portfolio: Councillor M Bird – Leader of the Council (Lead Portfolio)

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on the impact of Covid-19 on the draft 2019/20 revenue outturn, the known and potential impact on the 2020/21 revenue and capital position and risks to the 2021/22 budget, and to seek approval for a number of actions and amendments to the 2020/21 revenue budget.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The council is playing an active role in the overall national response to Covid-19, including the administration of business rate reliefs and grants, supporting households through the council tax reduction scheme, supporting the care market and other initiatives. Government committed to fully compensating councils for the costs of authorities' responses to Covid-19 and has to date allocated £21.36m (£17.48m unringfenced S31 grant and £3.88m hardship funding ringfenced to council tax payers) of funding to help support those costs. However, as well as the initial costs of funding the council's response, the impact of Covid-19 includes significant loss of income following closure of services and facilities and Covid-19 has also indirectly impacted on the delivery of approved budget savings as the council has refocused its resources on its response to Covid-19.
- 2.2 This report provides a summary position on the financial impact of Covid-19 on the revenue position for 2019/20 to 2021/22 and the potential impact on the capital programme, based on best available data, including:
 - (i) A draft revenue outturn for 2019/20 of £242k *under budget*, after taking into account £269k of additional costs and loss of income as a direct result of Covid-19. This is subject to final entries and external audit.
 - (ii) Anticipated additional costs / loss of income of £9.51m to June 2020 (quarter 1) and £3m per month thereafter beyond June 2020.
 - (iii) Further risks of £1.8m per month.
 - (iv) The known impact on the 2021/22 budget and risks to that.
- 2.3 There is considerable uncertainty at this point as to how long the current lockdown and associated impact will last, however it is expected that, after the initial crisis is over,

the subsequent impact on the national and local economy and on public finances will have implications into the medium term, impacting the council's reserves and budgets into 2021/22 and potentially beyond. This will require Government to review the now delayed Fair Funding proposals (originally expected to be consulted upon over the summer) and in particular the quantum of funds made available to council's to ensure their continued financial stability.

- 2.4 In summary, the council is able to manage the financial impact in the short term, however should the crisis continue to have such significant impact in quarter 2 and beyond, then additional actions may need to be considered, including supplementary budget savings, should Government not fully recompense councils for their losses. During this evolving period, regular updates will be reported to Cabinet on the financial implications for Walsall council, including any recommendations for additional actions to be taken to manage the evolving situation.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note the draft revenue outturn for 2019/20 of an underspend against budget of £242k, after taking into account £269k of additional costs and loss of income as a direct result of Covid-19, noting that this may change as entries are finalised and that this is subject to external audit of the accounts,
- 3.2 Delegate approval of final carry forwards and transfers to and from reserves to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader (portfolio holder for Finance).
- 3.3 Note the additional funding allocated to Walsall as set out in section 4.4 and 4.5 of this report, and that this will be insufficient to cover the additional costs of supporting the Council's Covid-19 response beyond the short term.
- 3.4 Note and endorse the financial governance arrangements (Silver and Gold reporting) put in place to manage the allocation of funds and approval of additional costs during Covid-19.
- 3.5 Approve that new funding allocations, where there are specific terms and conditions directed to specific functions or services (such as the emergency funding for rough sleepers to self-isolate) will be passed through to these services, and will be managed within existing grant rules.
- 3.6 Approve that un-ringfenced allocations (such as the S31 Covid-19 Response funds) will be pooled and subject to existing finance rules, and administered by the council's S151 Officer, with additional Covid-19 related reporting to Silver and Gold Command and Cabinet, as set out in this report.
- 3.7 Approve that, as a contingency measure, any unbudgeted windfall income/grant is pooled to provide additional funds should they be needed, to be administered by the council's S151 Officer.
- 3.8 Note the forecast impact of Covid-19 to the end of quarter 1 (June) and per month thereafter as set out in section 4.13 and the reasonable worst case costs set out in 4.14.
- 3.9 Note the loss of income as set out in sections 4.15 to 4.18.

- 3.10 Note the £1.7m additional costs approved through Silver and Gold Control between 20 March and this report despatch date and approve the allocation of additional budgets as set out in section 4.20 and Appendix 1, funded from the Covid-19 grant.
- 3.11 Note the additional estimated costs to June 2020 as set out in section 4.21 and 4.22.
- 3.12 Note the estimated financial impact on the delivery of 2020/21 approved savings, as set out in sections 4.26 to 4.29 of this report and the potential impact on 2021/22.
- 3.13 Delegate authority to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader, to allocate unringfenced Covid-19 funds to manage the forecast impact of income losses, additional costs, and delays in delivery of savings, as set out in this report, once actual figures are finalised.
- 3.14 Note the potential monthly cost of Covid-19 beyond quarter 1, and that should no further Government funding be provided, then the council may be required to start utilising its general reserves during quarter 2 to fund Covid-19 costs and take further action to address funding shortfalls.
- 3.15 Note the additional financial and non-financial risks to the council as set out in section 4.34 onwards.
- 3.16 Note the potential impact of Covid-19 on the capital programme as set out in section 4.30 to 4.32.
- 3.17 Note that an update report will be presented to the next meeting of Cabinet.

4. Know – Context

- 4.1 Councils are operating in an emergency response situation which is unprecedented. The lockdown and associated measures are having a significant impact on the services that the council provides to its residents and services users and how it provides them, and has required implementation of a number of new support measures. It is unclear how long the lockdown and associated measures will be in place or the cost of Recovery. There are substantial known and unknown costs. Regular conversations are being held with MHCLG officials to identify the issues facing council's and seeking Government support to fund the full cost of the response.
- 4.2 A national Covid-19 Response Fund has been made available, however initial allocations are unlikely to be sufficient to manage the costs of local authorities' beyond the short term. The current advice from Government is to 'continue to spend', however this is without the certainty that costs will be fully covered by Government.
- 4.3 In the meantime, the council is still legally required to operate within a balanced budget, to operate within financial controls and to deliver approved budget savings. Inevitably, in order to do this and if Government funding is not provided to fully cover Covid-19 shortfalls, then council's will need to consider other actions short of, and in some cases, including issuing of S114 notices.

Government's financial response to Covid-19

- 4.4 At Budget 2020 the Chancellor announced a Covid-19 response fund, initially set at £5bn, to fund local authority actions to support social care services and vulnerable people; alongside the need for the NHS to treat Coronavirus patients including maintaining staffing levels; and funding to ensure other public services are prepared and protected. The Department of Health announced on 19 March part of this allocation, with further details and guidance being released over the last few weeks. The first tranche of £1.6bn, handed out at the end of March, was distributed largely on the basis of the relative needs formula for adult social care. A further release of £1.6bn of funds to local authorities was announced on 18 April, the allocation of this being based on population.
- 4.5 The following table summarises funding announced by the Government towards associated costs for Walsall in the management of Covid-19 with more detail provided in the following paragraphs.

Available Funding – as at 30/04/2020		
Funding source	National share £bn	Walsall share £
COVID-19 Response Fund – LA element (announced 19 March) confirmed and unringfenced	£1.6bn	9,609,338
COVID-19 Response Fund – LA element (announced 18 April) confirmed and unringfenced	£1.6bn	7,871,766
COVID-19 Response Fund – NHS element (TBC)	£1.3bn	c7,500,000
Hardship Fund	£0.5bn	3,879,239
Emergency fund for rough sleepers to self isolate (£3.2m)	£0.0032bn	4,501
Total to date, of which:		28,864,844
Walsall Council Funds		21,364,844
Grants to Businesses		53,554,000

- 1) *£1.6bn unringfenced grant to LA's to help respond to COVID-19 pressures across all services delivered.*

Walsall's first allocation was confirmed on 20 March as £9.6m, being un-ringfenced and this has now been received. The funding is aimed at:

- Meeting the *increased demand for adult social care* and enable councils to provide additional support to social care providers,
- Meeting the cost of *extra demand and higher business-as-usual costs of providing children's social care*, including as a result of school closures and the need for increased accommodation to address the need for isolation, including for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children,
- Providing *additional support for the homeless and rough sleepers*, including where self-isolation is needed. This is on top of the £3.2m emergency fund announced on 17 March, from which Walsall received £4,501.
- Supporting *those at higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19* who may be asked to self-isolate in their homes for the duration of the pandemic. To support initial costs incurred by local authorities in their critical role in supporting those within the most clinically high-risk cohort who also have no reliable social network (i.e. who are both at high risk clinically and socially).

- *Meeting pressures across other services, as a result of reduced income, rising costs or increased demand.*
 - Whilst the funding letter advised that MHCLG expected that the majority of this funding will need to be spent on providing the Adult Social Care services required to respond to the Coronavirus crisis, subsequent discussion with them clarified that it is for council's to determine the appropriate allocation of these funds, in recognition of the council wide impact of the Covid-19 response.
- 2) *A further £1.6bn was announced on 18 April, with Walsall receiving £7.8m, an 18% reduction on our first allocation, largely as Districts have been allocated a larger share of the total funds. This is also unringfenced.*
 - 3) *Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will separately be receiving funds to pay for the additional costs of discharging and keeping people out of hospital, totalling £1.3bn, including social care costs - commissioned by the local authority unless existing local arrangements suggest otherwise. This is to be used to support the waiving of social care means testing for care placements to work with care partners (estimated at c£7.5m for Walsall, subject to confirmation).*
 - 4) *£500m Hardship Fund for local authorities to support hardship in their local area. Although it is for each authority to make its own determination in respect of any hardship relief scheme the guidelines state that the government expects each local authority to reduce the council tax liability of each working age council tax claimant by £150, or to zero if the total liability is less than £150.*
 - 5) *Business rate reliefs, for which the council will be fully compensated through a S31 grant, estimated at £1.86m.*
 - 6) *Business rates grants - A cash injection of £10k to businesses that are currently eligible for small business rates relief and grants of up to £25k to retail and leisure business operating in premises with a rateable value between £15k to £51k. The council has received a grant of £53.55m. The Government has also stated that it recognises that implementing this new measure will place some additional burden on billing authorities and confirms that it will provide New Burdens funding for this, however the mechanism for this has not yet been published.*
 - 7) *Schools – Government has recognised that schools may face additional costs as a result of Covid-19 and temporary school closures and has stated that it will put in place a new process that allows them to reimburse schools for exceptional costs that they face.*

Draft Revenue Forecast 2019/20

- 4.6 Cabinet have received regular reports on the 2019/20 forecast position throughout the year, and the reasons for variances to budget arising primarily from demand cost pressures in Adult and Children's Social Care. The council has a good track record of managing financial pressures and action has been taken to mitigate these pressures as far as possible.
- 4.7 Table 1 below summarises the draft revenue outturn, an underspend against budget of c£242k, after taking into account draft carry forwards, transfers to and from reserves and the impact of Covid-19. The impact of Covid-19 is estimated at c269k, including loss of income of c£84k and additional one-off costs of c£185k.

- 4.8 The draft outturn is subject to final entries to be completed by the end of May and external audit of the accounts. Approval of final carry forwards and transfers to and from reserves is requested to be delegated to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader, in order to finalise the Statement of Accounts by the end of May.
- 4.9 The draft final outturn indicates an overspend within services, with a corresponding larger underspend on central budgets. The previously reported position to Cabinet in December 2019 was an overspend of £2.78m. The main change relates to movements in central budgets, including release of one off S31 business rates windfall funding received after the 2019/20 budget had been approved of £1.18m and a forecast year-end surplus on pension charges due to the application of a discount from up-front payments of £1.98m.

Table 1: Forecast revenue analysis 2019/20 by Directorate			
Directorate	Net Budget £m	Year-end forecast £m	Forecast Variation to Budget (Under) / Over £m
Adult Social Care	62.35	62.52	0.17
Children's Services	68.58	69.70	1.12
Economy & Environment	48.07	48.20	0.13
Resources & Transformation	19.76	19.36	(0.40)
Services Position	198.76	199.78	1.02
Capital Financing & Central Budget	(77.40)	(78.66)	(1.26)
Total council tax requirement	121.36	121.12	(0.24)

General Reserves

- 4.10 In being able to release these funds, the council is in a stronger position to manage the impact of Covid-19 in that replenishment of reserves will not be required, which would have created additional financial pressure on top of the unprecedented pressure the council currently faces in relation to Covid-19.
- 4.11 General reserves were £15.67m as at 1 April 2019, which has reduced to £14.09m following the earmarking for specific use during 2019/20 as agreed by Cabinet, including extending the opening hours of the recycling centres (£110k), one-off funding of the falls prevention service whilst a review is undertaken (£139k), home to school transport in year pressures (£560k) and waste recycling contract cost pressures (£773k).

Revenue Budget 2020/21-2021/22 and Impact of Covid-19

- 4.12 Council on 27 March 2020 approved a balanced budget. This is predicated on a number of assumptions that Covid-19 has now put at risk, including the following. Further detail on the impact of these is provided in the following sections.
- Collection of £127.5m of council tax income, with a council tax base of 71,550 households, and collection of business rates income of £74.6m.
 - Receipt of £41.89m of fees and charges to directly offset the gross cost of services and reduce the cost of services to the council tax payer.
 - Delivery of £8.77m of savings through the Proud Programme.

- Investment into services of £26.53m to fund pay, contractual and other known cost pressures.
- A minimum level of reserves required of £13.55m. As stated in 4.11, the actual level of opening reserves is £14.09m, slightly above that required.

4.13 The table below summaries the estimated financial impact of Walsall's Covid-19 response between 1 April to 30 June and for every month thereafter. Further detail on each of these is set out in the following sections.

Covid-19 pressures	April – June 2020	Per Month
Loss of income due to service closures / changes - see 4.15 to 4.18	2,941,243	976,963
Gold and Silver approvals for additional cost pressures - see 4.20 and Appendix 1	1,703,953	-
Forecast additional costs - subject to Gold and Cabinet approval – see 4.21	2,716,252	1,127,127
Additional costs arising from Covid-19 Delay in the achievement of 2020/21 approved savings - see 4.26 to 4.29 and separate Cabinet report	2,145,998	911,888
Total to date	9,507,445	3,015,977
Unringfenced Government allocation less 2019/20 Covid-19 costs of £268,942	(17,212,162)	
Balance of grant uncommitted by End June 2020	(7,704,717)	
Balance of funds uncommitted by Mid-September	0	

In addition to the general Covid-19 Response fund, £3.8m has been provided in respect of the Hardship Fund. See 4.17.

4.14 As set out in the table, the Covid-19 response fund initial allocation is expected to be sufficient to fund the impact of Covid-019 until around Mid-September (should no other pressures arise), however beyond that the council would need to start utilising general reserves. Should the impact of Covid-19 continue throughout the year, an estimated reasonable case cost of Covid-19 would be in the region of £31m. A reasonable worst case would be in the region of £47m. In addition, the council would need to replenish utilised general reserves in year or during the 2021/22 budget setting process, putting finances under even more strain.

Loss Of income

4.15 The council is facing significant reductions in sources of income, for example from currently closed services such as leisure and car parking and traded services income from schools. Given councils' reliance on this income, the ability to balance the budget beyond the short term will be extremely challenging, as whilst Government has made a commitment to funding the full cost of the crisis, it has not yet acknowledged the significance of loss of income on the council's financial position.

4.16 An initial 3 month impact is contained within this report, estimated at £2.94m, with a further impact for every month thereafter of c£977k. A summary is provided below. It is proposed to increase cash limited budgets through the use of the Covid-19 response fund to manage these, once figures are finalised.

Source of income Loss	April to June Forecast £
Economy, Environment and Communities	
Active living	1,004,293
Leisure Culture & Operations Arts and Events	251,452
Art Gallery	26,050
Leather Museum reduction in shop	4,961
Libraries	9,585
Markets	103,000
MOT income	43,325
Litter enforcement income, waste	29,902
Arboretum visitor centre, Grounds, Parks	79,555
Loss of licensing income due to trading restrictions	9,123
Car parking income – off street	33,000
Car parking income – on street	126,000
Staff parking permit	54,000
Parking penalty notice income	150,000
Various services provided - such as drop kerbs, scaffolding, licences, skip permits etc	88,895
Planning	225,000
Bus lane penalty notice income	64,500
Resources and Transformation	
Box Office Events	22,752
Paid school meals and curatorial services	111,754
Children's Services	
Traded Services /Other Income	209,196
Centrally Held and Capital Financing	
Other losses - investment interest	294,900
Total loss of income	2,941,243

4.17 Further to the above, there is a potential risk that the Hardship Fund of £3.88m will be insufficient to fund the loss of income from council tax. Walsall currently has 18,389 council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) working age claimants, so will use £2.76m of the fund to implement the guidance issued by the Government in relation to reducing bills by £150 for each working age council tax claimant. This will leave c£1.12m for the authority to determine its own principles and fund new claim as a direct result of Covid-19. Within 3 weeks, new claimant levels have taken up a further £300k of these funds. It is expected that the number of CTRS claimants will continue to increase, and that the remaining funds will be fully exhausted just on this measure. The government has not indicated if further funding will be made available for this measure where actual claimant numbers increase above the level of Hardship Funds received.

4.18 Additionally, we are currently assessing the impact on the collection fund of further claimants and or a reduction in the council tax base, including a potential deficit on the

council tax collection fund should the grant of £3.8m, as is likely, be insufficient to cover the costs of supporting our residents, which will impact on 2021/22 budget setting.

Additional Cost Pressures

- 4.19 On the expenditure side, most costs will remain. For example, the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme enabling employees to be furloughed, does not in the majority apply to council's as they receive "public funds" which are expected to be used to continue to pay staff. Indeed, there are significant additional costs associated with our Covid-19, including staffing, support to residents and council tax payers and businesses and support to the elderly and vulnerable particularly in relation to adult social care and children's.
- 4.20 Unbudgeted costs incurred or committed to date total £1.7m and are set out in Appendix 1. It is proposed to increase cash limited budgets through the use of the Covid-19 response fund to manage these.
- 4.21 A reasonable cost assumption of a further £2.7m of costs has been forecast until June 2020, with a further £1.1m per month thereafter. This includes:
- ✓ Supplies and services, including PPE, cleaning materials, deep cleans of various premises,
 - ✓ Supplier relief mechanisms to support our providers and suppliers,
 - ✓ Agency to cover sickness/self-isolation,
 - ✓ Additional social worker support, brokerage and administrative costs to support adult social care clients,
 - ✓ Continued support to our staff to work from home,
 - ✓ Support to ensure social care market provision, including the financial stability of providers,
 - ✓ Support to assist those who are in hardship / Hub based support – including food parcel/delivery provision and supporting our communities and community associations,
- 4.22 Costs in relation to adult social care, which may continue for some time, include the cost of maintaining market sustainability in residential and nursing and domiciliary care, as these are likely to fall on the council. A separate report is due to be presented to Cabinet and the figures in this report include a reasonable cost assumption in relation to supporting the social care market.
- 4.23 The additional costs of discharging and keeping people out of hospital are not included within this figure as these costs will be recharged to Walsall CCG and funded from their allocation of the £1.3bn fund to be provided by the Government.
- 4.24 Costs of recovery or "Reset" are not included in the above figures and would need to be covered by Covid-19 Government funds. A separate report is presented on 'Reset' on this Cabinet's agenda.
- 4.25 The council's cash flow is also under daily review, and is currently being supported by Government having made up front payments of the business rates grants and social care grants due to the council.

Walsall Proud Programme Savings

- 4.26 The 2020/21 budget is predicated on delivery of £8.77m from the Proud Programme, with a further £38.36m required to be delivered over the following two years from

adopting new ways of working across the council, significantly enhancing our enabling technology capabilities, and improving our service efficiency and performance.

- 4.27 A separate report on Cabinet's agenda provides detail of the impact of Covid-19 on the council's Proud programme. Planned activities within the Walsall Proud Programme (WPP) have been reviewed in order to determine those activities which can continue and those which should be delayed as the council responds to the COVID 19 situation.
- 4.28 As part of this review, an assessment of the financial impact has also been undertaken, the preliminary results of which are set out in the separate Proud Cabinet report in relation to those work streams due to deliver savings in 2020/21 alone. The overall impact is anticipated to be at minimum £2.15m, although clearly should the current Covid-19 situation last longer than the initial forecast, then this could increase by c£912k per month.
- 4.29 Proud savings delivery will be kept under review and reported regularly to Cabinet. A 3 month delay could be accommodated from within the Covid-19 unringfenced funds as this is a clear indirect cost of Covid-19. It is important to note that these savings are still expected to be delivered, however they will now deliver only a part year effect in 2020/21. Additionally, there may be additional one-off costs as parts of the programme are paused and then reset, particularly in relation to any specialist resource required to deliver aspects of the programme. Further to this, there is a high likelihood of a knock on impact to 2021/22, as resource, once the programme is reset, will be focussed on both delivery of 2020/21 savings and implementation planning in relation to the c£20m savings to set a balanced budget for 2021/22. This is currently being assessed.

Capital Programme 2020/21 and Impact of COVID-19

- 4.30 The capital programme approved by Council on 27 February 2020 totalled £98.36m. We are currently assessing the potential implications of Covid-19 on the programme, and will bring a further update once we have fully assessed these, including the impact upon;
- Potential delay in regional and national funding decisions such as the Future High Streets Fund, where decisions on funding approvals have been put back until after the summer, which may result in risk to the authority in undertaking the required land acquisitions
 - Impacts on funding conditions for example for growth deal and ERF
 - Impact on planned school expansions
 - Contractual obligations impacting on the delivery of agreed programme of works e.g. for example payment of any contractual compensation claims, which may result in reduced funding to deliver programmes of work
 - Revisions to the ICT programme to accommodate home working
 - A potential impact on the delay in assessing statutory disabled facilities grants and aids and adaptations – including a potential reduction in requests, our ability to deliver requests, and risks around associated grant conditions.
- 4.31 In addition to the above, further impacts are likely to include:
- Borrowing implications, with interest rates reductions, the authority is reviewing its investment assumptions and corresponding borrowing decisions, which are also affected by cash flow requirements from supporting the Covid-19 response.

- Capital receipts - ability to bring assets to market and uncertainty around valuations.

4.32 Discussions are ongoing with MHCLG about potential impact and areas where the Government can support councils', including:

- Removing conditions from grant funding for a period of time.
- Providing one-off additional funding to support Covid-19 related costs e.g. highways maintenance, ICT costs to assist in home working, similar to one-off grants previously provided by the Government for specific capital programme areas, such as for pot-holes.
- Provision of additional Covid-19 revenue funding to support the borrowing implications of any pressures on the capital programme.
- Or failing, this provision of supported borrowing funding.
- Considering extending the use of the flexible use of capital receipts strategy regulations, to allow capitalisation of revenue expenditure.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities

4.33 The councils financial strategy and annual budget process is designed to ensure that resources follow council priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Covid-19 creates risk, in that resources may need to be redirected to support the council's response, if Government funding is insufficient to fully cover both the direct (additional costs pressures, loss of income) and indirect costs (cost of reset and costs arising from delays in savings delivery due to the need to refocus on our Covid-19 response. Regular dialogue is being held with MHCLG officials to seek full recovery of costs.

Risk Management

4.34 The council is having to make decisions that have a significant financial impact without a guarantee that the costs will be fully compensated for by the Government. The most obvious financial risk is therefore that the council will, if is not fully reimbursed for all of its direct and indirect costs, overspend its 2020/21 budget, and deplete its general reserves.

4.35 The 2020/21 budget and level of operating reserves were set following a robust financial risk assessment. The level of reserves can only be set based on a set of realistically foreseeable or predicted parameters, and was judged to be sufficient for all but the most unusual of events. Due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the current economic condition, others to potential regulatory or national issues, which may have a local impact. A global pandemic was clearly not part of that assessment and therefore our reserves, should Government not fully recompense the council for all the direct and indirect costs of Covid-19, would be insufficient to provide a sufficient cushion to avoid an overspend situation.

4.36 The short term risk of this is being managed through close management and reporting of costs, loss of income, and indirect impacts such as the delay in delivery of approved budget savings. Whilst existing finance rules are sufficient to manage the current situation in the short term, it has been considered appropriate to introduce an additional process to ensure that, whilst allowing agile decision making, additional spend is properly authorised, monitored and managed. As such:

- Any new spend up to £50k is reported to Silver Control, Chaired by the Executive Director for Children's Services, with the Head of Finance, for approval.

- Any new spend over £50k is reported to Gold Control, chaired by the Chief Executive, via the Head of Finance, for recommendation to Cabinet. This also requires authorisation by the S151 Officer.
- Following Gold consideration, new spend over £250k were reported to the Leader for approval prior to 19 May and Cabinet thereafter.

4.37 A number of additional financial risks exist, which are not currently included in the above figures, with a reasonable worst case assumption being £1.8m per month (on top of those elsewhere in this report), including:

- Loss of commercial investment income - the council is mindful of the short-term ability of tenants to make agreed rental payments and has introduced a number of measures to support these businesses. A risk remain however that some business may not survive the current crisis, despite the national and local measures put in place.
- Loss of the council tax base and council tax income, arising from new CTRS claimants, over and above that funded via the Hardship Fund.
- Loss of court income due to Government guidance.
- Housing 21 voids
- Additional looked after children and associated social work costs.
- Loss of traded services income.
- Increased bad debts generally.

4.38 As well as financial risk, the council maintains a register that highlights key themes of organisational risk (this is not risks to the community from Covid-19 or Reset) which is reported to Audit Committee as part of their annual work programme. The strategic risk register contains the following organisational risk themes. These are under review, however it should be recognised that during Covid-19, these risks are high, even with the current internal controls and mitigating actions in place. A Covid-19 register is in development and will include additional themes, such as our ability to meet our statutory duties, staff support, and compliance with data protection and governance.

- Threats to the Economic Growth of Walsall are not identified and mitigated, together with opportunities for sustainable growth being missed.
- The Proud Programme does not achieve the outcomes required to ensure that available resources are directed to deliver the greatest outcomes for the community.
- Partnership relationships with other sectors and our major suppliers fail to deliver on shared objectives and therefore outcomes for the community.
- The Council is unable to maintain service standards to support the most vulnerable in society.
- External Changes in Political and/or legislative environment.
- There is a lack of community cohesion and resilience placing increased pressure on public sector resources.
- Failure to achieve the savings required or manage demand pressures to enable a balanced budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to be delivered.
- Reduction in public health and social care budgets are a risk as preventive services are lost causing increased demand.

4.39 In respect of decision making and governance, a decisive response to the Covid-19 pandemic requires that decisions are made at speed and without complete information, creating the potential consequence that decisions made may have unintended impacts that cause significant harm to individuals or damage to livelihood or property. This places officers and the organisation at risk of future

complaints or litigation. Whilst the Council has done what it can in providing enough information to ensure that informed decision making takes place, this has to be set in the context of the overall emergency situation.

- 4.40 The council has set up a Gold and Silver Control meeting structure to manage the impact of the Covid-19 crisis that meet on a daily basis in order to analyse and respond to issues and information that the council receives both on a local and national basis. In addition to this the council has provided advice to all senior officers regarding lawful decision-making in the current crisis, as a consequence of having to postpone all council meetings to follow government guidance in relation to the lockdown. The council is now rolling out virtual meetings following the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 coming into force on 4 April 2020. This will ensure greater openness and transparency in decision-making and allow for scrutiny of executive decisions. The council carried out a governance view in relation to council meetings in July 2020 to see whether or not further elements of decision-making can be reintroduced on a safe basis.

Financial Implications

- 4.41 The financial implications are as set out in the main body of this report. The total likely cost of Covid-19 is unknown at this stage. It is expected that costs up to the end of August may be accommodated within the initial Covid-10 Response Funds, however should all of the identified risks arise then costs would surpass these funds. The implications of that are set out in the legal implications section of the report. Monthly returns are being provided to MHCLG of high-level projections of costs, however it is unclear whether and how further funding will be made available and how this will be designed to reflect the individual circumstances and financial losses at an individual authority level.
- 4.42 In addition to the implications for the 2020/21 budget, Covid-19 will significantly impact on the council's reserve levels, with knock-on implications on the council's ability to set budgets for 2021/22 and future years. This remains under review. A specific assurance on the Government's plans to compensate for such losses would be welcomed by council's to ease this burden.
- 4.43 Inevitably, if funding is not provided to fully cover shortfalls, then council's will need to consider other actions short of S114 notices, including identifying further alternative savings options, and emergency budgets.

Legal implications

- 4.44 The council is required to set and operate within a balanced budget. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer (CFO), in consultation with the council's monitoring officer, to make a report under this section if it appears to him or her that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. In practice, this is most likely to be required in a situation in which reserves have become depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.
- 4.45 This mechanism, however is impractical and should be avoided, as issuing a S114 notice requires all non statutory spend to cease immediately, a situation which would

just exacerbate the current situation. Assurance from Government that it will cover all direct and indirect costs of Covid-19 is therefore essential to allow council's to manage their legal obligations and maintain financial stability going forwards.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.46 A number of goods and services, such as PPE, are currently being procured and procurement colleagues are working closely with services to ensure this is done in an agile, but compliant manner.

Property implications

- 4.47 Many council premises are currently either closed or open with restricted access to essential workers.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.48 This report is prepared with consideration of health and wellbeing implications.

Staffing Implications

- 4.49 There have been significant implications for staff and how they support delivery of services. Many are having to adapt to new ways of working, particularly home working. There are opportunities to review our future ways of working as part of 'reset'.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.50 The 2010 Equality Act lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges. The equalities implications of decision made during Covid-19 are assessed prior to decisions being made.

Consultation

- 4.51 The report is prepared in consultation with relevant managers and Executive Directors.

5. Decide

- 5.1 To approve the recommendations as set out in this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Following Cabinet's consideration and approval, the S151 Officer will ensure implementation of the recommendations.

7. Review

- 7.1 Regular monitoring reports will be presented to Cabinet to inform them of the impact of Covid-19 and the forecast for 2020/21, including an update on risks and impact on the budget for 2021/22 and beyond.

Background papers: Various financial working papers.

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Deborah Hindson
Interim Executive Director
Resources & Transformation
(Section 151 Officer)

19 May 2020



Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council

19 May 2020

Gold and Silver Control Approvals

Date	Approval	Additional Costs Approved £
Gold Control approvals >£50k		
06/04/20	Use of Computerised Tomography (CT) equipment for digital autopsies – to be reviewed after initial 6 month period (April – Sept)	95,200
17/04/20	Provision of a temporary site to accommodate people from Gypsy, Roma and Travelling communities (20 April – 17 May 2020)	30,000
22/04/20	ICT to enable business continuity – issue of approx. 100 tablets, 52 monitors, 20 docking stations and 225 mobile phones to enable staff to work remotely. £339k approved, of which £155k relates to 2019/20	184,975
22/04/20	PPE - Cabinet report approved by the Leader 23/4/20 - a rolling monthly sum of no more than £660k over 3 months (£1.98m) – <i>permission has been given by NHS England to charge PPE costs to Walsall CCG, therefore this is assumed to be net nil cost to the councils as at despatch date</i>	0
04/05/20	Support for rough sleepers, victims of domestic abuse and complex young people requiring rehousing (13 weeks)	136,485
Total Gold approvals to date		1,646,660
Silver control approvals <£50k		
15/04/20	Cemeteries – increase in burial standby payments, additional diggers and call out payments – April to June 2020 (13 weeks)	27,143
20/04/20	Family Safeguarding – delay in the implementation of the Social Care locality model over 2 months (04/05/20 – 01/07/20)	30,150
Total Silver approvals to 7 May 2020		57,293
Total Silver / Gold approvals to 7 May 2020		1,703,953

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Post lockdown: Resetting and Recovery of business

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios:

Services: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To think through the transition from emergency response to turnaround and business resetting in the immediate, mid and long-term future.

To develop guiding principles and a framework to position the new ways of working and innovation the council wants to capture and help frame reflections for resetting service delivery.

To set out proposed principles and considerations around governance and next steps.

2. Summary

The policy landscape post Covid -19 is highly uncertain and it is likely that the challenges facing the authority before the pandemic will be further entrenched and inequality increased.

This paper proposes a framework for transitioning from emergency response to business resetting and recovery. It sets out some proposed principles, and considerations around governance and suggests next steps which ensure linkage to the Walsall Proud Programme where appropriate. The paper also recognises the multi-agency approach to reset and recovery and the importance of working with partners as part of the exit strategy.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Support a two fold approach to the reset objective work, led by CMT, comprising:
- **Practical reset**

Retain: what we need to do to ensure vital services remain operational

Restart: what we have had to stop doing to focus on the crisis but now need to pick up in some form

Amplify: what we have been able to do that show signs of promise for the future

Let go: of what we have stopped doing that was already or is now unfit for purpose

End: what we did in response to the immediate crisis but is specific to the crisis

- **Proud reset** – how the Proud programme can be adapted to support the practical resetting of services , utilising and embedding aspects of learning / new ways of working and changes made during Covid-19.

- 3.2 Endorse the proposed reset framework, intended to guide our planning, actions and responses over the immediate, medium and long-term future that will encompass lessons learned and experience of good practice during the pandemic period.

4. Report detail

Know

4.1 Context

The council will be entering a fundamentally different social and economic landscape. The council's response to date to the Covid-19 pandemic has been planned and delivered as a crisis response. The council's approach going forward will be to rethink and reset what the council does and how it will operate as a whole system in a more strategic manner. A 'back to normal' response will not be adequate.

The consequences and impacts of the pandemic and aftermath will continue to be felt nationally, regionally and across the borough. The council needs to ensure that it is as proactive in it's approach as possible, taking best practice from others and benefitting from lessons learnt within the organisation and from elsewhere including nationally and internationally, where it is proven to be effective.

4.2 Principles

The framework will be informed by the following principles:

Reshaping and resetting

The council will seek to plan on the basis of a "build back better" strategy - the approach will be an opportunity to rethink, reimagine, reinvent and to capture the innovative practices resulting from this time of crisis and the learning where things could have gone better. The council will not be limited by an aim of going back to 'how it was' or 'business as usual.'

Outcome focussed

The approach will be informed by a systematic review of the impact of Covid -19 on service delivery and learning at service, directorate and cross cutting objectives level. The approach will ensure that the council is aligned to and feeds into the Walsall Proud Programme Outcomes, Service Levels and Delivery models workstream and council wide outcomes.

Building on our strengths

The reset objective work will utilise and build on the Authority's assets and opportunities and the good practice within the council and elsewhere. This will include learning to date at a service level, directorate level and cross cutting level.

Areas for improvement

We will set out in our lessons learnt, those areas of weakness where things did not go so well in. We will prioritise the areas that we know we need to improve our provision and /or resilience now and in the future which may become priority areas for service reset and or service redesign.

Medium and longer term

The emphasis will be on the development and delivery of programmes, projects and activities that address need and impact over the medium and long term and ensuring a focus beyond the short-term emergency interventions associated with the crisis.

Interdependency with Walsall Proud Programme

The approach recognises the interconnectedness with the Walsall Proud Programme (WPP) and the opportunity the current context affords to repurpose the programme, utilise the programme to deliver reset objectives, accelerate WPP activity and solidify / capitalise on the gains made through sustainable new ways of working.

Working with our communities

The council will reset and reshape with our citizens, partners, businesses and communities and will consider how to make this engagement with communities meaningful and aligned to increasing resilience.

4.3 Governance overview

CMT will be the reset board, taking responsibility for the strategic co-ordination of reset activities at service, directorate and cross cutting level. A reset working group, comprising representatives from each directorate, support services and the Proud Programme will report into and take direction from CMT.

The reset objective work will follow all council formal governance procedures and seek approval from the appropriate forums as and when required.

Strategic leadership and co-ordination of regional recovery and reset strategy development and delivery rests with the Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) formulated from the WMCA Programme Board.

4.4 Next steps: moving from emergency response to resetting

Appendix Item A outlines the proposed reset framework. The framework will guide the actions we can take to support our response in the immediate, medium and long term. Exact timings will depend on how the pandemic progresses and when movement and work restrictions are lifted. We will use the framework to develop action plans to assist the council to manage the transition from emergency response to service resetting.

The reset objective work will include representatives from all support functions and each directorate – it will meet twice a week initially to form 3, 6, 9 and 12 month plans.

These plans will be shaped by all lessons learned – things that have been done well, things that could have done better and proposals for activities that should restart, stop, continue and amplify.

The initial three-month plan will be focussed on assessing the impact of Covid-19 and feed into any refresh of the council's existing long-term strategies. These plans will evolve over time and take into account any national and regional changes as applicable and may have to include prioritisation appraisal criteria to ensure the council is focussing efforts where they are required most. Consideration will also be given to how the services will respond in the case of future lock lockdowns and the service responses.

These plans will be fed into CMT for approval and the relevant directorate for implementation (including the Proud team to ensure alignment to future ways of working and outcomes.)

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.5 The reset objective work is linked to all services and areas of the council and it will be planned and implemented in line with all ten council corporate plan priorities and the Proud Outcomes work stream.

Risk management

- 4.6 There are a number of Walsall Proud Programme interdependencies, which will need to be managed in order to ensure reset is planned in line with future ways of working. The reset objective work will ensure mitigation of this through implementation approach, programme interdependency mapping and ensuring the reset objective is closely aligned to the Walsall Proud Programme. (The reset objective working group will include representatives from the Proud Programme)

Risks will be regularly reported through governance procedures to CMT and Walsall Proud Programme board where applicable, including mitigations and escalations where required.

Financial implications

- 4.7 There are no direct financial implications arising from this reset paper at present. It is however likely that financial implications of recovery or 'reset' will be incurred as planning work results in implementation activity. Any additional spend would need to be covered by Covid-19 Government funds and would require authorisation through the Councils specific Covid-19 decision making process to ensure costs are properly authorised, monitored and managed against these funds.

Legal implications

- 4.8 Input will be sought from Legal services as required, to ensure the compliant completion of any changes required.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.9 Advice will be sought from Procurement to ensure that any contractual changes associated with the reset objective work are completed in a compliant manner and in line with wider Walsall Proud Programme plans.

Property implications

- 4.10 There are currently no property implications proposed. These will be reviewed in line with the lessons learned during this pandemic – formal approval for plans will include any Property implications.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.11 There are currently no health or wellbeing implications proposed – any implications will be considered during formal approval for plans.

Staffing implications

- 4.12 There are currently no staffing implications proposed. During implementation of reset plans, HR will be included within the group and consulted to ensure the objective remains fair, legal and compliant.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.13 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed. EQIAs will be carried out on any proposed change activity resulting from the recommendation of this paper.

Consultation

- 4.14 Consultation on any reset plans will be undertaken with key internal stakeholders to allow feedback and the identification of required amendments prior to seeking formal approval.

Any consultations related to HR will be completed if applicable at project level.

5. Decide

- 5.1 The options for how to set up and implement reset throughout the council have been discussed at both Silver and Gold command. Reset was set up as a separate objective due to its importance and requirement for a specific focus with the view to present back any plans for formal approval through the appropriate governance channels.

6. Respond

- 6.1 The reset objective work will lead to the creation of detailed plans for the next 12 months and these plans will be evidence based, consider the implication of any lessons learned, include regional, national and international best practice and any profound economic, environmental or societal adjustments required.
- 6.2 The implementation of these plans will be delivered through the council and where appropriate, partners and wider communities.

7. Review

- 7.1 The reset objective work and outputs will be reviewed both by CMT and where applicable, in line with existing Walsall Proud Programme governance monitoring and benefits realisation monitoring.

Background papers

Appendix A - Reset and Recovery Framework

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Helen Paterson
Chief Executive
11 May 2020




Councillor Bird
Leader of the Council
11 May 2020

Appendix Item A

Reset Framework

1	Context and scenarios <ul style="list-style-type: none">What does the council know already about what the impact is? What are the challenges the Council is facing and will face in the future?What's the exit strategy? Multiple future waves? What are the possibilities for the future?What are all of the factors we need to consider?	Reset Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">Business ContinuityProtecting the vulnerableCivic LeadershipHealthcare SupportMitigating Economic ImpactCommunications	
2	Look back <ul style="list-style-type: none">What worked well? How can the Council embed and strengthen those?What didn't work, what needs to change in future to make sure this doesn't happen again?Identify WHAT but also ask WHY that happened and WHY it worked - as well as understanding some of the HOW (enablers etc.)	Immediate future <ul style="list-style-type: none">How does the Council get services back up and running in the context / different scenarios for the future?How do services simultaneously address the backlog of demand, and shore up resilience for future shocks?How do we adapt and repurpose existing transformation to support this?	Forward look <ul style="list-style-type: none">What does the Council want services to look like long term in the future? <i>Let's think radically about this</i>What does the Council no longer need?What needs to shift dramatically?What gaps need to be filled?How does the Council adapt and repurpose transformation to support this?
3	Plan and action <p>How does the Council adapt what it does to meet these needs? What are the priorities and how does the Council prioritise? What capabilities and resources does the Council need? What needs to be done first? What lead time and therefore preparation is needed?</p> <p>How does this feed/change the WPP and our benefits profile?</p>		

**Walsall Council**

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

1



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

1

Cabinet –19 May 2020

Corporate Plan delivery – Q4 update

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

- 1.1 Provide Cabinet with oversight of the current levels of performance in the delivery of services aligned to the council's corporate priorities and outcomes. Performance is reported against a set of key measures that were approved by Cabinet in May 2019.

2. Summary

The Corporate Plan 2018-21 sets out the council's purpose along with the priorities that we believe will help to reduce inequalities and maximise potential. Routine monitoring of key measures aligned to the priorities and outcomes enables Cabinet to maintain oversight, celebrate successes and where necessarily ensure action is taken to address underperformance. This is the forth report for 2019/2020 utilising measures approved by Cabinet in May 2019.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet review and endorse the performance information provided in the appendix.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Performance measures relating to corporate priorities and outcomes were refreshed in readiness for the current financial and municipal year and were approved by Cabinet in May 2019.
- 4.2 There are 37 performance measures and an additional five proxy measures that are used to track delivery of corporate priorities and outcomes. Highlight information for the 5 corporate priorities is presented in the Appendix.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.3 Information relating to performance against corporate plan priorities is summarised above and included in the Appendix.

Risk management

- 4.4 There are no significant risks associated with regular performance reporting, however there is an increased risk of the council not delivering its corporate priorities if monitoring is not carried out regularly and does not receive ongoing oversight by senior managers. Effective risk management practice is incorporated into the planning of projects and initiatives that will support the delivery of the good performance.

Financial implications

- 4.5 There are no direct financial implications related to this report but the level of performance and whether we wish to sustain or improve performance is linked to the allocation of budgets and how services resource delivery. High level headline financial information is included in the Appendix.

Legal implications

- 4.6 There is no legal requirement to report progress against the corporate priorities, however doing so promotes good governance and transparency.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.7 N/A

Property implications

- 4.8 N/A

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.9 Performance related to measures that deliver health and wellbeing are included in the Appendix. Cabinet should consider whether reported levels meet expectations or if additional action is required.

Staffing implications

- 4.10 There are implications for staff in that their individual and team performance will help in delivering the priorities in the Corporate Plan, as per the 'Golden Thread' approach to performance monitoring.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.11 Delivery of corporate priorities and outcomes underpins the delivery of the council's vision that "inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised". Monitoring the delivery of priorities and outcomes directly contributes to the vision.

Consultation

- 4.12 The progress report has been informed via submissions from lead officers in directorates and key performance individuals within services.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Recommendations for Cabinet have been included in section 3 of this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Portfolio holders will discuss with executive directors any action to be taken following their consideration of the information presented to ensure the expected level of service delivery is achieved.

7. Review

- 7.1 Cabinet will be provided with quarterly monitoring reports to main their oversight of the delivery of corporate priorities and outcomes.

Background papers

[Cabinet report – Corporate Plan 2018-21 refresh for 2019-20](#)

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Deborah Hindson
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19 May 2020



Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council

19 May 2020

Corporate Plan delivery – Quarter 4 2019/20 Appendix 1



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE



Quarter Four Highlights

Ref	Outcome	Measure Number	Measure All measures are reported annually	Q4 outturn	Q4 RAG
E1	An infrastructure and business environment that supports job creation and accessibility throughout Walsall, supporting company expansion, relocation and competitiveness through sustainable job creation.	1	Number of jobs in our economy	111,000 (2018)	A
		2	Business start up rates	12.5% (2018)	A
		3	Business closure rates	12.1% (2018)	G
		4	Number of Businesses assisted / supported.	290	G
E2	Residents are supported to possess the skills required to enter into and progress in work, through the delivery of the Walsall Inclusive Economic Growth Programme.	5	Number of local people supported through Walsall Works	119	G
		6	Number of local people supported through Impact	464	G
		7	Number of people placed / supported into employment	107	G
		8	Number of Apprenticeships supported / created	15	G
E3	Our town and district centres offer a distinctive and vibrant mix of retail, leisure, business, community and cultural opportunities, and new housing.	9	Commercial floorspace (sqm) created per annum.	33,000 (2015/16)	Not provided
		10	New homes created per annum.	738 (2017/18)	Not provided

1. Total employment figures in Walsall for 2018 show a small decline from 2017. Data is based on calendar year. Walsall is still below national average based on population size.
2. Data is provided annually in November. Report reflects 2018 data from ONS shows that business 'births' rate in Walsall remains static from 2017 but there has been a fall in business 'deaths'. This reflects the national trend.
3. The Walsall Works programme engaged with 456 people during Q4, 57 of which were placed / supported into employment.
4. The focus of the Impact programme during Q3 has been on understanding areas of programme that have been underperforming (mirrored by all partners involved in the programme). This is informing the review of the Engagement Strategy.

Quarter Four Highlights

1. 100% of service users are in receipt of a personal budget.
2. There have been 39 new engagements with NEET adults of working age, with a disability or long term health condition have led to paid employment.
3. New engagements into employment services by disability have exceeded the local target of 10 per month. Between April 2019 and February 2020 there were 192 new engagements.
4. For delayed transfers of care from hospital, at end of January indicator values are 154 delayed days attributed to social care within the month, equating to an average of 4.97 delayed days per day. This exceeding tolerances set for period. Position at equivalent point in 2018/19: 152 delayed days equating to an average of 4.9 delayed days per day.
5. As at end of February approximately 87% of people discharged from hospital into a re-ablement pathway were still at home 91 days later.
6. The desired outcomes of 513 out of 531 people subject to a safeguarding enquiry were met.



Ref	Outcome	Measure Number	Measure	Q4 outturn	Q4 RAG
P1	Enhancing quality of life for people with care and support needs and those with long term conditions.	11	Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support and those receiving direct payments.	100.00%	G
		12	Total number of young adults in employment/education or training as a result of engagement with employment services (cumulative over year with breakdown of category if required)	65	G
		13	New engagements into employment services by disability	192	G
P2	Delaying and reducing the need for care and support.	14	Long term support needs met by admission to residential and nursing care homes per 100,000 population.	585.57	G
P3	People recover from episodes of health or injury.	15	Proportion of adults aged 18+ who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement / rehabilitation services	86.53%	G
		16	Delayed transfers of care from hospital.	4.97%	A
P4	The most vulnerable are protected from avoidable harm, including treating and caring for people in a safe environment.	17	Percentage of people subject to a safeguarding enquiry who expressed a desired outcome.	88.50%	G
		18	Percentage of people subject to a safeguarding enquiry who expressed a desired outcome where the outcome was fully or partially achieved.	96.61%	G





Quarter Four Highlights

Ref	Outcome	Measure Number	Measure	Q3	Q3 RAG
I1	Modern Services.	19	Customer Satisfaction with all Council Services.		
		20	The number of services available on online		
		21	The number of customers who engage with the council digitally		
I2	A resilient council.	22	Percentage of employee appraisals completed.	53%	A
		23	Level of employee engagement, who are PROUD to work for the Council and embody the Council Values.		
		24	The percentage of employees responding positively that 'I have the opportunity to maximise my potential'.		

1. Data capture for measures 19-21 are under development.
2. Annual Performance Conversations (APCs) are targeted to be undertaken Feb/Mar each year however this has been relaxed whilst organisation responds to coronavirus.
3. Measures 23 and 24 relate to Staff Survey which is planned for late 2020. Services will be monitoring any employee feedback / survey data obtained as part of the Proud Programme where it exists.
4. Activities within the Walsall Proud Programme, not represented by the measures identified are detailed in the Review of Achievements document.



Quarter Four Highlights



Ref	Outcome	Measure Number	Measure	Q4 outturn	Q4 RAG
Ch1	Children will be ready for school.	25	Percentage of pupils reaching a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception .	GLD 67.5% (validated) 2 yr olds that benefit 1,297, 72.7% (Spring Term)	A
Ch2	The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed and for all under achieving groups.	26	The gap between attainment for children who are eligible for Free Schol Meals and those who are not eligible (KS2 RWM and KS4 Attainment 8)	KS2 RWM EXS - 22.3% points 2019 (validated) KS4 Attainment 8, -13.4 points (provisional) Perm Excl Pri - 0.03% (10) Perm Excl, Sec - 0.20% (36) Fixed Excl Pri - 0.53% (142) Fixed Excl Sec - 2.68% (467) 2019-20 academic year (to date 31.03.2020)	A
Ch3	Right children looked after, for the right length of time in the right placement.	27	Number/rate of children looked after	Looked after at period end 674 (98.9 per 10,000) Starting to be looked after - 243 (35.7 per 10,000) - rolling 12 months to end of period	R
Ch4	Care leavers are economically active citizens of their community.	28	Percentage of care leavers in education employment or training (NEETs).	55.9% (this is based on 19-21 yr olds)	G
Ch5	Young People are prevented from entering the criminal justice system.	29	Number of first time entrants. - youth offending	22 (76.5 per 100,000 population aged 10-17)	G

1. Although there has been a fall in the percentage of two years olds benefitting from early education during quarter four, it remains higher than last year and is above target.
2. Data on exclusions is for academic year shows performance is equal to or better than target for all four measures.
3. The proportion who are eligible for free school meals who achieved the expected standard has increased from 42.0% to 44.0% but the attainment gap remains wide.
4. The number of looked after children remains outside of desired tolerance. Reasons for this are being explored to fully understand the increase and impact with a view to predicting future activity.



Quarter Four Highlights

1. Walsall's overall employment rate of 70 is below the national average.
2. Latest annual data (17/18) showed a reduction in the number of adults doing less than 30 minutes exercise each week, down from 28.7% to 27%.
3. 2 of Walsall's 4 sites for pollution tracking are compliant with National Air Quality Objective value.
4. Measures 34 and 35 are annual measures so alternative 'proxy measures' are also used. In Q4 20 food establishments received healthy food switch awards.
5. The target for EPC's has been achieved, work of this team has helped secure £100,00 of funds from government to continue work in this area.

Ref	Outcome	Measure Number	Measure	Q4 outcome	Q4 RAG
Co1	Enable access and use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation.	30	Employment rates.	70.0%	A
		31	% inactive adults doing less than 30 mins exercise weekly.	27.00%	G
		32	Utilisation of green spaces for exercise/physical activity reasons	203,231	A
Co2	Reduce atmospheric pollution to improve long-term health of the population.	33	Pollution levels (micro grammes per cubic metre) M6 Jct 9 Blowich Lane W'ton Road Woodlands School		
Co3	Ensure all children are a healthy weight.	34	Proportion of children in reception that are a healthy weight (annual measure)	20 Establishments* (6 Gold 6 Silver 8 Bronze)	A
				72.9% (2018/19)	A
		35	Proportion of children in year 6 that are a healthy weight (annual measure)	20 Establishments* (6 Gold 6 Silver 8 Bronze)	A
				72.9% (2018/19)	A
Co4	Housing meets need, is affordable, safe and warm	36	Total number of households in Temporary Accommodation per 1000 households		
		37	Percentage of dwellings with newly registered Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) that are in the lowest bandings of F and G (most energy inefficient)	2.34%	G



Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Review of Achievements 2019-20 Report

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: All

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The report presents draft Review of Achievements document for 2019-20 for Cabinet's consideration and noting. This is to provide an overview of delivery against the corporate priorities as detailed in the Corporate Plan 2018-21.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The report presents a holistic review of some of the key achievements during the 2019-20 year in relation to the council's Corporate Plan based on performance information and activity.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet are recommended to note the achievements as detailed in the Review of Achievements 2019-20 document attached as appendix and agree the publication of this document on the council's website.

4. Report detail - know

Context

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

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.2 The report is set out to provide key performance and achievements against each priority in the Corporate Plan.

Risk management

- 4.3 The contents of the report present no risks to the organisation, publishing information relating to the performance of council services provides clear transparency and supports the identification of risks.

Financial implications

- 4.4 There are no financial implications in relation to the Review of Achievements 2019-20. The achievements contained within the report align with the council's budget setting process and allocation of resources when addressing the needs of communities the council serves.

Legal implications

- 4.5 There are no legal implications in relation to the Review of Achievements 2019-20 report but publication of performance related information is intrinsically linked to good governance and transparency.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.6 N/A

Property implications

- 4.7 N/A

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.8 There are no health and wellbeing implications in relation to the Review of Achievements 2019-20. The Marmot objectives were a key consideration in the development of the Corporate Plan and corporate priorities which this report reflects.

Staffing implications

- 4.9 N/A

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.10 As an information report there are no direct aspects relating to reducing inequalities in this report. The corporate priorities support the council's visions that 'inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised' and our purpose 'to create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential' and reporting on delivery against the priorities underpins the council's commitment to reducing inequalities.

Consultation

- 4.11 All council services have been consulted in the drafting of the Review of Achievements 2029-10 report and have had the opportunity to inform the content of the report.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet are recommended to note the achievements as detailed in the Review of Achievements 2019-20 document attached as appendix and agree the publication of this document on the council's website.

6. Respond

- 6.1 It is recognise the Review of Achievements does not include everything that has been delivered and Cabinet can provide additional content for inclusion prior to publication.

7. Review

- 7.1 Delivery of corporate priorities will continue to be monitored and will inform future publications.

Background papers

[Corporate Plan 2018-2021](#)

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Councillor M Bird
Leader of the Council

19 May 2020

Cover document title: Review of Achievements 2019 - 20

Introduction

Like all local authorities Walsall has faced many challenges linked to national austerity measures but through our local and regional partnerships the council has retained a strong position that continues to be built upon. There is also the international challenge of climate change and fulfilling our responsibility to do what we can to reduce the negative impact from our activities on the environment whilst serving all our communities.

Reflecting on what has been delivered during 2019-20 in the context of our vision that 'inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised' and our purpose 'to create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential' provides an opportunity to recognise the commitment of staff and some of the key achievements of the last year. It also allows focus on the year ahead and ensuring we continue to focus on what matters most to the communities we serve as the organisation seeks to secure the future of services through an ambition transformation programme and the development of variety of service delivery models.

As this report was being compiled the world was battling the COVID-19 pandemic. In responding to this the council had to adapt planned activity to ensure essential services were maintained, guidance from central government was followed and cascaded and government initiatives to help residents and businesses were implemented in a timely and efficient way. Elements of this work have been added to this review although it is recognised that a full understanding and assessment of activity will not be possible until after the crisis is over.



Ref	Outcomes
E1	An infrastructure and business environment that supports job creation and accessibility throughout Walsall, supporting company expansion, relocation and competitiveness through sustainable job creation
E2	Residents are supported to possess the skills required to enter into and progress in work, through the delivery of the Walsall Inclusive Economic Growth Programme
E3	Our town and district centres offer a distinctive and vibrant mix of retail, leisure, business, community and cultural opportunities, and new housing

Ensuring there is an environment that nurtures the growth of businesses, attracts additional businesses and supports local people into training and employment opportunities is key to achieving economic growth for all people, communities and businesses. This is not something that the Council can do on its own or in isolation of the wider region. During 2019-20, through working with private, voluntary and public sector we have:

- ☑ We have worked closely with rail operators to progress the reopening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton line including new stations in Willenhall and Darlaston with planning applications now logged with the council.
- ☑ Advanced works in preparation for the £78 million complete redevelopment M6 junction 10 to improve the infrastructure for the borough including intelligent traffic signal technology installations along A454 and A4148.
- ☑ As the accountable body for the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, successfully administered almost £300 million of funding across the Black Country, with £100 million supporting regeneration activities and transport improvements that benefit the borough.
- ☑ Smart technology installations such as CCTV, Variable Message Signs and Journey Time Monitoring. This will allow for real time monitoring of the network, improving local network resilience and driver information. There have also been upgrades to traffic signal technology and significant junction improvements at Mellish Road Roundabout and Hatherton Street.
- ☑ Agreed a visionary Walsall Town Centre Masterplan together with a 6 month action plan to make our town centre cleaner and safer - responding to what residents and visitors told us during consultation. To support the Masterplan's delivery we are pursuing Future High Streets Funding and LEP and Combined Authority money to deliver our ambitions for our town, focused on the Prominent Rail Station and Connected Hubs elements of the Masterplan.

- ☑ Commenced the procurement and delivery of the Willenhall Master Plan with a focus on housing delivery as part of the Walsall to Wolverhampton Growth Corridor.
- ☑ Completed the £9 million Wisemore Central scheme including a new 60-bed Travelodge, the Explore Learning tuition centre and retail / commercial space.
- ☑ Multi-million pound investment has been secured to support the remediation of the Phoenix 10 site which will deliver 57,575sqm employment floorspace and circa 1100 new jobs once completed.
- ☑ Secured almost £1million EU funding to deliver the Black Country Community Grants Programme and through the first round 23 grants were offered to Walsall CVS groups. This totalled £228,479 of support that directly benefited 414 local residents to undertake activities to move them closer to achieving their economic goals.
- ☑ Through various schemes supported approximately 500 people into employment and an additional 1,000 into improving their employability through the Walsall Works and Black Country Impact Programmes, with the number of businesses committing to supporting local people to access jobs and training rising to 1,000.
- ☑ Supported young people and adults with a range of disabilities to secure work experience as part of time limited paid introduction to work or as part of voluntary work placements within the adult provider resources.
- ☑ Expanded the role and remit of the successful private sector-led Walsall Economic Board, to include steering the development of the Town Deals for Bloxwich and Walsall. Our Town Board could lever an additional £50million of government investment into these areas to help with their economic growth.
- ☑ Developed a business case to promote the delivery of a lottery bid that supports the inclusion and development of Community partnerships to maximise the use of third sector resource for young people and adults with disabilities. -aspiration to deliver jobs, work experience and universal resource as part of the proposal.
- ☑ Worked on a number of schemes to develop new homes in the borough including securing £9.7 million investment, in collaboration with the WMCA and BC LEP, to deliver approximately 603 new homes on the former Caparo, Goscote Works and Harvestime Bakey sites; construction of 407 new homes commenced on the former Goscote estate, which will include 126 affordable properties and 205 new homes at Wards Keep and Heathfield Lane West.
- ☑ Re-energised the *Rethinking Parks* project so that it now delivers a set of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sponsorship Packages, providing businesses the opportunity to invest in parks and green spaces in Walsall.
- ☑ Delivered a pilot scheme to Walsall Town Centre and Beechdale working in a more intense and targeted way to improve and maintain the environment to help businesses and communities to thrive. The approach involves working with

partners, businesses and communities to deliver improvements to the environment. Examples include working with property owners and Community Payback on graffiti removal and a mixed service approach the lease to a piece of land which was subject to fly tipping was terminated and the site secured to prevent recurrence.

- ☑ To the end of February 2020, over 180 fly tipping incidents captured on dedicated CCTV cameras have been investigated by Community Protection Officers. Resulting in, 37 FPNs issued and 4 court appearances. Two fly tippers identified through “Walsall’s Most Wanted”. Community Protection Officers investigating fly tipping featured in the Christmas Special of Channel 5’s “Grime & Punishment”.
- ☑ During COVID-19 we shifted the focus of our support to residents looking for work to align them with the opportunities in retail and distribution that arose as part of the response to coronavirus. The council also facilitated the issue of business rate relief grants and the council tax relief processes to maximise the take up in Walsall of the national schemes.



Ref	Outcomes
P1	Enhancing quality of life for people with care and support needs and those with long term conditions
P2	Delaying and reducing the need for care and support
P3	People recover from episodes of health or injury
P4	The most vulnerable are protected from avoidable harm, including treating and caring for people in a safe environment

People being able to live independently and improve their personal health and wellbeing enables them to positively contribute to their communities and local economy. Responsibility for the health and wellbeing of people is shared across a number of key partners such as Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Walsall Healthcare NHS trust and agencies such as Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Achievements in 2019-20 include:

- ☑ Implementing a new Strengths Based Approach in adult social care to improve outcomes for adults with care and support needs and their families. The introduction of the '3 conversations' model as a strengths-based innovative to needs assessment and care planning focuses primarily on people's strengths and community assets.
- ☑ Maximising the use of corporate assets such as Goscote centre to enable co-location of Children with Disabilities and SEND with Learning Disabilities promoting wider partnership working and encouraging more local conversations with health colleagues to develop all age approach.
- ☑ Progressing the discussion and arrangements for the Walsall Together Partnership, focussing on the integration of services across the borough.
- ☑ Development of the All Age Disability (AAD) hub, focussing on statutory and none statutory functions to promote independence and reduce reliance on long term social care where this is possible. This approach builds the relationships and interdependencies across the younger person's health, education and social care needs by jointly thinking how we can deliver key messages that affect the lives and wellbeing of younger people preparing for adulthood to enable them to thrive.

- ☑ Working with young people and their families to co-design the resources for younger people moving into adulthood.
- ☑ Investing in the Care Quality Team to support providers to improve on the quality of service in Walsall.
- ☑ Increasing nursing bed capacity within the Borough to meet increased demand and support discharges from the local acute service.
- ☑ Providing employment support to 172 people who presented with a health barrier or learning difficulty, including poor mental health, physical disability, dyslexia or dyspraxia through our Walsall Works programme. 35% of the young people engaged in the Black Country Impact programme declared a disability or health issue.
- ☑ Delivering a range of public awareness campaigns to assist self care including:
 - Cook and eat sessions
 - Let's Talk about Suicide Prevention leaflets
 - Stay Safe with Medicines
 - Procurement of Integrated Drug and Alcohol service
- ☑ Progressing the Making Connections Walsall (MCW) approach which has fostered genuine partnerships including with statutory services. A strategic aim of this initiative was to develop the provider sector and service hubs have grown in knowledge and confidence and developed links with a wide range of charities, services and wider organisations. Their knowledge of local services has been praised. In addition the funding invested in grass-roots organisations has provided new activities for clients and the wider community. This was an essential element of the response to COVID-19 in getting support to vulnerable residents.
- ☑ Protected the most vulnerable through covert enforcement operations to ensure taxi and private hire drivers are carrying users of wheelchairs and people supported by assistance dogs properly. One driver was convicted in court for failing to carry a passenger in a wheelchair securely and was ordered to pay £980 and 3 points added to his driving licence.
- ☑ As part of the council's response to COVID-19 we worked with colleagues in health services, care homes and care providers to ensure the continual delivery of quality services and the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers.



Ref	Outcomes
I1	Modern services
I2	A resilient council

The development of resilient and modernised services and service delivery models is key to ensuring all council services are efficient and effective. Significantly our ambitious Walsall Proud Programme is transforming the way we work to:

- Improve outcomes and customer experience
- Improve employee satisfaction and engagement
- Improve service efficiency and performance.

A number of achievements have been delivered in 2019-20 including:

- ☑ A balanced budget for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to address reductions in government funding, whilst providing significant service revenue and capital investment and an appropriate level of reserves.
- ☑ Attracting additional funding in excess of £3 million through developing detailed financial modelling for bids to set up Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) initiatives.
- ☑ Co-located adult social care teams in localities with other health and care professionals to provide more streamlined services in community settings. Similarly we have strengthened locality working by aligning children social work teams and virtually aligning other areas, to existing Early Help and partnership localities to improve community focus and provide a more joined up, solutions-focussed offer to children and families.
- ☑ Implementing the Perform+ approach in key front line services to improve service efficiency and responsiveness with plans to roll out further across more services.
- ☑ The use of more technologies to enable more flexible working to better serve customers. We are modernising our IT services to increase availability and improve resilience so we can better meet the needs of our customers.

- ☑ Launched the newsroom webpage to improve communications with customers and provide a platform to increase and promote news. This also provides media with opportunity to track news without having to submit an enquiry.
- ☑ Increased income generation by increasing the range of services offered by the Register Office.
- ☑ Modernised services for customers and delivered a number of improvements including:
 - Making it easier for people to claim council tax reduction with 80% of applications now received on-line, speeding up the process
 - New online functionality for Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit has increased the opportunities for customers to interact with the council when convenient to them. This has seen a 30% in the last six months in the use of online facilities.
 - Dealing with housing benefit applications quicker than the national average (11 days compared to 17 days nationally) meaning residents are less likely to fall into rent arrears. Changes in entitlement to housing benefit are also managed quicker than the national average.
- ☑ A rolling programme of testing of Business Continuity Plans has provided assurance that services are well prepared; to be a resilient council it is important that there are effective arrangements to continue service delivery in a host of potential situations.
- ☑ Strengthening our Apprenticeship Programme with currently 394 staff (Corporate – 226, Schools – 168) accessing our Apprenticeship Levy, spent on improving the skills / qualifications of the workforce, ensuring they are fit for the future.
- ☑ Launched the Mental Health First Aider Scheme and have 40 individuals engaged in providing mental health support to employees experiencing a mental health episode. These mental health first aiders were key to supporting staff mental health and well-being during the response to coronavirus.
- ☑ Launched initial alcohol and drugs testing sessions which have been well received by managers and employees. The programme of random testing will now continue on an ongoing basis with the option for managers to be able to request one-off testing of individuals in cases of cause and suspicion.
- ☑ In improving services the council has received national recognition in a number of areas, including:
 - Securing the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) innovation award in collaboration with Tarmac and their service delivery partner Kaarobontech.
 - Winning the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) award for our Welfare and Housing Benefits service.
 - Winning an award at the British Parking Awards for our leading work in partnership with Penham Excel to remove untaxed vehicles from the borough's roads – improving the safety of Walsall and helping to disrupt and reduce crime.

- Adaptations team were winners of the Technical Officer of the Year award.
 - Awarded Corner Stone Employer status by the Black Country Careers Hub for our Apprenticeship Programme for our commitment to helping young people reach their full potential, promoting social mobility and supporting equal opportunities for all.
- ☒ Our enabling technology workstream plans were fast tracked to enable remote working for whole workforce so to comply with government guidance regarding essential only travel and social distancing whilst also prioritising customer access to essential services.



Ref	Outcomes
Ch1	Children will be ready for school
Ch2	The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed for all under achieving groups
Ch3	Right children looked after, for the right length of time in the right placement
Ch4	Care leavers are economically active citizens of their community
Ch5	Young people are prevented from entering the criminal justice system

Children that have the best start in life, are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well are more likely to achieve their potential and we are committed to providing opportunities for children to aspire and achieve. Key achievements during 2019-20 include:

- ☒ Ensuring that parents, children and families have the opportunity to be involved in decision making and service design and that our young people's achievements are celebrated by:
 - Holding our 'Big Conversation' with parents, children and families, to gather their feedback and ensure that their voices are heard as we transform our services.
 - Encouraging and enabling young people to be engaged and consulted when senior appointments are made.
 - Holding our 'Excellent Night Out' event for children in care.
- ☒ Increased the number of 2 year-olds accessing early education by encouraging and supporting parents to identify and access suitable provision. Around 80% of eligible children now benefit from early education which will help to ensure that they develop the skills needed to be 'school ready' when they begin their formal education.
- ☒ Supported our more vulnerable children to improve their education outcomes. At key stage 2, the gap for the percentage of children who achieve the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths has reduced by:
 - 2% points between children who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not
 - 3% points between children who are in receipt of SEN Support and those who are not
 - 4% points between children who are in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan and those who are not.
- ☒ Developing the Keep In Touch Programme to provide support to vulnerable children and young people throughout the school holidays.

- ☑ Secured a place on the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme to implement the Family Safeguarding Model. This will significantly enhance our locality model, improving the services and support we are able to offer to children and families in Walsall.
- ☑ Received positive feedback from a focussed two-day Ofsted visit in October 2019 which looked at the quality and impact of services offered at the front door. It concluded that *“The quality of work in responding effectively to contacts has improved since the last inspection in 2017. This is positive for children and families in Walsall, who receive a timely response to initial identified needs and concerns”*.
- ☑ Launched Turning Point – our specialist provision to support adolescent with complex needs and prevent them from coming into care. This service has been developed in close partnership with young people to ensure that it is focussed on meeting their needs.
- ☑ Continued to ensure that outcomes for Care Leavers improve with:
 - Over 60% of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training – higher than the national average.
 - 10% of Walsall’s care leavers go onto higher education compared with just 6% nationally
 - Over 40% of carers remain living with their foster carers after the age of 18 ensuring that they continue to benefit from stability and support.
- ☑ Reduced the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System through our partnership between our Youth Justice Service and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit and established a ‘place based’ violence reduction pilot through working closely with our partners Walsall Police and Walsall College.
- ☑ Launched the *Don’t hurt the one you love* campaign at Walsall College to encourage young people to drive safely and responsibly with passengers in their car and for passengers to speak out if they feel unsafe in a vehicle being driven dangerously.
- ☑ Supporting the development of the Safeguarding agendas inclusive of exploitation, financial abuse and working groups that support and promote the message that Safeguarding is everyone’s business.
- ☑ Working with the home to school transport team, 23 vehicles were checked. 17 were fully compliant and advice and cautions were issued for a range of minor breaches.
- ☑ 2 multi-agency operations were carried out to ensure the safety of our young people attending schools’ proms events. As well as some vehicle defects, officers warned the driver of an ice-cream van about its unsuitability to transport passengers.
- ☑ During COVID-19 we continued to support our most vulnerable children utilising IT software and solutions to maintain contact with them, enable contact with families and continued to manage case conferences.



Ref	Outcomes
Co1	Enable access and use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation
Co2	Reduce atmospheric pollution to improve long-term health of the population
Co3	Ensure all children are a healthy weight
Co4	Housing provision matches local need and reduces homelessness

Our varied, strong and vibrant communities are the basis of why Walsall is the place it is and we are committed to working with these communities to continue to build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion. In 2019-20 we have:

- ☒ Facilitate a range of activities in our green spaces across the borough, including our 7 Green Flag status parks and greenspaces, to encourage people to be active and get healthy. These include:
 - Park Runs
 - Nordic Walking Programmes
 - Adventure Walks
 - 4 new health walks
 - Couch to 5k jogs
- ☒ Through the One You Walsall Healthy Lifestyle Service we have managed over 4000 referrals with the majority of individuals achieving a positive change in their health. We are also supporting 24 businesses to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees.
- ☒ Food for Life (Healthy eating in schools programme) are now working with large numbers of early years settings and primary schools to embed healthy eating into the school/nursery day and encourage communities to grow and prepare healthy food.
- ☒ Working with the CCG and West Midlands Fire Service launched smoke-free homes initiative highlighting the hidden dangers of smoking indoors, the dangers of second-hand smoke and the risk of house fires.
- ☒ Facilitated annual Sha'ban event for members of the Muslim community. This event entails a gathering of community members at Streetly Cemetery after sunset to carry out a full evening of prayers for their departed loved ones.

- ☑ Clean and Green improved the quality of the environment across the borough by increasing the frequency of weed spraying and grass cutting on verges and large open spaces, and adding to the provision for arboriculture work.
- ☑ Extended the services offered by the Register Office to include EU Settlement Scheme, which allows European nationals living in the UK to apply for settled status and 'Opposite sex Civil Partnerships, enhancing the range of choices for formalising partnerships available to our residents.
- ☑ Through the Homeless Night Shelter, with support from volunteers, supported 26 individuals to be re-housed and 2 individuals have been assisted to reconnect with their own area.
- ☑ Built on the use of the Lichfield Street Hub, a Grade II listed Edwardian building formerly known as the Central Library following completion of a sensitive £4.56m renovation. The Hub offers a diverse range of activities for Walsall residents and communities from 'Tiny Tots' to Walsall Works Job Clubs to mindfulness colouring groups.
- ☑ Raised fine levels for all environmental crime in the borough together with an active campaign against flytipping, with fixed penalty notices and prosecutions clamping down on those who choose to break the law and blight our communities.
- ☑ Reduced charges for bulky waste collection and opened both household waste and recycling centres for 7 days a week to assist the lawful disposal of waste.
- ☑ Set out how the council and partners will seek to improve the housing offer in Walsall over the next 5 years, with the adoption of Walsall's Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025. It provides a focus on new and energy efficient homes, integrated and resilient communities, independent living and preventing homelessness, and tackling rogue landlords.
- ☑ Fully modernised our Homelessness services, enabling over 240 homelessness preventions, and over 300 reliefs whilst also working towards an end to street homelessness through
 - Reducing rough sleeping by 45%,
 - Leading the West Midlands with the Housing First initiative which provides rough sleepers with a home of their own and as much support as needed, with over 50 people housed and supported,
 - Developing and launching an Alternative Giving Scheme, to enable public and business donations to help rough sleepers
- ☑ Worked to ensure stability for our residents threatened with homelessness:
 - minimising the number of households placed in Temporary Accommodation, averaging 0.8 households per 1000 households, which is well below the national average,
 - reduced the number of homeless families placed in bed and breakfast to 0 in March 2020,

- successfully piloting dispersed Temporary Accommodation to help provide a more modern service for our families who find themselves homeless, with 5 additional pilot homes provided by the Council and partners
- ☑ Completed over 700 property adaptations to enable our residents to remain in their own home and live independently for as long as possible.
- ☑ Worked with energy partners to provide 1000 energy efficiency measures ranging from central heating systems to smaller works such as draught proofing to keep our residents safe and warm.
- ☑ Agreed the Safer Walsall Partnership Plan with its '20-20 vision' to tackle crime and disorder and create a safer Walsall, aspiring for strong and resilient communities where people are safer from harm and feel they belong.
- ☑ During the COVID-19 pandemic with One Walsall and our four locality hubs we co-ordinated the volunteer and community response, providing support to thousands of vulnerable residents, everything from befriending and support with shopping to providing food parcels.

Cabinet – 19 May 2020

Internal Audit & Risk Management Service Contract Award

Portfolio: Councillor Bird, Leader of the Council

Related portfolios: All

Service: Finance – Council Wide

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Provision of an internal audit and risk management service that supports the statutory requirements of the council's Section 151 officer and acts as an independent, objective assurance designed to add value and improve the council's operations by providing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of control and governance and risk management processes.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 specifies that 'every local authority will make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs' with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 requiring councils to 'undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes.'
- 2.2 Whilst these regulations do not stipulate how the council should provide these services, effective internal audit and risk functions require a diversity of skills that local authorities can find difficult to source and retain. As such the council previously agreed to provide these services from an external partner.
- 2.3 With the current contract for these services due to expire on 30 June 2020 a retendering exercise has been carried out to ensure the council is able to continue to meet its statutory duties going forward, utilising a mini competition process under the Crown Commercial Services Management Consultancy Framework (RM3745) Framework Lot 3. The benefits of using this framework being that pre-qualifications of finance, experience, and training have already been undertaken and all the companies on the framework are nationally known and reputable thereby reducing the potential risk to the council.
- 2.4 As the award of the contract incurs expenditure in excess of £250k it is a key decision.

- 2.5 Cabinet Members should refer to the private session report for confidential details and commercially sensitive matters relating to the evaluation of the tenders.

3. Recommendations

Subject to consideration of the information in the private session of the meeting, Cabinet will be asked to:

- 3.1 Award the contract for the provision of an Internal Audit and Risk Management service to Mazars LLP from 1 July 2020 until 31 March 2022 (with the option to extend for 2 further 12 month periods).
- 3.2 Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Transformation to enter into a new contract to deliver the Internal Audit and Risk Management Service by using the most appropriate procedures and to subsequently authorise the sealing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for the provision of such services.
- 3.3 Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Transformation to vary the contract during the contractual period to ensure the Council continues to achieve value for money and the services continue to meet the corporate priorities.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 specifies that 'every local authority will make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and will secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs'. The Executive Director for Resources and Transformation, acting as the Section 151 Officer, is the responsible officer for the council.
- 4.2 In addition, the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 refer specifically to matters pertinent to internal audit and risk within local authorities and state that 'a relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance'.
- 4.3 Historically within Walsall these required functions were provided via an internal service, however in 2015 following the departure of the Head of Internal Audit, and with a number of vacancies within the team, the council chose to undertake a review of the service.
- 4.4 This review identified that:
- Effective internal audit and risk functions require a diversity of skills that local authorities find difficult to source and retain.
 - Difficulties had been experienced in trying to employ suitably qualified and experienced staff from agencies to provide additional audit coverage when required.
 - In house teams were not as able to keep abreast of / afford, continuing professional development and training.
 - Specialist expertise and in-depth knowledge could not as easily be sourced by an in-house team, and would need to be bought in on an annual basis.

- In house teams do not always have the awareness of current and emerging issues, both sector specific and general, that third party specialist providers may be privy to.
 - In cross organisational working, knowledge of best practice from other organisations / sectors can be shared and capitalised upon.
- 4.5 Additionally the review highlighted that the functional separation of internal audit and risk was outdated, with the most recent thinking instead focussing on Assurance Based Audit (ABA), which uses a risk based approach to co-ordinate all assurance activity to ensure that duplication is minimised and a co-ordinated assurance position is given to management. Under this methodology risk based auditing is employed in place of the traditional systems based audit approach. This raises the profile of risk management and embeds it in the day to day operations and management of the business as opposed to it being perceived as a 'bolt on' exercise.
- 4.6 The review therefore identified a number of available options to the council for the future service delivery of internal audit and risk:
- Retain an in-house function and merge internal audit & risk with reduced management costs.
 - Outsource the delivery of internal audit and risk to a third party provider.
 - Co-sourcing, adopting a similar approach as the outsourcing model, but with service delivery shared between the contracted third party provider and an in house team, with the third party provider delivering specialised areas or those that are more cost effective to outsource, such as IT audit and forensic investigations.
 - Shared Services, seeking to share service delivery with other local authorities / public sector organisations.
- 4.7 Having fully considered all options, an outsourced model was recommended and approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 16 December 2015, with a contract for the external service beginning in January 2016, which was awarded to Mazars LLP.
- 4.8 The provision of the outsourced service since that point has been effective, with the move to risk based auditing allowing an improved focus on evaluating and improving the effectiveness of control and governance, and with access to the wider resources of the company (to support in specialist audit areas and in instances of absence / sickness) supporting the service provider to consistently meet required performance targets across the contract period.
- 4.9 In preparation for the end of the current contract period a report was presented to Cabinet on 18 December 2019 asking them to endorse a 3 month extension to the current contract (from 31 March 2020 to 30 June 2020) to allow the required time to complete a retender process and allow for any associated TUPE arrangements to be put in place should there be a change in provider.
- 4.10 This retendering exercise has now been carried out using a mini competition process under the Crown Commercial Services Management Consultancy Framework (RM3745) Framework Lot 3. The benefits of using this framework are that pre-qualifications of finance, experience, and training have already been undertaken and all the companies on the framework are nationally known and reputable thereby reducing the cost to the council.

- 4.11 An Invitation to Tender (ITT) was published with a return date of 17 February 2020, with tender returns then being evaluated in accordance with the criteria published in the ITT, on the basis of cost and quality, with the recommended supplier identified based on the overall combined score for both these elements.

5. Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 5.1 The provision of an effective internal audit and risk management service contributes to the Corporate Plan priorities of Internal Focus and ensuring all council services are efficient and effective, by seeking to improve the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 The proposal to continue with an outsourced provision provides a number of opportunities and mitigates against the risks of either moving the service in house or seeking to identify either a co-sourcing or a shared service model.

Effective internal audit and risk functions require a diversity of skills that local authorities can find difficult to source and retain. Difficulties have previously been experienced in trying to provide this service internally and employ suitably qualified and experienced staff or procure staff from an agency when required to provide additional audit coverage.

In house teams are not as able to keep abreast of / afford, continuing professional development and training. Specialist expertise and in-depth knowledge cannot be as easily sourced by an in-house team, and would need to be bought in on an annual basis.

In house teams do not always have the awareness of current and emerging issues, both sector specific and general, that third party specialist providers may be privy to. In cross organisational working, knowledge of best practice from other organisations / sectors can be shared and capitalised upon.

- 6.2 The provider will be required to comply with all conditions, warranties and representations expressed or implied by statute or common law, council policies, strategies, rules and procedures in delivering the Internal Audit and Risk service to the standards required. This would ensure that the service to customers continues to be of a high standard.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The tendered costs for the recommended supplier were £204k for the period 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, and £236k for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This cost is in line with the existing budget for the service.
- 7.2 The contract also includes a further contingency sum of up to £88k across the total contract period which is included to allow for unplanned work in relation to money and fraud / irregularity, however this will only be allocated on a call off basis subject to a proposal of the work being agreed prior to commencement.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the council is required to 'undertake an effective Internal Audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance'. There are no restrictions placed on how this is delivered.
- 8.2 Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations set out in this report Cabinet should note that the Council will be entering into a contract on the Crown Commercial Services Management Consultancy Framework (RM3745) Framework Lot 3 terms and conditions of supply, rather than its own contractual terms and conditions.

9. Procurement Implications

- 9.1 The procurement and awards process are in accordance with the council's contract rules.
- 9.2 The contract value is above the current European Union procurement thresholds and therefore the service was tendered using a mini competition process under the Crown Commercial Services Management Consultancy Framework (RM3745) Framework Lot 3. The benefits of using this framework are that pre-qualifications of finance, experience, and training have already been undertaken and all the companies on the framework are nationally known and reputable thereby reducing the potential risk to the council.
- 9.3 Thirteen suppliers were attached to the project on the council's e-Tendering Portal and downloaded the Invitation to Tender with a return date of 17 February 2020.
- 9.4 Tenders were opened on 17 February 2020 using a formal opening ceremony on the In-tend e-tendering portal. The council received two tenders as set out below:

Bidder No.	Bidder Name
1.	BDO LLP
2.	Mazars LLP

Tender Evaluation Process

- 9.5 The tenders were evaluated in accordance with the criteria published in the ITT as shown in the tables below:

Weighted Price Criteria:

- 9.6 The evaluation of this section is against information included in the pricing schedule.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Price	40%
<i>Total</i>	<i>40%</i>

Weighted Non-Price Criteria:

- 9.7 The evaluation of this section is against information included in the Tender Quality Questionnaire

Criteria	Percentage
Social Value	5%
Quality Reviews	PASS/FAIL
Preparation of 3 year Audit Strategy & Audit Charter	8%
Preparation of annual internal audit plan	8%
Managing and Resourcing the Work	9%
Implementation Plan	10%
Audit Methodology and Software	5%
Computer Auditing	5%
Cost Saving initiatives	5%
Innovation & Effectiveness	5%
Total	60%

- 9.8 Tender price evaluation, due diligence checks and the evaluation summary were completed by Procurement. The tender non-price criteria evaluations were completed by senior council officers from the Finance service.

Tender Outcome

- 9.9 Given the commercially sensitive nature of the tender evaluation information, a report detailing the outcome of the evaluation appears in the Private Session Agenda Cabinet Report.
- 9.10 The successful bidder has made commitments to contribute to Social Value in the following areas;
- Walsall will receive opportunities to contribute to research and programmes implemented by the Centre for Social Value, and be party to the results
 - Through Mazars' efforts to be make environmental improvements, Walsall Council may benefit from the following:
 - Reduction of paper use
 - Reduction of energy consumption
 - Reduction of business mileage
 - Recycling of paper waste
 - Mazars' work and partnership with suppliers to meet appropriate environmental standards
- 9.11 Steps have been taken to minimise procurement related risk. However, there will always remain an inherent risk of legal challenge associated with any procurement undertaken by the Council.

10. Property implications

- 10.1 None relating directly to this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 The content of this report has taken into account the Marmot objectives and it is confirmed that the proposals have been tested against the relevant considerations in this respect which has found that there are no health and wellbeing implications.

12. Staffing implications

- 12.1 None relating directly to this report.

13. Reducing Inequalities

- 13.1 There is no direct impact on protected groups from this proposal as it is not withdrawing, changing or reducing any service, and is simply seeking to continue a contract for the provision of an internal audit and risk management service for the council. As such an Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed.

14. Consultation

- 14.1 The public will not be impacted by this decision and therefore no public consultation has been required. However the provider will undertake consultation with all council directorates as part of the process of agreeing, finalising and implementing the annual audit plan.

15. Decide

- 15.1 The ending of the existing contract gives the council the opportunity to review the options for provision of the service going forward. However as the same risks identified in 2015 to seeking to provide the service internally still exist, and the provision of the outsourced service has been effective in managing these risks, and has consistently met the required performance targets across the contract period, the recommended option is to continue with an outsourced service.

16. Respond

- 16.1 Subject to approval of the recommendations, the Executive Director for Resources and Transformation will finalise and enter into contract with the recommended supplier.

17. Review

- 17.1 Performance of the contract will be monitored through performance reports provided to council officers managing the contract and will also be reported quarterly to the council's Audit Committee.

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Deborah Hindson
Interim Executive Director
19 May 2020



Councillor Bird
Portfolio holder
19 May 2020