



# 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 29<sup>th</sup> day of September 2025 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: [www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com](http://www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com)

Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2025.

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 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2025– (**Enclosed - Pages 8 to 28**)
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:

**C. Jeavons**

Could the portfolio holder explain to me why there is such a lack of support, options, resources and information for parents with children who have additional needs.

I myself have dyslexia and was severely failed by the education system. My son who now shows very clear signs of autism and or adhd is having the same issues getting a diagnosis/ support and unfortunately my story isn't an uncommon one. I would like ask why this is the case and if there is anything they can do to improve or help this current situation.

- (b) From members of the Council:

**Councillor Smith**

With regard to the issue of "Mandatory Food waste", given that:

- a) Walsall Council's Cabinet made a unanimous decision on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025 to adopt Option 1 which would consist of households being issued with two further waste bins.. a smaller one and a larger one, the latter for kerbside collection of food waste on a weekly basis....

and that

- b) Cllr. Pete Smith "called in" this Cabinet decision as there had been neither public consultation nor scrutiny of such prior to the decision

and that

- c) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this issue and the "call in" on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and unanimously recommended an alternative method for the disposal of food waste that should be considered alongside the options in the cabinet report.

and that subsequently

- d) Cabinet considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations at their meeting of 22 May 2025 and resolved to stick by its original decision of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025, namely to approve the introduction of statutory weekly food waste collections from 31 March 2026 and also to

approve the standard food waste collection service to be one small kitchen caddy and one larger kerbside caddy per household, with the larger kerbside caddy being emptied weekly.

Will the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public whether there is to be any further change to this Cabinet decision, especially given a recent refreshed Cabinet and a change of leadership of the Council and more importantly because Option 2 which would enable households to mix food waste with garden waste in their Brown Bin for weekly collection all the year round, would be much more viable and acceptable to the vast majority of households?

### **Councillor Ward**

Despite the overgrowth along the Black Country Route being reported in April, and assurances that works would be undertaken in June/July, we are now in September, and the area remains severely overgrown. This continues to obscure road signs and is further blighted by fly-tipping.

Can the portfolio holder inform me when this key entrance to the borough will be properly addressed, as its current condition presents a poor image of Walsall and remains a disgrace?

### **Councillor Coulson**

I like to think of myself as one of the last people who would need to have it explained to them the value of trees, to human life. However, during my year as a Councillor, I have now had several residents come to me experiencing major issues with massively overgrown trees in their gardens. The Turnberry Estate in Bloxwich started to be built roughly 40 years ago, and so a number of these trees have had that many years of further growth. I have been to visit a number of residents and seen the devastating effects that allowing these trees to continue to grow bigger and bigger, is having on their lives. And yet when entirely reasonable requests to have these trees cut back to manageable levels have been made, they have been rejected, and these trees have continued to grow, blocking out more and more light, and severely hampering my resident's enjoyments of their houses and their gardens.

How much more agony are these residents supposed to endure before a reasonable compromise can be reached between the understandable desire to protect trees, but my resident's need for reasonable levels of light?

### **Councillor Smith**

At the Council Meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 I asked a question about the under-utilisation of our Town Hall in Leicester Street and in particular why this beautiful building is standing unused most of the time and what plans there are for ensuring that our Town Hall has a future as the town centre's Number One community asset, owned by the Council and vibrant with activities and events as it has been for most of the past 120 years prior to Covid?

In response the appropriate Portfolio holder at the time, Cllr. Ferguson stated that “In order to expand the scale and number of events in the Town Hall, there would be a need for capital investment in the ancillary facilities such as the bar and toilet facilities. It is proposed to seek advice from external consultants to understand the scope of facilities required and the likely opportunities for larger events and revenue generation to assess the viability of the Town Hall as a venue.”

Given that this was 22 months ago, can the Portfolio holder now give me, the Council and the public an update on whatever progress has been made since I asked and received the response to my question?

### **Councillor Smith**

There is a marked under-utilisation and inefficient use of the Council’s key town centre physical assets, namely the Civic Centre, Council House and Town Hall, mainly due to a combination of factors, including too many staff working from home for too long; the public being effectively shut out of the Civic Centre since the closure of the One Stop Shop and a lack of sufficient investment in our Town Hall to attract the kind of venues and activities that Walsall folk fondly remember in days gone by.

Given the above, can the Portfolio holder give me, the Council and the public an assurance that he will take back for further consideration, a re-opening of the One Stop Shop in the Civic Centre, and a full return of staff back to their town centre based offices and if he cannot give such assurances, will he take back for consideration the disposal and sale of the Civic Centre, with all proceeds used for re-investment in a serious upgrade of our Leicester Street Town Hall and an expansion of our Community Hubs to better and more effectively meet the needs of residents in our local neighbourhoods, now deprived of their previous town centre Council service Hub, namely the One Stop Shop?

### **Councillor Smith**

Given that housing related issues are amongst the highest number of concerns that come to my attention as a local Councillor, (and no doubt many other Councillors) including issues related to homelessness, inadequate housing, requests for more suitable accommodation to meet particular needs, disrepairs, complaints against landlords etc.

Given also that there is a housing crisis in Walsall due to a severe mismatch between the Demand for and Supply of social housing at affordable rents, aggravated by the loss of thousands of properties from the rentable housing stock, due to mainly historic “Right to Buy” take ups and the massive lack of investment in new affordable rentable properties over several decades by successive Governments, as well as more recent demand factors, including some inward migration, can the Portfolio holder inform me, the Council and the public, of the numbers on the Council’s and whg’s housing waiting lists together with a realistic and frank assessment as to what this means for the majority of them, in terms of time before their needs can be met. Most

importantly what can, and will this Council realistically do to address this dire situation?

9. To note the result of the by-election for the Pelsall Ward held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025 as follows:

<b>Names of candidates</b>	<b>No. of votes Polled</b>	<b>Candidate elected</b>
Dan Barker	72	
Joe Belcher	127	
Lee Michael James Chapman	1176	
Graham Eardley	<b>1231</b>	<b>Graham Eardley</b>
Hannah Jones	125	

**Turnout: 31.98%**

10. Composition of Political Groups (Enclosed - Page 29 to 32)

11. Appointments to Committees

12. Independent Remuneration Panel (Enclosed - Page 33 to 39)

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

**Annual Audit Report 2024/25**

- 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 2024/25 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 15 September, 2025 reproduced for this meeting (Enclosed - Page 40 to 54))

14. To receive a presentation from the following Portfolio Holder / Outside Body representatives:

- a) **Statutory Deputy Leader, Prosperous Places and Investment** - Councillor Andrew; (To follow)
- b) **West Midlands Combined Authority – Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee** – Councillor Martin (To follow)

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

15. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors Bird and Statham**

### **High Needs Funding Pressures and the Dedicated Schools Grant**

- This Council is committed to providing appropriate education support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This support is mainly funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
- The high needs block (HNB) of the DSG pays for specialist provision, including special schools and services for those children with complex needs. Since the introduction of Education and Health Plans (EHCPs) in 2014, the number of children requiring support has risen sharply, putting significant financial pressure on local authorities, including Walsall. The growing demand has led to increasing deficits, threatening the financial stability of education services both locally and nationally.
- Nationally, the Local Government Association (LGA) estimates that the cumulative high needs deficit across local authorities now stands at £3.15 billion, around 33% higher than the national budget spend and with projections indicating this could rise to £5 billion by 2025/26.
- Demand continues to outpace funding. Many councils have been running deficits for several years due to the rising demand for EHCPs. In 2022/23, over 80% of councils had DSG deficits.
- Like many other Local Authorities Walsall is experiencing acute pressures. Since 2014, the borough's High Needs allocation has increased by £30 million. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has surged from 1,200 to over 4,700. This growth in demand and complexity of need has significantly outstripped the annual increases in funding representing a real-term reduction in funding of 45%.
- This is not sustainable, and we are calling to the government to take action now.

### **Financial implications**

- At the end of the 2024/25 financial year, Walsall Council was managing a DSG deficit of over £30 million, with projections indicating that this will rise to a cumulative balance of approximately £123.7m by close of 2028 unless systemic funding reform is introduced.
- The national statutory override currently allows local authorities to hold DSG deficits off their general fund balance sheets until March 2028. The override is not itself a solution to the problem and only delays the impact on councils.
- The financial implications of managing these deficits are profound. Councils are incurring borrowing costs to sustain services and cover shortfalls, diverting

resources from other essential services. In Walsall the interest costs incurred as a result of borrowing to date due to the DSG deficit is £1.8m with a further £12.4m projected by close of 2028.

- This is equivalent to increasing the council tax by 20% year on year. This would not only require an annual referendum but also greatly impact on our communities where many are already facing high deprivation.
- When the override ends based on current projections Walsall will need to find an ongoing mainstream budget of circa £30m a year to cover the shortfall in SEND funding alongside a one off cumulative deficit of circa £123.7m to find.
- The uncertainty surrounding the future of the statutory override exacerbates these pressures and undermines financial planning and stability. Many councils have warned that, without action by the Government, they will be forced to issue section 114 notices when the override ends.
- The 2025 Spending Review includes a commitment to reform the SEND system, at least in part through the new Transformation Fund. Details of these reforms will be set out in a Schools white paper in the autumn.
- The Government's upcoming reforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system must be bold enough to eliminate local authorities' deficits on the DSG going forwards before March 2028, while ensuring SEND children receive the support they need.

**Therefore, this Council resolves to:**

- Call on the government to provide a proportionate and sustainable increase in central funding to match the rising costs and demand for SEND services and High Needs Funding, so that Walsall Council can continue to meet its statutory responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people without undermining the sustainability of other essential local services.
- Request that the government permits councils to allocate interest costs from funding the DSG deficit to the DSG account and apply the statutory override retroactively to either 2014 or the first year a DSG deficit was incurred. This measure will prevent the national underfunding of SEND provision from affecting other council services funded by the local taxpayer.
- For a cross party letter to be sent to the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, setting out this Council's concerns and requesting urgent action to address these funding pressures in the interests of Walsall's children, families, and communities including developing an approach to address historical cumulative DSG deficits, and to support local authorities handle them when the statutory override ends in 2028.  
(or)
- Support the LGA's call for the write-off of DSG deficits, recognising that without such action, councils face unsustainable financial burdens.
- Engage with local MPs to raise awareness and seek parliamentary support for a long-term solution to DSG funding pressures.

This Council reaffirms its commitment to championing the rights and aspirations of children and young people with SEND, and to securing the funding and system reform required to enable every child in Walsall to achieve their full potential, now and for generations to come.