

Cabinet – 24 July 2013

Corporate Plan 2013/14-2015/16

Portfolio: Councillor Bird (Leader of the Council)

Related portfolios: All

Service: Business Change

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

This report sets out for approval the Corporate Plan 2013/14-2015/16 which is attached as an appendix. The Corporate Plan focuses on the three objectives agreed through the Working Smarter Programme – to empower staff, to improve services to residents and businesses in Walsall and to save money. It reaffirms the vision, values and priorities that were agreed in partnership through the sustainable community strategy and describes the outcomes we would expect to see.

2. Recommendations

That Council be recommended to approve the Corporate Plan 2013/14-2015/16

3. Report detail

The Corporate Plan provides a clear focus to plan activities and target improvements. The plan aligns to our shared partnership vision to make Walsall a great place to live, work and invest and has been annually produced and reviewed for a number of years.

The plan has been written within the context of the aims and principles of our Working Smarter Programme and commits us to the three clear objectives of that programme:

1. Staff feel empowered and involved in change
2. Improved services to residents and business in Walsall
3. The Council saves money

4. Council priorities

The Corporate Plan establishes the following priorities for the Council:

- **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work**
- **Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people**
- **Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities**
- **Improving Safeguarding, Learning and the Life Chances for Children and Young People.**

5. Risk management

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

6. Financial implications

The development of the priorities has run alongside the budget setting process and as such activities needed in year to deliver it are all accounted for within the 2013/14 budget. As the plan takes a look forward to 2016, the priorities contained within it, and intelligence around its delivery will also be used to help inform future years' budgets.

7. Legal implications

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

8. Property implications

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

9. Health and wellbeing implications

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

10. Staffing implications

The Corporate Plan helps to provide staff with a clear vision of what the council is trying to achieve which can be translated into understandable individual targets through the Employee Performance Appraisal process. The plan also clearly expresses as a core objective our desire to empower staff and involve them in change.

11. Equality implications

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

12. Consultation

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

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel have reviewed the plan at their meeting on 15 July and their comments are incorporated into the latest version of the plan.

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Rory Borealis
Executive Director

16 July 2013



Councillor M.A. Bird
Leader of the Council

16 July 2013

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Walsall Council Corporate Plan 2013/14-2014/15

Foreword

<From Leader of the Council and Chief Executive>

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Introduction

The Corporate Plan sets out the high level priorities for the Council for 2013 onwards and the outcomes we hope to achieve through delivering these. It is directly aligned to the sustainable community strategy 'The Walsall Plan', which was developed in partnership with other public sector organisations in Walsall, demonstrating our commitment to working across organisational boundaries in the best interests of the people of Walsall.

It sets out our purpose as a Council, our shared vision with partners to make Walsall a great place to live, learn, work and invest, our priorities for improvement and the differences this will make to people's lives. It also expresses the shared values which underpin the way in which we work.

The plan will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure it remains fit for purpose and that we are delivering what we need. The plan will be supported by a framework for understanding and improving how services are performing. Details of how we will do this and how we are performing against the plan will be published on the Council's website and a report will be submitted annually to a public meeting of the Council reviewing progress and any changes that may be needed.

Our Purpose

The Council exists to benefit the public, responding to their needs to ensure the delivery of effective local services. We do this with limited resources and so must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible. This means we need to listen to the demand coming from local people and build up a thorough understanding of how we can better serve them by equipping our staff with the skills, knowledge and freedom to respond. It also means we need to look outside our own organisation and work with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

This plan will be achieved through the Council working more smartly in the way it operates. Working Smarter is an ambitious change programme that attempts to bring this about through taking out waste and spending less, improving customer service and changing the way we do our business. The way the council does its business will be underpinned by good governance and upholding high standards of conduct. But as well as a specific programme of change, Working Smarter is also a culture that will become embedded within the council, underpinned by three key objectives:



Our Shared Vision and Values

The Council is just one of the organisations in the borough that has a role in meeting the needs of local people. We work collaboratively on a day to day basis with our partners to provide vital services to residents, and together we have a shared vision in which:

“Walsall is a great place to live, learn, work and invest”.

This vision is expressed through the Sustainable Community Strategy ‘The Walsall Plan 2013-16’, which provides the top shared priorities and ambitions for the borough between key agencies from the public, private and voluntary sector who seek to improve the quality of life experienced in Walsall.

This vision is accompanied by a set of shared values that describe the way we behave and work together:

- The community is at the heart of what we do. We practice inclusion and value diversity.
- We empower ownership at all levels across the partnership to enable the swift and effective delivery of services.
- We are committed to all our stakeholders and champion innovation and enterprise.
- Working positively in partnership, we deliver opportunities and prosperity for people within the wider community in and around Walsall Borough.
- We manage available resources responsibly for the benefit of our community.

Further information

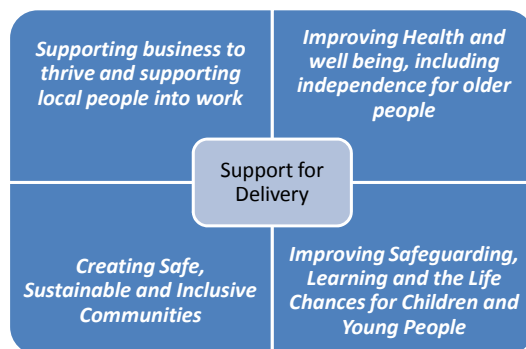
[The Walsall Plan](#)

Our Priorities

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

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

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



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

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

The strength of the local economy is critical to achieving Walsall's vision. Economic prosperity has a fundamental impact on other outcomes, including health, community safety and the life chances of our young people. We know that the economic divide between the east and west of the borough corresponds with poorer health, lower educational attainment and higher crime rates. If we wish to meet the other priorities highlighted in this plan, it is imperative that we do what we can to tackle the economic inertia to allow businesses to grow and help get more people into work.

This is a challenging task. Walsall, like the rest of the Black Country, was in a period of relative economic decline even before the recession hit in 2008. We have had a relatively high number of people dependent on out of work benefits and they are relying on these for longer. Health and well being outcomes are improved where people are in work. However, currently business growth is slow and a high proportion of jobs are lower paid reflecting the low skill levels that exist across the workforce and where well paid jobs are available locally there is often a lack of skills to fill them.

Many of the factors affecting the local economy are outside of the Council's control and have national and international causes, but there are things we can and will do: From improving our town and district centres to make them more attractive for businesses and shoppers to creating housing that makes people want to stay and live in Walsall: From providing support to businesses seeking to start up or expand, to providing access to learning and training to local people to equip them to fill those jobs; supporting families on out of work benefits to break the cycle of dependency by helping to raise aspirations.

Further information

[Walsall Local Economic Assessment](#)
[Black Country Core Strategy](#)
[Planning 2026 - Site Allocation Document](#)
[and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan](#)

We will know we have been successful if we see the following outcomes:

- *Less people dependent on out of work benefits*
- *More Businesses*
- *More Jobs in Walsall*
- *More Walsall residents in work*
- *More Walsall people with better skills and behaviours that match what employers need*

2. Improving Health and well being, including independence for older people

Reducing health inequalities in the borough has long been an ambition for the council but, with the transfer of public health to the organisation on 1 April 2013, we now have more direct responsibility and opportunities for achieving it. Not only do economic factors impact on health as stated above, but poor health is itself a barrier to work. It also increases dependency on the social care system, stretching resources and impacting on our ability to support individuals in need of care. The health inequalities within Walsall are stark, with men living in the most deprived wards of the borough expected to live 11 years less than those living in the more affluent. But increasing economic prosperity is not the only thing that needs to be done to tackle poor health and the council is committed to reducing preventable ill health in the borough through the work it does. Initiatives which increase access to and encourage participation in leisure activities can make a positive contribution towards reducing obesity, particularly in children, which we know is a significant determinant of ill health. Similarly, given the number of preventable illnesses caused by tobacco, alcohol and drugs, awareness raising as well as support to quit can help reduce the number of instances of diseases caused by these substances. The provision of good quality housing will also have an impact on health for residents as we know there is a link between health and housing standards.

As people live longer lives, we understand that maintaining independence is important to them; the ability to stay in their own homes and determine their own care packages is essential to their wellbeing and dignity. The key to maintaining independence is early intervention. Rather than the more traditional model where agencies would wait until problems became more acute before getting involved, we know that providing low level support and advice at an early stage can have a big impact; helping people to stay in their own homes for longer and also equipping them with the knowledge and understanding to take control of their own affairs.

Further information
[Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

We will know we have been successful if we see the following outcomes:

- *Gaps in life expectancy between the least and most deprived wards in the borough are reduced*
- *More people living healthier and more active lifestyles*
- *Reduced childhood obesity leading to healthier adult lifestyles*
- *Fewer vulnerable adults and older people needing intensive support and for shorter periods*
- *More vulnerable adults living meaningful lives in their own homes with fewer people living in long term residential or nursing care*

3. Creating Safe, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

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

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

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

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

We will know we have been successful if we see the following outcomes:

- *Local people value their local environment*
- *People are safe, and feel safe, in their local community*
- *Local people have a sense of belonging and ownership of their local community*
- *There is active participation in the 'civil society'*
- *The housing needs of local communities are met*

Further information

[Community Safety Plan](#)
[Green Spaces Strategy](#)

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

Our children and young people are key to future improvements in the borough. Issues discussed above such as health, anti-social behaviour, skills and aspirations can be tackled much more efficiently and effectively at a younger age. Children and young people are the most vulnerable in society but they are also those with the greatest capacity to make a positive change. That is why a vision has been created with partners called 'better together for children'-expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16 that supports both the Sustainable Community Strategy and this Corporate Plan.

Protecting children and young people from harm, either from abuse or neglect remains a key priority and, following a critical Ofsted inspection in 2012, we know there is some significant improvement needed here that is being addressed through the Children's Improvement Board. We want to ensure that children are not only protected but allowed to thrive; equipping them with the skills and qualifications they need to progress into adulthood as active citizens and in a way that supports a healthy lifestyle.

Further information

[Children and Young People Plan 2013-2016](#)

We will know we have been successful if we see the following outcomes:

- *Fewer children needing to be looked after by the council but those that do staying in the system for less time*
- *Child poverty levels are reduced along with the impact of this poverty*
- *Educational attainment improves across the board and the gap is reduced*
- *There is more choice of high quality learning, training and employment opportunities for young people*

5. Support for Delivery

The priorities expressed in this plan will only be delivered through services within the council working together in a seamless way, and the council itself working effectively with partners. In order for this to happen, a strong framework needs to be in place that empowers staff and ensures that resources are allocated effectively and fairly. That is why the fifth priority is 'support for delivery'. Ensuring that 'back office' support services are available at the point of need, will dramatically reduce the time to resolve issues and will allow the council to back up its words with actions.

Changes to support services will only be made in reaction to the changing demands from front line services, which are themselves informed by customer demand.

Whilst this plan articulates our desire for improvements at a strategic level, real improvement comes from individuals changing the way they work, making the small changes that add up to make a big difference. All staff will be empowered to work flexibly to be able to respond to shifting demand and we will equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to do this. They will be encouraged to take action where they feel something can be done better for the customer and will be intrinsically motivated by the clarity of purpose provided. In turn we will use their knowledge of 'how the work works' to inform future improvements at an operational and strategic level.

The Council are committed to conducting ourselves with integrity, being open and inclusive in our decision making, being clear on our responsibility and holding ourselves accountable to the community..

Further information

[Walsall Code of Governance](#)

We will know we have been successful if we see the following outcomes:

- *The Council continues to save money whilst still meeting the other outcomes expressed in this plan*
- *Staff feel empowered and valued and want to stay and work in Walsall*
- *There is transparency at all levels of the organisation as to how we are performing in meeting customer demand and the priorities expressed in this plan*
- *Good governance is upheld in delivering our services and managing our staff*