



Walsall Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall to be held on **MONDAY the 18TH day of JULY 2022 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: <https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/AuditelScheduler/CreateSchedules/Past/41>

Dated this 8th day of July, 2022.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

1. To elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are not present.
2. Apologies.
3. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23rd May, 2022 (**pages 6 to 19**)
4. Declarations of interest.
5. **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.
6. Mayor's announcements.
7. To receive any petitions

8. To answer any questions in accordance with Council procedure rules:

(a) From the public: None.

(b) From members of the Council:

Councillor Pete Smith

Would the appropriate Portfolio Holder join me in;

- a) thanking the several Community Associations and other Community Groups across the Borough that have been and still are working in partnership with Walsall Council to address the difficulties that residents, especially vulnerable residents have endured due to Covid and could endure due to Cost of Living problems especially around fuel and food poverty and the difficulty that many may have in being able to access help via the internet

and
- b) Giving a brief outline of some of the splendid work that these organisations have been doing and are prepared to do in the future, in order to give vulnerable individuals and local communities the capacity for greater resilience as we go forward?

Councillor Pete Smith

Given that Statutory guidance from the Department for Education on the Cost of School Uniforms was published on 19th November 2021 under the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021 and that this Act requires the appropriate authorities of relevant schools to have regard to this guidance when developing and implementing their school's uniform policy, including local authorities, and further given that the main Points of the Guidance are as follows:

- Parents should not have to think about the cost of a school uniform when choosing which school(s) to apply for. Therefore, schools need to ensure that their uniform is affordable.
- In considering cost, schools will need to think about the total cost of school uniforms, taking into account all items of uniform or clothing parents will need to provide while their child is at the school.
- Schools should keep the use of branded items to a minimum.
- A school's uniform policy should be published on the school's website, be available for all parents, including parents of prospective pupils, and be easily understood.

- Schools should ensure that their uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money (including the quality and durability of the garment).
- Single supplier contracts should be avoided unless regular tendering competitions are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where the best value for money is secured. This contract should be re-tendered at least every 5 years.
- Schools should ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire. Information on second-hand uniforms should be clear for parents of current and prospective pupils and published on the school's website.
- Schools should engage with parents and pupils when they are developing their school uniform policy.

Can the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public, of the extent to which local authority controlled schools have, in the light of this recent Government guidance, made changes to the development and implementation of their Schools' Uniform policies as well as the extent to which the local authority can influence Academy Trusts to do likewise?

Councillor Pete Smith

Given that whilst it may be the case for some that "work is what you do, not where you do it from" but also given that for many other public sector workers as well as arguably large sections of Walsall residents (and Council tax payers) "work is not just what you do but where you do it from", would you share with me, this Council and the public, information on the following question, in 5 sub-sections:

- a) How many Council employees worked entirely from the Council House/Civic Centre before Covid caused a re- think?
- b) How many Council employees presently work entirely from the Council House/Civic Centre?
- c) How many Council employees work entirely from home?
- d) How many Council employees work from a mixture of home and The Council House/Civic Centre?
- e) How many Council employees work on site, at their place of work, due to the impracticability of working from home due to the nature of their work?

9. Amendments to Planning and Building Control delegations under Part 3.5 of the Council's Constitution.

To approve changes to the Constitution.

(Note: Report to Audit on 27th June 2022 reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting **(Pages 20 to 44)**)

10. Committee appointments

To confirm that Councillor Samra be appointed Vice Chair of Licensing for the remainder of the municipal year.

To note that Councillor Nawaz has become a member of the Audit Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

11. **Portfolio holder briefing.** To receive a 5 minute presentation from the following portfolio:

- Leader of the Council - Councillor Bird **(To Follow)**

(Note: A member of the Council may ask the portfolio holder any question and another associated question without notice upon each report. Questioning by members is limited to 10 minutes for each report presented.)

12. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillor Nawaz and Councillor Hussain.**

That this Council:

- Recognises that due to the decision of the current administration to close the Councils 'First Stop Shop' residents are unable to access much needed face to face support for issues including housing benefit, council tax, planning issues, taxi licensing issues and homelessness, leading to inconvenience and distress for many; and
- Understands that many residents are unable, for various reasons, to access the Councils Services by electronic means and that many residents are still coming to the Civic Centre to access the One Stop Shop.

This Council urges the current administration to reconsider its decision to close this much needed facility and to reinstate some form of 'face to face' access, within the First Stop Shop for the borough's residents.

13. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillor Nawaz and Councillor Hussain.**

That this Council:-

- Expresses its concern that Wolverhampton University have suspended most of the Bachelor Arts, and all the Master of Arts courses, and confirmed that there will be no new intake this academic year.

- Notes that many of the courses would take place at its Walsall Campus; and
- Recognises that the Arts are important to the fabric of our town and society and therefore should be protected.

This Council calls upon Wolverhampton University to reconsider its decision to make these drastic cuts which will impact on residents in Walsall and beyond both now and in the future and to work with Walsall Council to explore other avenues, such as the Arts Council, for funding of these courses.

15. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillor Smith.**

This Council is aware that given the increasing and likely ongoing cost of living problems especially for those on lower incomes and others with problems that put them at a disadvantage, there is an understandable corresponding increase in the demand and expectation for help, assistance or advice, not just via online help but face to face help, by large numbers of our Borough's residents.

This Council is also aware that thousands of its local residents will not have access to, or the ability to use, a computer and/or the internet, especially, though not exclusively, older generation residents, residents with certain learning difficulties, those who are on the lowest incomes and those who are inadequately housed or homeless.

This Council is further aware that following the closure of the Council's One Stop Shop at the Civic Centre due to Covid, there is now no official Council office anywhere in the Borough for residents of its 104,000 plus households to go to, to seek Council help or advice on Council related matters of concern to them, such as concerns over Council tax, Benefits, food poverty, fuel poverty, cost of living issues, Blue Badges and other disability issues, Planning matters, etc. etc.

The Council is also aware that its drive to save money (predominantly due to the government controlled system that funds local Councils) has been through more digital technology which simply translated means possibly greater convenience and possibly monetary savings to the Council but greater difficulties and social costs for those referred to in the last paragraph, as well as greater reliance by the Council on the Community Centres and Hubs that are now increasingly being called upon to take on the extra work generated by the Cost of living crisis, especially more so now that the One Stop Shop at the Civic Centre is closed to the public.

Therefore this Council, as a matter of urgency calls on its Leader and Cabinet to work with their Executive Directors to address this concerning issue by either re- opening the One –Stop- Shop at the Civic Centre and/or working out a fully funded strategy of partnership with local Community Organisations & Hubs to help plug the increasing disconnect that is taking place between a growing number of our Borough's local residents and their Council.