

Council – 18 September 2017

Progress Report of Councillor Jeavons, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

Making a Difference Everyday

The activities covered in this portfolio are diverse and are key to achieving inclusive economic growth, creating prosperous communities and making a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people. The Walsall Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets our economic development priorities to 'Create Local Jobs' and 'Support Local People into Work' and is aligned with the key themes of our new Corporate Plan. I have summarised the activities of this portfolio based on these themes, which are:

- **People**
- **Business**
- **Place**

In my opinion none of these headings can truly be considered in isolation: if we are providing opportunities through training and apprenticeships to enable local PEOPLE to access jobs, then we need to ensure that local BUSINESS are supported to grow to create new jobs and be sustainable long-term, with improvements to the overall PLACE needed so that high-quality sites and transport links are available to accommodate BUSINESS growth and house our PEOPLE.

I have many highlights over the last year in regard to our efforts in this portfolio.

In terms of **PEOPLE**, we have focused on further development of our award winning Walsall Works Programme, including our pivotal role in the delivery of the Black Country IMPACT Programme which to date has supported over 1500 young people with 581 being our most vulnerable residents. Our performance through Walsall Works continues to exceed expectations with the team having facilitated and delivered 2500 positive outcomes for Walsall residents in apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeships, skills training and employment; of which 686 were delivered since April 2016. Walsall Works has attracted significant interest from partners having secured £1m of investment from VIEW funding and made a significant contribution to the Walsall Economic Growth Programme, with Cabinet approving additional resource to extend for a further two years (up to March 2021) that will enable the programme to grow and expand the good work. The team are fully engaged on discussions with the Combined Authority in regards to additional resources, powers and flexibilities on adult skills and employment support for the benefit of the borough and its people.

In terms of **BUSINESS**, we have had a successful Walsall Business Week with over 200 businesses reached during the week long programme. The Walsall Economic Board goes from strength to strength and continues to bring together some of the key employers in Walsall to actively assist our aims around job creation, skills and work security. I have personally visited some of the major Walsall businesses on the Economic Board, including ZF Lemforder, Homeserve, Handelsbanken and Jhoots. I

have found these businesses to be dynamic, innovative and proud to be in Walsall - and I too am proud that they are! Moving forward we will continue to foster links with these and our other Walsall businesses and become a partner of choice in the years ahead.

In terms of **PLACE**, we have seen the announcement of the planning submission for the £9million Wisemore Central scheme next to Tesco that will include a hotel and restaurant/commercial uses, and the £14million 'The Quarter' retail scheme nearing completion with Poundland and B&M as the first occupants. We have seen the strategic purchase of the Saddlers Centre as part of our growing retail investment portfolio. This will provide a revenue income stream for the Council but also gives us a point of control to proactively support our regeneration aspirations for the town centre, particularly around the entrance to the railway station as a strategic gateway into the borough. This is important when we consider the recently announced new rail franchise and the potential service improvements that are anticipated and the benefits this will bring to the borough.

TRANSPORT is the golden thread running through our regeneration efforts. Works are continuing on the electrification of the Chase Line and the scheduled improvements at M6 Junction10, as well as the introduction of the new West Midland Rail Franchise and efforts to link Walsall and Wolverhampton with a rail service. By the mid-2020s the borough of Walsall will be a town that is very well connected to the wider region and central London and able to ride the HS2 ripple; providing economic opportunity in terms of jobs and investment.

Lastly, it was my pleasure to attend a one day conference in London in the spring, where I was able to speak to an audience of highways engineers and contractors about how our highways department has become award winning. This is a great fillip for Walsall and we actively have peer councils trying to replicate and learn from our methods, which are regarded as best in class. It is so important to ensure that we provide a safe and efficient highway system for the benefit of the travelling public whether they be pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, or public transport users.

This is an exciting time to be involved in regeneration in Walsall - we have much to shout about and I hope that this report gives you a flavour of what is going on, the potential Walsall has and the vision that this coalition administration has for the town and district centres, our communities and the people within them. It only remains for me to thank the teams within the department who work so hard on a daily basis to make the vision a reality. I commend the report to you.

PEOPLE

Our **award winning Walsall Works programme** continues to exceed expectations and since 2012 has delivered 2518 outcomes for Walsall residents; of which 686 were achieved since April 2016. A summary of our performance is set out below:

Performance Outputs	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
Walsall Works Apprenticeships	104	262	113	73	92	3	644
Walsall Works Pre-Apprenticeships	191	147	92	37	95	9	562
Jobs	0	159	180	166	160	129	665
Work Experience	0	0	24	14	13	6	51
Self Employed	0	0	1	4	2	2	7
Study	0	75	103	40	56	37	274
Talent Navigator Referral	0	0	6	1	0	0	7
Talent Match Referral	0	0	21	3	22	21	46
Referral to Specialist Service	0	2	0	2	4	2	8
Apprenticeships (none funded)	0	86	91	31	19	11	227
Traineeships (none funded)	0	12	7	3	5	1	27
Total Performance	295	743	638	374	468	218	2518

The Walsall Works programme has made a significant contribution to the **Walsall Economic Growth (ECG) programme** which was established to create the conditions to generate new job opportunities within the borough, together with providing the support local people need to secure or remain in employment. Further investment has enabled the Council's Employment and Skills Team to continue the delivery of an **apprenticeship wage subsidy** as a mechanism to support local businesses to access the finances they need to flourish and create jobs. However, our key focus is to support local residents to find and secure employment through our free Walsall Works **Jobs Brokerage / Matching Service**.

Since April 2017 we have given emphasis to promotion of our free job matching service to drive up the number of vacancies being managed by Walsall Works. We have secured 225 vacancies from employers, some with multiple jobs, identifying the potential for 752 job vacancies. We have led on large group information sessions and job matching for Piri-Fino, Staffline (TK Maxx), LUDA, Blakemores, Poundland, Holiday Inn, Whitehouse Cox, Lawlors, Fortel, Barons Court Hotel; all whom have resulted in local people accessing employment.

Through these relationships we have also offered additional business development advice and greater links with key providers delivering on programmes such as the ESF / ESFA funded **Skills for the Workforce, Response to Redundancy** and the **Skills Factory** designed to provide units towards and bitesize training courses.

We have lead or supported facilitation of key **events** including those held during Walsall Business Week which saw the first Walsall Skills Show, Meet the Buyer events and the annual Expo. We have held several recruitment events including Apprenticeships events, Job Fairs and Sectoral events that match local employers with local suitable people. Our large events have attracted 1000+ unemployed people who have interfaced with employers and providers promoting a range of jobs and training across all business sectors. The schedule includes:

Date	Type of Event	Lead
09.09.2016	Recruitment Event – Old Square	Walsall Council
22.09.2016	Walsall Jobs Fair	Walsall Council
27.01.2017	Employ your Skills	Walsall Council
30.03.2017	Walsall Jobs Fair	Walsall Council
27.04.2017	Succeed into Employment	Walsall Council & whg
14.06.2017	Skills Show	Walsall Council
11.07.2017	Construction Event	whg
07.09.2017	Walsall Jobs Fair	Walsall Council
10.10.2017	XPO –Real Apprenticeship	BC Training Group
12.10.2017	Care Event	whg
24.11.2017	Employ your Skills	Walsall Council

We have launched our new www.walsallworks.com website and weekly job alerts are sent out to 2500+ residents actively looking for work and registered onto the Walsall Works programme and to our partners such as DWP and Work Programme to promote to their clients.

We are currently embarking on our **Walsall Works award launch**, which will be issued to employers in recognition of their contribution to economic growth. This will include the achievement of different levels of award to help stimulate further commitments for taking on local people including other social value outcomes.

Walsall has played a pivotal role in development and delivery of the **Black Country IMPACT programme**; having been awarded £51 million, including £17 million match funding from the four BC Councils, and leveraging in some £34 million of new external funding to support 16 – 29 year olds classified as NEET into positive outcomes. For Walsall this will draw in £6 million of new funding, matched to a potential £2.25 million, to support around 3500 local people, with 1000 entering sustainable work or training outcomes through to July 2018.

To date the programme has achieved (as at 11th August 2017):

Directorate	Enrolment	Intervention	Outcome
Adult Social Care	126	49	23
Economy & Environment	588	367	137
Children Services	557	173	56
Change & Governance	230	54	10
Total Participants	1501	643	226

Of these, we have enrolled and are actively supporting 581 of our most vulnerable young people from key thematic groups:

Looked After Children Care Leavers	55
Homeless	40
Living in a Jobless Household	290
Lone Parents	87
Teenage Parents	43
Ex-Offenders	66

Further to our development of the **Social Value Charter**, approved at Cabinet in July 2016, we have introduced our Targets, Outcomes, Measures (TOMs) ensuring that all contracts over the value of £50,000 are weighted and secured not only on value, price and deliverability but also on economic, community and economic benefits aligned to the Councils priorities. We are currently developing the tendering processes to ensure effective review, monitoring and co-ordination of support to enable contractors to deliver on their obligations.

The team continue to provide secretariat support and direction to the **Walsall Employment and Skills Board** whose focus in the past years has been on driving apprenticeships, understanding and addressing health barriers and improving information, advice and guidance in schools. The board has also engaged with the HS2 Programme Board to obtain clear visibility and timelines in relation to the HS2 Growth Strategy and its Employment & Skills Strategy.

We have strengthened our working relationships with Walsall Housing Group (whg) through joint projects, such as the **VIEW programme 'Investing in the Economic Growth Programme'**, and are reporting progress to whg and the VIEW board as part of the quarterly review process against the people, business and place themes.

On a Black Country Level we are the financial accountable body for the £2.8m **City Deal Housing Pilot** programme that is being delivered by Accord Housing over 5 years. This has delivered support to 1789 people in receipt of housing benefit with 235 people going into employment and 118 into sustained outcomes across four key ward areas. The reduction to the welfare bill is quantified at £1.1 million. Our role is to actively support delivery in the ward area of Darlaston South.

We actively participate in regional working to ensure Walsall contributes and achieves against the objectives of the **West Midlands Combined Authority** and have inputted into and led on discussions in relation to the Productivity and Skills Commission, new Work and Health Programme, Employment Support pilot and on new propositions for Devolution Deals.

The team work towards the aspirations and targets set out in a number of different strategic documents; nationally, sub-regionally, locally and corporately. This relies on working closely with our strategic partners and the private sector to address a range of difficult and complex challenges within the employment and skills agenda. This includes ensuring that new developments, albeit housing or business led, grow our existing transformational sectors and help raise skill levels or support residents to overcome barriers to employment - hence reducing poverty. There is a need to better utilise public resources, including existing European funding, to ensure our most vulnerable residents are identified through better use of data and intelligence, targeted through outreach and community capacity initiatives, and supported with their employability. This will enable residents to secure employment opportunities in

the public sector via the apprenticeships and will encourage the private sector to take advantage of local initiative such as Walsall Works.

The External Funding Team, who deliver services across both Walsall and the Black Country, successfully won approval in 2016 for the **Black Country Community Grants programme** which secured £990,000 of new funding that runs through to July 2018. The grant aims to fund local community groups (with a turnover of less than £150,000 per year), with up to £15,000 per each successful application, to provide support to local people in their communities to get them closer to securing employment. The programme started in earnest in early 2017 and so far 12 community groups in Walsall have been awarded funding totalling almost £115,000 that aims to support 428 people. This represents 26% of the £442,000 allocated so far across the Black Country, so Walsall is punching its weight.

The External Funding Team also carry out the **Technical Assistance programme** for both the Black Country ESF and ERDF programmes, which aim to ensure that we retain and spend all of the £156 million approved by the EU through to 2021. To be clear, the UK Government has underwritten the EU allocations so regardless of Brexit, this work can and will continue. Within Walsall, the team have supported whg to secure £1,175,000 of ERDF funding to deliver Smart Electric Heating and Grid Balancing in the Borough and to secure the lead delivery for a £4million ESF Building Better Opportunities programme to deliver Financial and Digital Inclusion activities across the Black Country. The team also supported Steps to Work in Walsall to secure £11million to deliver Employment Support for the over 25's through ESF funding.

Alongside these projects, the Team support local businesses and Third Sector organisations to secure additional funding, including around £1million of **Lottery funding** for a range of charities across the Borough and a successful £3.5 million **Arts Council NPO bid** for the New Art Gallery.

During 2017/18 the team will continue to expand its activity, which will include the appointment of a post that will target securing external funding to increase the amount and diversity of funding that enters the borough to benefit and support our economy.

BUSINESS

We continue to provide **support to existing businesses**, as well as **start-up businesses**, helping them to grow and expand.

At the strategic level, the **Walsall Economic Board** brings together some of the key employers in Walsall including: Homeserve plc, Wedge Group, ZF Lemforder, Maloney Metalcraft, The Midlands Co-operative, Lonestar Group, Jhoots Pharmacy, WHG, Walsall College, Handelsbanken Autobase, Fortel Construction, Accord Housing, Addison O'Hare and the University of Wolverhampton. The Board aims to assist us in driving forward the creation of local jobs and businesses, together with ensuring that local people have the skills employers need and the opportunities to secure work. The Board, along with its Employment and Skills Sub-Group, is now playing an increasingly active role in the borough's strategic partnership structure and taking ownership of key partnership priorities, as well as helping to foster strategic links with our larger companies as part of the Board membership.

With our top 6 Walsall-registered **strategic companies** generating a combined turnover of £5 billion, including Poundland, A F Blackmore and One Stop Stores Ltd, and another 13 companies generating more than £100m turnover per annum, establishing links and planned outreach by our team and strategic leads is a key priority, particularly where there is no current active engagement.

The Employment Growth Team has engaged with Walsall-based businesses from a range of sectors, both delivering ERDF and VIEW funded programmes, and has also been reactive to enquiries received with circa 30% relating to start-up or scale-up needs. A total of 591 business engagements have been recorded; of which 86 businesses have been supported, assisted or referred to partner agencies in Q1 2017/18.

By supporting businesses with **growth planning and funding**, the team has ensured that the Black Country Transformational GOLD programme has attracted a healthy pipeline of Expressions of Interest. To date six grants have been secured for Walsall projects, totalling £70,000 and drawing in £214,000 of private sector investment. The team have also helped businesses to access support through the BC Access to Finance team, Get Set for Growth, BCRS, and other local strategic projects/products such as IPSS, BECCI, Manufacturing Growth Programme, and Groundworks' Low Carbon project.

Premise searches and relocation support continue to form a significant proportion of the teams' reactive engagement; with enquiries serviced through our growing knowledge of local and national agents, property owners and landlords, and data held on our Customer Relationship Management system. These enquiries are providing some indication of a generally positive trend in terms of demand and pipeline and a clear increase in interest in smaller units (<5k sqft).

Our Employment Growth Team have processed **Start-up Support** referrals to Access 2 Business, who deliver funded support, and have also been able to directly support start-up firms as part of the provisions of the VIEW funding, with new businesses typically contacting the team within a few months of beginning trading or

in the initial planning stages. Support has also been provided to early stage businesses to access funding through national mechanisms such as the National Start up Loan fund.

Through the **Black Country Growth Hub** the team has access to national and regional teams who support Walsall businesses to grow and sustain employment. This year, **Department of International Trade** staff have assisted both exporters and foreign-owned companies in the borough liaising with the local team to ensure continuity and breadth of coverage.

The team has successfully delivered two SME events and the inaugural **Walsall Business Week** in June 2017. Through the week long programme, Walsall Business Week reached over 200 businesses with a number of events hosted by partners from public and private sectors, national and international guest speakers, and an 80-table Networkers Expo. In addition to this the team continue to sit on boards and actions groups to support a range of initiatives, including **High Value Manufacturing City, BIMwm, Invest Black Country, ERDF BCT GOLD, BC Growth Hub** and **ERDF AIM**, and also supported **Black Country Day** with colleagues from across the Black Country.

By working closely with local networking groups, the Chamber of Commerce, and other internal teams, businesses in Walsall are provided with a number of routes to access services and support, and referrals are made back to relevant colleagues, partners and organisations to provide businesses with a portfolio of options and products to choose from. This “menu” of services is articulated to partners and colleagues periodically to help them by complementing their specific offers.

Working with **Invest Black Country** we ensure that Walsall is showcased as an investment location to bring new companies in to the area to help create new jobs and generate business rates revenue as a result of commercial premises / sites becoming occupied. Invest Black Country has been working to increase the number of inward investment leads flowing into the Black Country through the delivery of a targeted lead generation programme which conveys the Black Country value offer to businesses in the key sectors. In the 2016-17 period, the team generated 138 investment leads for the Black Country. Moving forward we will ensure that Walsall sites and developments continue to attract interest and subsequent investment from external investors through the Combined Authority’s West Midlands Growth Company, who are now taking the lead on this work.

The Black Country continued to see significant investment from foreign owned companies in 2016/17 according to recent figures from Department of International Trade. From 21 projects, including new investment and existing company expansion, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) created a total of 748 new jobs and 269 safeguarded jobs in the Black Country in 2016/17.

PLACE

SITES

Statutory '**Local Plans**' are vital to ensure a sufficient supply of land and premises whilst protecting the environment and they provide the basis for the Council's decisions on Planning Applications. Following extensive consultation, on 7th June the Council submitted Walsall's **Site Allocation Document** (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre **Area Action Plan** (AAP) to the Secretary of State for examination. The Planning Inspectorate will lead an Examination in Public of each plan in September and October respectively. If found 'sound' the plans will be adopted following formal approval from full Council. Covering the period up to 2026, the plans propose sites for about 4,000 new dwellings and seek to safeguard and make available around 650ha of employment land, as well as 7,500 sqm of new retailing and 73,000 sqm of offices in Walsall Town Centre.

Alongside progressing plans for Walsall, together with the Black Country authorities, the **Review of the Black Country Core Strategy** has now commenced with the 'Issues and Options' consultation. The review will plan for the Black Country's future development needs up to 2036; addressing new challenges and opportunities and making sure that investment is attracted to create jobs and wealth across the area. Addressing housing need, whilst sustaining employment opportunities, will be a key issue of the review with additional sites needed to meet growing demand – the proposed **review of the Black Country's Green Belt** will be imperative to this, as will working with authorities in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area to see how we work at a regional level to consider the challenge.

Walsall continues to attract significant levels of development interest, despite there being some caution in the construction industry during 2016 and 2017, and has received 1187 **planning applications** and prior notifications since September 2016 (note 1372 planning applications were received in 2016/17 financial year). Utilising the Government's performance markers, the **Development Management Team** have achieved the following performance in terms of planning applications delivered within the targeted timeframes over the last 12 months; Majors 86.84%, Minors 71.43% and Others 66.58%. Through the issuing of decision this service continues to enable new housing, industrial and retail developments to come forward across the borough. Since September 2016 the team has also processed and concluded 138 **enforcement cases** and a Senior Enforcement officer and 2 enforcement assistants have recently been appointed to help enhance the service and process enforcement enquiries.

In terms of delivery, to complement the £12m **Walsall Waterfront** cinema and restaurant development, the developer - Kier Property - are currently on-site constructing phase two of the project, which will provide a further four restaurants to the already successful Waterfront development. These are scheduled to officially open in September and will create further jobs in addition to the 250 jobs already created. The Waterfront area has also seen the refurbishment of **Wharfingers Cottage** into a new restaurant and created 25 jobs. These developments have enhanced Walsall Waterfront as a leisure destination and widened the evening economy of the town centre.

Also at Waterfront, the former **LEX** site, has benefitted from Local Growth funding with £150,000 of site remediation works having recently been completed. Options to redevelop the site for commercial use are now being considered. The Council also continues to work with land owners and the Homes & Communities Agency on redevelopment proposals for land at **Station Street**, which will seek to improve the sites connectivity and gateway location next to Walsall Rail Station and the Waterfront area. The acquisition of the **Saddlers Centre**, as part of our growing retail investment portfolio, provides the Council with a real point of control to proactively support regeneration in the town centre and enhance the key gateways at Station Street, Park Street and Bradford Place.

Following demolition works, **The Quarter** redevelopment by developer Norton & Proffit is nearing completion in the **St Matthews** area of the town centre. The £14m retail scheme will provide over 8,000sqm of new floorspace, with the first units now occupied and operated by Poundland and B&M. In total the scheme is estimated to bring in an excess of 300 new jobs to this part of the town centre which has already benefited from the major investment in the **Old Square Development**.

Work continues to bring development sites forward within **Gigaport**; building on strong developer interest in sites such as the former Jabez Cliff site, the Challenge Block in Hatherton Street, and the remaining plots within the Jhoots site. Planning consent has been awarded for a residential scheme at **Teddesley Street** with Walsall Housing Group due to start on site this autumn. A planning submission is also being determined for **Wisemore Central** – a £9million scheme which includes a 60-bed hotel, restaurant, and retail/commercial uses, and would create more than 100 jobs when complete.

Delivery of sites within the Darlaston element of **the Black Country Enterprise Zone** in and around Junction 10 of the M6 continues, building on established partnerships with landowners to secure delivery. A developer procurement process has been run in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency to identify a private sector partner for the **Phoenix 10** site, the largest employment site in the borough. The partners have identified a preferred bidder who is capable of redeveloping the 18 hectare site for circa 600,000sqft of employment uses with necessary approvals being obtained to enter into a contract. I hope to be able to announce the name of the partner later this year. Significant investment decisions have also been taken to acquire strategic sites within the Enterprise Zone in order to accelerate delivery of employment uses and economic growth – with further formal announcements to follow. Remediation works at the **Tempus 10** site to provide development platforms have been completed with discussions on-going with potential end-user and developer interests to bring development forward.

Work continues to progress at pace at the Borough's largest housing development project that will deliver 867 new homes – **Goscote Lane Regeneration Corridor** - with planning consent granted for the final phase of redevelopment at the former Goscote Estate. To date 376 new homes (including 200 affordable and 176 private sale units) have been completed as part of the scheme, working in partnership with Walsall Housing Group, the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes and Communities Agency and developer Keepmoat. The £85m investment also includes

the £1m invested into open space improvements at the Lea and Swannies Field, with existing and new communities benefitting from these works.

Walsall Housing Group have completed another over 55s wellbeing scheme providing 66 units at **Carl Street, Bloxwich**. Accord have completed the final phase of 80 affordable homes at the **former Beechdale School site**. These homes, which range from 1 bed apartments to much needed 4 bed family homes, are energy efficient timber framed homes which have been manufactured across the road at Accord's **LoCal factory**. Accord have also started a 60 home affordable development in **Rushall**.

Supporting the delivery of development across the Borough and within our neighbourhoods continues to be a priority. As well as works currently on-site, a pipeline of development opportunities for **housing, employment and commercial** continues to be worked on. This is being facilitated by effective partnerships with land owners, developer partners and investors- both private and public sector, and opportunities to maximise income from funding available through the Black Country LEP and West Midlands Combined Authority as a priority. These **pipeline projects** are helping to support the delivery of 1500 new homes, 252,000 sqm of employment and 100,000 of mixed use floorspace, alongside side up to 9700 new or sustained jobs within the borough. Facilitating development in this way will be essential in supporting the Council's revenue income base derived from Business Rate and Council Tax income.

Working with private sector partners, Local Growth funding has been approved for site investigations, remediation and/or gap funding (subject to grant agreements) to advance delivery of Walsall's employment sites; including the **former McKechnie Brass** site at Middlemore Lane; **Moxley Business Park**; **Airfield 55** at Airfield Drive; and the **former Willenhall Sewage Works**. 200,000sqft of industrial floorspace has also been delivered at the **Bullseye site** at Bull Lane, which is now occupied by Tool Bank and DFS distribution.

Delivery options are also being considered for various strategic housing sites, including the **former Caparo Factory** in Birchills, **Pier Street Brownhills** District Centre to complement housing delivery at Silver Street and High Street, and **Willenhall Garden City** which encompasses a wider area in and around the District Centre boundary.

The **Asset Management** function is key to supporting the Walsall development pipeline as well as continuing to manage the Council's operation estate and supporting our partners to deliver services from our wider portfolio. The important role that the Council's land and property portfolio plays has therefore been recognised by the Council's Transformation Programme. A review has commenced to ensure that the continued management and rationalisation of the Council's property estate meets our **operational needs** now and in the future, and that the property **investment portfolio** is enhanced to maximise revenue income generation. Significant investment decisions have been taken to acquire strategic retail property within Walsall Town Centre and Aldridge District Centre as part of the non-operational investment portfolio, whilst there have been continued strategic acquisitions to support redevelopment plans in the Enterprise Zone.

TRANSPORT

Transportation makes a vital contribution to the local economy and is an important component to enable continued growth. Through the **Walsall Transport Plan 2017-2022**, we have a clear, ambitious and forward thinking vision to improve and develop the network. My job is to ensure we sustain this positive contribution and deliver transport schemes where funding has been identified to support local connectivity for residents and businesses and unlock development potential.

A major improvement to **Junction 10 of the M6** is being developed in conjunction with Department for Transport and Highways England. Funding of £64m has been secured for this scheme through the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Highways England together local tax payers money. An innovative governance model between the funding partners has been established to deliver the project. Preliminary design work and an assessment of the land required are currently being prepared. A Planning Application has been submitted for the project marking a major milestone in the programme, which will see works start late 2018.

Liaison with Network Rail is ongoing in relation to the major **Chase Line Electrification Project**, line closures throughout the summer have allowed for the installation of the overhead electric cabling. Throughout the past year improvements to bridges have taken place, including major works at Central Drive, Bloxwich. Network Rail has continued to consult with the residents and businesses regarding the project which also includes proposals for the closure of Bloxwich level crossing. Improvements to some five existing road junctions are taking place on the local highway network to improve the environment but also to mitigate the impacts of re-routing traffic.

Last month it was announced that West Midlands Trains Ltd (a joint venture between Abellio, East Japan Railway Company and Mitsui & Co Ltd) has been successful in their bid to operate the **West Midlands rail network**. The new rail franchise will bring much needed improvements in terms of extra capacity, more frequent services and station enhancements across the network. This includes commitments to operate an hourly direct service between Walsall and London and to increase Sunday services to the same frequency currently available on Saturdays. These improvements will open up economic and leisure based opportunities for Walsall residents. Together with Transport for West Midlands, we will also work closely with the new rail operator towards the reopening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton, including new stations in Willenhall and James Bridge, to generate better connections for our district centres.

Since August 2016 the Council has spent over £3m implementing 50 **highway maintenance resurfacing schemes** covering a total length of 10.7km of carriageway and 6.4km of footway. In addition we have carried out 37 preventative treatments to carriageways over a total length of 12.4km at a cost of some £735,000.

We are now in the final year of the **West Midlands Challenge Fund** allocation. This will have brought around £40m of investment in maintaining the regions classified network. For 2017/18 Walsall has an allocation of £2m and since August 2016 the Highways team have delivered 6 major schemes namely: Weston St; High St,

Moxley; High St, Walsall Wood; Essington Rd; Lichfield Rd, Rushall; Wolverhampton Rd. All expenditure must be used on the classified road network with the aim of assisting regeneration and the local economy.

We have continued to be at the forefront of innovation utilising new techniques and products to ensure that we get the best quality and value for our residents. As an example we have used the velocity patcher again this year, addressing over 7000 defects at an average cost of less than half that quoted by DfT as the typical cost of a pothole repair. The partnership we have developed with our term contractor Tarmac was recognised by winning the **Municipal Journal Excellence award** for delivering efficiencies in Highway Maintenance.

Officers are well advanced in preparing legal and technical documents ready to go to tender for the new **Highway Maintenance contract** procurement.

We are also investing Integrated Transport Block funding of £1.3m per annum in improvements to the Walsall highway network through the **Transport Capital Programme**, including road safety schemes; contribution to the development of the major project at M6 J10; and the development of other strategic schemes, such as improvements at junctions on the A461 Lichfield Road corridor.

During times of such major investment it is even more challenging to keep our road network moving. In the last year over 120 **Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders** have been implemented across the borough helping keep our roads safe and moving.

In addition our Traffic Officers have been working in partnership with Network Rail and Highways England preparing for and delivering **Major projects** taking place in Walsall. Working closely with Statutory Undertakers and our own Highways Maintenance Team officers continue to coordinate and manage road works to minimise road congestion and disruption to the movement of traffic.

As an example, Virgin Media are undertaking a major investment programme, the 'Project Lightning' scheme, to bring high speed Broadband to the residents of the Borough. Our officers have developed a new customer focused method to assist in the delivery of this major undertaking.

The Urban Traffic Control team based in Wolverhampton City, as part of our successful shared service, has effectively managed the traffic on the highway network by control of traffic signals. This has been particularly beneficial when there have been issues on the motorway network or other significant events within the area.

2017 saw the completion of canal towpath and highway improvements as part of the '**Managing Shorter Trips**' Programme. The Managing Short Trips initiative was launched in 2015/16 with £4.2m funding from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal. Its aim is to improve access for cycling and walking via the Black Country's rich heritage of canal towpaths, as well as on-road cycle routes. Over 25km's of new cycle route were created across the Black Country. Walsall's improvements centred around the Walsall Canal with over 4km of new, wider

towpath between the Town Wharf and Midland Road, Darlaston. 3km of new cycle links were also created from the canal to nearby destinations including Walsall Train Station, Bradford Place, Manor Hospital, Bentley Retail Park, Darlaston Swimming Baths and Rough Hay / Darlaston Green.

Schools pupils have continued to receive **Bikeability** training, putting Walsall on track to meet the annual Department for Transport target. This training is complemented by other initiatives, such as cycle maintenance and leisure cycle rides, to help remove barriers to cycling.

The **A*STARS (Active Sustainable Travel and Road Safety) programme** continues to grow and evolve across educational establishments in the borough. We have over 70 schools participating including special, faith and independent schools. 5 new schools have also signed up to start from Sept 2017- Jubilee Academy, St Joseph's, Whetstone Field, Alumwell Jr, West Walsall E-ACT (secondary school).

To support the A*STARS Programme, a number of schools received improvements through the '**Safer Routes to School' Schemes**. Two new cycle shelters were installed at and four 'Safe School Zones' were implemented with new interactive school signs, advisory 20mph speed limit, improved road markings and traffic calming.

A series of associated activities such as our '**Walk to School Month**' and the **National Walk to School week** saw literally tens of thousands of children across the borough joining in and choosing sustainable and active travel to and from school.

October 2016 also saw our **Drive2Arrive** event held at Walsall Football Club. Prospective new drivers from secondary schools participated via interactive scenarios presented in association with West Midlands Fire Service, West Midlands Police, local driving schools and Young Person's Substance Misuse Service. Students benefit from information associated with becoming responsible new drivers

PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING PROGRAMMES

We continue to develop our partnerships and relations at regional and sub-regional level and contribute positively and successfully to guide and inform these strategic agendas and deliver resultant programmes at the local level in support of our people, business and place.

We have actively participated in the successful development of the now constituted **West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**. A successful first devolution deal has been negotiated with Government which is estimated to bring £8billion of investment into the region over the coming decades. The **West Midlands Strategic Economic Plan** has been adopted by the WMCA which provides the vision and economic policies to guide the region towards achieving significantly better economic prosperity and increasing our regional Gross Value Added by 5% above the national average by 2030.

Future Devolution Deals are being discussed and at present the WMCA is finalising the arrangements for a Mayoral Combined Authority subject to the outcome of recent public consultation and feedback from Government. Depending on this, it may be that a draft Mayoral Combined Authority Order could be presented back to Cabinet in October 2016. The ongoing devolution dialogue with Government also includes the Black Country's submission requesting around £120million of Local Growth Funding through the 3rd round of Devolution Deals – this forms part of the first ask of Government made by all three West Midlands Local Enterprise Partnerships through the Combined Authority.

At the sub-regional level, the four Black Country councils have successfully worked in partnership for many years and, together with the Black Country Consortium, have and will continue to achieve significant success. As part of this Walsall Council played a key role in the formation, and is now acting as secretariat and supporting the Governance arrangements, of the **Black Country Joint Committee**. The Joint Committee brings together the four Black Country Leaders to enable that joint discussions and decision making. The remit has also now been widened to include all funding received from the Combined Authority.

Securing external resources is essential if we are to realise our people, business and place ambitions. One key programme of funding that was created as part of the Devolution process is the **Local Growth Deal (LGF)**. The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership has been allocated £211 million LGF funding through to 2021 to aid the creation of new quality jobs, develop / improve our infrastructure and increase housing numbers. Walsall Council was appointed by the Joint Committee as Accountable Body for the programme and has successfully administered the governance, contracting and payment arrangements throughout the 2015/16 and 16/17 financial years – with the full £76.85 million of LGF grant claimed from government for the Black Country.

Walsall borough is and will continue to benefit significantly from the LGF programme. To date £9.3 million of the total LGF claimed has been invested in Walsall projects and in total we have secured circa £49.57 million LGF funding for our projects, including £8.8 million for the Goscote Lane Corridor housing delivery, £39.29 million

towards Junction 10 of the M6, together with £9.48 million of Local Growth Funds for a range of local projects. Outcomes from this work will include: 741 new homes, 257 businesses assisted, 2847 people supported into learning and 906 people supported into apprenticeships and sustainable employment.

Understanding the scale and the nature of the economic challenge we face, and developing robust and evidence-based solutions is vital to moving forward with our partners. We have continued to gather evidence through an ongoing **Walsall Local Economic Assessment** process, which continues to inform the Walsall Economic Framework and the key Economic Development priorities – Creating Local Jobs and Supporting Local People into Work – that are set out the **Walsall Strategic Economic Plan** (SEP, 2015).

Our local SEP articulates the key priorities for the development of a flourishing Walsall economy, but recognises that these are set within the context of the wider economic ambitions of the Black Country and the West Midlands Combined Authority. This administration continues to recognise the importance of the **Walsall SEP** for the Borough, which clearly sets out our ambitions and priorities for the future, which have been accepted by key partners, including the private sector, through the Walsall Economic Board. . The priorities in the SEP are directly linked to and aligned with all the themes in our new Corporate Plan. We also recognise that many economic issues cannot be tackled in isolation, examples being the cross-cutting priorities of skills development, quality apprenticeships for all, and building a healthy workforce. Many of these shared priorities are identified and addressed within the **Walsall Plan: Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy** – which was adopted by local strategic partners in 2017.

In June 2017 Cabinet approved £2 million of additional resources, creating our £14.79 million **Inclusive Economic Growth Programme**. The programme aims to create the conditions, environments and infrastructure capable of sustaining existing and attracting new businesses that create new job opportunities within the borough, together with providing the support that local people need to secure or remain in employment. The programme demonstrates our long-term strategy and commitment to sustaining the growth of Walsall’s economy by the achieving the following outcomes through to March 2021.

Key Outcomes/Outputs	Outcomes Anticipated (Up to March 2021)
Apprenticeships (16 – 24 year olds) (Pre & Full Apprenticeships)	477
Jobs Created or Safeguarded	8797
People Placed/Supported into Employment	1,246
Businesses Assisted	1,298
External Funding Secured to Support People & Businesses	£20 million
New Public & Private Sector Investment Secured	£700 million
Combined Authority / Local Growth Funding Secured	£50 million
New Business Secured by local companies (e.g. ‘Meet the Buyer’ etc)	£14 million
New Council Tax and Business Rates revenue income generated.	£12 million

Conclusion

Inclusive economic growth requires investment in each driver of our economy – in our people, businesses, places and transport infrastructure throughout the borough – all of which need to work and interlink collectively to achieve and sustain our growth needs and aspirations.

Building on our successes and strong track record of delivery and innovation through partnership working, we are committed to pursuing inclusive economic growth and will continue our long-term strategy to invest our resources to deliver services which create the conditions to: support local people into work and fulfil their potential; enable local businesses to flourish and create jobs through growth; bring forward pipeline development sites; and unlock economic potential through transport improvements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Jeavons', written in a cursive style.

Councillor L Jeavons
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
September 2017