



Walsall Council

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 June 2024 at 6:00PM

**Meeting Venue: Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street,
Walsall**

[Livestream Link](#)

Membership:

Councillor A. Hicken (Chair)
Councillor E. Morgan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J. Chapman
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor T. Jukes
Councillor N. Latham
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham
Vacancy

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor S. Elson – Children's Services

Quorum:

4 Members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: Nikki Gough Telephone: 01922 654767 Email: nikki.gough@walsall.gov.uk
[Walsall Council Website](#)

**If you are disabled and require help to and from the meeting room,
please contact the person above**

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public Session

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.

2. Substitutions

To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on
a. 11 March 2024 and
b. 16 April 2024.

(Enclosed, Pages 1 -11)

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

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. Walsall as a Families first pathfinder presentation.

To describe the pathfinder programme and its delivery in Walsall.

(Enclosed, Pages 12 - 29)

7. Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) Refresh.

To receive an update on the refreshed Walsall Right for Children transformation programme.

(Enclosed, Pages 30 - 39)

8. Areas of focus – 2024/25

For Members to agree their areas of focus for 2024-25.

(Enclosed, Pages 40–43)

9. Forward Plans

To receive the latest Forward Plans in respect of the following:

- Walsall Council Executive Forward Plan.
- West Midlands Combined Authority Board.

(Enclosed, Pages 44 - 59)

10. Recommendations Tracker

To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.

(Enclosed – Page 60)

11. Date of next meeting

To note that the date of the next meeting will be on 24 September 2024.

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 March 2024, 6:00pm

In Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present:

Councillor Hicken (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Latham
Councillor Nasreen
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor Rattigan
Councillor C. Statham

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Elson

Officers present:

R. Homer	Director (Children’s Social Care).
I. Vanderheeren	Director (Early Help)
Z. Morgan	Head of Service
R. Phillips	Head of Early Help, Family Support and Youth Justice
P. Rutherford	Strategic Lead, Youth Justice
S. Gittins	Community Safety Manager
N. Gough	Democratic Services Officer
A. Duff	Violence Reduction Partnership
Inspector Fagan	West Midlands Police

50 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harrison, Garcha and Whitehouse.

51 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

52 Declarations of interest and party whip

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

53 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

54 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were submitted.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

55 **Youth Justice Partnership – Reduction of Youth Violence**

The Head of Youth Justice presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report detailed the aims, roles, and responsibilities of partners within the Youth Justice Partnership to reduce serious youth violence in Walsall. The Committee was informed that reducing violence was one of the 5 priorities of the Youth Justice Services 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan. This priority was aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership.

Members were informed that a Serious Violence Needs Assessment had been undertaken and the outcome of this had been translated into a serious violence delivery plan. Violence was the most common offence type reported to Walsall Youth Justice Service. The range of programme and activities carried out to prevent violence were described and the effectiveness of such approaches.

In response to questions relating to the work carried out with children and knife crime, the Committee was informed of the range of activities which took place with children and within schools to prevent such activity.

Challenge was provided in relation to the collection of data in relation to demographics – recognising the ethnicity bias in the justice system. Members were informed that the service had developed the way it worked with children who were overrepresented within the service. Specific programmes were designed for these groups. Plans were in place to influence other Partnerships and work with colleagues to prevent this bias in the first place.

Walsall Children's Alliance and Walsall Learning Alliance was working on exclusion and belonging to ensure that children felt included, and that their needs were met at school. Further challenge was provided on the unmet health needs of children entering the youth justice system. The Strategic Lead for Youth Justice stated that children in the youth justice system often had a range of unmet needs that led to a greater risk of youth violence and support was provided to mitigate this alongside provision of services. Officers stressed that if needs could be met in the first instance, then vulnerabilities could be avoided.

Members questioned what was being done to address the issue of unmet needs and prevent the situation in the future. The Director (Early Help) described this work, which included the following:

- Work with health partners.

- 0-5 family hubs advice and guidance.
- Mental health support.
- Longer term system changes in the voluntary sector.
- An Early Help offer for Siblings and Peers.

Members were advised that the system could not meet demand and there were generations of parents who did not have good experiences with such services. It was also stressed that once a child entered the youth justice system, they were often better able to access the support that they needed.

In response to questions, Officers stated that success for the service was fewer children in the system and when they did enter the system they did not re-enter. This demonstrated that the whole of the system was operating effectively. It was important that the child's voice was considered as part of the strategic plan and there was an apprentice role which facilitated this.

A discussion was held around the process when a child was arrested. It was stressed that the Police tried to utilise different options to avoid the arrest of a child. Although there was not a specific team to deal with children, they would be dealt with by a skilled officer. The Police representative explained that Officers often had to deal with the situation that presented itself, however appropriate adults were present to advocate the needs of the child. It was stressed that decisions made relating to child were made more slowly and there was time to gather information to influence this. The principle when working with children was to punish at the lowest possible level. Information on such cases was shared at the partnership panel, which was chaired by the Police and the Youth Justice Service.

The Head of Youth Justice stated that a custody triage question list had been made more child friendly and that distraction packs were now provided.

The Committee was informed that reoffending rates for Walsall (25.3%) were positive compared to the West Midlands (26.5%) statistical neighbours (26.9%) and England and Wales (32.2%). Members were advised that one event which involved lots of children could affect data, so it was important to consider long term trends.

Members considered the importance of attendance at school and were advised that for children in the youth justice system this was monitored. Attendance was a big focus across the system and was in the violence reduction plan.

Resolved that:

- 1. The Youth Justice Reduction of Violence report be noted.**
- 2. The Committee supported the direction of travel of the youth justice partnership.**
- 3. The Committee congratulated Teams involved in lowering the reoffending rate amongst children.**
- 4. That further information is provided on unmet health needs and contributing factors towards the rise in children entering the youth justice system.**

- 5. Members remained concerned that attendance and exclusions appear to be a contributing factor to children entering the youth justice system and invited the Youth Justice Partners to attend a future meeting to discuss this issue.**

56 Supporting Children with Disabilities

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). This report outlined how the service meet the needs of children with a disability. The Walsall Disabled Children and Young People's Team was a specialist Social Work Team which supported the families of children who had a complex disability in Walsall. It was stressed that not all children who were defined as having a disability would meet the threshold for a service from the Disabled Children and Young People's Team as the majority of children and young people in Walsall, including those who were disabled, would receive services through health, education and universal or targeted provision within their local community. A service was provided when needs couldn't be met through universal services and/or there was a safeguarding concern regarding a disabled child.

The demographics of the children using the service were described, with 144 children allocated to the team. 82% of allocations were supported as children in need, and the greatest cohort was those aged 10- 14 years. It was noted that 73% of children were male, which was in line with boys being more likely to have an additional need.

Work to prepare young people for adulthood was described which included the transition between children's and adults' services. The Transitions Panel tracked and monitored the support offered to those leaving care, this forum included input from health, education, and commissioning partners with the aim of ensuring that services were aligned when the young person turned 18. It was noted that this Panel was newly established and would be further developed.

In response to questions the Head of Service clarified that most of the children in care, using this service, were in residential care. The most common area of unmet need was the mental health of young people, this was a complex area but also the biggest challenge. It was clarified that this children in care were supported up to the age of 25 years old.

A further discussion was held around the recognition of a child's needs by parents and how this was supported. It was stressed that assessments incorporated schools and health services providing the opportunity for relationships with families to be built.

Resolved

That the Supporting Children with Disabilities report be noted.

57 Recommendation Tracker

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from previous meetings, including progress made and outstanding items.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

58 **Areas of Focus**

Resolved that:

The Areas of Focus be noted.

59 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be 16 April 2024.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 7:53 pm.

Signed:

Date:

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16 April 2024, 6:00pm

In Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present:

Councillor Hicken (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Latham
Councillor Nasreen
Councillor Garcha
Councillor Whitehouse
Councillor Nasreen
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor W. Rasab

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Elson

Officers present:

R. Homer	Director (Children’s Social Care).
I. Vanderheeren	Director (Early Help)
R. Phillips	Head of Early Help, Family Support and Youth Justice
Katie Storer-Young	Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer
D. Elrington	Head of Community Safety and Enforcement
R. Warren	Head of Service, MASH, Exploitation and Turning Point
L. Wright	Head of Service (Support and Protection)
Antony Schaffarczyk	Head of Service (Family Safeguarding)
N. Gough	Democratic Services Officer

Partners

Chief Superintendent Dolby	West Midlands Police
A. Jones	Designated Nurse Adult Safeguarding (Black Country ICB)
D. Benson	Independent Scrutineer of the Safeguarding Partnership
H. Matthews	Head of Service Street Teams
R. Rackstraw	Operation Manager, Street Teams
Z. Chowdhury	Violence Reduction Partnership

60 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nawaz.

61 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions.

62 **Declarations of interest and party whip**

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

63 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

64 **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were deferred.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 be deferred.

65 **Children at risk of exploitation**

The Head of Service introduced the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report provided the Committee with an update in respect of Walsall's arrangements and work to support Children and Young People that may be at risk of exploitation over the last 12 months. Child exploitation was described, which included child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, modern slavery, and trafficking.

Members were provided with information on the 'All-Age Exploitation Strategy' which set out the vision to ensure the co-ordinated provision of services designed to address the protection of children and the disruption and prosecution of activities by adults. It was proposed to complete a strategic needs assessment by May 2024, which would lead to a revised exploitation strategy alongside an updated strategic delivery plan that would reshape focus and strategic objectives.

The operation of the 'Exploitation Hub' was explained, as a multi-agency approach to identifying, screening, and sharing of intelligence around those at risk of exploitation. Performance data from the hub was used to identify trends and emerging themes.

Members were informed that the 'Exploitation Pilot Team' was a 12-month programme, launched in October 2022, that focussed on delivering bespoke packages of support to individual children that were identified and selected through exploitation triage. The Exploitation Pilot Team had been audited, and the findings were positive with a decrease in vulnerability or risk for most young people. This had resulted in the extension of the pilot, until summer 2024.

The Head of Service described the Walsall CARE (community activities reducing exploitation) project, which was established following the receipt of DfE funding. The objective was to provide positive activities and diversionary support to each young person involved in the project. The outcomes of this project were presented, which were extensive.

Partners proceeded to present an update on the work within their organisation to tackle child exploitation.

The Chief Superintendent provided the West Midlands Police update, explaining that there was a dedicated exploitation team which was proactive in making arrests. The team was careful not to enforce against victims. There was an ambition to grow this team and create more posts. It was stressed that partnership work in Walsall, in this area, had increased in effectiveness.

The representative from the Violence Reduction Unit described the role of the unit as to prevent violence, particularly in those under the age of 25. Members were informed that key priorities included a crime prevention offer.

The Designated Nurse - Adult Safeguarding stated that exploitation was a key priority for Walsall ICB. A post had been created to support exploitation hubs from a health perspective. Most recently an exploitation event had been held, and this would be repeated in 6 months.

The Head of Early Help, Family Support and Youth Justice stated that the team provided positive activities to prevent young people from being exploited in Walsall, which was important when working with a vulnerable group of young people.

The Head of Community Safety and Enforcement stated that he co-chaired the 'all age' exploitation subgroup, and policies had been updated to include children. All strands of the service were involved in work relating to exploitation, this included trading standards, environmental health, community safety and community protection.

The Head of Service - Street Teams described the work of the service, stating that it worked closely with the exploitation team. Work included services for abused children, provision of a family worker, education of young people and families and training within schools.

There then ensued a series of questions from Members to Officers and Partners. In response to these questions the Chief Superintendent informed the Committee that in order to tackle adult perpetrators of exploitation more intelligence needed to be gathered alongside partnership working. Members were informed that tackling county lines operations in Walsall was successful due to successful partnership working at Black Country level. Officers stated that it was not always the case that young people were known to social services. Members were informed that a whole family approach was taken, although there was very often a safeguarding element in the household.

Chief Superintendent stated that there was a risk that victims could become offenders, which was evidenced by a disproportionality in victimology.

The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership responded to challenge to state that there was always more work to do however he was assured that there was an effective response in Walsall. He further explained his depth of experience in the area.

Partners agreed that awareness raising was a key area of concern to ensure that those at risk of exploitation were identified. It was clarified that historical allegations were investigated fully, and serious case reviews highlighted lessons learned.

The Director (Early Help) responded to state that partnership training was reviewed on an ongoing basis, and this was considered by the practice development group.

The transition to an adult from a child was considered, and the loss of safeguards (from the law and systems) when a child turned 18 years old. The adverse outcomes for young people were described. The role of the Probation Service in this capacity was described and the link that this service had with the Early Help Team.

Further to challenge, Officers stated that it was reassuring that referrals were received. It was important that exploitation was identified, however there was a focus on preventative work. It was stressed that the data relating to Walsall was not concerning. In response to a question around the number of projects offered, Officers explained that evaluation was ongoing however outcomes were positive at this early stage.

Members questioned the outcome of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), Officers responded to state that a set of recommendations relating to access to systems, and quality of referrals from the Police to MASH. Work was underway to make progress on these actions. It was stressed that good practice was also recognised by the inspection.

Officers confirmed that work was done with taxi drivers and hotels to ensure that they could identify exploitation. The Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer confirmed that new taxi drivers received exploitation training, and where there were know issues with hotels the team made contact to provide training. She further provided detail on the complexity of exploitation post-covid - the drug market had adapted to the pandemic to exploit vulnerable adults and children in their own homes.

Officers and Partners described work that was done with the BAME communities to increase awareness and ensure concerns were referred. The process for reporting concerns in relation to exploitation were described.

Resolved that:

- 1. The Children at risk of exploitation report was noted.**
- 2. It was recommended that this item be reconsidered in the new municipal year.**
- 3. That a letter be sent, on behalf of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the Police and Crime Commissioner expressing concern around the arrangements in relation to funding for exploitation hubs.**

66 **Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment**

The Director (Children's Social Care) introduced the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report outlined the partnership activity relating to child sexual abuse within the family environment in Walsall.

The context to child sexual abuse was provided, this included its inclusion as a strategic priority in Walsall, and that a child sexual abuse subgroup had been formed in September 2023 with the specific aim of ensuring that there was a shared understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse and how long lasting impact could be prevented. A strategic needs assessment focusing on child sexual abuse was planned by the end of summer 2024 and would support a revised child sexual abuse strategy.

The Head of Service (Family Safeguarding) explained that the approach to this issue was a partnership one, using the 'Four P' approach which was to plan, prepare, prevent and prosecute.

In response to questions, Officers clarified that there had been 21 convictions. The Director stated that locally and nationally child sexual abuse had been underrepresented. Further challenge was provided in relation to how referrals were encouraged. The methods for identification were provided and how professionals were encouraged to link in together and the criteria for assessment. In response to queries around data collection and the ability to link information and track issues back, the Committee was informed that the Partnership complied with data protection laws and confirmed that the key thing was to ensure child sexual abuse was identified.

Resolved

1. That the Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment report was noted.
2. That a report on Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment be reconsidered at a future meeting.

67 **Recommendation Tracker**

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from previous meetings, including progress made and outstanding items.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

68 **Areas of Focus**

Resolved that:

The Areas of Focus be noted.

69 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be confirmed at Annual Council.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 8.55 pm.

Signed:

Date:

Walsall as a Families first Wave 2 pathfinder



Walsall Council



IMPROVE
outcomes and
customer experience

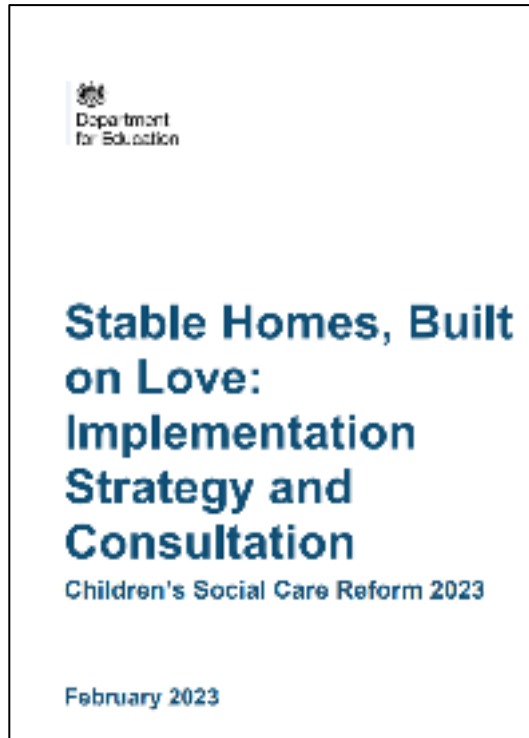


IMPROVE
employee satisfaction
and engagement



IMPROVE
service efficiency
and performance

National Context: Making “Stable Homes, Built on love” a Reality



Pillar 1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families



Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system



Pillar 3: Unlocking of family networks



Pillar 4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care



Pillar 5: A valued, supportive and highly skilled social worker for every child that needs one



Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data

National Context: Making “Stable Homes, Built on love” a Reality



Our statutory guidance, **Working Together to Safeguard Children**, has been updated and replaces the 2018 version. It makes clear that successful outcomes for children relies on help, support and protection.



The **Children's Social Care National Framework** brings together the purpose, principles, enablers and outcomes that children's social care should achieve so children, young people and families can thrive.



Our **Data Strategy** sets out how we will transform data and additional services in children's social care. We will improve information sharing through research and evaluation, make improvements to data services and use our data and digital solutions fund to continue testing innovative practice.



Championing Kinship Care outlines the practical and financial support we will provide kinship families and is backed by £20 million investment.

Overview

As a Wave 2 Pathfinder we will be part of a group of 7 selected local authorities who will design and test wide-ranging reforms to family help and children's social care. This will enable the government to understand the delivery implications of reforms ahead of a national rollout.



Pathfinder Aims

Stable Homes, Built on Love set out a vision to rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

The pathfinder will test radical new delivery models for family help, child protection, family networks and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (see slide 6) ahead of a national transformation.

Our ambition is to ensure that children, families and communities:

- Are given the opportunity to co-design and co-produce the reformed system.
- Can access one system and work with one lead practitioner, who coordinates one bespoke team around the family and co-creates one plan to support them.
- Only need to tell their story once and experience the system as welcoming, supportive, fair, and focused on their strengths.
- Can access strong, decisive multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect children and young people from harm.

Our business case identifies the following long-term measurable benefits:

- Reduction in the number of children looked after
- Reduction in the number of child protection plans
- Reduction in the number of days a child spends in care

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Delivering an effective system of help and protection for children and their families is a multi-agency endeavour. We want to create greater consistency and accountability across all multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, so that leaders at the right level are making the right decisions for local children and families. Our ambition, through the pathfinder and in line with Working Together, is to establish clear, equitable and shared safeguarding arrangements, embed a clear line of sight between strategy and practice and - given the key role they play in children's lives - test a greater strategic role for education providers



Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

We expect all pathfinder areas to implement changes set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023):

- Set out lead (strategic oversight and accountability) and delegated (operational delivery) safeguarding partner roles, responsibilities and joint functions across local authorities, health and the police
- Introduce a Partnership Chair to facilitate discussions, encourage consistency and provide a clear mechanism for escalation, underpinned by a system of independent scrutiny to provide rigour and challenge

Minimum Expectations

Engage children, families and communities in design and delivery

Develop a shared practice framework

Test a stronger role for education at strategic level

Establish clear and effective multi-agency data and information-sharing arrangements

Develop and agree shared set of outcome measures at child, family, cohort, demand and population level

7

Family Help

Families should be able to access the right help at the right time from the right people, so that they can overcome challenges, stay together and thrive. To achieve this, we want LAs to establish a targeted Family Help Service to support children and families with multiple needs.

This new community-based service will bring together previously separate teams, who will work closely together to facilitate access to more effective help in the short to medium-term. This will help to address children and families' needs before they escalate and avoids unhelpful handovers between practitioners.

Minimum Expectations

Establish a local Family Help Service, integrating existing support for children and families eligible for/in receipt of targeted early help and CIN services

- Be based in and led by the LA (but with buy-in from partner agencies)
- Bring together and integrate with existing universal and wider VCS and community services (Family Hubs etc), and children's social care

Establish Family Help Lead Practitioner role

Establish a single Family Help assessment and plan

8

Family Help

Minimum Expectations

Establish a Family Help multidisciplinary team(s) as required and identify and manage risk.

- Be alert to the changing circumstances for the child both inside and outside of the family home to quickly identify concerns and escalating risk and make a section 47 referral where there are concerns about significant harm.
- Remain case holder and work closely with the MACPT, including the LCPP, who will lead section 47 enquiries and oversee the development and review of any child protection plan.

- Include social workers and family support workers in the core team.
- Consider the inclusion of agencies, services and practitioners spanning: domestic abuse, substance misuse, children and adult mental health, probation, public health, youth justice, youth workers, adult social care, police, health visiting teams, midwives, sexual health and school nursing and homelessness and housing teams.

Family Help

- Offer Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) to consider who in and how the wider family network could support the family, engaging an independent coordinator to facilitate this.
- Build a flexible and responsive 'team around the family' (TAF), bringing in all relevant agencies or individuals required to support the family at different stages, and keeping the needs and experiences of the child paramount.

Minimum Expectations

Establish a welcoming, integrated 'front door' to services.

- Test how multiple existing referral pathways can be streamlined to provide a more seamless support offer for children and families.
- Initial assessment to be framed as a supportive conversation, focusing on the strengths and needs of the whole family and involving the wider family network wherever possible.
- Appropriate child protection and SEND expertise as part of a multi-agency front door team to determine response required and identify and manage risk.

Child Protection

Establishing family help will result in a new approach to the way families access and receive support. This must run alongside a child protection system that protects all children from significant harm inside and outside of the home.

Our ambition is for a child protection system that is decisive, multi-agency with multidisciplinary skills, where practitioners have the expertise, experience, time and support to identify actual or likely significant harm quickly and take rapid and effective protective action.

Minimum Expectations

Establish and test multi-agency child-protection team(s) (MACPT)

- Be responsible for leading strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries, overseeing development and delivery of child protection plans, keeping child protection plans under review, providing case consultancy and support and providing relevant evidence to any subsequent court proceedings.
- Set out how operational decisions and the related responsibilities of different agencies will be executed and quality-assured for children who are the focus of section 47 enquiries and child protection plans.
- Trial chairing child protection conferences from within the MACPT team.

Child Protection

Minimum Expectations

Establish and test multi-agency child-protection team(s) (MACPT)

- Have a core membership of dedicated and skilled resource from children's social care, health (paediatrics), police and education in a physical, virtual or hybrid team with clear lines of support and oversight to and from their parent agencies.
- Have the optimum multi-disciplinary skill-set to meet local needs and harm profiles. These can include but are not limited to: probation and youth justice, youth workers, voluntary sector family/child engagement leads, mental health practitioners (psychiatry, psychology, education psychology), health visitors, midwives, domestic abuse services, substance misuse services, sexual health, school nursing, housing and virtual school headteachers. Decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of these roles must be explained.
- Have mechanisms for bringing in other practitioners as required, to ensure that MACPTs can respond to all harm types including intra-familial harms, extra-familial harms and exploitation as well as considering specific needs for children with SEND, vulnerable infants and adolescents

Child Protection

Minimum Expectations

Establish and test parental representation in child protection

- Must work with parents, including those with lived experience of child protection, to design and deliver the service.
- Must develop and implement a plan for engaging harder to reach parents such as male parents/carers.
- Must clarify how they plan to work with parents where the harm is extra-familial and where parents are a protective factor (e.g. exploitation)

Minimum Expectations

Establish and test Lead Child Protection Practitioner role

- Must be qualified social workers with substantial frontline child protection practice experience within CSC
- Will take statutory child protection decisions with input from the wider MACPT working with the family help lead practitioner and building in family group decision making/family network engagement.
- Will provide advice to and consult on child protection concerns and issues with the family help lead practitioner.
- Must have access to and participate in reflective individual and group supervision

13

Family Networks

Our vision is that every child's right to a family life is prioritised wherever possible. Family networks are essential in supporting families to stay together and thrive. When this is not possible, they can themselves offer a safe, loving and stable family home and keep children out of local authority care.

We want to create a culture where family networks are actively involved from the point a child gets a social worker. Children and families should be supported to identify who in their family network could be a source of support and these networks should be empowered to help and support parents and children when they are struggling.



Family Networks

Minimum Expectations

Develop model(s) of integrating family group decision making (FGDM) in and throughout new family help and child protection systems

- Offer all families FGDM by default and engage family networks at every decision point
- Clearly set out how FGDM will be integrated throughout the system, including as part of family help and child protection conferences, and the role of different practitioners within this.

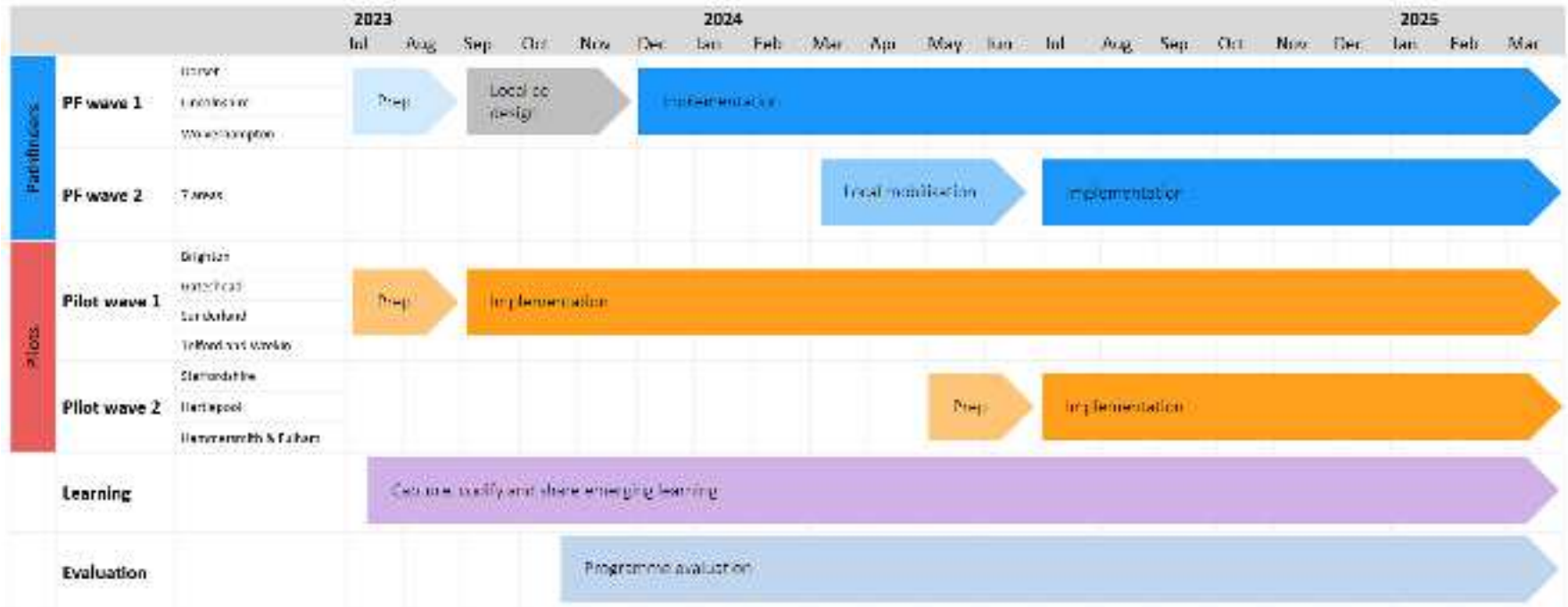
Mandatory use of the family group conference (FGC) model at pre-proceedings

Minimum Expectations

Introduce Family Network Support Packages (FNSPs) to enable family networks to support children and parents

- Use FNSPs when there is a financial or practical barrier to a family network providing support to a child living with their birth parent. Funding must directly enable the family network to overcome barriers to providing support.
- Not provide funding to parents unless that directly unlocks support from family networks.
- Make family engagement in FGDM a pre-requisite for accessing FNSPs.

Time scales



What's next



Intro of Walsall to the Pathfinder - understanding how it will work



Learn from wave 1 LA's – Wolverhampton, Dorset and Lincolnshire



Focus on communication and engagement across partnership, with workforce, and with children and families



Develop a vision, an implementation plan, and governance arrangements

- 1) Initial reflections and thoughts?
- 2) Key opportunities for us as a partnership?
- 3) Lot to do in a short space of time, but also working together, shared approach and thinking together as a partnership. What do we need to do to be able to get this right?
- 4) What do we want to take into our conversations in two weeks time?

Walsall Right For Children (WR4C) Refresh

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacie Elson

1. Aim

- 1.1 The refreshed WR4C aspiration, foundations and priorities aim to provide a robust evidence based response to Performance, the voice of children and young people and staff in ensuring we provide effective services.

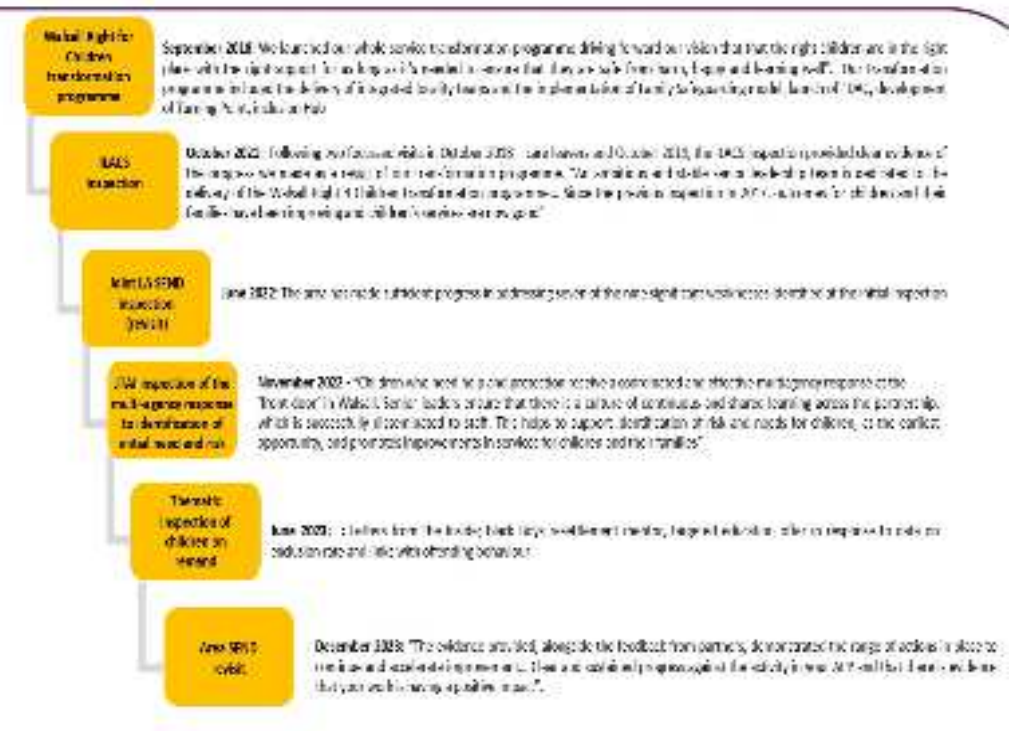
2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and identifies any areas it wishes to scrutinise further as part of its 2024/25 areas of focus.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 Walsall Right for Children transformation programme was developed in 2018 and set out its original vision to ensure that the right children are in the right place with the right support for as long as it's needed to ensure they are safe from harm, happy and learning well. The delivery of the vision through strong foundations and focussed priorities has enabled children services to successfully improve our processes, practice and partnerships across the borough to secure improved outcomes for children and families. The continuous improvements made through the WR4C programme has been acknowledged through a number of inspections:

Our Walsall Right for Children Improvement Journey



In December 2023 we began to review the WR4C vision, foundations and priorities to ensure alignment to both the current Council Plan and the 'Child Friendly Borough' and 'Feel Safe' themes within We are Walsall 2040.



In addition to the council plan and the WAW 2040 Borough plan the refreshed aspiration, foundations and priorities were informed by:

- Children's Services performance information
- Our 2023 Staff health check completed by 225 members of staff.
- Council Employee survey data

- Staff celebration and consultation event engaging with over 200 members of staff in December 2023.
- Children and young people's voice through:
- 'Reformation 2' – the system – documentary produced with young people in Youth Justice setting out the issues around disproportionality and calling the system to make changes
- 'It takes a village' – documentary produced with our young people leaving care setting out the system change that needs to happen to ensure care experienced young people have better lived experiences and opportunities.
- Big Conversation – January 2024 – engaging with 503 children on understanding what it is like growing up in Walsall and the issues they would like leaders to address to improve outcomes for all children growing up in Walsall.

What staff have told us:

Through the council staff survey our staff told us that we do well at:

- Providing effective strategic leadership;
- Supporting personal productivity;
- Treating people fairly and with respect;
- Sharing knowledge and experience;
- Getting teams to communicate and work effectively together; and
- We are getting better at encouraging inclusivity, diversity and equality.

The survey showed us we can do better in the following areas:

- Retaining knowledge when staff leave the organisation;
- Improving opportunities to communicate between services and directorates;
- Recruiting the right people for its future needs;
- Consistently closing the loop on surveys and feedback; and
- Supporting staff to be resilient and to strike a better home life and work life.

The following themes were identified through the staff celebration events consulting on the draft aspirations, foundations and priorities:

- They wanted us to use aspiration rather than vision – as this would set out what we are aspire to as well as the right steps to support and achieve how we get there.
- In our aspiration we needed to focus on a real sense to be aspirational for ALL children in Walsall.
- Getting the language right was important to our staff. They told us to make it simple and meaningful so everyone could understand and connect to it.
- Children at the heart of our aspirations, foundations and priorities is the most important thing and is what we value in working for Walsall Children's services.
- Collaboration and co-production is vital (with partners and children and families) but staff reflected time and resources are needed to be able to achieve this.
- Best start in life is important, but not losing the focus on our adolescents and transitions stages needs to be as reflected in our priorities as the first 1000 days of children's lives.
- Practice that focusses on belonging and connections is key.
- We need to set out how we will support the workforce in consistently applying the foundations and enable them to do the best possible job.

- Need for opportunities to develop and grow within the organisation is an important part of feeling valued.

What children and young people told us:

- Children’s main worries/concerns around growing up in Walsall are being safe, their environment, including living in and having access to clean and green, opportunities to good education that meet need and jobs for the future.
- Children in more deprived areas feel more negative about how they feel about growing up in Walsall now and about their future opportunities.
- Children are sceptical about whether we will take positive action as a result of what they say and secure more positive outcomes.
- Children identified that having a good and sustainable network of support (through friends, Family and trusted adults) provides them with the foundations of the best start in life as well as feeling safe and developing into a successful adults.
- Some of our children conveyed a level of discouraged acceptance that they are treated differently in various settings and that racism was a part of their everyday lives.
- Help and support is not always easy to get or is not provided in a way that is engaging or meet their needs. Having access to support that will help with meeting children and their families basic needs (food, clothes, education housing) is as important as supporting children with more complex issues.
- Children want to be an active part of making change.

Walsall Right 4 Children – Our Aspiration

“Every Child and Family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed”



Our WR4C aspiration will be delivered through a relentless focus on our five foundations underpinning everything we do and four priorities driving our work.

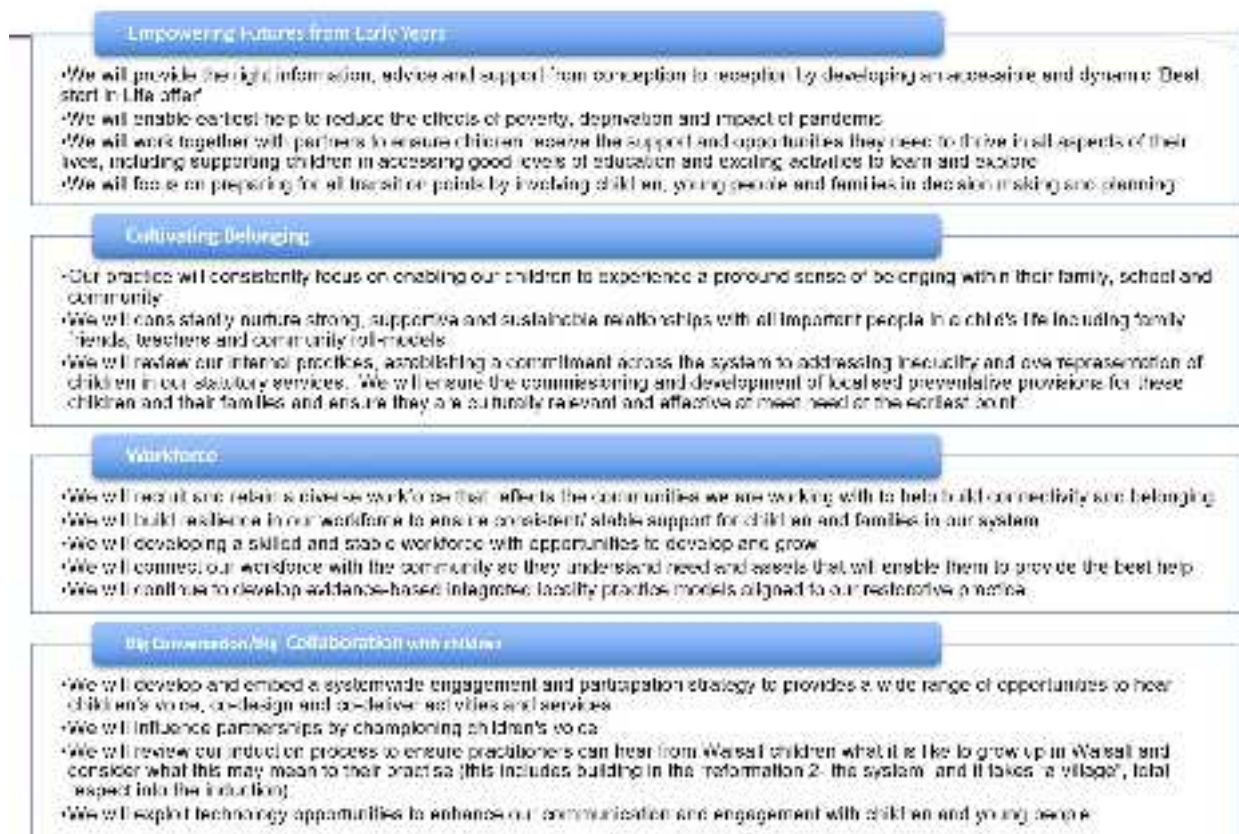
Our Foundations

We will increase understanding children's lived experiences and how we can improve them.	We will work with children, young people and families and their local communities enabling them to make positive and sustainable connections.	We will focus on or actively addressing gaps in equality and racism.	We will learn and improve together - we will share a culture of continuous improvement by diligently closing the learning loop.	We will continue to be proud of what we do and celebrate our achievements.
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Our Priorities

Empowering Futures from Early Years	Cultivating Belonging	Workforce	Big Conversation/Big Collaboration with Children
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Refreshed priorities:



Council Plan Priorities

The WR4C refreshed aspirations, foundations and priorities are aligned to and will be contributing to all of the Council plan priorities:

1. **Economic - *Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses.*** Our priorities will have a focus on enabling young people to engage positively in formal education and a range of opportunities to develop knowledge and skills for life.
2. **People - *Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing.*** Our practice will focus on creating sustainable change through connecting children and families to supportive network that will provide them with the resilience beyond statutory support.
3. **Internal focus – children are at the heart of our WR4C aspiration and priority and through implementation we will be aiming to provide effective, efficient and equitable help and support.**
4. **Children - *Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well*** is embedded in our aspirations.
5. **Communities – throughout our priorities we have a focus on Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community.**

Furthermore, this new vision and foundation and priorities will align to the newly developing Council Plan through its close alignment to We are Walsall 2040. The new

Council Plan is an articulation of what and how the Council will deliver against the Borough ambitions for 2040. WR4C adheres closely to the key ambitions for 2040 and thus will be aligned and influence the new Council Plan.

4. Financial information

4.1 The refreshed aspiration, foundations and priorities will form the base of our services plans across children services and will enable us to focus on the right things internally and with our peers across the Council and with partners to contribute to a balanced budget.

5. Reducing Inequalities

Reducing inequalities is a key focus of the Walsall Right for Children (WR4C) program, which aims to provide effective services to children and families in need. The refreshed priorities of the program align with the Marmot objectives of giving every child the best start in life, enabling all children to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives, and creating fair employment and good work for all.

One of the priorities of the WR4C program is to empower children from an early age by providing them with the best possible start in life. This includes a focus on the first 1000 days of a child's life, as well as on the transitions stages and the needs of adolescents.

Another priority is to cultivate a sense of belonging and connection by understanding the lived experiences of children and families and meeting their needs. This involves co-production and collaboration with partners, children, and families, as well as a focus on practice that fosters belonging and connections.

By implementing these priorities, the WR4C program aims to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for children and families in Walsall.

6. Decide

6.1 The priorities may help scrutiny members to decide what progress reports or areas of focus for the forward plan.

7. Respond

7.1 Internal next steps

The refreshed aspirations, foundations and priorities will go live on the 1st April and will be driving forward service plans across Children Services (as part of the budget setting process).

Aligned to the priorities we are reviewing our performance and outcome framework to ensure that we are measuring impact resulting from implementing our priorities. This will be monitored through our quarterly WR4C performance board.

We are planning a WR4C conference on 28 June which will be an opportunity to bring all of our Children’s Services staff together to share and communicate the directorate plan to implement our priorities, share good practice we want to upscale and undertake further planning with our staff across the Directorate.

7.2 Collaboration – next steps



In achieving its aspiration, Children’s services, will need to continue to focus on the development of strong and effective collaborations with cross council services and wider partners:

7.2.1 Internal Collaboration - Corporate joining the dots.

The delivery of our WR4C aspiration and effective implementation of the priorities will rely on strong collaboration and integration with other Directorates across the Council.

The new WR4C aspirations, foundation and priorities have been shared with the Policy & Strategy unit to ensure influence and alignment to the newly developing Council Plan. We will continue to ensure that the vision and aspirations for children and young people are enshrined in the Council Plan to maintain our progress on delivery against the 2040 ambitions for children and young people as will be set out as part of our WAW2040 Children and young people strategy.

The outcome of the Big Conversation has been presented to Director group in March 2024 with the aim for Directors to consider how they could respond to what children have told us through the service planning process. Directors agreed to also have a session with the Senior Management Group to present the findings of the Big Conversation so they can contribute to our collective response.

We have identified a number of key cross council opportunities to implementing our priorities:

- Further enhancing our locality model through embedding Families Hubs and implementation of wave 2 pathfinder - including the link to resilient communities and Public Health in building the capacity healthy child provision and of the

- voluntary and community sector in providing preventative and sustainable support for our most vulnerable families.
- Support the development of an effective youth offer in collaboration with resilient communities and Public Health.
 - Consider and drive opportunities for children through our regeneration plans and programmes to enhance and expand safe green spaces in the communities.
 - Enhance safety through community led initiatives i.e work in Bloxwich, Blakenhall and Mossley, violence reduction plan, domestic abuse plan, etc
 - Development of a Youth Council to ensure children can hold us directly to account.
 - Empower Youth Leadership (through Youth Council) in Educational and Vocational Training and Development, influencing jobs for the future.
 - Implement the recommendations as a result of “reformation 2 – the system” and “it takes a village” to ensure that we close the gap on inequalities for our most vulnerable children.

7.2.2 Influencing the partnership.

The Big Conversation we undertook in January 2024 gives valuable and rich information on children views and aspirations around growing up in Walsall. A report has been written outlining the detail from the consultation and in addition of it informing our internal children’s services we will need to maximise this to influence the partnership response through the Children and Young People Alliance.

The Children and Young People Strategic Alliance was launched in March 2023. Recognising that “**today’s children are upstream adults**”, it is driven through a “**Children First**” vision to create a collaborative space critical to developing new ways of thinking and new ways of working informed by the voice of children, young people and their families

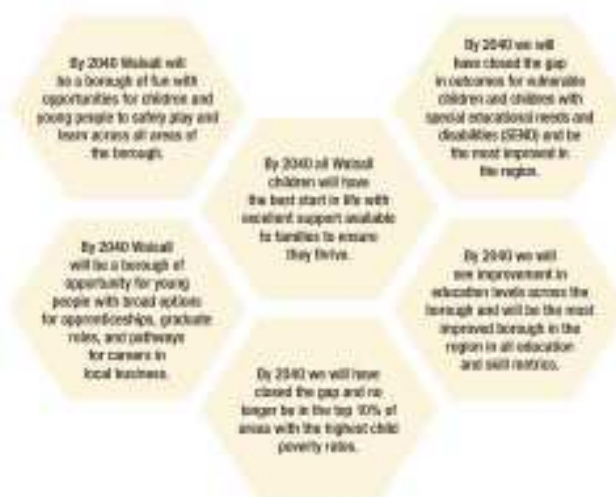
Partners as part of the Alliance have signed up to working to one moral purpose: ***“to regularly consider how the lived experience of children and young people in Walsall can be improved.”***

The Alliance provides an opportunity to develop a good understanding of the needs of children and young people in Walsall and system wide change which needs to take place to enable improved outcomes. As well as using this information to enable partners own organisation change it enables them to influence change for children and young people in other strategic spaces.

Current members of the Alliance include: NHS Walsall, Black Country Integrated Care Board – CYP and Maternity; Primary care and Place development , Walsall Council – resilient Communities, Walsall Council Children’s Services; Voluntary Sector, Public Health, Police, Walsall Together (ICB), Education, WHG, Safeguarding Board, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust; Wolverhampton University.

The We are Walsall 2040 Strategy seeks to make Walsall the most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents

in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances. The key ambitions underpinning this strategy are that we want to be Healthy and Well, Thriving and Happy, Prosperous and Innovative, and Proud of Our Borough. The We are Walsall 2040 Strategy seeks to make Walsall a child-friendly borough and sets out six key outcomes to make this a reality:



The Children and Young People Alliance has taken on the responsibility of developing a 2040 Children and Young People Strategy, as a subset to the WAW 2040 Strategy to ensure we are working to achieve these above outcomes.

The themes highlighted by children in The Big Conversation January 2024 consultation are consistent with those highlighted through other consultation activities undertaken in Walsall since 2020, including the 1600 children and young people consulted as part of We are Walsall 2040 development in 2022-2023. The feedback from children and young people is an important issue leaders from the Council and across the partnership landscape will need to reflect on to ensure we act on their views and are monitoring impact.

Children's Services facilitated the strong foundations through the development of the Children and Young People's Alliance, to establish effective collaborative leadership and long-term decision making, across the Partnerships with a collective focus on improving the lived experiences of children growing up in Walsall.

The Big Conversation is informing the development of the 2040 Children and young people strategy and provides a pivotal moment for the Children Alliance to come together and maximise power and resource in identifying and acting on system solutions that will address the key issues identified by children that prevents them from thriving.

By doing so, The Alliance can ensure that the borough evolves into a place that not only meets the current needs of its residents but is also prepared to support the well-being and success of future generations and delivers our 2040 ambition to be a 'Child friendly borough'. A future report on this will be presented to CMT (May 2024)

8. Review

As part of our WR4C performance board we are currently refreshing our performance and outcome framework to ensure that we are measuring impact as a result of implementing our priorities.

The Alliance is also in the process of developing a outcomes framework as part of the WAW2040 Children and young people strategy which will clearly set out how our collective success will be measured.

We will produce a annual report that will demonstrate progress, impact and any areas for further developments which we will need to focus on in subsequent year to ensure we are on track to achieve our outcomes.

Background Papers

None

Author

Isabel Vanderheeren
Director of Early Help, WR4C Partnerships
☎ 01922 650434
✉ isabel.vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk

25 June 2024

Areas of focus for 2024/25

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor S. Elson – Children's Services

Report

The purpose of this item is to provide relevant background information for Members so that the Committee's areas of focus can be agreed for 2024/25.

It is important for Members to consider the wide range of potential issues within their remit and which of these they could consider during the year.

When agreeing items, it is important that consideration is given to the level of value the Committee could add. It's important to prioritise work based on strategic importance, data and timing.

Remits of the Committees

Following Annual Council, the remit of the Committee has been agreed as follows:

All aspects and general services related to serving children and young people (excluding education and learning). The scrutinising of performance in relation to the following Corporate Plan priority:

- Children have the best start in life and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

Presentations from Leader and Portfolio Holders on their priorities

The Scrutiny-Cabinet Protocol encourages dialogue and communication between Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet at all times; but especially with selecting items to scrutinise during the ensuing year. To assist with this, presentations on priorities within their respective portfolios will be received at the meeting in September from:

Cllr. S. Elson – Children's Services

Presentation on services within the remit of the Committee

A presentation will be provided at the meeting providing more detail about the Council's services that fall within the committee's remit.

Items recommended from previous year.

The following items were recommended for consideration by the committee in the last municipal year:

- Youth Justice – Reduction of Youth Violence.
- Exploitation.
- Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment.

Items considered during the previous year.

- Budget setting process.
- Q2 financial monitoring.
- Family/Local Hubs.
- Early Help Strategy.
- Social Worker recruitment and retention.
- Private Fostering.
- Youth Justice priorities and disproportionality.
- Youth Justice – reduction of youth violence.
- Children at risk of exploitation.
- Safeguarding Annual report 2022/23.
- Intra familial abuse strategy.
- Young Carers.
- Children with Disabilities.

Budget scrutiny

Monitoring the financial performance of the Council is a valuable and important task that Scrutiny Committees are ideally placed to perform. It assists Members in identifying areas of operation that are underperforming that may require scrutiny.

It is suggested that all Scrutiny Committees consider the quarter 2 updates at a formal meeting. It is also suggested that the financial outturn for the previous year, quarter 1 and quarter 3 updates be circulated to Members outside of a formal meeting for information. Subject to the caveat that Members can request the reports to come to a committee meeting if they wish, and that any significant budget pressures or changes will be raised with the Chair, to discuss the issue being formally reported to a committee meeting.

Council performance

The Council Plan, as agreed by the Council, sets the strategic direction for the authority by reference to five priorities. Each priority has a number of measures allocated to it. Scrutiny committees may wish to consider monitoring progress against the measures that sit within their remit. It is the role of the Scrutiny Overview Committee to take an overarching view of performance against all measures included in the Council Plan.

Pre-scrutiny

A copy of the Forward Plans of key decisions from Walsall Council's Cabinet and the West Midlands Combined Authority Board are attached as an appendix to this report. Updates of these will be provided to Committees at subsequent meetings. In respect to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee (BCJC), since March 2023, the Black Country LEP has been abolished. As such, the BCJC still monitors the implementation of projects until approximately March 2026. Decision-making on funds relating to the Black Country Enterprise Zone, will remain with the BCJC until March/April 2025, when it will revert to the Council for matters relating to Walsall.

Members should consider the forthcoming decisions and consider if there are any issues that they may wish to review and seek to influence prior to the Cabinet making a decision on these matters.

Working Groups

A working group is an effective method for Members of Scrutiny Committees to consider an issue in depth over a number of months and to produce a final report and recommendations to the Committee. Once completed, the report and recommendations can be considered by the Cabinet and/or Council. The challenge for Members is selecting the right topic at the right time and to provide the working group with an achievable brief.

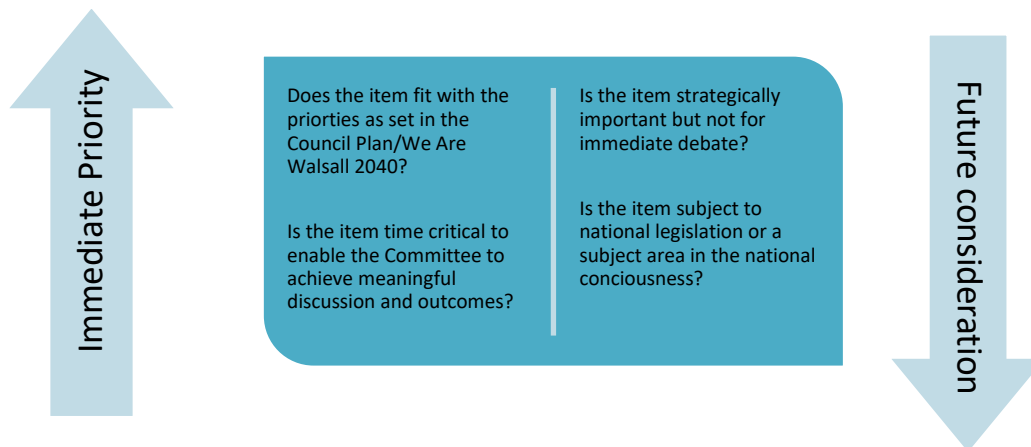
In terms of resourcing working groups, mindful consideration should be given to the number of working groups established. Therefore, it is recommended that no more than 3 working groups be established across all Scrutiny Committees.

Prioritisation

The remit of the Committee is very broad and the range of issues that could be considered during the year is vast. The challenge that Members face is in prioritising those issues that are the most important whilst still leaving sufficient capacity to address other issues that may arise during the year. To assist Members to manage the broad topics available, it is important that alternative methods of being informed and updated, away from Committee meetings, are used effectively. For example, Members could request briefing notes on particular topics thereby helping to create additional capacity for more substantial items at Committee meetings.

In terms of scheduling items, it is important that an agenda includes a manageable amount of business to enable the Committee to focus on topics in depth rather than to carry out superficial treatment that may require the Committee to revisit the topic at a later date.

Members should use a prioritisation tool, for example:



THINK PRIDE

- P**ublic - Is the subject matter in the public interest and concerns local people?
- R**ealistic - Is the matter achievable? Is there enough time to scrutinise, and are the resources available?
- I**nterest - Is this an area affecting a certain ward or the whole Borough/National?
- D**uplication - Is there work already ongoing? Is another Committee doing the same piece of work?
- E**ffect - Is there an opportunity to change and where Scrutiny can influence?

Statutory Guidance for Scrutiny

On 22 April 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published new statutory guidance for Councils and Combined Authorities in relation to Overview and Scrutiny functions. Whilst, this is new statutory guidance, majority of the changes refer to the inclusion of combined authorities relating to devolution and the Scrutiny Protocol. In practice, there has been no direct changes in the working arrangements for Scrutiny at Walsall.

Recommendations:

That, the Committee consider and formulate a work programme for the municipal year.

Contact Officer:

Nikki Gough

Democratic Services Officer

☎ 01922 654767

✉ nikki.gough@walsall.gov.uk



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

4 June 2024

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW Craig.Goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (Craig.Goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.

- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
JULY 2024 TO OCTOBER 2024
(04.06.2024)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
36/24 (4.6.24)	Council Plan 2022/25 – Q4 23/24: To note the Quarter 4 2023/24 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Sam Oliver Sam.Oliver@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	17 July 2024
25/24 (8.5.24)	Productivity Plan: To agree the publication of the Council's DLUHC Productivity Plan response document.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	17 July 2024
23/24 (18.3.24)	Commercial Strategy: To agree the strategic approach to generating income, reducing costs, fostering an entrepreneurial culture, forming partnerships, and investing in businesses to support local economies and social objectives	Cabinet Key Decision	Michele McPherson Michele.McPherson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024

26/24 (8.5.24)	Pre-Audit Outturn 2023/24: To receive the pre-audit revenue and capital financial outturn position for 2023/24 and approve recommended carry forwards, and financial indicators for 2023/24.	Cabinet Key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024
27/24 (8.5.24)	Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the annual report for treasury management activities 2023/24 including prudential and local indicators.	Cabinet Council Non-key decision	Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024
28/24 (8.5.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 and approach to Budget Setting for 2025/26: To report the financial position based on 3 months to June 2024, and to set out our approach and timeline for the 2025/26 budget process and amendments to the Medium-Term Financial Framework	Cabinet Non-key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024
24/24 (8.4.24)	Interim provision of street lighting services: To ensure the provision of street lighting between the end of the PFI and the start of the next term contract.	Cabinet Key Decision	Katie Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	17 July 2024

32/24 (4.6.24)	<p>Appointment of Contractor for Civic Centre and Council House Decarbonisation Works:</p> <p>To appoint a contractor for decarbonisation works at the Civic Centre and Council House.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	17 July 2024
66/23 (4.12.23)	<p>Waste Management Strategy Update - Fryers Road Household Waste Recycling Centre redevelopment (HWRC):</p> <p>That Cabinet approve the pre-tender budget for the redevelopment of a larger Fryers Road HWRC and agree to use the Pagabo framework (design and build stages) for the procurement of Fryers Road HWRC.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Katie Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk Stephen Johnson Stephen.Johnson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew Cllr Murphy	17 July 2024
29/24 (8.5.24)	<p>Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder bid:</p> <p>To approve the project delivery plan and accountable body status for the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder grant.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Phil Rutherford Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk Rachael Phillips Rachael.Phillips@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024

30/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Fostering Agency Framework: To agree call off contracts with Independent Foster Care Agencies under a new framework arrangement.	Cabinet Key Decision	Paula Wilman Paula.Wilman@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024
31/24 (4.6.24)	Families First for Children – Pathfinder To agree receipt of a grant and to set out financial risks.	Cabinet Key Decision	Rita Homer Rita.Homer@walsall.gov.uk	Internal/Cabinet	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024
57/23 (6.11.23)	Draft Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Climate Strategy: To approve for public consultation the draft Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Katie Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	17 July 2024
33/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Childrens Residential Homes Framework: To agree call off contracts with Residential Children’s Homes providers under the West Midlands Regional Framework.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sally Gamston Sally.Gamston@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	4 September 24
34/24 (4.6.24)	Temporary Accommodation Regulator Registration: To approve registration with the Regulator of Social Housing for the purpose of providing additional Temporary Accommodation for homeless people.	Cabinet Key decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	4 September 2024

<p>35/24 (4.6.24)</p>	<p>Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key decision</p>	<p>Neil Hollyhead Neil.hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations</p>	<p>Cllr Garcha</p>	<p>16 October 2024</p>
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West Midlands Combined Authority

Forward Plan

Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Portfolio Lead	Employee to contact:
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the provisional outturn position for 2023/24 for the revenue and capital programmes and any relevant risks and financial updates	WMCA Board 14 June 2024	Open		Beverly Sullivan Financial Planning and Coordination Manager
West Midlands Investment Zone - Approval of Investment Plan To approve the overall investment strategy for the West Midlands Investment Zone, including Year One Delivery Plan and capacity funding.	WMCA Board 14 June 2024	Open		Steve Bowyer Partnerships and Engagement Strategic Lead
Metro Penalty Fares Outcomes of consultation, proposing to increase penalty fares on metro network.	WMCA Board 14 June 2024	Open		Amanda White Interim Metro Director
Appointment of WMCA Boards and Committees etc 2024/25 To consider the appointments made by constituent, non-constituent and observer member authorities to the WMCA Board and its other boards/committees for 2024/25 and other associated matters.	WMCA Board 14 June 2024	Open		Dan Essex Governance & Scrutiny Manager
WMCA's Scrutiny & Audit Annual Report The purpose of this scrutiny and audit annual report is to highlight the activities and achievements of scrutiny & audit during 2023/24.	WMCA Board 14 June 2024	Open		Lyndsey Roberts Scrutiny Officer

<p>A Review of the Effectiveness of Member Engagement and Development within the WMCA To consider the findings of a scrutiny review undertaken to examine the effectiveness of member engagement and development within the WMCA.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 14 June 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Dan Essex, Lyndsey Roberts Governance & Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Officer</p>
<p>Terms of Reference for Member of Parliament's (MPs) Questions to the Mayor To inform Board of the outcome of negotiations with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) on the issue of MPs Questions to the Mayor and to seek approval for the draft terms of reference, the process for selecting a chair and a timeline for the first session.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 14 June 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>James Hughes Member Relationship Manager</p>
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the financial position as at the end of Month 2 (May 2024) and present the revised multi- year capital programme which takes account of the outturn position for approval</p>	<p>WMCA Board 19 July 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>Universal Support To consider the principles agreed with local authority partners for the commissioning and delivery model of Universal Support, a Department for Work & Pensions funded opportunity to support residents with health conditions to gain and progress into employment.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 19 July 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>John Hall Senior Delivery Manager-Employment Support</p>

<p>Culture, Creative and Heritage Infrastructure Programme To seek permission to undertake the Culture, Creative & Heritage Infrastructure programme of activity.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		Hayley Pepler
<p>Bus Options Report To consider options for the future delivery of the region's bus network.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		Steven Hayes Head of Network Transformation
<p>Bus Depot Strategy To approve the funding for TfWM to acquire sites for Bus Depots.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		Ian Shore Asset Delivery Manager
<p>Transport Capital Programme To raise awareness of the capital budget pressures across transport multi-modal programmes.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		Jenni MacKenzie, Sandeep Shingadia Head of Transport Portfolio, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration
<p>Ring & Ride Update To consider the latest position.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		
<p>Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension (WBHE) Business Case Consider a report in relation to Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension (WBHE) Business Case</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Open		Simon Dickinson, Tom Oldershaw, Mike Waters Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation - TfWM
<p>Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO) To consider the latest position.</p>	WMCA Board 19 July 2024	Fully exempt		Kate Taylor Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning

<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>Single Settlement Update To consider the work undertaken to-date between the WMCA and constituent authorities to develop functional and place-based strategies that will underpin the delivery of the Single Settlement.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Jonathan Gibson Head of Policy & Public Affairs</p>
<p>Health of the Region Report 2024 To acknowledge the findings of the report and to approve its recommendations, including WMCA actions on improving health through all its policies and programmes.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Mubasshir Ajaz Head of Health and Communities • Strategy, Integration and Net Zero</p>
<p>Key Route Network Review 2023/24 To approve the amended Key Route Network within the WMCA area.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Rachel Ing Corridor Manager</p>
<p>Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 Endorsement of the Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 following completion of public consultation and validation from the Regional Road Safety Strategic Group.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Darren Divall Regional Road Safety Manager</p>

<p>Local Transport Plan Adoption To consider recommendations to approve the final version of the LTP suite of documents (including Area Based Strategies) which have been adapted to align fully with the WMCA Functional and Place Based Strategies.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 September 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Carl Beet, David Harris, Mike Waters Head of Strategy and Intelligence - TfWM, Transport Strategy and Place Manager - TfWM, Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation - TfWM</p>
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>Best Value Fare Capping for Bus (cEMV Broker) To consider the Full Business Case for the national cEMV Broker pilot and West Midlands roll-out which will enable best value fare capping for bus users to be delivered for travellers using their contactless debit card or other device. The Board will also be asked to approve the legal partnership arrangements with the collaborating delivery entities.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Matt Lewis, Mike Waters Head of Swift, Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation - TfWM</p>
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position</p>	<p>WMCA Board 10 January 2025</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>

<p>Draft WMCA Budget 2025/26 To consider the draft budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 10 January 2025</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>WMCA Budget 2025/26 To approve the 2025/26 budget.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 7 February 2025</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position</p>	<p>WMCA Board 14 March 2025</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position and provisional outturn for the 2024/25 financial year.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 13 June 2025</p>	<p>Open</p>		<p>Beverly Sullivan, Sally Truman Financial Planning and Coordination Manager, Lead Financial Planning Accountant</p>

The Forward Plan

This document sets out known 'key decisions' that will be taken by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) over the coming months.

Forthcoming key decisions are published online to meet the statutory 28 day notification rule for each meeting where a key decision will be taken. Where it has not been possible to meet the 28 day rule for publication of notice of a key decision or an intention to meet in private, the relevant notices will be published as required by legislation as soon as possible.

What is a key decision?

A 'key decision' means a decision of the Mayor, WMCA or officer which is likely:

- (a) to result in the WMCA incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income amounting to £1m or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the WMCA.

The report relating to a decision, together with any other documents being considered, will be available five clear working days before the decision is to be taken (unless the documentation contains exempt information).

The forward plan also provides notice of when the WMCA may decide to exclude the press and public during consideration of a particular matter due to the potential for disclosure of confidential or exempt

information. The grounds upon which local authorities can exclude the press and public are specified by law and details of the exempt categories are available on request from the Governance Services team (governance.services@wmca.org.uk).

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

- make a representation about why a matter should be heard in public, or
- submit information to the decision-making body about an item in the forward plan, or
- request details of relevant documents, or
- seek advice about the WMCA's decision-making arrangements,

should contact the Governance Services team: governance.services@wmca.org.uk

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Recommendation Tracker 2024/25

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
11 March 2024	Youth Justice – Reduction of Violence	Members remained concerned that attendance and exclusions appear to be a contributing factor to children entering the youth justice system and invited the Youth Justice Partners to attend a future meeting to discuss this issue.	Rachael Phillips	In progress	April 2025	To be scheduled.
		That further information is provided on unmet health needs and contributing factors towards the rise in children entering the youth justice system.				
16 April 2024	Children at risk of exploitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was recommended that this item be reconsidered in the new municipal year. 2. That a letter be sent, on behalf of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the Police and Crime Commissioner expressing concern around the arrangements in relation to funding for exploitation hubs. 	Rebecca Warren	In progress	April 2025	To be scheduled.
16 April 2024	Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment	That a report on Child Sexual Abuse within the Family Environment be reconsidered at a future meeting.	Rita Homer	In progress	April 2025	To be scheduled.