

Cabinet – 15 December 2021

The Borough Plan ‘Our Walsall Story’

Portfolio: Councillor Perry, Councillor Craddock

Related portfolios: All Portfolios

Service: Policy and Strategy unit

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To develop a borough plan, ‘Our Walsall Story’ which sets out the long-term ambition for Walsall based on our residents, businesses and partners views to be achieved by 2040.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Walsall has so much to be proud of, however there are going to be significant challenges in the months and years ahead for many of our communities, however there are as many opportunities for the borough to shape a hopeful and ambitious future for our residents.
- 2.2 Strong relationships and partnerships have been built in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic with public services, businesses and communities have come together to support each other and protect the most vulnerable and maintain the economy.
- 2.3 We are in a unique and pivotal period which will be decisive on how lives might be lived. This provides the opportunity now to develop a borough plan, which will be for everyone in our borough. It will be a springboard for further partnership collaboration and investment, building on the strong partnerships already formed.
- 2.4 A shared Borough Plan provides a framework for future collaboration across all communities and partners with a shared ambition, priorities and outcomes. We are ambitious for Walsall and together we will create a borough that works for everyone.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the development of a borough plan over 2022 to be ready for submission to Council approval in February 2023.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Walsall has so much to be proud of, however there are going to be significant challenges in the months and years ahead for many of our communities. We have already begun with We Are Walsall, a campaign to promote our town centres, to encourage people to return to them and to promote our pride in the borough. However there are as many

opportunities for the borough that can only be addressed when the borough works together as one to shape a hopeful and ambitious future.

- 4.2 In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, public services, businesses and communities have come together to support each other and protect the most vulnerable and maintain the economy. Strong relationships and partnerships have been built, proving that when partners come together great things can be achieved.
- 4.3 This is a unique and pivotal period, and the next decade will be decisive on how lives might be lived as there have already been fundamental shifts in how digital technologies affect how people socialise, work and live.
- 4.4 In this context, and despite the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic has brought, there has been a strong emphasis on hope and ambition coming from our communities, partners and businesses. As a council we have been through a large change programme and we know we need to be radical, brave and ambitious – reimagining what we do, how we do it and being clear on why we are doing it, putting our customers (local people and businesses) at the heart of our new way of working at all times.
- 4.5 This provides the opportunity now to develop a borough plan, which will be for everyone in our borough. It will be a springboard for further partnership collaboration and investment, building on the strong partnerships already formed. To assist us with future conversations with our partners we have produced a short video which will set out our ambitions for the future of Walsall.
- 4.6 A shared Borough Plan provides a framework for future collaboration across all communities and partners with a shared ambition, priorities and outcomes. We are ambitious for Walsall and together we will create a borough that works for everyone.
- 4.7 The development of the plan will be informed by the voices and priorities of local communities, alongside understanding and responding to insight gathered through impact studies, surveys, our Joint Strategic Needs and assets Assessment (JSNA) and wider data analysis to shape how conditions and opportunities are provided for happy, healthy, thriving, connected communities. The release of findings from the recent national census begins in March 2022, providing us with the most comprehensive snapshot of our residents and communities available to us in a decade: helping understand who we are, how we live and what we do.
- 4.8 To develop the plan there will be a broad engagement programme, speaking to local residents, businesses and partners to capture the experiences, insight and aspirations from different perspectives. An equality impact assessment on our engagement will also be undertaken to ensure we captured a broad set of experiences and insight. An example of the types of questions that could be asked include;
 - Why are you proud to live and/or work in Walsall?
 - What is important for you for the future?
 - What are your priorities for Walsall?
 - How has Covid-19 affected you and your family?
- 4.9 To be as inclusive as possible the engagement will be varied, taking a number of different approaches and methodologies to ensure a broad range of views and experiences are captured. This will include online surveys, video booth, workshops, partnership forums and ongoing conversations.
- 4.10 The expected timeline for development of the borough plan will be launching in the New Year, engagement activity over the spring and summer, consolidation of the findings in

the autumn, with draft plan developed for feedback in the winter and final agreement in February Council 2023.

- 4.11 A dedicated project team, with engagement budget will be established to deliver the plan. This team will draw upon the skills and expertise of a range of teams and partners from across the borough so that as many local voices are heard as possible to help shape Walsall's future collective ambition.
- 4.12 Walsall should be incredibly proud of how it has come together to help each other deal with the practical, economic and social impact of the pandemic. This is a strong foundation in which to build the ambitions for the borough, so together we can create Our Walsall Story for the future.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.13 It is envisaged that the new Borough Plan will help shape the future priorities of the Corporate Plan. The work undertaken in shaping the Borough Plan will help implement all the current council five areas of focus (EPICC) by providing a better understanding of the key issues and drivers for our residents, businesses and communities.

Risk management

- 4.14 In delivery of the aim to develop a Borough Plan, project planning methodologies will be used to ensure deliverables and outputs are achieved and risks managed.

Financial implications

- 4.15 The net costs for the project will be picked up within existing 22/23 budgets , albeit with partner contributions where possible. This will be covering the following;
- Dedicated team (ie secondments) and Policy and Strategy officers once implemented, to plan, arrange and facilitate events and briefings, manage dedicated email box, provide specialist support on tools/techniques/ develop and draft plans and coordinate involvement with partners and third sector.
 - Events Budget for community events, venues for briefings and two partnership events (circa 30k) – meeting rooms, conference facilities, refreshments, speakers
 - Communication and Branding budget (circa 40k) – accessible communications and marketing materials
 - Materials budget for third sector involvement (circa 20k) – community facilities and incentive.

Legal implications

- 4.16 No direct legal implications

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.17 No direct procurement implications. If external providers are needed in the development of the borough plan ie focus group or engagement activities, these will go through due process within defined budgets.

Property implications

- 4.18 No direct property implications

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.19 A key element of the borough plan will be to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of our residents. Having a place that supports peoples wellbeing, with the right support for training and skills, job opportunities and varied leisure and cultural offers with an ambition to further these will support our populations wellbeing. Building on the partnership approach in which was established through the response to covid-19.

Staffing implications

- 4.20 Secondment opportunities will be available to council staff to be part of the project team to develop the borough plan.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.21 The final borough plan will be based on a clear understanding of the drivers and consequences of inequalities. This will include building on the knowledge gleaned from engagement activity with our residents, the updated Joint Strategic Needs and assets Assessment (JSNA), residents and children's surveys, census data (expected Spring 2022), population and economic modelling (ie megatrends). These will inform and shape the final borough plan to define action to reduce inequalities.

Climate change

- 4.22 No implications directly arising from this report. The project team will be mindful of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and ensure that it is a consideration in the production of the Borough Plan.

Consultation

- 4.23 In the development of the borough plan, a range of engagement activities will happen throughout the year to listen and understand the views, thoughts and aspirations of our local residents and partners. These will inform and shape the final borough plan.

5. Decide

- 5.1 This is a unique opportunity to develop a Borough Plan which sets out the ambitions for Walsall by 2024. Building on the strong partnerships, engagement and a period of mass unexpected social change, now is the time to engage our communities, businesses and partners to help us shape the future ambitions for Walsall.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Subject to approval a project team will be set up using planning methodologies will be used to ensure deliverables and outputs are achieved lead by the sponsoring Executive Director.

7. Review

- 7.1 The project lead will report to CMT on a regular basis for oversight with planned updates to Portfolio Holder leads with the sponsoring Executive Director accountable for delivery.

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