

Council - 11 July 2011

State of Walsall Debate

Portfolio: Councillor Bird- Leader of the Council

Service: Council Wide

Wards: All

Summary of Report

Council Procedure Rule 17 provides for a 'State of Walsall' debate to be held at the first ordinary meeting of Council in the Municipal Year. As per this procedure rule, the results of the debate will be:

- i) disseminated as widely as possible within the community and to agencies and organisations in the area; and
- ii) considered by the Leader in proposing the budget and policy framework to the Council for the coming year.

The attached information has been compiled to provide a profile of key issues in the Borough, aligned to the priorities expressed in the Corporate Plan agreed at the Council meeting of 18 April 2011. This is background information to assist and inform the debate at the council meeting.

The information contained in this report is correct as of the time of the paper being published, however more detailed and up-to-date information will continue to be provided throughout the year at <http://www.walsall.gov.uk/observatoryindex>

Paul Sheehan
Chief Executive

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STATE OF WALSALL

Communities and Neighbourhoods

People

Latest official population estimates give a population for Walsall of 255,900 people. Numbers have increased over recent years, reversing a period of decline throughout the 1990s. Population is more heavily concentrated in the centre and west of the borough. Around 17% come from a black or minority ethnic background. 20% (1 in 5) of Year 1 to Year 6 pupils regard English as an additional language.

The borough is made up of several individually distinct neighbourhood communities to which people show a strong sense of belonging.

Population projections show that the number of people will continue to increase over the next five years; numbers of dependent people will increase and numbers of people of working age will decrease (see figure 1).

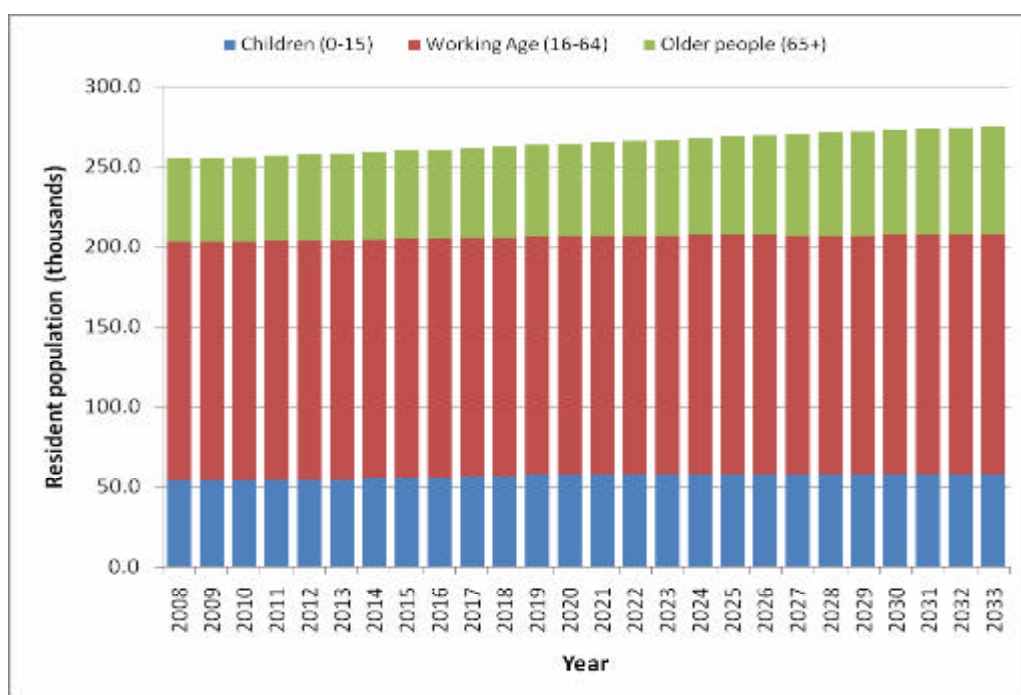


Figure 1: Walsall population projections by broad age group (2008-2033)

Source: 2008-based Sub-national Population Projections, Office for National Statistics

There has been an improvement in the proportion of people who are satisfied with the local area as a place to live, although Walsall still lags behind the national average.

Research by Ipsos Mori¹ into what background characteristics may be associated with making 'satisfaction' hard to achieve shows that Walsall faces many of these challenges.

Things that make it harder to achieve satisfaction include:

- Deprivation
- Number young people (aged under 19)
- High turn over of population
- Physical living conditions, over-occupation,
- Living in urban, built up environments

Budget consultation 2011/12 shows us that people want a borough that is clean, green and attractive. Litter and rundown buildings appear to be strongly interrelated and directly influence how people feel about the area. Having effective, reliable, cheap and clean public transport and easy access to car parking are recurring themes.

Highway maintenance is raised as in need of improvement. Pot holes and traffic congestion are the main concerns as well as pedestrian safety. Making sure the borough is a safe place and tackling anti-social behaviour remains a priority.

Respondents recognise the importance of education for all; however some people have concerns about the standard of the borough's schools and attainment levels. Unemployment and the borough's ability to cope with future government cuts concern many respondents.

Having the right services and advice at the right time is important for those who are, or may become, vulnerable. It is important for residents to have enough facilities and activities that reflect the borough's diverse communities and cultures. Some people think that Walsall does not celebrate or shout about its successes enough and that the negative attitude towards the borough is in need of reversing, the outcome being a borough that is proud.

¹ Ipsos Mori, People, Places and Place (Duffy and Chan 2009)

Environment

48.7% of all household waste collected is now recycled (2010/11). As a result 46,842 tonnes (38%) of the boroughs waste goes to landfill. The average residual waste per person is now 529kg/person/year.

Across England, around 40% of waste from households is currently recycled, as of 2011, compared to just 11% in 2000/01. As at 31 March 2010, Walsall's recycling rate was above England average, and the highest of all Metropolitan borough councils.

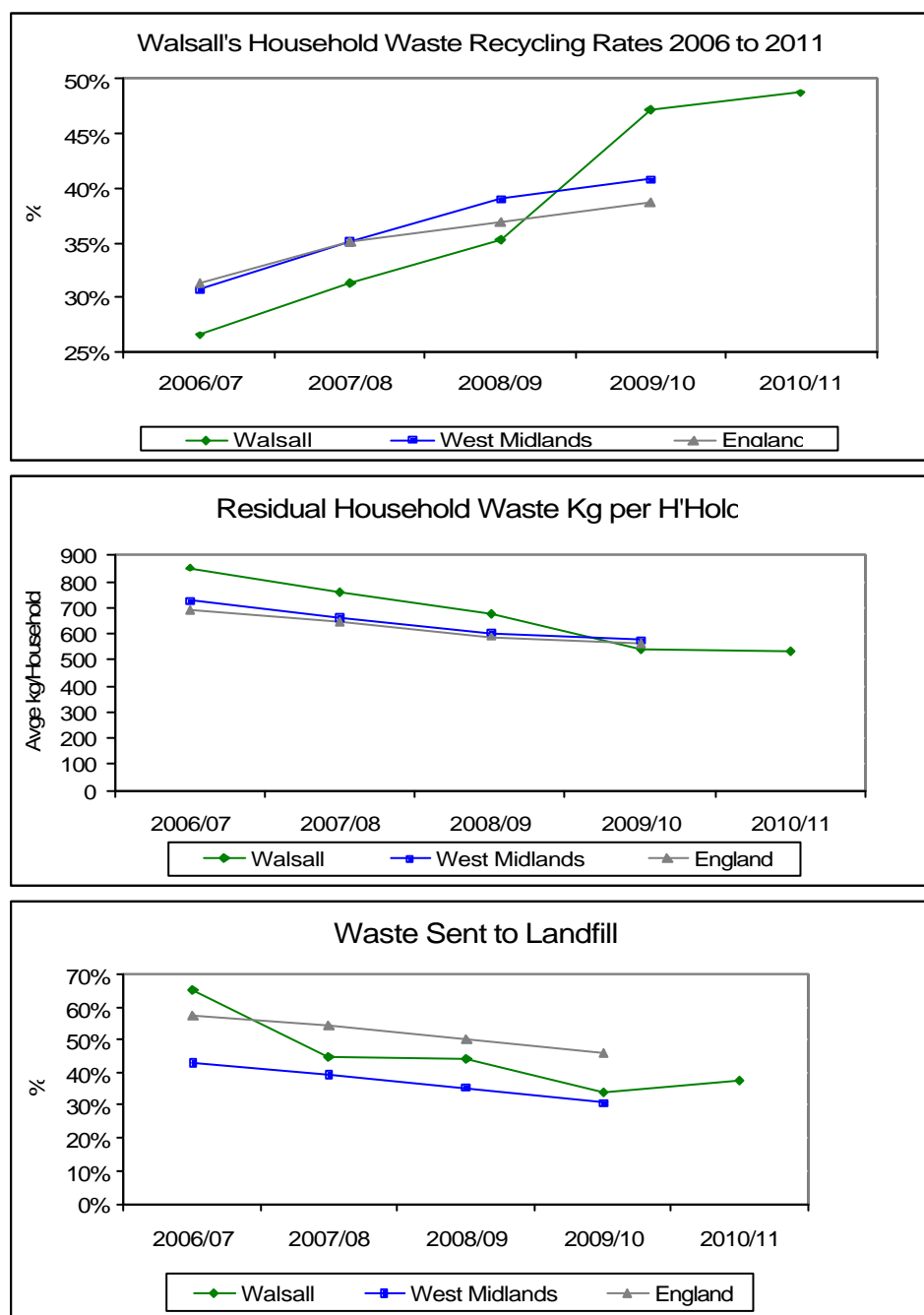


Figure 2: Household waste and recycling 2006-2011 Source: <http://www.wastedataflow.org>

Resident satisfaction with household waste management service has improved significantly over the last 10 years. Currently 89% of residents are very/fairly satisfied with their recycling service and 95% with the waste management service overall². Walsall's waste management approach is hence well regarded in comparison to West Midland regional average 71.5%; All Eng average is 69.8%³.

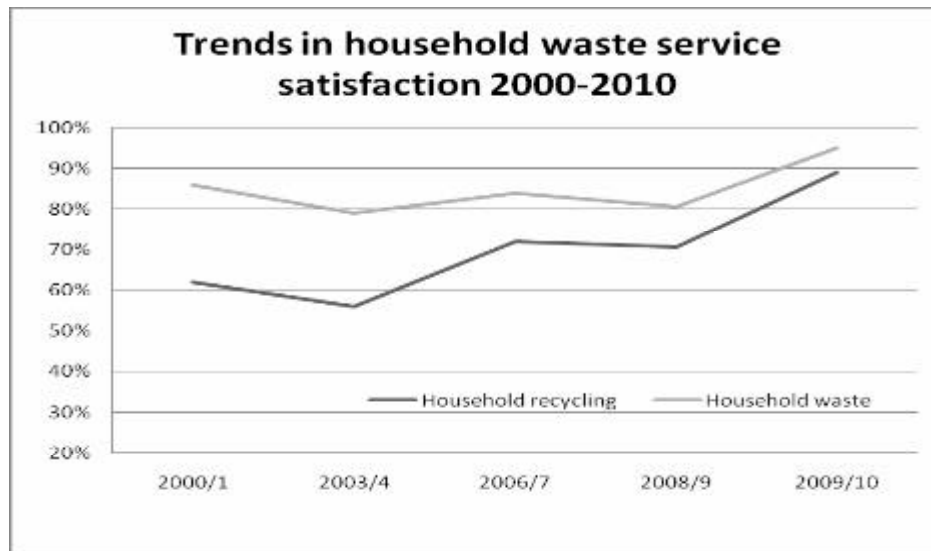


Figure 3: Resident Satisfaction with household waste service

There have been significant improvements in street cleanliness over the last 5 years with levels of litter, detritus and graffiti all showing a decline in prevalence

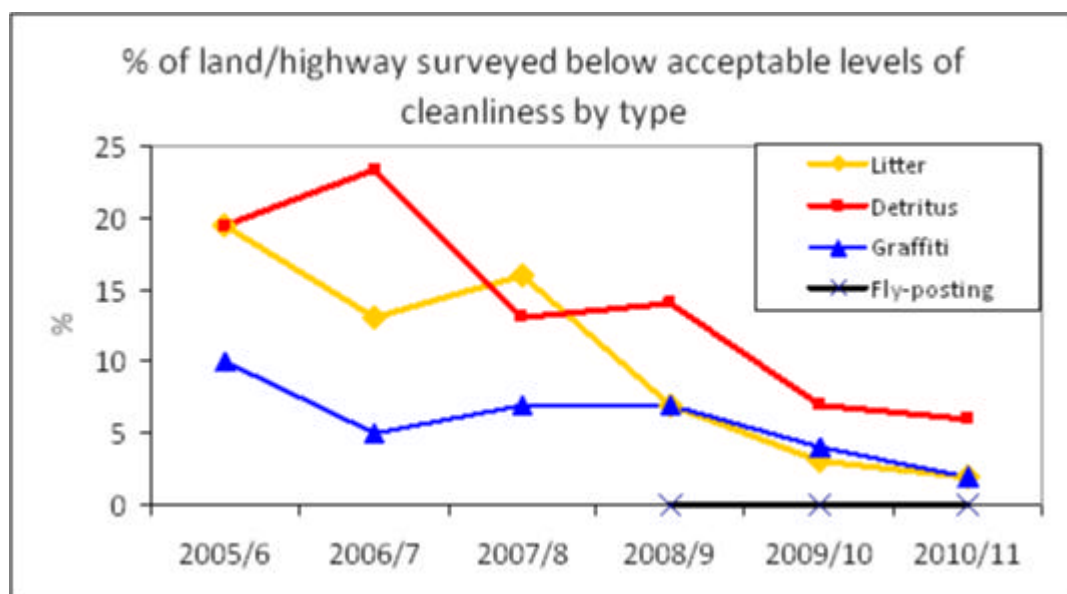


Figure 4: Street Cleanliness

² Trend based on 2000/1 – 2006/7 Best Value Survey, 2008/9 Place Survey and latest Walsall Citizen Panel Survey (Dec 2009).

³ Source 2008/9 Place Survey

In 2009/10 there were 1,940 fly-tipping incidences across the borough, well above the five year average of 1,500 (2006-2011). Fly-tipping is a national issue and during the same period nearly 947,000 fly-tipping incidents were dealt with by local authorities in England, although an 18.7% decrease from 08-09; most fly-tips (63%) consisting of household waste.

The annual number of fly-tipping incidents in Walsall has fluctuated but linear trend line shows that fly-tipping has become a steadily increasing problem over the last five years.

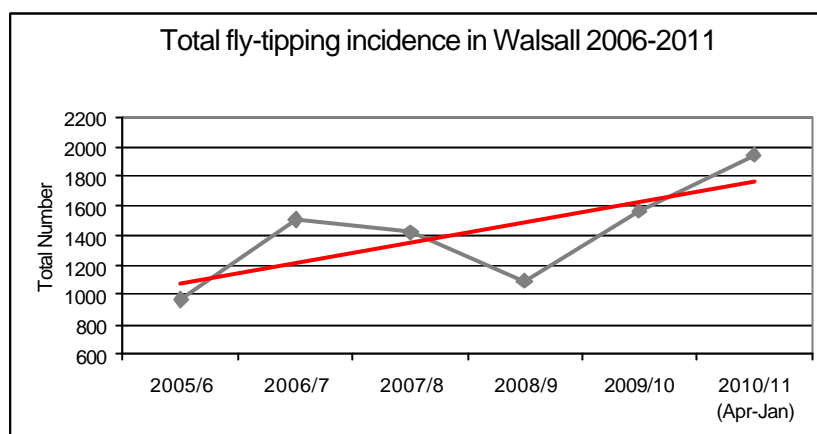


Figure 5: Fly-tipping in Walsall

More detailed information collected during 2010-11 indicates the types of fly-tipping that the borough experiences and the seasonal variation. A large proportion (66%) of fly-tipping involves van loads of fly-tipped waste as an off load from 'white van' building trades who are avoiding commercial disposal costs. An additional 30% of fly-tipping involved car boot loads and single items which largely consist of household waste.

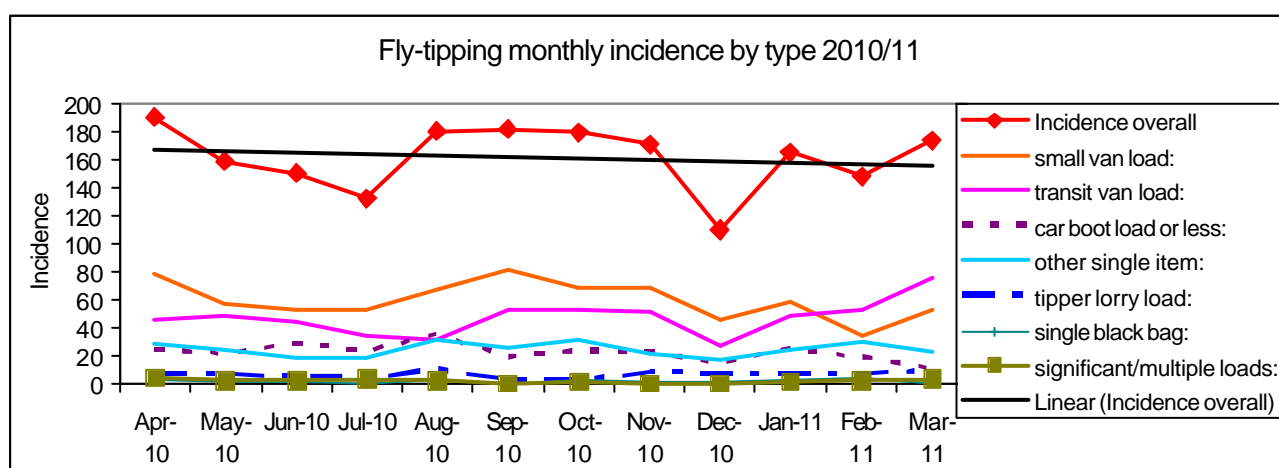


Figure 6: Fly-tipping by type

The borough contains a number of statutory and non-statutory conservation sites that are identified for their nature conservation or geological importance. These include sites that are important on a European scale as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) as well as sites that are important on a national scale; Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In addition there are places of special interest locally such as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); which provide good public access for people to enjoy local wildlife. These are statutory sites as the important features of these sites are protected by law from development and other damage.

There are also a number of sites of substantive nature conservation value that do not have any statutory status but are recognised for protection through the planning system. Including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs).

Across Walsall in total there are 127 nature conservation sites in the borough including, 7 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 1 of which is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), 11 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), 43 sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs) and 66 Sites of Local Interest for Nature Conservation (SLINCs), covering 907.7 hectares, of which the vast proportion (627 hectares) are actively managed. .

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Total recorded crime in Walsall has increased by 5.5% compared to the same period last year but this reflects a national picture of rising crime levels. Overall crime remains below the West Midlands average and within the average range for other similar councils. An analysis of crime by type shows that the main contributor to the overall increase in crime is vehicle crime, with theft from vehicles up by 23.4%. Meanwhile there have been reductions in violent crime and drug offences.

Crime Type	2009-2010	2010-2011	% Change
Domestic Burglary	1580	1632	3.3
Burglary Other Building	1565	1505	-3.8
Violent Crime	4818	4661	-3.3
Robbery	439	478	8.9
Vehicle Crime	2124	2511	18.2
theft of vehicle	672	719	7.0
theft from vehicle	1452	1792	23.4
Criminal Damage	3575	3700	3.5
damage to dwellings	926	938	1.3
damage to other building	440	439	-0.2
damage to vehicles	1451	1442	-0.6
Drug offences	684	665	-2.8
Total Recorded Crime	19063	20112	5.5

Figure 7: Crime by Type, annual change.

Source: WM Police

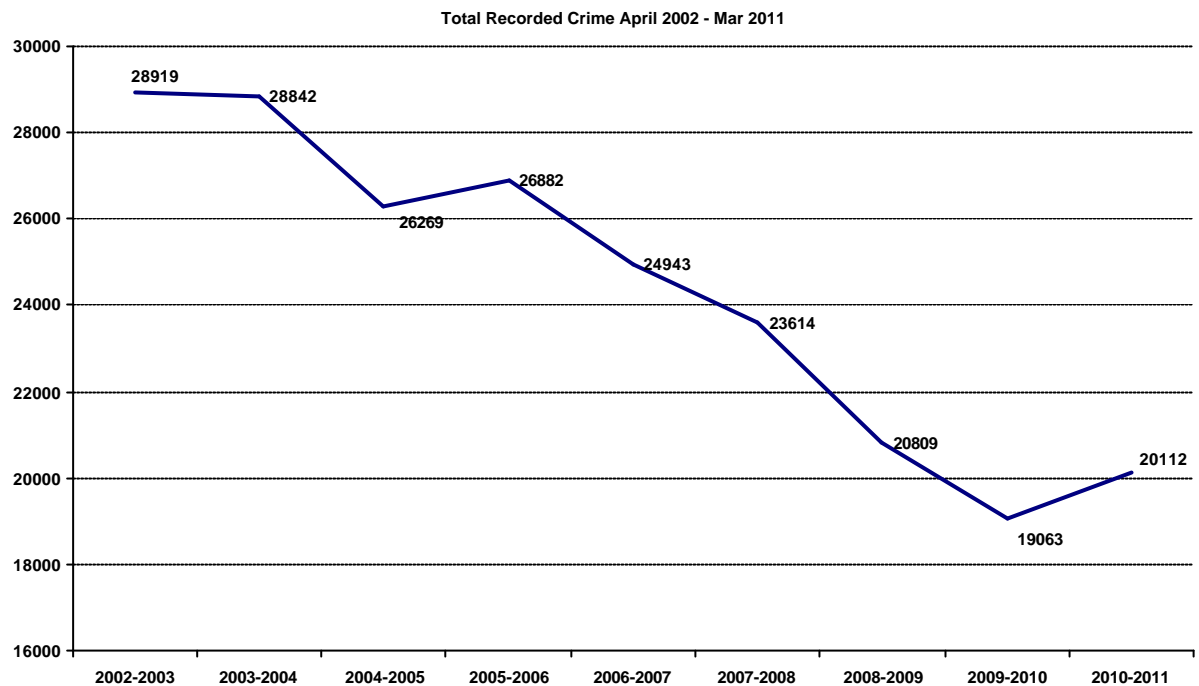


Figure 8: Total Recorded Crime 2002-2011
 Source: West Midlands Police

43% of Walsall respondents say there are no social issues concerning them in their neighbourhood. However, of those that thought social issues did exist, the lack of facilities for young people, crime and drug misuse were the biggest areas of concern.

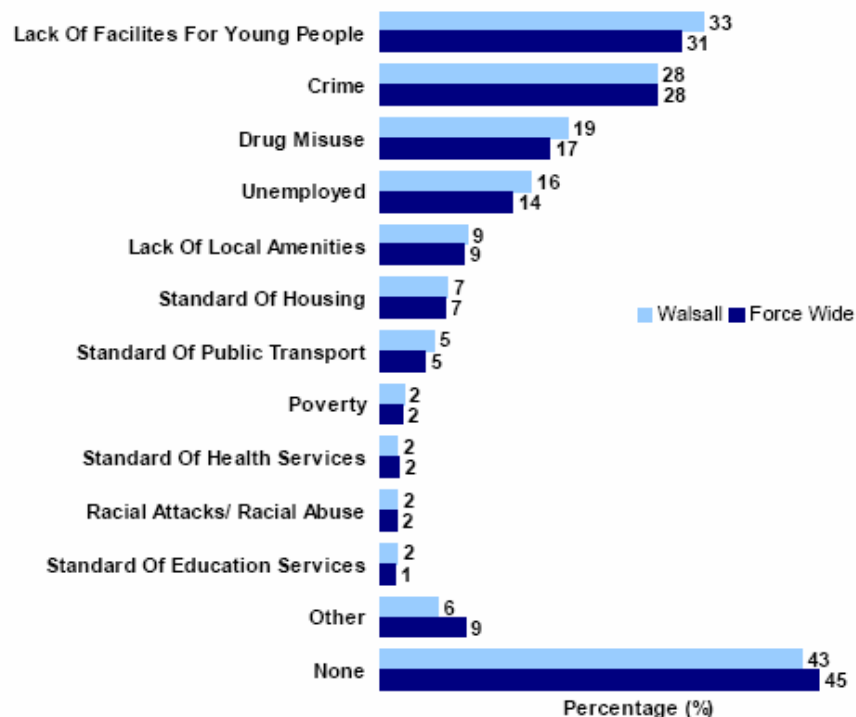


Figure 9: biggest social issues in the local neighbourhood
 Source: WM Police, Feeling The Difference Survey April 2010 – Feb 2011

Highway network (road condition)

One of the most important of the boroughs assets is its highway network which includes roads and footways, footpaths and public right of ways. The total road length maintained by Walsall is approximately 532 miles (856km), of which 48 miles are classified principal A roads, 25 miles are classified non-principal B roads, and seven miles are classified non-principal C roads.

The condition of the network is important to the boroughs economic, transportation and accessibility needs. Data shows that only 7% of principal roads and 5% of non-principal roads are classed as requiring maintenance (2010/11.) Over 70% of the boroughs principal and non-principal roads are in good condition.

Since 2007/8 Walsall's roads are seen to be in generally good and stable condition compared to the national average.

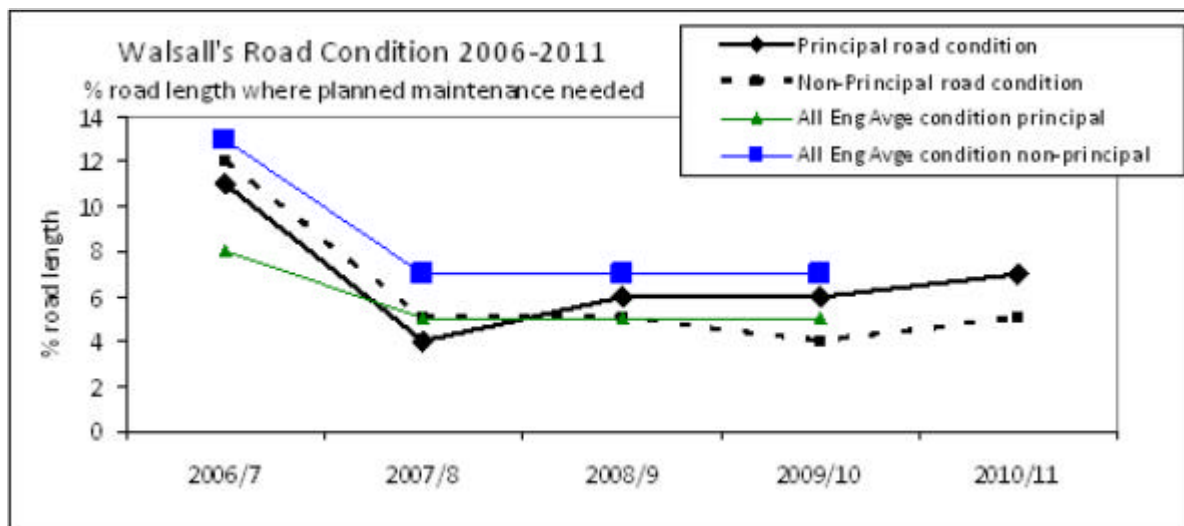


Figure 10: Road Condition Indicator Score

Economy

Deprivation

In 2010, Walsall fell to the position of 30th most deprived English local authority out of 326, putting it within the worst 10%. However, while some parts of the borough are among the most deprived in the country, others rank within the very least deprived (figure 2). The borough fares particularly badly in terms of education, income and employment deprivation.

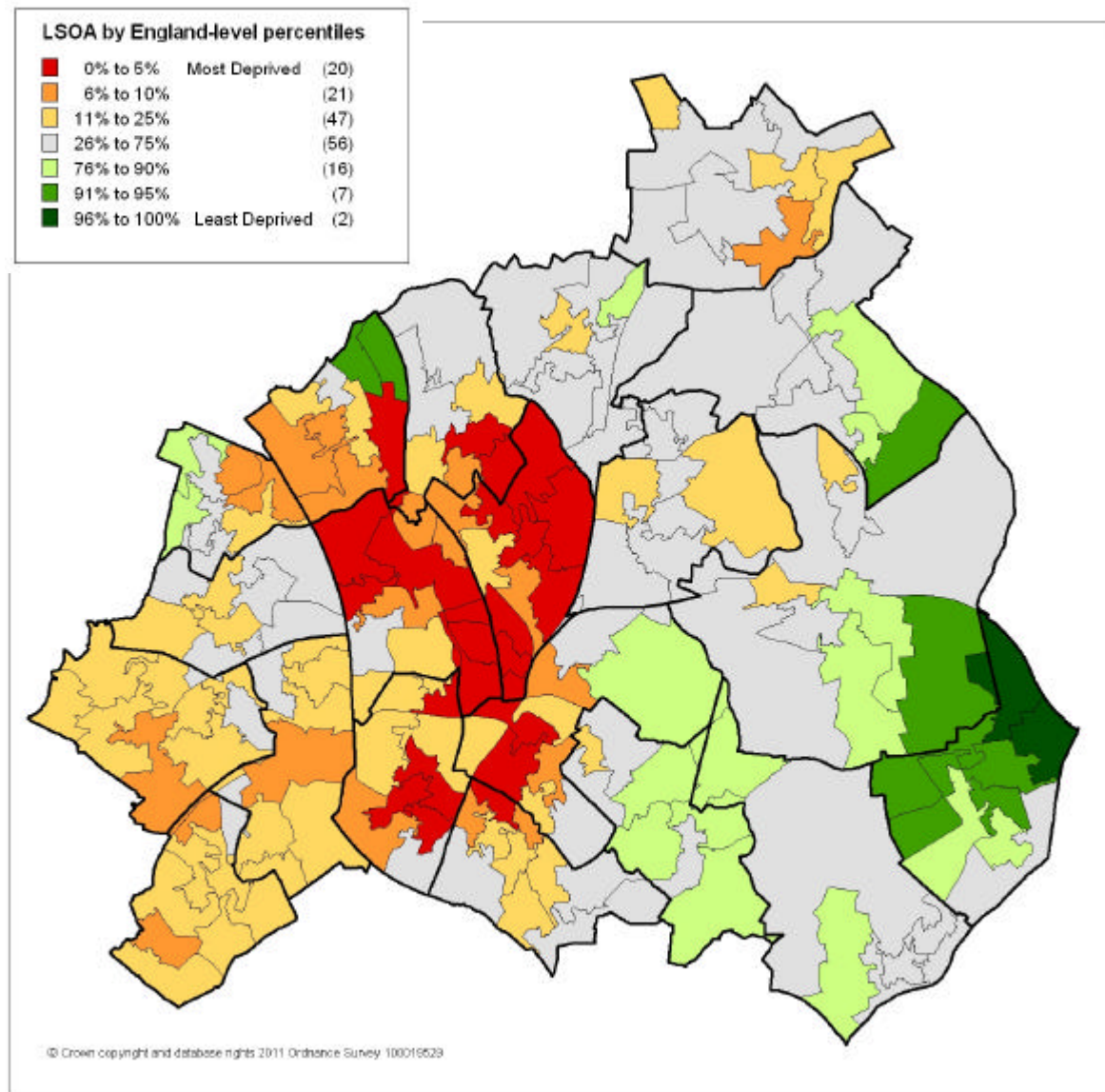


Figure 11: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010

Source: *Department of Communities and Local Government*

Employment

Employment levels in Walsall are considerably lower than the region and nationally, with less than two thirds of the working age population (63.2%) in employment in comparison to 68.5% in the West Midlands and 70.5% in England. Above average unemployment has been a long-term trend in Walsall, with the unemployment rate consistently above regional and national rates: currently 6.5% of working age people in the Borough claim Jobseeker's Allowance (figure 3).

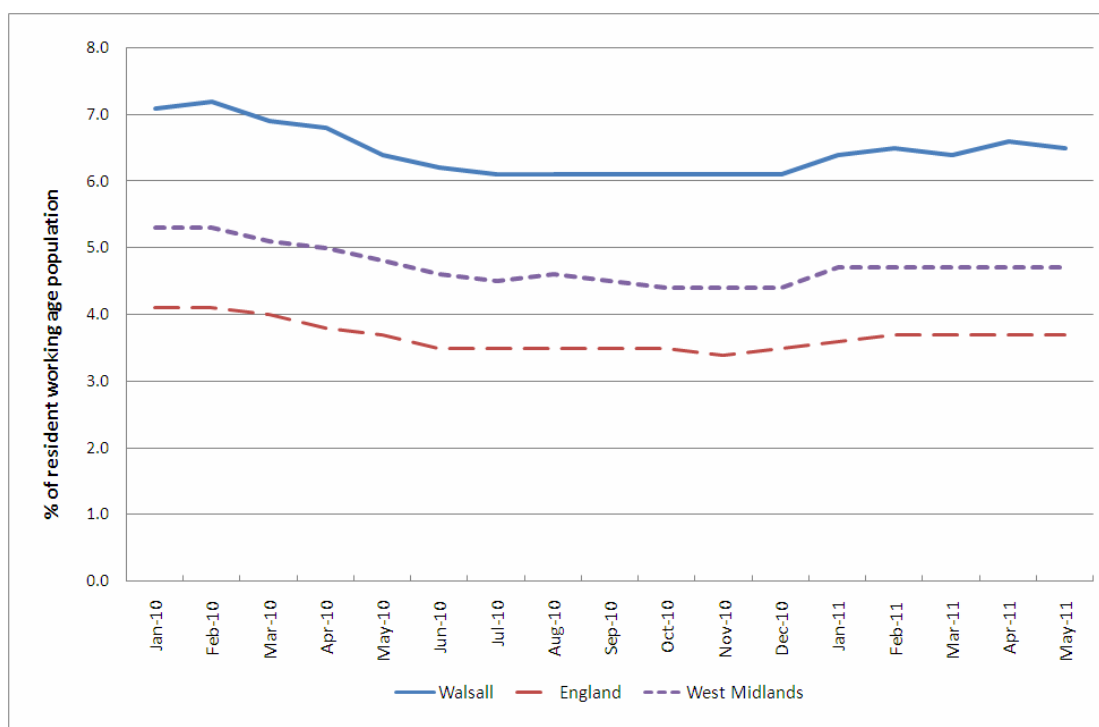


Figure 12: Jobseeker's Allowance Claimant Rate, Jan 10 – May 11

Source: Office for National Statistics

Walsall contains higher than average levels of benefit claimants. This is especially the case in relation to job seekers, employment support allowance and incapacity benefit claimants, lone parents and carers. In February 2010, nearly 35,000 residents in the borough were claiming benefits, accounting for over a fifth of the working age population compared with 17.1% in the West Midlands and 14.7% nationally. High levels of unemployment and worklessness are concentrated in the west of the Borough.

The manufacturing sector remains much more important to the local economy than nationally with its share of total employment almost twice as high as England as a whole. Walsall remains under-represented in a number of private sector areas including property and other business activities, financial services and hotels and restaurants. Whilst growth in certain sectors has brought the structure of the economy more in line with the national average, the major decline in manufacturing employment has not been fully offset by increases in the service sector, which has led to overall employment decline. Figure 4 shows that distribution, hotels and restaurants, along with the public

sector, are key employment sectors – but that manufacturing and finance & business services are also significant.

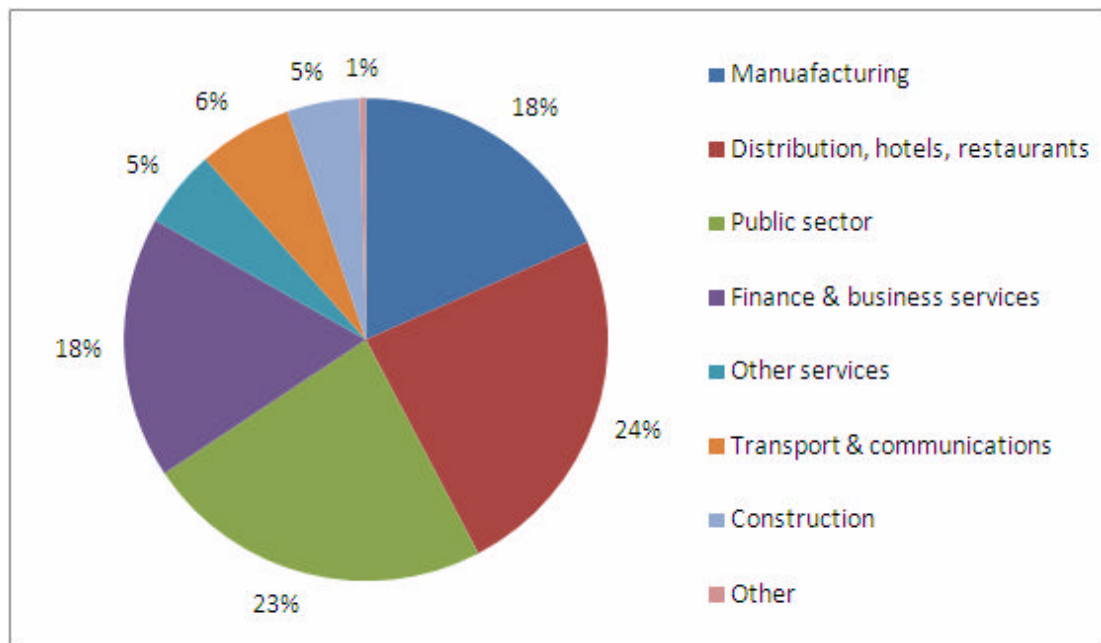


Figure 13: Employment in Walsall by sector, 2008

Source: *Annual Business Inquiry*, Office for National Statistics

Education and Skills

The current level of skills among Walsall's working age population is generally low, putting pressure on the local economy through difficulties for employers recruiting suitable employees, limited opportunities of progression for those in employment, and high levels of worklessness. A significant number of local businesses in Walsall have indicated that lack of skills acts as a barrier to recruiting new staff. Latest figures shows a fifth (19.9%) of adults living in the borough have no qualifications, compared with 16.0% regionally and 12.3% nationally.

At Key Stages 4 (GSCE) educational attainment has improved year on year, however Walsall remains behind both the West Midlands and National averages with 49.5% of Walsall children achieving 5A*-C in 2010 compared to 53.4% nationally and 54.2% in the West Midlands.

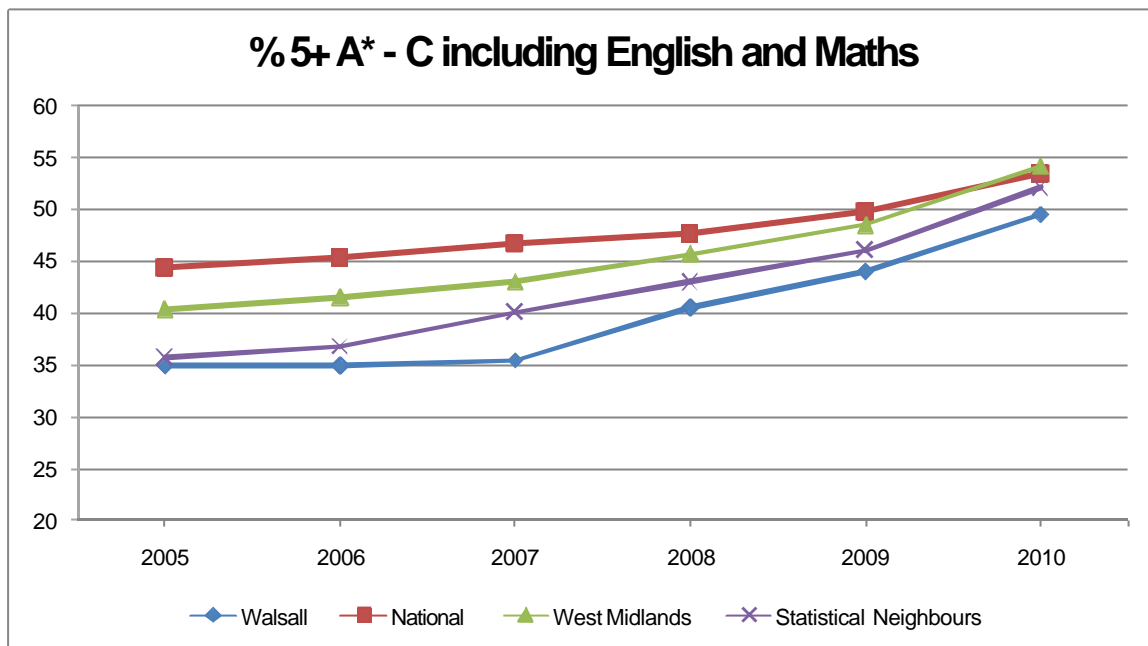


Figure 14: GCSE Attainment 2010

A similar story can be seen in post 16 education where the average points score in Walsall was 644.2 in 2010 compared to a national average of 732.9.

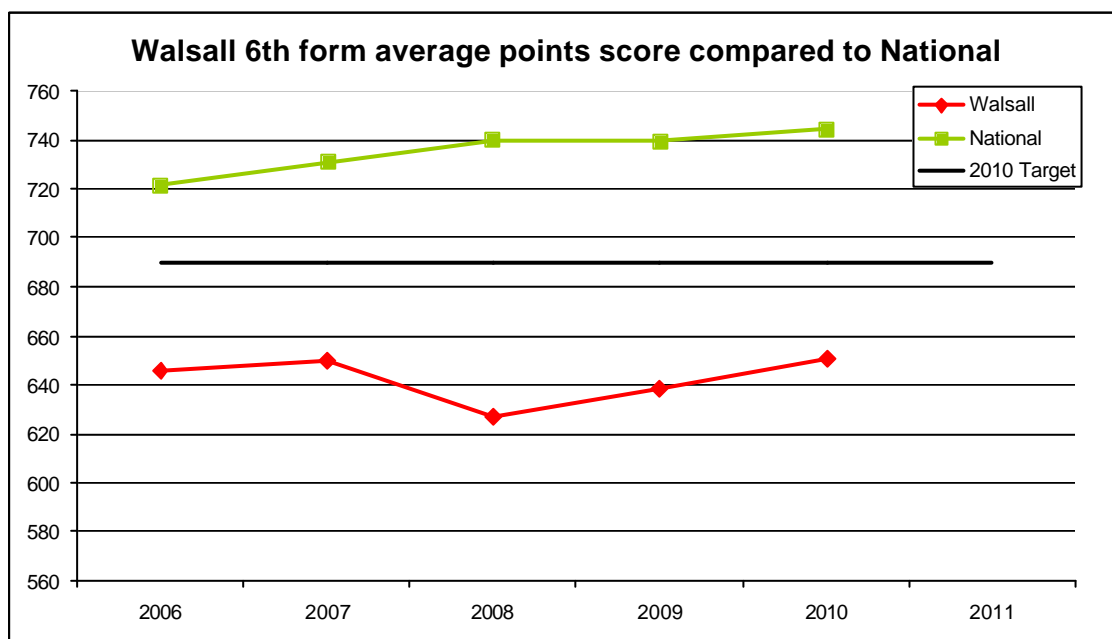


Figure 15: Post-16 educational attainment 2010

Enterprise

Walsall was home to over 7,500 active enterprises in 2009 and has a new business registration rate of 35.6 businesses per 10,000 people aged 16 and above. This is lower than comparable data for the West Midlands region (41.7) and England (49.6) and shows Walsall lagging behind in terms of new business creation. In 2009 there were 720 new enterprise 'births' but 1,005 enterprise 'deaths', giving a net loss of 285 businesses. However, this was the first year that there had also been a net business loss nationally, demonstrating the widespread impacts of the recession.

There have been some improvements in new businesses' survival rates in the borough over the past five years. However, survival may have been affected by the recession from 2008 onwards and generally remains slightly below the national average. Over nine in ten enterprises survive their first year, but this falls to less than two-thirds surviving for three years and only around half survive for four years.

Housing

65% of households in Walsall are living in owner occupied accommodation, 27% rent from a housing association and the remaining 8% rent privately or live rent free. The Private Sector House Condition Survey found an estimated 10,200 dwellings (13%) in Walsall where fuel poverty was present. The private rented sector has, by a substantial margin, the highest rate of fuel poverty at 44% - 2200 dwellings. The Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2010 showed a total of 4219 vacant properties of which 1835 were vacant for over 6 months.

As at January 2011 there were 1687 private sector residential properties which were empty for over 6 months. The private sector empty properties are distributed mainly to the west of the borough but also have large numbers of properties in the east. 251 properties have been empty for longer than 2 years and are distributed across the borough.

Land Registry data shows the average house price in Walsall in the second quarter of 2010 was £138,820, lower than both the national and regional average.

The updated housing needs study 2010 estimates that the average annual gross household income (including non-housing benefits) in Walsall is £25,410.

Town and District Centres

In the 2010 Walsall Town Centre survey, when asked what's lacking, more than half of all respondents (51%) would like to see more places in which to eat out, 48% would like a new department store and over a third (37%) would like to see more independent clothes shops.

Just under a third (32%) feel that the range of shops in Walsall town centre has improved over the last five years, however, 44% feel traffic congestion has got worse in the same period, (even following the completion of the ring road). 38% each feel that car parking and the appearance of the town has also worsened within the last five years. Addressing these issues is important for the maintaining and strengthening the economic prosperity of the town centre.

District centre surveys show respondents in Aldridge were significantly more likely to rate the area as good than respondents in Brownhills who were least likely to rate the area good. The range of shops was most negatively rated by respondents in Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall.

Results from the district and Walsall town centre surveys show a significant number of people are drawn out of the borough to the shopping areas of Birmingham and elsewhere.

Health and Well-being

Health Inequalities

By 2015 Walsall is estimated to be the place of residence for almost 50,000 people aged 65 and over, 7,000 of which will be 85 and over. Despite this growth in the older population, life expectancy continues to fall short of national averages, particularly in men. More and more people are living with ill-health and chronic long-term conditions in later life.

Male life expectancy for boys born today in Walsall is 2 years shorter than national averages and the inequality gap is widening.

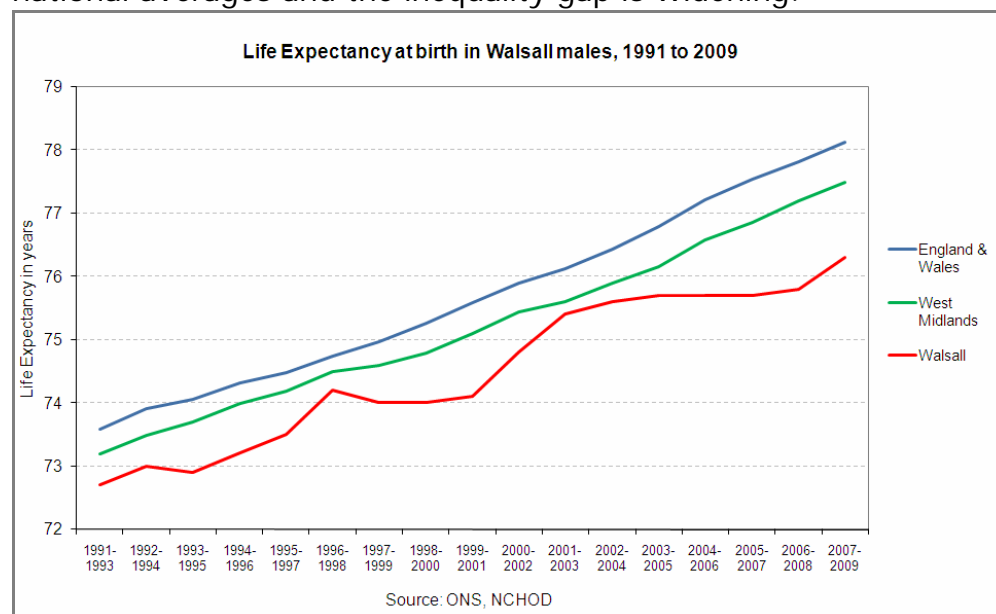


Figure 16: Male Life Expectancy at Birth

Source: NHS Walsall

Females fare better, with girls born today expecting to live on average almost 82 years – the same as the West Midlands region as a whole and only 4 months less than national averages.

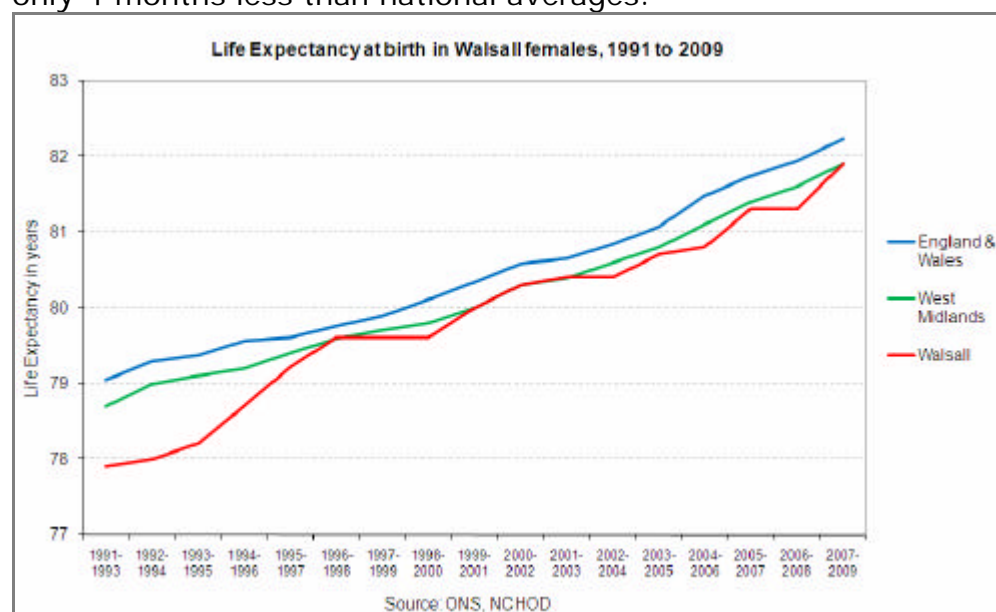
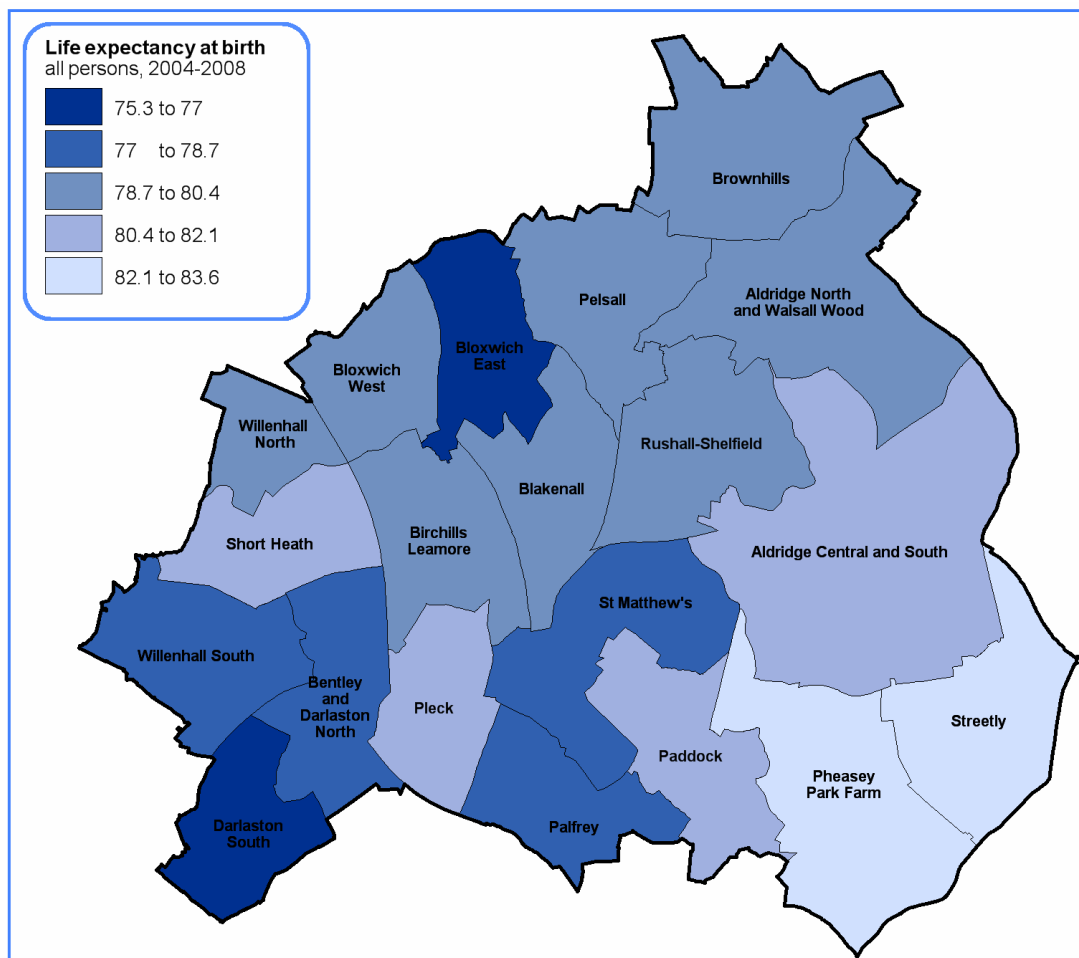


Figure 17: Female Life Expectancy at Birth

Source: NHS Walsall

As a key factor in determining our life expectancy, Walsall's infant mortality rates continue to be some of the highest in the country. Poor choices in lifestyle (smoking, diet and physical activity) continue to be above average in the borough, and nearly 4 out of every 10 Year 6 children in Walsall are considered overweight or obese.

There is also a wide discrepancy between different parts of the borough, with people living in the most deprived ward in Walsall dying on average 8 years younger than those in the most affluent.



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Figure 18: Life Expectancy at Birth by Walsall Ward.

Source: NHS Walsall

Vulnerable Children

A high number of children in Walsall, particularly in the most deprived wards, require looking after by social care and those that are looked after have been staying in our care system for longer periods. 2010\11 saw a slowing down of this trend but there was still a net increase of 24 children coming into the care system. Current estimates, based on the first two months of 2011\12 suggest we could see the first net decrease in numbers for 5 years.

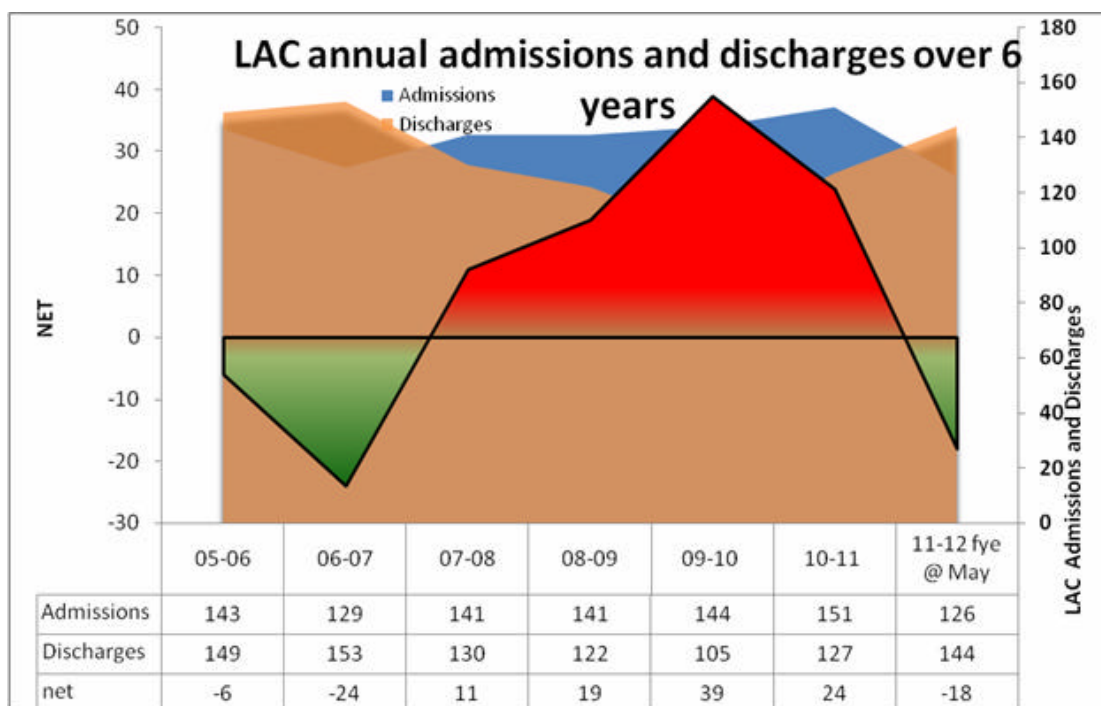


Figure 19: LAC Annual Admissions and Discharges.2005-2011

Road Safety

Across the West Midlands Metropolitan Districts in 2009, Walsall had the third lowest level in road casualties with 8.6% (869). In 2009 the figures showed a reduction in the number of serious casualties (73) down from the 2008 levels of 91, although there was a slight rise in fatalities (7), up from 4 in 2008.

Air Quality

Latest estimates show that Walsall borough emitted a total of 1,487 thousand tonnes of CO₂ in 2008 representing 5.8 tonnes per head of the population (per capita); this represents lower per capita emissions compared to West Midlands region (6.7) and England (6.8) averages. This figure excludes

motorway emissions⁴ which in addition accounted for 108 thousand tonnes of CO₂ in 2008, though a reduction from 145 in 2005.

In Walsall there was a 7.9 % per capita reduction on 2005 baseline, higher than the equivalent 5.6% reductions across the West Midlands and England.

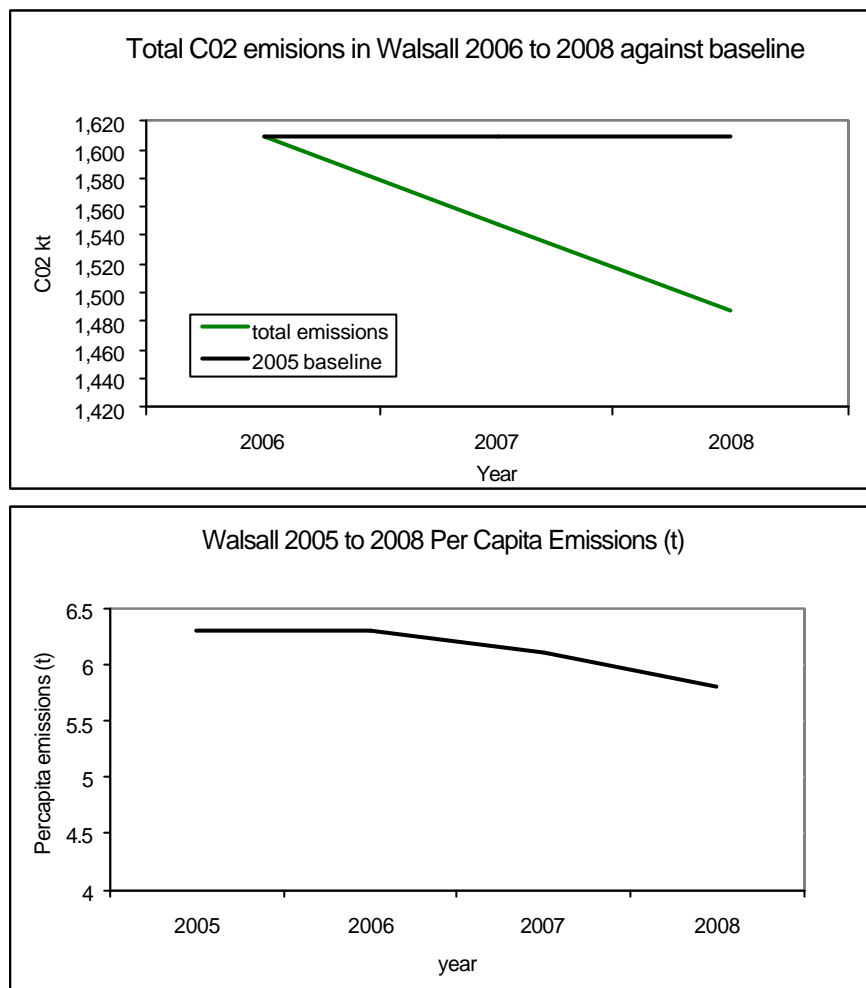


Figure 20: Total and Per Capita CO₂ emissions.

Fuel Poverty

There continues to be significant investment in improving energy efficiency across all housing sectors in the borough, aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions and tackling fuel poverty. During 2010/11, the council assisted a total of 2,552 households improve the energy efficiency of their homes and hence help to reduce their energy costs. That included 1,779 households assisted through national Warm Front Grants to a total of £2.3 m for example covering boiler replacements, central heating systems, loft insulation and draft proofing. Together with 523 who were assisted through local Health Through Warmth

⁴ Measurement excludes certain emissions, which it has been considered local authorities are unable to directly influence. Including motorways, large scale industrial installations, Diesel railways and land use, land use change and forestry.

programmes and a further 250 households referred by the council to its loft and cavity wall contractor for assistance through Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding.