



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 4th day of November 2024 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com

Dated this 25th day of October, 2024.

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 meetings of the Council held on 23rd September, 2024– **(pages 6 –27)**
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 Smith

Given that there is a housing crisis in Walsall and beyond, that Whg, with already around 18,000 on its waiting list has effectively closed its books on new applicants and that Walsall Council, despite having no properties of their own, has opened a waiting list of its own which runs in to many thousands and is growing week by week, with very little prospect of ever meeting the demand,

and given further that the Council, over 2 decades ago legally transferred ownership of its housing stock to a wholly independent registered social housing provider (Whg) through a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT), and that the legislation, whilst providing for an LSVT, does not provide for a reversal of that arrangement,

and given that legally Walsall Council still has the power to provide Council housing,

and finally given that the new Government has indicated a commitment to provide extra finances to build more Council homes in the future towards its national target of building 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years,

would the appropriate Portfolio holder explore the future possibility and feasibility of Walsall Council, venturing into building homes for letting at affordable rents, under Council ownership?

Councillor Smith

Given that once again this Council is on the “same old tripple-whammy merry go- round” of a further £28million cuts to front line services, increases in many service charges AND the maximum Council tax rise allowed (4.99%)

and futher given that some of the cuts under consideration for the next financial year include: the phasing out of most school crossing wardens, the removal of Council funding for festive lights across the Borough, even less frequent grass cutting, increased charges for the collection of bulky items, increases in Council car park charges, reduced cleaning for Council owned buildings, a massive £7.4 million cuts/increased charges to Children’s

Services and an even bigger £8.7 million cut/increased charges to Adult Care and Public Health services

and finally given that present projections seem to promise similar cuts to services, increased charges for many services and maximum Council tax rises, year on year at least up to 2028/29, can the Portfolio holder convince me, this Council and the public that the so called public consultation exercise on the Budget proposals commencing October 17 and ending 29 November is nothing less than a necessary but meaningless exercise that will make very little difference to the proposals already “oven baked” and ready to serve and furthermore can he suggest an answer to this on going annual ritual of more cuts, more service charges and maximum Council tax rises?

Councillor Smith

As winter approaches, could the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public of the following;

- a) Does Walsall Council have figures or at least an estimate of the numbers or “rough sleepers” in our Borough,
- b) To the Council’s knowledge, what provision has been made /is going to be made available for those in Walsall who are homeless and face the prospect of living on the streets this winter, and,
- c) How will rough sleepers be made aware of such provision?

9. To confirm the following recommendation of **Audit Committee**:

Annual Audit Report 2023/24

- 1.1 That Audit Committee review and provide feedback on the proposed Annual Report.
- 1.2 That, subject to any changes arising from recommendation 3.1, the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023/24 be approved and that the Chair of the Audit Committee present the report to the next meeting of Council.

(Note: Report to Audit Committee held on 25 September, 2024 reproduced for this meeting (**pages 28 to 36**))

10. To confirm the following recommendation of Licensing and Safety Committee

Street Trading Review – Change of Designation to Consent Streets

- 1) That the Council, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon it by virtue of Section 3 and schedule 4 paragraph 2 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, authorises the designation of all streets in the controlled borough of Walsall as consent streets with effect from 1 December 2024; and that the prescribed statutory notice of intention be published; accordingly, and
- 2) note that the relevant changes to permits for existing licence holders will be made at the renewal stage in April 2025.

(Note: Report to Licensing and Safety Committee held on 18 September, 2024 reproduced for this meeting (**pages 37 to 74**))

11. **Appointment of an Independent Member to Audit Committee**

That Council confirms the appointment of Mr D Walsh as an Independent Member to the Audit Committee with immediate effect for a four-year Term of Office concluding at the end of the 2027/28 Municipal Year. (**pages 75 to 77**)

12. **Planning Committee Appointment**

To appoint Councillor Waheed Rasab to replace Councillor Singh Sohal, following his resignation.

13. **Appointment of Planning Committee Chair**

To appoint a Chair of the Planning Committee.

14. **Appointment to Outside Body**

To confirm that Councillor Russell be appointed to serve as Trustee for the Harpers, Marsh, and Crumps Almshouse Charity for the remainder of the municipal year.

15. **Portfolio holder briefings** - To receive a 5 minute presentation from the following portfolio:

- a. Deputy Leader and, Economic Growth and Regeneration – Councillor Andrew (**pages 78 to 88**)
- b. Children and Young People – Councillor Elson (**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.)

16. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by Councillors Perry, Andrew, Murphy, Wilson and Martin

Motion:

This Council acknowledges the persistent problem posed by off-road bikes in our neighbourhoods, which have become a societal scourge affecting residents across the Walsall Borough, county, and indeed the country. Despite with our partners our ongoing operational response, the challenges presented by these machines extend beyond mere law enforcement and require a comprehensive approach.

We resolve to:

1. **Recognise the Challenge:** Acknowledge that off-road bikes are a significant nuisance in our communities, creating safety hazards and disrupting the quality of life for residents.
2. **Advocate for Legislative Change:** Urge the government to consider enacting legislation that makes it an offence to supply these machines to young people. Additionally, we call for enhanced powers for law enforcement to enter premises and seize these vehicles more effectively.
3. **Enhance Operational Responses:** Continue our operational responses to this issue, while recognising that current efforts often result in minimal outcomes at court. We seek to balance immediate action with long-term solutions.
4. **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Direct our officers to collaborate with local partners, and neighbour authorities' following proven successful strategies to tackle this issue more effectively.
5. **Public Awareness Campaign:** Implement a public awareness campaign to educate residents about the risks and consequences associated with off-road biking, fostering community support for solutions.

Conclusion:

The Council calls on all members to support this motion as we seek to address the challenges posed by off-road bikes in a holistic manner. Together, we can work towards creating safer, more peaceful communities for all residents.

Action Requested:

Resolve to write to the Minister of State for Crime and Policing outlining the above and seeking a commitment to investigate strengthening the law.