

## **Cabinet – 17 December 2008**

### **Budget Consultation 2009/10 – 2011/12**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Griffiths, Finance and Personnel

**Service:** Council wide - finance

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary of report**

The council's vision sets out our aim for the borough to be a place where people get on well together, support and look after each other, young people fulfil their potential and the borough prospers economically and materially. Seven of the council's ten priorities focus on the needs and aspirations of local people. listening to the views and opinions of local people is therefore critical to what we do. Part of our commitment to listen to local people is to consult people on what they think about council services and priorities and how this should be reflected in the annual budget. This report summarises outcomes from the widespread public consultation towards the Council's draft budget proposals for 2009/10, which have taken place from September to November 2008.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That contents of this report and its appendices be noted.
- 2.2 That the outcomes from the budget consultation, set out in this report, be considered by Cabinet as it develops the council's 2009/10 corporate revenue and capital budget.

#### **3. Background information**

The council consults annually as part of its budget process. This year over 1,000 residents will have been consulted.

#### **4. Resource considerations**

- 4.1 **Financial:** The consultation that was undertaken was funded from existing revenue budgets. Face to face interviews were conducted by ICM Research. All other events were conducted using in house expertise and resources.
- 4.2 **Legal:** The Council has a legal duty to consult with NNDR rate payers. There was a meeting attended by the CFO on 11 September 2008 and there will be a further meeting offered in January 2009.
- 4.3 **Staffing:** None

#### **5. Citizen impact**

- 5.1 The consultation process was designed to be as inclusive as possible, seeking the views and opinions of residents, stakeholders, the business and voluntary sectors as well as older and younger people and including black and minority residents and those with disabilities. Understanding the views and opinions of local people will assist cabinet as it develops and finalises the budget for the financial year ahead. The feedback obtained will also be used by council services alongside other sources of customer intelligence and feedback when developing service plans and in continued implementation of the council's vision.
- 5.2 Please note due to the diversity and sometimes contradictory nature of consultation feedback, it is impossible to reflect and address every issue raised by the various individuals and groups.

#### **6. Community safety**

The consultation process has raised a number of issues relating to community safety in particular anti-social behaviour, reducing crime levels and concerns over knife crime which can be linked to reports in the national media at the time. Activities for teenagers remain a top priority for local people. Ensuring citizens are safe and secure remains the most important council priority for local people.

#### **7. Environmental impact**

The consultation process has raised a number of issues relating to the local environment including keeping streets and public areas clean, educating people about their responsibilities as citizens to keep our borough litter free, tackling graffiti, fining people who litter our borough, tidying up eyesores and ensuring our Street Pride services are effective.

#### **8. Performance and risk management issues**

- 8.1 **Risk:** None

- 8.2 **Performance management::** The outcomes of these budget consultations will be fed through to council services and to LNPs via the council's website [www.walsall.gov.uk/budget\\_consultation](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/budget_consultation) and individual heads of service. Participants will be sent a feedback newsletter summarising actions and outcomes of the budget setting process, demonstrating that we listen and act upon what local people tell us.

## 9. Equality implications

- 9.1 Over 1,000 face to face interviews were conducted across the borough so to gather the views of a wide and diverse population. Interview quotas were set against the demographics of the borough and ensured that the right proportion of interviews were conducted across key demographic groups and in each LNP area. Over 100 interviews were conducted in each LNP.
- 9.2 The consultation programme also included particular focus on the views of young people, older people, people with disabilities and representatives from the voluntary sector and black and minority groups.
- 9.3 Feedback was provided on a range of diversity, equality and access issues including access to public transport and making it easier for people to get around, including the ring road and reducing traffic congestion.

## 10. Consultation

- 10.1 The process is an example of how the Council is continuing to use innovative consultation methods with residents and partners on key issues as part of a council wide strategy for consultation and engagement. Budget consultation has been inclusive and extensive including residents, young people, service users, black and minority ethnic residents and groups, business representatives and the voluntary and community sectors.
- 10.2 A wide range of qualitative and quantitative consultation methods have been used including focus groups, meetings, an evening workshop at an LNP, web surveys and face to face interviews. Residents could also write in or email us their comments.

## Background papers

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'James Walsh', written in a cursive style.

James Walsh  
Chief Finance Officer

8 December 2008

Signed:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Al Griffiths', written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Griffiths  
Portfolio Holder

8 December 2008

## Budget Consultation Financial Year 2009/010

### The consultation process

Between September and October 2008, Walsall Council undertook its annual programme of budget consultation, gathering public views and opinions on council priorities, allocation of resources and spending.

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

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

- Face to face household interviews
- Presentations and meetings
- Focus groups
- Web surveys
- Attendance at specific events and meetings
- LNP meetings

Participants in the 2009/10 budget consultation process;

- 1,148 local residents<sup>1</sup>
- Youth Opinions Unite<sup>2</sup> (7)
- Over 50's Forum<sup>3</sup> (6)
- Making Our Choice<sup>4</sup> (16)
- Service Users Empowerment<sup>5</sup> (5)
- Carers Network Event<sup>6</sup> (81)
- Disability Forum<sup>7</sup> (16)
- Web survey (7)
- Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast Club (14)

1,296 people took part in budget consultation this year.

### ***Comments board at the Walsall Carers Event 2 October 2008 and Willenhall LNP 15 October 2008***



<sup>1</sup> 1,148 residents were interviewed. ICM Government & Social research unit were commissioned to undertake interviews with local residents across the borough.

<sup>2</sup> Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) is the council's youth involvement and youth engagement programme.

<sup>3</sup> The Over 50's Forum is an independent group consisting of volunteers who wish themselves and others in the borough to be able to speak and be heard.

<sup>4</sup> A self advocacy group supported by Royal Mencap and funded by the Walsall Learning Disability Partnership Board.

<sup>5</sup> Service Users Empowerment gives support and encourages empowerment to all disabled groups including people with learning disabilities.

<sup>6</sup> Carers Network event was attended carers in Walsall.

<sup>7</sup> The Disability Forum has a wide representation which covers all areas of disability, bring a broader and stronger view from communities in Walsall.

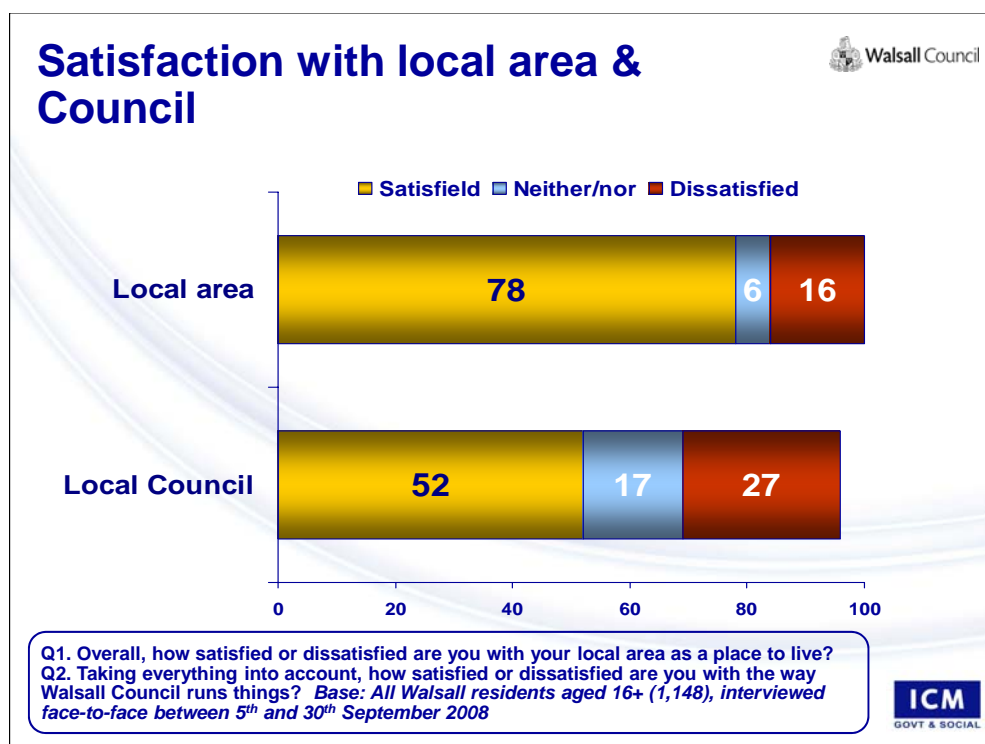
## Face to face interviews

1,148 residents were interviewed. ICM Government & Social research unit were commissioned to undertake interviews with local residents. The interviews sought to measure public attitudes relating to the delivery of services in the Borough and priorities for the future.

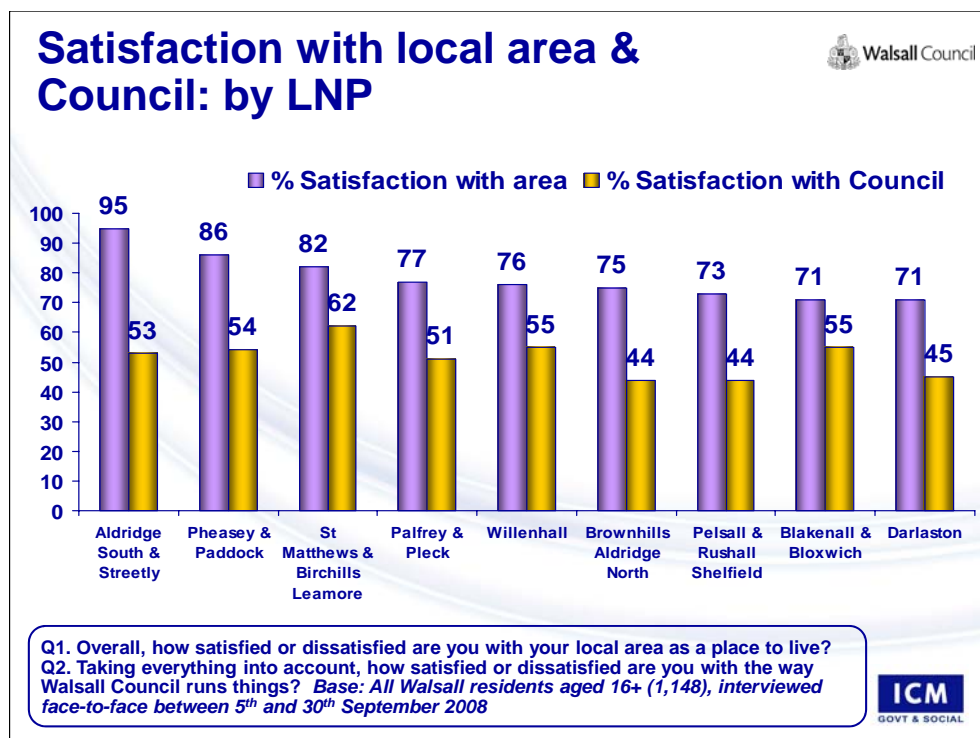
Interviews were carried out face-to-face, in home, across the borough between 5th and 30th September 2008. A representative sample was interviewed, with quotas set by age, gender, work status and ethnicity, ensuring the sample was broadly representative of the local population. The sample was also stratified by Local Neighbourhood Partnership (LNP) to ensure a sufficient number of interviews in each, enabling reliable comparisons by LNP area. A minimum of 111 residents were interviewed in each LNP.

Some graphs do not add up to 100%. This is due to computer rounding and the exclusion of 'don't know' responses. A full data report is available on request.

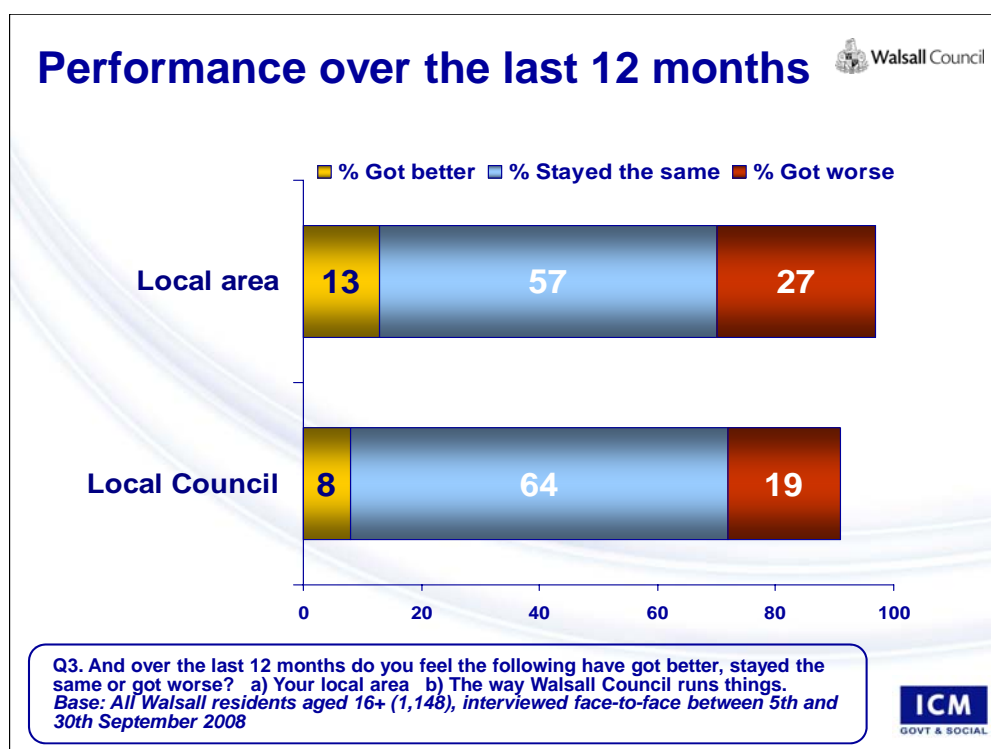
The great majority of residents speak positively about their local area (78% satisfied). However, people are less favourable with the way the Council is running things: half (52%) say they are satisfied with the Council overall, while a quarter (27%) are dissatisfied.



Examining results by LNP, satisfaction with the local area is highest in Aldridge and South Streetly (95%) falling to 71% in Blakenall and Bloxwich and Darlaston LNP. Satisfaction with the way the council runs things ranges from 62% in St Matthews and Birchills Leamore to 44% in Brownhills Aldridge North and Pelsall & Rushall Shelfield.

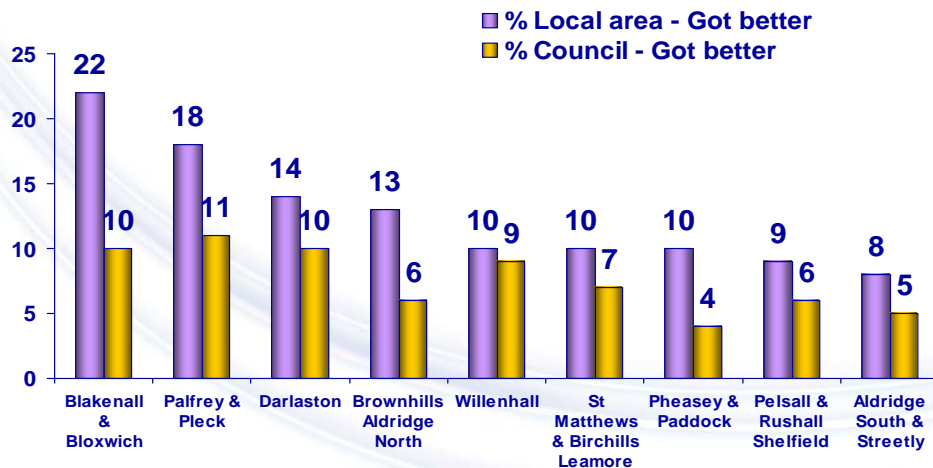


Most people feel the local area and the Council have stayed the same in the last 12 months (57% and 64% respectively). Among those who think there has been movement either way, more believe their local area and the Council have got worse rather than better.



Residents living in Blakenall and Bloxwich are most likely to say their local area has got better over the last 12 months (22%), followed by residents living in Palfrey and Pleck (18%).

## Performance over the last 12 months – by LNP

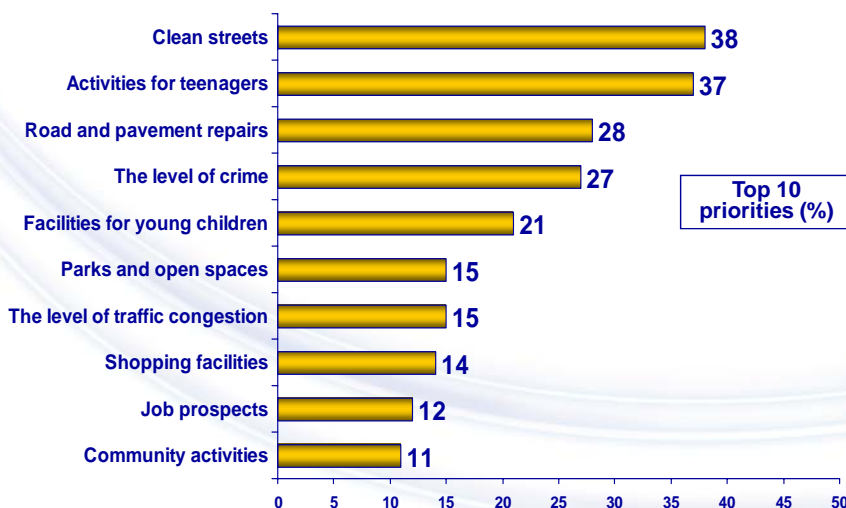


Q3. And over the last 12 months do you feel the following have got better, stayed the same or got worse? a) Your local area b) The way Walsall Council runs things.  
Base: All Walsall residents aged 16+ (1,148), interviewed face-to-face between 5th and 30th September 2008

## Top priorities for improvement

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

## Priorities for improvement

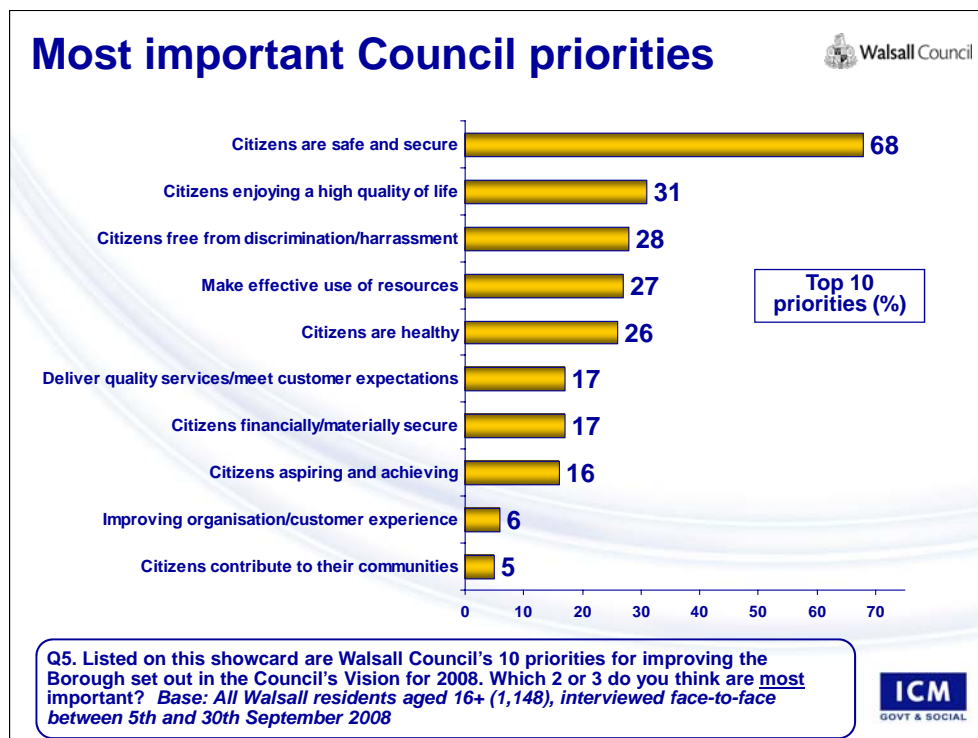


Q4. Thinking about this local area, which 4 or 5 things, if any, do you think most need improving? Base: All Walsall residents aged 16+ (1,148), interviewed face-to-face between 5th and 30th September 2008



## Most important council priorities

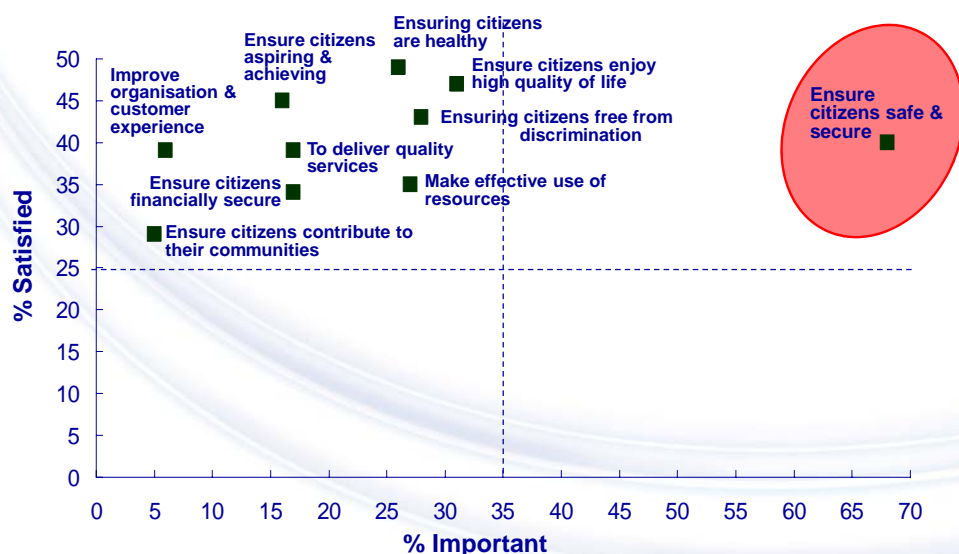
Of the Council's 10 Priorities for 2008/09, the most important in the eyes of residents is to ensure citizens are safe and secure (68%). Ensuring citizens enjoy a high quality of life (31%) and are free from discrimination or harassment (28%) are also key priorities.



Ensuring citizens are safe and secure is also the priority on which level of dissatisfaction with the Council's performance is highest (35%, although 40% are satisfied). In relation to residents' second most important priority – ensuring citizens enjoy a high quality of life – satisfaction with the Council is relatively high (47%). Across all ten Council priorities, people are more satisfied than dissatisfied. Residents speak most favourably about the Council's ability to ensure citizens are healthy (49%).

Results for satisfaction V's performance clearly highlights ensuring citizens' are safe and secure as the top priority for local people.

## Identifying priorities



Q5. Listed on this showcard are Walsall Council's 10 priorities for improving the Borough set out in the Council's Vision for 2008. Which 2 or 3 do you think are **most important**? Q6. Using this card, I would now like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way the Council is performing against each of its priorities? *Base: All Walsall residents aged 16+ (number), interviewed face-to-face between 5th and 30th September 2008*

## Money allocation

When asked to allocate £100 on Council priorities, responses are largely consistent with the importance residents attach to them. Local people would spend most on safety and security (£28.42) followed by citizens' health (£12.59) and on making effective use of resources (£12.18). In contrast, they would spend least on ensuring citizens contribute to their community (£2.10).

## How residents would allocate £100 on the Council's priorities

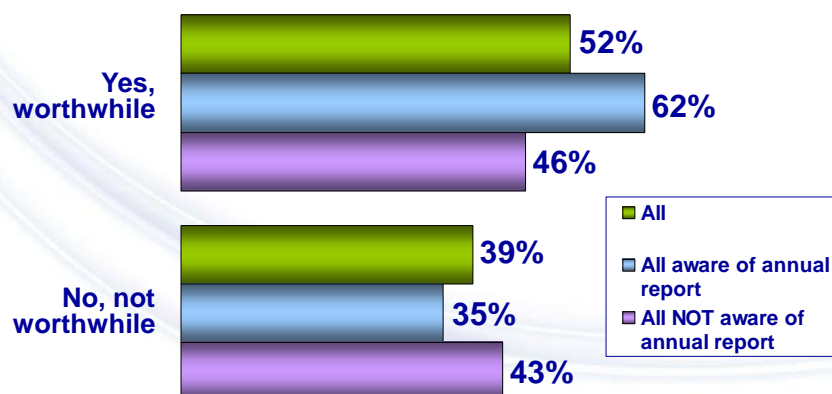


Q7. Imagine we gave you £100 to spend on Council priorities. How much money would you spend on each priority? *Base: All Walsall residents aged 16+ (1,148), interviewed face-to-face between 5th and 30th September 2008*

## Financial reporting

Four fifths (39%) say they were aware before they were interviewed that the Council produces an Annual Report. Just over half (52%) believe it is worthwhile for the Council to produce this publication, rising to 62% among those who were aware of it. Close to half (47%) express an interest in the Council's financial management and performance.

## The Council's Annual report (2)



Q9. Is it worthwhile the Council producing an Annual Report?  
Base: All Walsall residents aged 16+ (1,148), interviewed face-to-face between 5th and 30th September 2008



### Council Priorities

Qualitative research through facilitated group discussion was aided by the use of tasks;

- Money allocation - participants were asked to allocate £100 across the ten council priorities (see appendix 1)
- Priority grids where participants were asked to plot council priorities in terms of how important they are and how well the council is performing on them (see appendix 2)
- What makes somewhere a good place to live voting – participants were given stickers they then used to vote for the aspects that make somewhere a good place to live (see appendix 3).

Discussions were recorded and have been summarised in this report along with actual quotes.

### To ensure that citizens are safe and secure

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

*'Dealing with disruptive behaviour of children. No discipline, no respect. Unsafe to go out at night.'*

*'Communities are not working together to prevent crimes in neighbourhood areas. One concern is knife crime and indecent behaviour from youngsters.'*

*'Because of the national stories of teenage killings, there is a higher fear of crime because you think it could happen to you'.*

*'Newspapers - need to be positive so that the elderly will not feel scared and can socialise at night, especially using the bus station (fear of crime – should be supervision at bus station).'*

*'No law and order – don't feel safe and secure in your own home.'*

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

*'Lack of police on the beat.'*

*'More police in areas with gang problems i.e. Mossley.'*

*'More activities for young people so there is less anti-social behaviour.'*

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

*'Council, Police and Partnership need to work better together.'*

Respondents in the Making Our Choice focus group would welcome advice on how to keep personal possessions safe like mobile phones, handbags and bikes. Feeling unsafe at night is a worry for this group and respondents feel that more CCTV is needed.

*'Too much robbery in Walsall Town. cards, bags – no one is free to walk.'*

One person in the Service Users Empowerment group commented that they had noticed more police on the beat recently.

Members of Service Users Empowerment suggested using inter-generational projects to encourage older and younger groups to mix and hopefully alleviate fears and take positive action. They thought that often fears can be down to misunderstanding groups of people and that getting these groups to work together would help.

The Over 50's Forum suggested that communities need to work together to tackle crime and fear of crime.

Some individuals thought that Walsall could be worse, comparing the borough with Moss Side in Manchester and areas of Birmingham, Walsall was thought to be much safer.

*'There are much worse places to live than Walsall.'*

One member of Making Our Choice wanted the police and Walsall Council to work better together to make people feel safer.

*'Society is getting a bit rough. Need protection, respect. You could get into trouble with a thug. No one is standing up for the disabled or vulnerable. We need a voice.'*

### **To ensure that citizens are enjoying a high quality of life – clean, green, and mobile**

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

*'Disgusting state of Walsall Town Centre. Rubbish from take away shops and Walsall Bus Station.'*

*'More control over litter dropping and spitting, more fines would deter.'*

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

*'Educate on litter "Bin It"'*

People believe that tidying up the local area, improving buildings and tidying up eyesores will encourage more people from further away to visit the town, use our facilities and spend money in our shops.

*'No one will come and visit you if you have a grotty neighbourhood, so it is important'.*

*'The Overstrand is an eyesore, it spoils the view of St Matthews.'*

*'Improving areas will bring people in from wider parts.'*

*'You don't want to walk around and have glass and stuff on the floor; you want to take pride in where you live'.*

People want an efficient and effective weekly bin collection and improved facilities for recycling all types of material including garden waste, plastics and cardboard.

*'Facilities for collection of cardboard, plastic bottles and metal; all of which are recyclables.'*

Cleaning of roads and gutters was identified by a number of people as in need of improvement.

*'More gully cleaning needed.'*

*'All drains never cleaned. Croft Street, Whitehouse Street, Hospital Street, Short Acre and Long Acre. All this water collects in Stafford Street.'*

*'Road sweeping is done at 6am when cars are parked therefore litter not collected.'*

People value the local parks, especially when they are well maintained, free from litter and vandalism. Being able to access the local park is important to members of Service Users Empowerment who suggest ensuring new housing developments have lots of open green space.

*'I am glad about the lovely park we have and the events that take place there.'*

*'Boards are kept well and grass is always cut.'*

People in the Making Our Choice group gave progress on green issues the 'thumbs up'.

One individual who has caring responsibility highlighted the difficulty of accessing some local facilities such as the local park because parked cars and cracked, uneven pavements make getting there difficult.

*'I have been living in Walsall for the past 31 years. I look after my husband who is wheelchair bound. My husband loves to go out on a sunny day, but there is no such thing like decent pavements and it is so difficult to get the wheelchair through the parked cars on the pavement something should be done and taken notice of it.'*

Being able to easily get around is critical for many groups, particularly younger and older people and those with caring responsibilities. It is equally important for people with mental health and learning difficulties to be able to get around and maintain independent lives.

Some people are concerned about the number of pedestrian crossings there are when walking to Manor Hospital. Traffic congestion and the ever ongoing roadworks are a particular bug bear for

local people. Most people are unconvinced that the new ring road will solve the traffic problems in Walsall town.

*'Oh the traffic is just chronic at the moment.'*

*'Road works on most roads all of the time.'*

*'It's wacky races!'*

*'Traffic jams in Walsall – A60 junction does not work.'*

People in the Making Our Choice group were concerned about the new Arboretum junction, particularly for pedestrians and people in wheelchairs.

Traffic calming initiatives are welcomed in some areas, especially where it is working. However speed humps are disliked by many, with people preferring other initiatives such as flashing warning signals warning people to slow down.

*'Glad the speed limit has been lowered from 40mph to 30mph.'*

*'Road humps don't work, they just wreck your car and people speed up in between. Those flashing warning lights are better.'*

*'Painted '30' in a circle on the roads is good.'*

Many people use on the local bus service but are concerned about accessibility, Walsall bus station and some areas of the borough which are less accessible.

*'Buses are not all accessible.'*

*'Bus drivers could be better, more friendly.'*

*'The bus station was designed without any consultation with those who use it.'*

*'There are too many buses squeezing into one space. Buses queue up blocking stands preventing people from getting on. It's not efficient.'*

*'Walsall – Wolverhampton more frequent service. Station at Willenhall (& Darlaston), Hospital Bus Services after 6pm (also cover New Cross).'*

In terms of service planning in particular roads, the disability forum stress the need for the council to think about disabled people at the outset and not far down the line when it's too late.

*'Road works, the council needs to think about disabled people first.'*

One young person from Streetly said;

*'It's easier to get into Birmingham so I don't really come to Walsall that often. The buses and trains need to be better. Metro and Bus station needs to be improved so that more people will come to the borough.'*

Another young person illustrated the difficulties of getting to places they want to go to;

*'Trains and connections from Walsall should be better. If I want to go ice skating in Telford, I have to get the bus to Wolverhampton first to be able to get a train to Telford as I can't get a train straight from Walsall. It takes longer and in the end I can't be bothered'.*

People value the ring and ride service and other community transport services, however increasing costs and availability concern some.

*'Council transport to college for students with learning disabilities (on income support) has gone up 50% from £90 a year to £145. Where will it end?'*

*'More flexible transport for older people i.e. to doctors & hospital. Ring & Ride useless from Short Heath area.'*

Feedback from the Transport Users Forum via the Disability Forum highlighted a few local concerns including young people hanging around the bus station, shops and the Civic Quarter which makes people feel intimidated.

Skateboarding, riding bikes and crowds of young people can cause problems for those with disabilities.

*'Where are the police stopping kids skateboarding on the pavements and around the Civic Quarter? How can the council not notice this on their doorstep?!'*

*'I know a blind lady with a guide dog who got knocked over.'*

*'They just aren't aware.'*

### **Ensuring citizens' are free from discrimination and harassment**

Local people do not identify any serious problems around discrimination and harassment, however some young people thought that bullying remained a problem in their school and some carers noted that racial harassment was a problem for them.

Indirect comments suggest issues and concerns around the growing eastern European population in the borough. Some residents are concerned about local jobs and housing not being given to local people and instead to immigrants.

*'Housing is being given to immigrants over local people.'*

*'Polish people taking all the local jobs.'*

Getting on well with each other in Walsall was an issue for some Making Our Choice members. The perception in this group was that generally neighbours get on well together but sometimes problems occur with some young people causing anti-social behaviour in the local area. Some thought that a night time curfew should be considered in some areas. Noisy neighbours and people being noisy in public were identified as a problem. It was thought that the council should do more to help and parents need to do more too.

*'Walsall Council can only do so much. Education is important.'*

*'Parents and teachers have a responsibility. Parents need to help break the cycle of discrimination in the community. Young people lack respect.'*

Some people said they feel vulnerable when out and about. One individual from Making Our Choice explained the difficulties he faces;

*'Sometimes people just don't listen to you. It's difficult to get a job if you have mental problems. Sometimes you feel frightened to talk to people, people don't want to listen.'*

Young people commented;

*'You don't see that many arguments or fights around Walsall.'*

*'This is an old Black Country town and some people grow up with their parents not being tolerant so there is still racism'.*

### **To make effective use of our resources**

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

*What makes you mad? 'Wastage by council.'*

*'Let local people have a say in local expenditure to save waste and unnecessary spend.'*

*'Payment to day centres should be for all to pay or non to pay.'*

*'Gym membership is too expensive.'*

*'If the council didn't spend money wisely, none of the other stuff would be possible.'*

Representatives at the Disability Forum meeting felt it was very important to recognise the savings the council has achieved through working through the voluntary sector in particular the adapted housing project.

*'How can these savings be passed on to people with disabilities?'*

Some thought that effective use of resources can be achieved through more *'interactive partnership'* working.

One person commented;

*'The council seems to cut services that affect the least people.'*

### **Ensuring that citizens are healthy**

Older people put particular emphasis on the importance of this priority. Quality and accessible health care services are essential. Furthermore older people specified the desire to be more closely involved in decision making on health matters.

*'For healthy citizens' I would like a similar system to Sure Start for the elderly, who they can talk to but information needs to be in a simple format.'*

*'Better communication of health services available e.g. leaflets.'*

*'Lack of Health Centre/GPs Short Heath.'*

*'9/10 programme – preventative health – Council has not done anything.'*

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

*'Feel lonely and depressed. My husband is under depression. He needs more care and attention.'*



*'Not enough short breaks for special needs children.'*

*'Lifelong resident of the borough. Myself and wife aged 70. For 40 years saved the borough money by looking after my son – cerebral palsy / epilepsy / blindness / spasticity – I ought to expect some pay back. What do I get? a) No respite care b) Disruption of my paid care agency by social services demands i.e. care times for my son cut in half.'*

*'After 23 years of looking after my daughter who has a learning disability and h=behaviour problems which are steadily getting worse, it looks like I MIGHT be getting some constructive advice and help. Even though I have been to the doctors and social services in the past but no one wanted to know. It only took a near breakdown.'*

Younger people recognise that a healthy population ensures a healthy workforce and economic prosperity.

*'Healthy people means more people to work'*

There was feeling that more needs to be done and the council can play a key role, working with the NHS and schools to tackle obesity, smoking, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol abuse.

*'Teenage pregnancy is a problem.'*

*'Stop people taking drugs.'*

*'Obesity is a major problem.'*

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

*'Cheaper admissions to leisure facilities, swimming, gyms etc.'*

Those with learning and mental health difficulties feel that exercise is important for staying healthy but were disappointed that the council had taken away things like local tennis courts which people could use to stay fit. In addition this group commented on the price to use the gym at Leisure Centres being too much.

People from Making Our Choice expressed that they like to go swimming but don't feel confident enough, and would like support to do this.

### **To deliver quality services and meet customer expectations and taking the transformation agenda forward (improve the customer experience)**

Quality services are essential for a prosperous borough and local people want to access the best possible service available.

*'Some good, not all.'*

*'Regeneration is a good service.'*

*'Charter for responding to phone calls, e-mails and letters within a specified period.'*

*'Smile a bit more !'*

*'Access via local one stop shop.'*

*'Getting better – at least we get a response now.'*

Representatives attending the Community and Voluntary sector meeting stressed the importance of supporting and working with them as the 'third sector'. The group felt very strongly that they are able to offer the council lots more in terms of working with the community, supporting the council's priority to deliver quality services. However the group thought that the council needs to better understand the sector.

*'Make use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector.'*

*'Make decisions together.'*

*'Need to ensure we are using the voluntary sector – efficiency gains.'*

*'Need to understand the sector and the outcomes. Directors clearly don't understand.'*

Given the close community links the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector possesses they strongly believe they *'are on the pulse of the local community'* and *'ahead of the research'*. Developing better working relationships will foster greater understanding of local communities and strengthen the work of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and the council.

*'Capitalize on the services and knowledge and skills of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector.'*

*'Talk about the problems, support agencies and each other.'*

Some group members thought that as well as a lack of understanding, no one in the council appeared to be a champion for the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. It was acknowledged that those working in community development are supportive, however there is a lack of high level support e.g. elected members and executive directors.

*'There is no champion for the voluntary sector.'*

This group voiced frustrations around funding and the difficulties around forward planning as when funding is uncertain is always difficult to plan services into the future. Whilst it was acknowledged that this is just part and parcel of 3<sup>rd</sup> sector work there was feeling that more could be done to ease the pressures.

*'On a cost recovery basis organisations are never going to get off the ground. Funding is needed to help with the cash flow at this early stage.'*

*'Fund on outputs – how many people you deal with.'*

*'Being able to plan 3 years in advance is critical.'*

### **Citizens are aspiring and achieving and ensuring citizens are financially and materially secure – achieving economic well-being**

Comments relating to these two priorities were very closely linked in that a good education supports economic well-being.

Young people specify a need for improved schools, better facilities and quality teachers.

*'Our school might be getting shut down because of bad GCSE results. I try really hard at school but my teachers are rubbish. I think good quality teachers are really important, and you need good equipment too.'*

Young people linked good education with a good quality of life and a prosperous future.

*'Good grades = good job = more money = good life.'*

Young people rated this priority as 'high' importance and 'low' in terms of current performance and quality of service.

Young people identified the need to provide activities around the area to help people learn. Reference was made to an IT initiative that had worked in some areas.

Some thought that having pride in the areas where you live supports a prosperous borough, one where people are aspiring and achieving and achieve overall economic well-being.

*'There is not enough pride in Walsall'.*

*'More people should get jobs'.*

Some people were unsure of the overall economic vision for the borough. Some seemed overwhelmed by all the regeneration that is going on wondering if it is going to achieve its desired effect.

Feedback from Making Our Choice members highlights their desire to succeed but the stress the importance of support.

*'There is no where to go.'*

*'It's scary when services might end. Change is scary.'*

*'When things [services] are under threat it often affects those people who are most vulnerable. We [voluntary sector and the council] need to have long term discussions and to work together to find solutions.'*

### **Ensure that citizens are active – contributing to their communities**

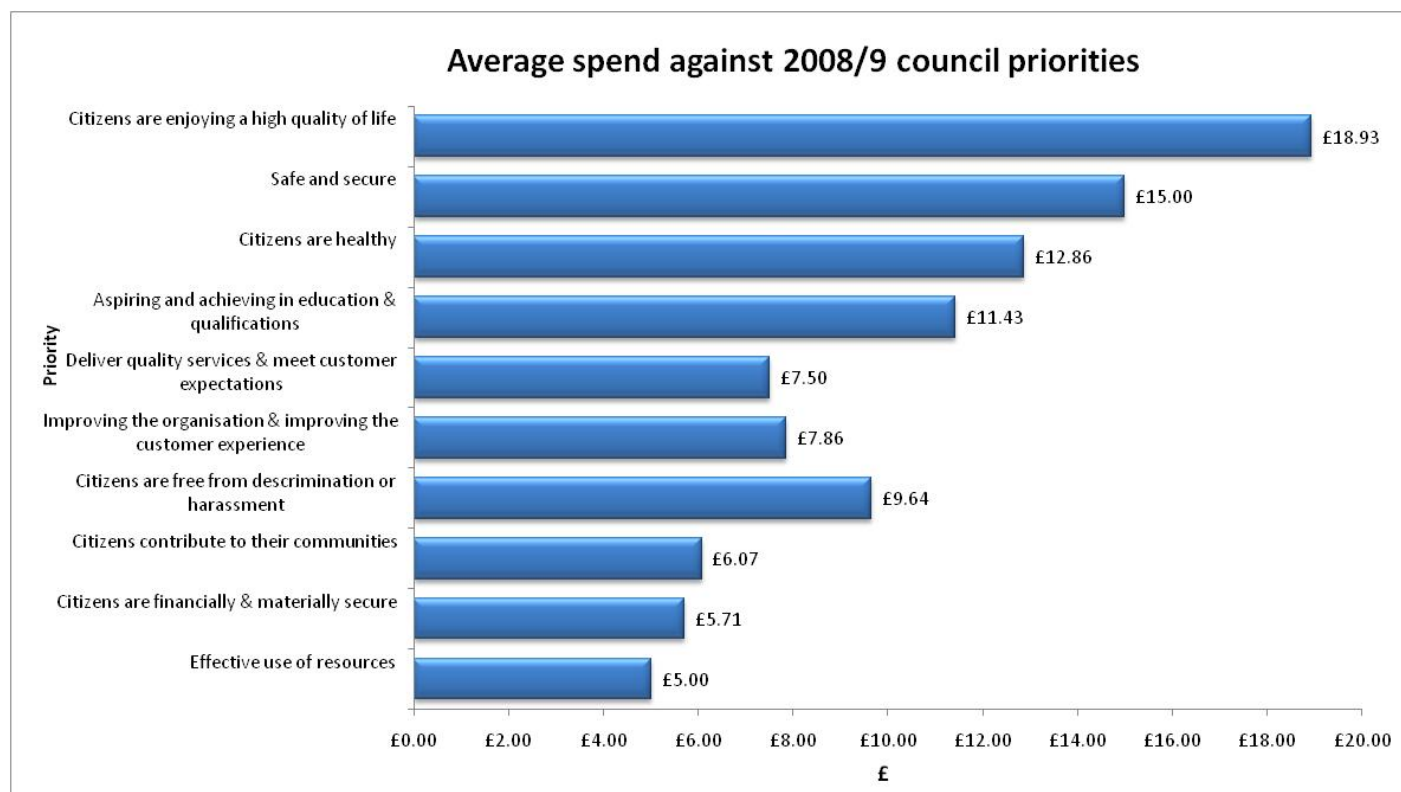
The benefits active communities can bring to a local area were not immediately recognised by the groups we spoke to. Some thought that it is good to be involved and volunteer, however the true benefits this can bring to a community was generally not forth coming.

One young person thought that active communities would foster cohesion bringing indirect benefits such as less anti-social behaviour.

*'This is very important because if people are active in their communities there will be less anti-social behaviour.'*

## Appendix 1 - Council spending priorities

Attendees at the Over 50's Forum (6), Youth Opinions Unite (7) and Willenhall LNP (15) meetings were given a notional £100 to spend on the 10 council priorities. Respondents were invited to allocate the money however they wish, thus reflecting what is most important to them.



Based on the responses of 28 people.

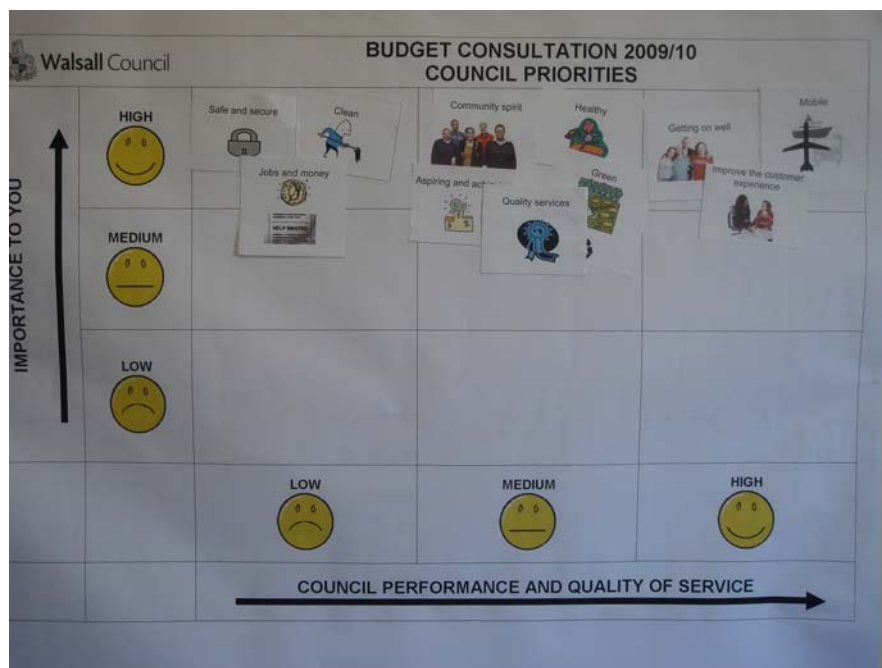
### ***Youth Opinions Unite members decide how to allocate their £100***



## Appendix 2 - Priority grids

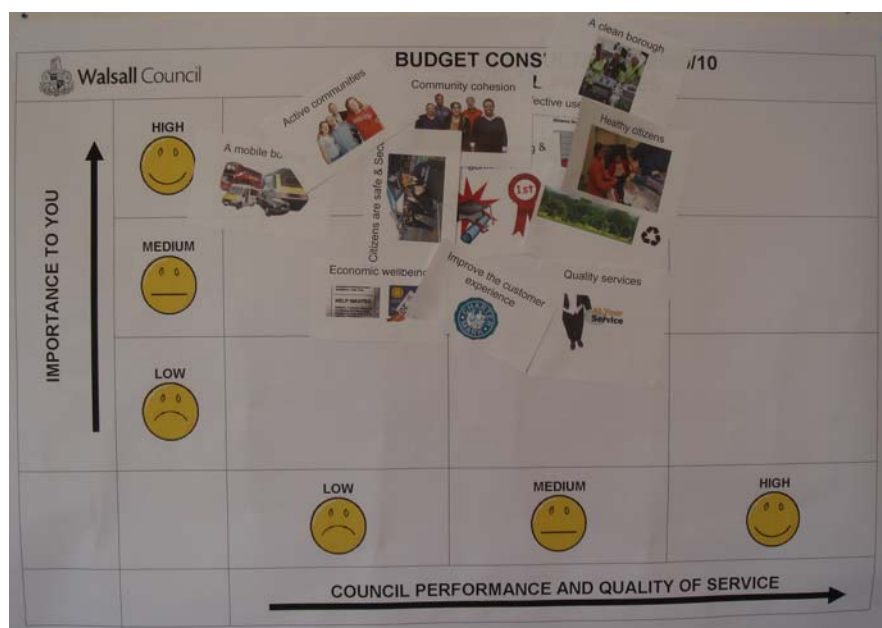
Priority grids were developed to assist group discussion and ensure a focus on the council's ten priorities. Participants discussed each council priority in turn, deciding as a group where on the priority grid it should go; high, medium or low importance and high medium or low council performance. Priorities appearing in the top left hand box are key priorities, being most important and most in need of improving council performance.

### Service Users Empowerment



Key priorities for SUE were; citizens' are safe and secure, a clean borough and economic well-being.

### Over 50's Forum



Key priorities for the Over 50's Forum were; a mobile borough, active communities and ensuring citizens are safe and secure.

## Youth Opinions Unite



Key priorities for Youth Opinions Unite were; citizens' are aspiring and achieving, citizens are safe and secure and healthy citizens.

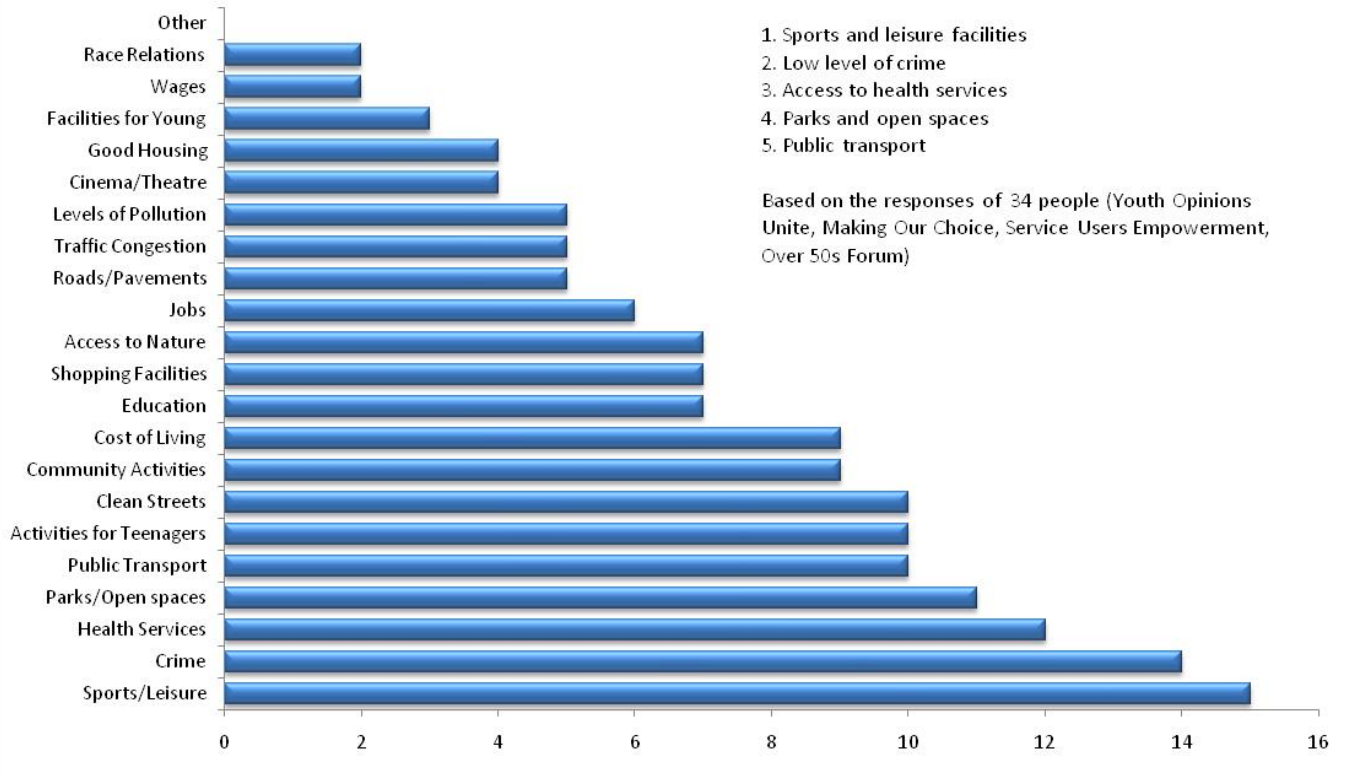
## Appendix 3 - What makes somewhere a good place to live?

Participants at specific meetings were given 5 (3 in the case of Service Users Empowerment) stickers which they could use to vote for aspects they think make somewhere a good place to live. Pictures representing a variety of aspects<sup>8</sup> were posted around the room for individuals to vote for. Some votes from the Making Our Choice group are shown below and overall results are shown in the graph.



<sup>8</sup> Full list of aspects included; Access to nature, Activities for teenagers, Affordable decent housing, Clean streets, Community activities, Cultural facilities (e.g. libraries, museums), Education provision, Facilities for young children, Health services, Job prospects, The level of crime, The level of pollution, The level of traffic congestion, Parks and open spaces, Public transport, Race relations, Road and pavement repairs, Shopping facilities, Sports and leisure facilities, Wage levels and local cost of living.

## What is most important for making somewhere a good place to live?



### Top vote allocation by group

Making Our Choice – Sports and leisure facilities

Service User Empowerment – Traffic congestion and activities for teenagers

Over 50's Forum – Public transport

Youth Opinions Unite – Parks and open spaces