



Walsall Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall to be held on **THURSDAY the 24TH day of FEBRUARY 2022 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: <https://youtu.be/-VO82vpHyUE>

Dated this 16th day of February, 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 10 January, 2022 (**pages 6 to 12**)
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 P. Smith:-

With regard to the academisation of Walsall local authority run schools, **to what extent** do you agree with the following points:-

- 1) That there is no evidence that standards have risen just because the school has become an academy. Indeed there is evidence that standards have fallen in several cases in Walsall following the school becoming an academy.
- 2) That academisation is about taking parents out of the picture with no requirement for parent governors with the Academies run by non- elected, mainly unaccountable business men and women.
- 3) That academisation is not about boosting achievement but about dismantling national pay scales for teachers and recruiting unqualified staff.
- 4) That the academies programme places huge power in the hands of the Education Secretary in Whitehall, while mainly severing schools' links with democratically elected local authorities.
- 5) That former Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw was correct when he criticised seven sizeable academy chains for failing to improve the results of too many pupils in their schools, while paying board members large salaries.

Councillor Smith:-

Given that in recent years, Walsall Council tax has gone up year after year under Conservative and Labour run administrations with Walsall paying one of the highest, if not THE highest rates in the Black Country and the West Midlands, with a seemingly never ending “double whammy” of “increases in Council tax and cuts to services”, mainly due to Central Government cuts to local Council grants, which in Walsall’s case amounts to over £106m since 2011, and further given that at least some Councillors present today, have borne witness to:

- Walsall Council losing control of **its housing stock**, with 99% of the rented properties now in the hands of separate Housing Associations or Private landlords.

- Walsall Council losing control of its **Care Homes** for our elderly and vulnerable, with once again the private sector turning them into “better money spinners than boarding houses in Blackpool”
- Walsall Council losing control over its **Schools and Colleges**, with democratically unaccountable Academy Trusts taking over most of them.
- Walsall Council losing many of its libraries, Community Associations & Centres, youth clubs and Sure Start Centres, etc. as funding has been pulled
- The move to mere token representation on public bodies like the Fire Authority and the Police Authority towards which Walsall Council tax payers contribute.
- Resources being channelled to regional Mayors and Commissioners that may well have gone to local Councils
- the demise of local Councillor influence and public involvement as well as the watering down of democratic accountability with such moves as the closure of neighbourhood offices, the removal of area planning committees and the move from a Committee structure to a Cabinet structure to name but a few, such moves misleadingly sugar coated with claims of efficiency and smarter working,

Given all of the above, **to what extent do you fear, as I do, that** it is only a matter of time before the last vestiges of local democratic accountability are removed and where local Metropolitan District Councils such as Walsall will disappear, unless systems are changed to maximise public involvement in the decision making process so that people will feel a sense of ownership and hence support rather than feeling a sense of detachment and disconnect, thus inadvertently facilitating the demise of local government as we know it?

Councillor Worrall:

"The proposed Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Middlemore Lane, Aldridge, is an excellent, forward-looking, project. However, there is considerable local concern at the expected significantly increased volumes of vehicular traffic, including HGVs, on the local road network to and from the site, including residential areas of Aldridge, Rushall and Shelfield.

Can you advise me whether, as part of the HWRC project, mitigating, effective, traffic calming/road safety/speed reduction measures on feeder routes through nearby residential areas are included, and if so, what they are, and specifically, whether anything is proposed in the Westgate/Barns Lane 20 mph zone (where the existing limit is widely ignored), and along Spring Road/New Street, Shelfield?"

9. **Mayorality 2022/23.** Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 2(vi) to name the Mayor-Elect and Deputy Mayor-Elect for 2022/23 in accordance with the powers contained in Sections 3 and 5 of the Local Government Act, 1972.
10. **Annual Audit Report –** To note the Annual Audit Report **(pages 13 – 51)**
(Note: Report to Audit Committee reproduced for this meeting.)
11. To confirm the following recommendations of the **Personnel Committee:**
Pay policy statement and living wage 2022/23 (pages 52 – 87)
1) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/2023 be approved; and
2) That the continuation of the living wage as detailed in the Pay Policy (section 6.5) and section 4.2, (option a) of the report (appended) be approved.
(Note: Report to Personnel Committee reproduced for this meeting)
12. To confirm the following recommendations of **Cabinet:**
(a) Our Council Plan 2022-25 (pages 88 – 111)
1) That the 2022-25 Our Council Plan be approved.
2) That the final design of the document be agreed with the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.
(Note: Report to Cabinet reproduced for this meeting)
- (b) Corporate Budget Plan 2022/23 -2025/26, incorporating Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2022/23. (Pages 112 – 299)**
To approve the recommendation as set out in the cover report [annexed].
(Notes: In accordance with Council procedure rule 17.8 “A recorded vote will be taken on any decision relating to the Council’s budget or Council tax”. Cover report and report to Cabinet reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting)
13. **Portfolio holder briefings.** To receive a 5 minute presentation from the following portfolios:
(a) Children’s – Councillor Wilson **(pages 300 to 304)**
(b) Internal Services – Councillor Statham **(pages 305 to 316)**

(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.)

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

This Council is opposed to the rise in National Insurance contributions which will exacerbate in work poverty and disproportionately impact on young people and less affluent residents within the Borough; and asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to express Walsall Council's opposition to this unjust tax rise.