

Walsall Council
Corporate Plan
2021-22

Inequalities are reduced and potential is maximised

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Forward by the Leader of the Council

During the past year, I could not be more proud to represent the people of Walsall. The Borough's resilience and community spirit has been truly inspirational and also cements my previous statement of how privileged I feel to be working alongside committed elected members, partners and staff.

What has been wholeheartedly demonstrated during this period are our strong regional partnerships with all agencies who have worked together tirelessly to ensure that the changes needed to be implemented, in order to ensure that our residents are provided for, took place, which enabled the Borough to stay resilient.

While the challenges linked with reducing resources to drive the services we deliver remains areas to be continually addressed, I am pleased to report some significant successes such as:

- (a) Balanced budget;
- (b) Improved service developments
- (c) Continued support to our local communities while responding to COVID-19.

We will publish a further 3-year plan for 2022-25, after taking a year to better understand the impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic to better inform how the Council can respond to the needs of our residents and in line with our 4-year budget plan.

In October 2020, the Council conducted "The Impact of COVID-19: Residents' experience and wellbeing" survey which was posted to a random sample of 10,000 households and a further 2,000 distributed via community organisations and networks. It was also available to complete online. Almost 2,400 people responded. The findings of this survey have given the Council a clearer understanding of how communities in Walsall have been, and continue to be impacted by COVID-19 as well as identify residents' concerns and priorities for the future. Findings from this key piece of research are now being used to inform the Council's COVID-19 reset and recovery plans and ongoing service transformation.

Survey findings linked to the Council's Areas of Focus -

Economic: A third of respondents said that the pandemic had had a negative impact on their household finances. 26% of respondents in employment report that they had been furloughed at some point during the pandemic, which is broadly comparable to the national rate of approximately 25% at the height of the first lockdown.

People: The toll the pandemic has taken on people's mental and physical health is evident, with more than half of all respondents saying that their mental / emotional health had deteriorated during the lockdown. Almost a third said their physical health had also deteriorated. More detailed analysis shows there is a clear correlation between mental / emotional health and levels of physical activity reaffirming the wider benefits of exercise.

Survey findings show that more than four fifths of respondents remain worried about the pandemic, with most saying they are concerned about the safety of immediate family and friends, staying safe, concerns about people not following guidance and job security.

Internal Focus: Within a very short space of time the majority of the Council's workforce were required to work from home and our investment in technology has enabled us to largely continue delivering services in a relatively seamless manner.

Survey results show that almost two thirds of respondents interacted with the Council in some way during the pandemic, with digital methods (the website and email) being the most popular. More than a quarter of respondents telephoned the Council. Looking to the future digital methods remain residents' preferred way to contact the Council along with telephone.

Encouragingly more than two thirds of respondents rated their experience of contacting the Council during the pandemic as very or quite good.

Children: The provision of facilities and activities for teenagers is identified as a top priority in terms of its importance and need for improvement. With education provision also featuring as a priority area.

Communities: Nearly half of all respondents agreed that people in their neighbourhood pull together to improve the local area. An example of this resilience and community spirit is that a quarter of respondents volunteered or helped out in some way during the pandemic, the most common reason being to support vulnerable people in the community.

In support of the Council's resilient communities' model, most respondents agree that residents should be encouraged to take more responsibility for tackling straightforward problems, and that communities should be encouraged to come up with solutions to problems in their local area.

These results confirm that we are a resilient people and I want you to be assured that I will continue to work with the Council to ensure that issues raised are addressed so that Walsall remains a place to be proud of.

Councillor Mike Bird
Leader of the Council

Introduction by the Chief Executive

Welcome to this refreshed edition of Walsall Council's Corporate Plan. Due to the unprecedented climate/situation that we are currently in - regionally, nationally and globally - with the demands on our resources, we decided to publish an edition for 2021-22, which builds on our previous plans and has a greater focus on outcomes.

COVID-19 has unexpectedly made the Council, as well as our partners in the Borough, quickly significantly transform the way we work. This has made us rethink how best we can meet our three PROUD promises:

1. Improved customer experience
2. Improved staff satisfaction
3. Financial benefit and service efficiency

Adaptations to the way that we work, including online council meetings, supporting Children through digital means and mobilising community hubs to support our most vulnerable has humbled me on how agile and responsive our staff and teams are.

While we continue to address the immediate implications of this pandemic, which have created many unknowns with regards to the medium and longer term impacts to the Borough, we now plan to spend time considering these issues in more depth and with greater focus on inequalities.

This edition will highlight the Council's continued commitment to reducing inequalities and maximising all potential through the provision of services and much needed support to some of our most vulnerable residents as well as how the Council intends to continue managing the uncertainty of 2021.

The Council will be taking this year (2021/22) to learn, listen and understand the changed needs of the Borough and rebuild the foundation for the longer term view, which the Cabinet will discuss during the year and publish in detail in the 2022-25 Corporate Plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Key Workers for their commitment in keeping all essential services – education and childcare, health and social care, food and necessary goods – accessible for all. It is also appreciated that, in spite of the hardship felt, our residents and businesses have worked with us to keep people safe. I was heartened to learn that over a quarter of respondents to our survey – “The Impact of COVID-19: Residents' experience and wellbeing” - have volunteered during the pandemic and that for 36% it was the first time they had done so, with the main reason for volunteering being to support vulnerable people. This has had a positive result in that 25% of our respondents stated that they now feel more connected to their community than before the pandemic. We will be looking into how this can continue after the pandemic as this will assist in creating a resilient Walsall community.

Dr Helen Paterson
Chief Executive

Our Borough

This last year has tested the Borough's systems, infrastructure and partnerships to ensure that services are delivered and residents are fully supported throughout this most testing period. With Walsall's aim on reducing inequalities and maximising potential, the Council's survey - “The Impact of COVID-19: Residents' experience and wellbeing” – covered a wide range of themes, which will feed into future plans:

- **Resident health and wellbeing:** Around two-thirds of respondents feel that their general health is good, with just 9% feeling that it is poor. Older residents are significantly less likely to feel that their health is good, instead describing it as 'fair'.

Around a third of respondents are clinically vulnerable to the virus (moderate risk), and two in ten live with or care for someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable (high risk). Respondents aged 65+ and those with a pre-existing health condition are at significantly higher risk. Those from Asian backgrounds are significantly more likely to be living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable (19% White vs 32% Asian).

- **Impact of the pandemic on employment and finances :** A third of respondents say that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their household finances. Younger respondents, those from BME backgrounds, and those furloughed, unemployed or self-employed are particularly likely to have suffered negative impacts.
- **Concerns about the virus :** Eight in ten respondents are worried about the Coronavirus pandemic, with three in ten feeling very worried. Worry is significantly higher where

respondents have particular health issues, or are living with someone clinically extremely vulnerable.

- **Resident priorities** : Residents think levels of crime, clean streets and health services can be identified as the top three priority areas in Walsall over the next three years.
- **Sense of community** : Around a quarter of respondents have volunteered or helped out in some way during the pandemic. Most of these respondents have volunteered before. By far the most common reason for wanting to volunteer throughout the pandemic is to support vulnerable people. Elderly respondents and those with a health condition or low mental wellbeing are significantly more likely than average to mention the social benefits of volunteering.
- **Satisfaction with the Council's response to the pandemic and communications** : 67% of respondents who have interacted with the Council in the past six months would rate their experience as good. Respondents who have particular vulnerabilities or who are dissatisfied with the Council in other ways give lower scores.

Walsall's Proud Journey

Walsall Council is PROUD of our past, present and for our future. The Council is committed to reducing inequalities and ensuring all potential is maximised and its employment policies, procedures and guidelines are designed to support this vision and deliver the Council's priorities through:

- Improved staff satisfaction
- Improved customer experience
- Financial benefit and service efficiency.

With the many changes that have occurred this past year and the new way that we are currently living, working and providing services, we would like to present to you the achievements to date that have occurred by the Council over since 2018 at the start of the previous Corporate Plan. These have contributed towards the continued delivery of services within the Borough before and throughout the pandemic – and these improvements and changes have assisted in the way that we all have had to adapt locally, nationally and globally in the way that we live, work and play in Walsall. The Council has;

- Carried out a thorough engagement programme with council employees to ensure that everyone working for Walsall Council know that they have a voice to be heard and for the Council to continue learning
- Signed off £10m of realisable Walsall Proud Programme benefits
- The successful implementation of the Cloud Navigator programme and One Source, which played a significant part in the swift transition and continuation of services to be delivered:
 - through remote working – rapid rollout of laptops and phones, transitioning to a remote workforce in response to COVID-19
 - Setting up response and reset groups to deal with the impact of the pandemic
- Continued service-led transformation in Adults and Children's services and the collaborative creation of plans for further integrated working with partners

- Created and appointed to new key senior positions in areas including Customer Services, Communications and Administration & Business Support.

Our Aim:

Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised.

Our Values

Our Values highlight how the Council works with local communities and influences choice and behaviours through Professionalism, Leadership, Accountability, Transparency and Ethical working (PLATE).

The Council's values and behaviours will be at the core of everything the Council delivers and, through a culture of continuous improvement, the Council strives to increase performance, efficiency and champion the design of services to meet the needs of the Borough.

The Council is committed to creating an environment that provides opportunities for all residents and communities to fulfil their potential.

Strategic Intent / key strategies and plans

The aim and values of the Corporate Plan will be used as a “golden thread” throughout our strategies and key documents. We will use what we know about our community to shape how we meet their needs to reduce inequality and maximise their potential. Our strategic assessments i.e. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Community Safety Needs Assessment, Local Economic Needs Assessment will be used to inform our decisions and updated versions feed into the 2022-25 Corporate Plan. Further research, analysis and consultations with communities will take place over 2021-22 to update this understanding.

Walsall's 5 Priorities, 10 Outcomes and 20 Markers of Success

EPICC continues to be our focus, which are underpinned by our 10 outcomes for our residents. To ensure progress is measurable towards our outcomes over the year each outcome has two markers of success. These 20 Markers of Success will be the tools to measure progress over the year on achievement to Outcomes and reported to cabinet on a quarterly basis.

Walsall Plan – HWBS

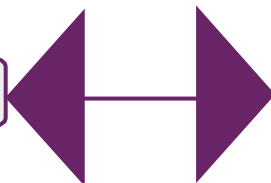


Walsall Corporate Plan

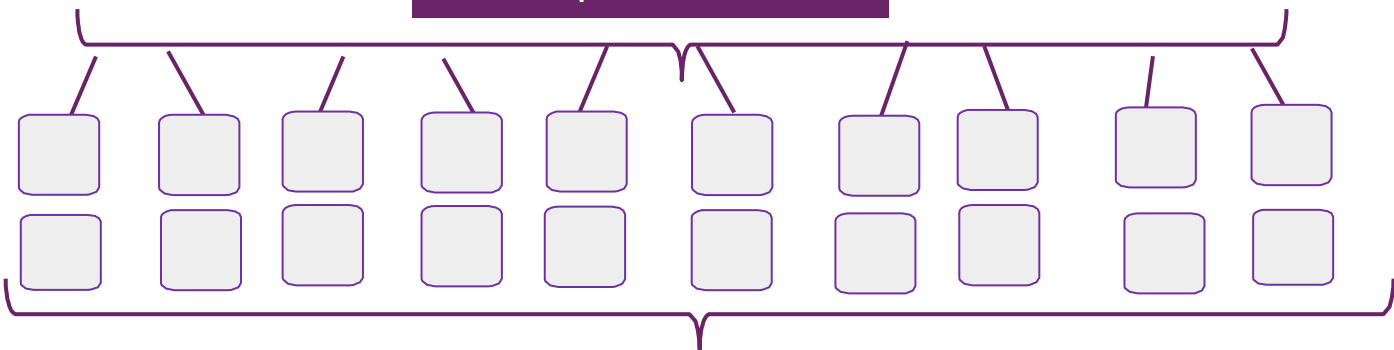
Aim: reduce inequalities and maximise potential



Budget alignment



10 Corporate Outcomes



20 markers of success to assess progress

PRIORITIES	OUTCOMES	MARKERS OF SUCCESS	
		Enablers	Outputs
Overall Aim: Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised			
ECONOMIC Growth for all people, communities and business	1. Creating an environment where business invests and everyone who wants a job can access one	1. Transport networks free from defects and congestion.	1. Businesses accessible to staff, suppliers and customers.
		2. Levels of business investment can be measured however it tends to be retrospective by 12 months	2. A combination of low unemployment figures and high vacancy figures
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to fulfil their personal development	3. We have figures for available training and education place vs demand. However the work we do on impact helps to identify those who are not taking advantage of the offers	3. Numbers of folk from hard to reach groups helped into training
		4. Attractive public realm	4. Increased footfall in town centres.
PEOPLE have increased independences, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities	3. People live a good quality of life and feel that they belong	5. Opportunities to volunteer publicised widely.	5. Different communities working and living together
		6. Borough's diversity represented	6. Facilities / services available for all ages, non- & gender binaries and cultures to access
	4. People know what makes them healthy and they are encouraged to get support when they need it	7. Wide range of formal and informal leisure opportunities.	7. More people taking part in formal and informal sport and leisure activities.
		8. Safe and convenient cycleways and footways	8. More people using active travel modes
INTERNAL Focus – All council services are efficient and effective	5. Internal services deliver quality and adapt to meet the needs of customer facing services	9. Role/responsibilities understood and owned	9. Required outputs are delivered to realise quality outcomes
		10. Internal Services have staff and processes able to adapt to meet the emerging needs of customers	10. Internal Services are regularly reviewed and delivered within budget
	6. Services are efficient and deliver value for money	11. Online portals that allow self-service, payments and order tracking.	11. Smarter commissioning of services
		12. Automation of processes.	12. Processes are automated where possible
CHILDREN have the best possible start, are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well	7. Children thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	13. Our services are delivered in collaboration with children, young people and families – involved in service design and development, involved in developing and implementing their plans, feel more resilient, provide regular feedback	13. Children at risk of exclusions can access effective support – CYP feel supported to engage with education, root causes of exclusions are understood, schools are more inclusive, professionals and families find it easier to access the right support to ensure children remain in school
		14. Our response to vulnerable adolescents is local and proactive – more vulnerable YP are engaged in education, supported in their family home, fewer YP entering the criminal justice system	14. Vulnerable children are identified and supported effectively – receive a high quality, graduated response to needs, supported through a robust local offer of support and services to reach their full potential.
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	15. Our services and support is responsive to the needs of different communities (locality model)	15. The needs of children and families are well understood in each locality.

		16. Partners are proactive in responding to these needs (graduated response)	16. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience
COMMUNITIES are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion	9. Housing meeting all people's needs - is affordable, safe and warm	17. Council and partners review local assets	17. Reduction of families in temporary accommodation
		18. Council and partners maintain open communication with all communities	18. Community networks more accessible
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities	19. Council and partners engage in cultural awareness	19. Wide range and high quality cultural offers.
		20. Review and address local 'hotspots'	20. High quality, well maintained public realm and safe community spaces

How the Council will deliver

There are multiple ways in which the Council could 'Respond' to deliver its outcomes. The Council could deliver, coordinate, influence, signpost, regulate or do nothing. The Council will use this framework to set the strategic intent to deliver the 10 outcomes and will help inform key decisions. The 20 Markers of Success are the performance measures that will be used to track quality and delivery of progress towards achieving the outcomes of the plan and form the basis of regular reports to Cabinet. The monitoring of these measures provides Cabinet with oversight of progress being made against the plan, which will ensure customer satisfaction and financial overview.

Financial planning and management: matching resources to the vision and delivering outcomes

Walsall Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall, by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable. We do this with limited resources and so must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible. We are led by the communities we serve who help shape the services we provide and we help those communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement and co-operation.

It is aligned to its priorities and objectives and specifically the Council's Corporate Plan and the Council's Proud Programme of transformational change. It aims to achieve this through the delivery of efficiencies, income reviews and service reviews and redesigns to redirect existing and reducing resources to areas of high council priority in order to deliver the Council's outcomes.

Partnerships

Walsall Council will provide strong, fair, open and honest leadership for the Borough and its people and will work with all organisations that are willing to work in the best interests of Walsall and work towards improving outcome delivery to ensure maximisation of all potential.

The Council has partnerships with organisations and agencies in the health, voluntary and private sectors. These partnerships are competitively procured where required and appropriate to do so and negotiated to ensure the best value for money and considered outcomes. All arrangements are outcomes focused – to improve the wellbeing for all residents and business in the Borough - in accordance with the Walsall Plan, Corporate Plan, with governance arrangements in place to deliver Walsall's vision.