



Walsall Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall to be held on **MONDAY the 8th day of July 2024 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com

Dated this 28th day of June, 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

1. To elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are not present.
2. Apologies.
3. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 20th May, 2024 and 3rd June, 2024 – **(pages 3 – 20)**
4. Declarations of interest.
5. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
6. Mayor's announcements.

7. To receive any petitions
8. To answer any questions in accordance with Council procedure rules:
 - (a) From the public:

Mark Brindley

How has the conclusion of the trials regarding the murders of Bailey Atkinson and Akeem Francis Kerr influenced the collaborative efforts to enhance safety in Walsall's Town Centre, and what strategies are being considered for the future night-time economy?

- (b) From members of the Council: None
9. Members appointed to the Executive (**Pages 21 - 32**)
10. Committee, Charities and Outside Body Appointments (**Pages 33 - 34**)
11. Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24 (**Pages 35 - 55**)
12. **Portfolio holder briefing** - To receive a 5 minute presentation from the following portfolio:
 - a. Leader of the Council – Councillor G. Perry (***To Follow***)

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



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 20 May, 2024, at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Present

Councillor C.D.D. Towe (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillors: G. Ali
A. Andrew
B. Bains
H. Bashir
M.A. Bird
C. Bott
P. Bott
R. Burley
J. Chapman
S. Cheema
S.J. Cooper – Adj Council
M. Coulson
S.K. Ditta
S. Elson
K. Ferguson
G. Flint
M. Follows
N. Gandham – Adj Council
A. Garcha
P. Gill – Adj Council
N. Gultasib
A. Harris
L. Harrison
A.J. Hicken
A. Hussain
I. Hussain
K. Hussain
S.B. Hussain
T. Jukes
P. Kaur
R. Larden
N. Latham
E. Lee
K. Margetts
R. Martin
R. K Mehmi
E. Morgan
K. Murphy
J. Murray
L. Nahal
S. Nasreen
A.A. Nawaz
A. Parkes
K. Pedley
G. Perry
W. Rasab
L.J. Rattigan
E. Russell
S. Samra – Adj Council
K. Sears
G. Singh Sohal
P. Smith – Adj Council
C.A. Statham
M.A. Statham
M. Ward
V.J. Waters
J. Whitehouse
T. Wilson

1. **Welcome to new members**

The Mayor extended a warm welcome to the newly elected members of the Council – Councillors Lucie Nahal, Michael Coulson, Jade Chapman, Eileen Russell, and Klara Margetts

2. **Apologies**

An apology was received on behalf of Councillors P. Gill.

**Note: Councillor Gill joined the adjourned meeting on 22 May, 2024.*

3. **Election of Mayor 2024/25**

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and seconded by Councillor Sears:

That Councillor Anthony Harris be elected Mayor of this Borough for the municipal year 2024/25.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried and it was:

Resolved

That Councillor Anthony Harris be elected as Mayor of this Borough for the municipal year 2024/25.

The Council adjourned to enable the Mayor to put on the robes and chain.

Councillor Anthony Harris (Mayor) in the Chair

The Mayor read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked the Council for the honour conferred upon him. In doing so the Mayor conveyed his thanks to Councillor Bird and Councillor Sears for moving and seconding the motion. He stated that it was the pinnacle of his career as a showman and was proud of the opportunity to represent the residents as Mayor of Walsall. He thanked his family who had afforded him the time to carry out his duties as Councillor for over 20 years. The Mayor then thanked former and current Councillors and officers.

4. **Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2024/25**

It was **moved** by Councillor Follows and seconded by Councillor Andrew:

That Councillor Louise Harrison be appointed Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the municipal year 2024/25.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried and it was:

Resolved

That Councillor Louise Harrison be elected as Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the municipal year 2024/25.

The Council adjourned to enable the Deputy Mayor to put on the robes and regalia.

5. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April, 2024, a copy having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record.

6. **Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor proceeded to make the following announcements and informed the meeting that he reserved the right to make a further announcement at the adjourned meeting to be held on 22nd May, 2024.

(a) **Mayor's Chaplain**

The Mayor stated that Reverend Emily Reynolds would be his Chaplain during his year of office.

(b) **Mayor's Civic Service**

The Mayor confirmed that a Civic Service would be intertwined with a Civic Carol Service and held on Sunday 8 December, 2024 at 10.45 at St Matthew's Church, Walsall.

(c) **Charities**

The Mayor announced that any monies raised during his year of office would be donated to the Guide Dogs, Well Wishers and Midlands Air Ambulance Charity.

7. **Presentation of badges to retiring Mayor and Mayoress**

The Chief Executive presented badges to the retiring Mayor and Mayoress – Councillor Towe and Louisa Hughes.

8. **Vote of thanks to retiring Mayor and Mayoress**

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That this Council thank Councillor Towe for the contribution he has made as Mayor of Walsall MBC and to the people who live and work in the borough and that Louisa Hughes be thanked for her services as Mayoress.

Councillor Towe replied.

9. **Adjournment**

It was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That the Council adjourn until 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 22 May, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 6.50 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 22 May, 2024

The Mayor reminded the meeting that 2 hours and 10 minutes remained for business to be transacted.

10. **Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor referred to the death of former Councillor Gareth Illmann-Walker, a member of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council from May 2011 to May 2015. The Mayor, Councillors Cheema, Nawaz, Bird and Andrew paid tribute to former Councillor Illmann-Walker, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council have heard with deep regret of the death of former Councillor Illmann-Walker, a member of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council from May 2011 to May 2015 and places on record their appreciation of his services to the borough and expresses its condolences to his family at this sad time.

11. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

12. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

Resolved

There were no items in private session.

13. **Election results – 2 May, 2024**

The report was submitted.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

14. **Formation of political groups**

The report of the Chief Executive was circulated around the Council Chamber.

Resolved

That the receipt of returns from political groups be noted.

15. **Members appointed to the Executive**

A schedule of portfolio responsibilities was circulated around the Council Chamber.

Resolved

That the following Cabinet responsibilities for the municipal year 2024/25 be noted:

Description of portfolio	Names of portfolio holder
<p>Leader of the Council</p> <p><i>Council Plan Vision: Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. Together we are committed to developing a healthier, cleaner and safer Walsall and creating an environment that provides opportunities for all residents, communities and businesses to fulfil their potential and thrive.</i></p> <p>Overall responsibility for Council policy and strategy, the Council Plan & Walsall 2040. Proud Promises, transformation, communications, marketing and brand,</p>	<p>Cllr Mike Bird</p>

<p>emergency planning, business insights and performance. Financial Planning, Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>Government relations and liaison with local MPs and West Midlands leaders. West Midlands Combined Authority, Association of Black Country Authorities and Black Country Joint Committee.</p>	
<p>Deputy Leader and Regeneration</p> <p><i>Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place.</i></p> <p><i>Statutory Deputy Leader as required by Schedule A1 of Local Government Act 2000</i></p> <p>Regeneration, economic development, planning policy (inc Walsall Local Plan), Planning and Building control, Employment Growth, Skills, Strategic Housing (inc Housing Standards and Improvement), strategic use of assets, strategic traffic and transport, car parks. Programme Management & Delivery. Markets.</p>	<p>Cllr Adrian Andrew</p>
<p>Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities</p> <p><i>Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere</i></p> <p><i>Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other</i></p> <p><i>Oversight role for all Cabinet portfolios</i></p> <p>Resilient Communities including locality co-ordination, community development and diversity, community associations, voluntary and community sectors, Community Safety, community cohesion, Safer Walsall Partnership. Community Protection inc Anti-Social behaviour, statutory nuisance and environmental crime enforcement. Environmental Health and Libraries</p> <p>Customer Access Management (external focus including aligning services delivered by voluntary and community sectors), Walsall Connected, Homelessness, Migrant Support and Housing Advice</p>	<p>Cllr Garry Perry</p>

<p>Education and Skills</p> <p><i>Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy</i></p> <p>Admissions and school place planning, quality and performance of schools and academies, governors of schools and governance, Early Years, Home Education, Alternative Provision, Access and Inclusion, Virtual School, Home to School Transport, Services to Children with Special Needs and disabilities and their families, Safeguarding. Walsall Learning Alliance. Ofsted and CQC inspections.</p> <p>Adult learning and Skills.</p>	<p>Cllr Mark Statham</p>
<p>Adult Social Care</p> <p><i>People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home</i></p> <p>Social Care services for older people and people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health needs. Supporting people. Health partnerships, ICB health interface lead, protection for vulnerable adults, transition arrangements between Children's and Adult Social Care. Adult social care commissioning, brokerage, market shaping and management.</p>	<p>Cllr Keir Pedley</p>
<p>Street Pride</p> <p><i>The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough</i></p> <p>Clean & Green Services (inc waste strategy, refuse management, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, countryside service, fleet services). Highways Maintenance, Pollution Control. Parking Enforcement, Road Safety, Traffic Management. Engineering</p>	<p>Cllr Kerry Murphy</p>
<p>Children</p> <p><i>Children and young people thrive emotionally, physical, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential</i></p> <p><i>Statutory role as Lead Member for Children's Services</i></p>	<p>Cllr Stacie Elson</p>

<p>Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, Family Safeguarding, involvement of children and young people, transition arrangements between Children's and Adult Social Care Walsall, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting. Ofsted and CQC inspections.</p> <p>Early Help, Family Hubs, Youth Justice, Children's Strategic Alliance and Performance Improvement</p>	
<p>Customer</p> <p><i>The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring</i></p> <p>Customer Access Management (Internal Focus inc Customer Strategy and supporting processes to improve services to customers), Customer Experience Centre, Revenues and Benefits (Council tax and business rates), Household Support and Welfare</p>	<p>Cllr Gaz Ali</p>
<p>Internal Services</p> <p><i>We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use.</i></p> <p>HR, Organisational Development. Learning and development, workforce equalities. Administration and business support.</p> <p>Transformation and change delivery, digital operations and delivery, ICT, information governance.</p> <p>Financial management and accountancy, financial administration, systems and payroll. Internal Audit, risk and insurance. Treasury management. Corporate Landlord including facilities and asset management, catering, cleaning, caretaking.</p> <p>Governance, legal and assurance, Democratic Services, Elections and Mayoralty</p>	<p>Cllr Ken Ferguson</p>
<p>Wellbeing Leisure and Public Spaces</p> <p><i>People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life</i></p>	<p>Cllr Gary Flint</p>

<p>Public Health functions and activities including commissioning services that affect the long-term health of residents. Health protection for local outbreak management, healthy lifestyle, infection prevention and control, immunisation. Mental and emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>Leisure including Active Living Centres, Bereavement and Registration Services, Cemeteries and Crematoria. Culture services including the New Art Gallery, Walsall Arena and museums.</p> <p>Healthy spaces (parks and open spaces).</p> <p>Climate change/net zero.</p> <p>Chair of Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>	
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16. **Constitution and Timetable of meetings 2024/2025**

A report was submitted [annexed].

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That:-

1. The amendments to the following parts of the Constitution as detailed in **Appendix 1**, be approved:

(a) Part 3 – Responsibility for functions:

3.2 (6)	-	Audit Committee role and remit
3.2 (7)	-	Health and Wellbeing Board membership
3.5	-	Scheme of delegations to officers

(b) Part 5 – Codes and Protocols

5.19 - Flag Flying Protocol

2. The timetable of meetings for the municipal year 2024/2025 as set out in **Appendix 2** of the report be approved.

17. **Appointments to Committees**

A list of nominations from the political groups was circulated around the Council Chamber.

The list was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That the following members be appointed to Committees for the municipal year 2024/25:

Audit Committee

Councillors, Larden, Mehmi, Nawaz, Parkes, Singh Sohal, Waters (1 Vacancy)

A. Green (Independent member), (2 Independent member vacancies).

Corporate Parenting Board

Councillors Elson, Chapman, Ferguson, Hicken, Jukes, Nasreen (1 Vacancy)

Health and Wellbeing Board

Councillors Coulson, Elson, Flint, Pedley, Rasab

Licensing and Safety Committee

Councillors Ali, C. Bott, Cooper, Ferguson, A. Hussain, I. Hussain, K. Hussain, Mehmi, Nawaz, Parkes, Rasab, Samra, Sears, Ward.

Personnel Committee

Councillors Ali, Bains, Gill, Hicken, A. Hussain, Jukes, Nawaz, Rasab, Ward

Planning Committee

Councillors Bains, Bashir, Bird, P. Bott, Elson, Follows, Gill, A. Hussain, I. Hussain, K. Hussain, Margetts, Martin, Murray, Nahal, Nawaz, Parkes, Samra, Singh Sohal, M. Statham, Waters

Standards Committee

Councillors Andrew, Bashir, Burley, I. Hussain, Jukes, Larden, Martin, Rasab, Samra, Sears

Scrutiny Overview

Councillors Chapman, P. Bott, Follows, Hicken, K. Hussain, Latham, Murray, Sears, Singh Sohal, Ward, Waters

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny

Councillors Chapman, Harrison, Hicken, Jukes, Latham, Morgan, Nasreen, Rasab, Rattigan, C. Statham (1 Vacancy)

Education Overview and Scrutiny

Councillors Ditta, Gultasib, Harrison, Hicken, S. Hussain, Latham, Rasab, Rattigan, Russell, Singh Sohal, Towe

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny

Councillors P. Bott, Cheema, Follows, Gill, Hassan, Hicken, I. Hussain, Larden, Margetts, Singh Sohal, Whitehouse

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny

Councillors Chapman, Coulson, K. Hussain, S. Hussain, Martin, Mehmi, Nawaz, Parkes, Rasab, Rattigan, Waters

18. Appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs

A list was circulated around the Council Chamber.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That the following members be appointed Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees for the municipal year 2024/25

Committee	Chair	Vice-Chair
Audit	Mr. A. Green (independent member)	S. Sohal
Corporate Parenting Board	S. Elson *The Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services is Chair	T. Jukes
Health and Wellbeing Board	W. Rasab Nominee of controlling group	*To be appointed by Health and Wellbeing Board
Licensing and Safety	K. Ferguson	S. Cooper

Personnel	B. Bains	P. Gill
Planning	M. Statham	J. Murray
Standards	R. Martin	T. Jukes
Scrutiny Overview	J. Murray	K. Hussain
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny	A. Hicken	E. Morgan
Education Overview and Scrutiny	N. Latham	C. Towe
Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny	M. Follows	J. Whitehouse
Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny	K. Hussain	V. Waters

19. **Appointment of representatives to outside bodies and charities**

A list was circulated around the Council Chamber.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That the following members be appointed to the undermentioned bodies for the municipal year 2024/25 (unless otherwise stated):

(a) Outside bodies

WMCA Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors A. Hussain and Singh Sohal

West Midlands Combined Authority – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors Waters and Martin (Substitute)

West Midlands Combined Authority – Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

Councillors R. Martin and Waters (Substitute)

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Councillors Ferguson (nominated to answer questions on the discharge of the functions of the Fire Authority) and Cheema

Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee

Councillor Kaurs and Lee (Substitute)

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Councillor Elson

Local Government Association – General Assembly

Councillors Hicken (allocated 2 votes), Cooper, Mehmi, and Nawaz

Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee (PATROL AJC)

Councillors Larden and Wilson (Substitute)

Project W2R Contract Management Board

Councillor Murphy

River Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Councillors Flint and Murphy (Deputy)

Walsall Citizens Advice Bureau

Councillors Ali and Russell

Walsall Museum and Art Galleries Development Trust

Councillor Follows

Walsall Society for the Blind

Councillors Hicken and Jukes

West Midlands Employers (WME) Shareholder Board

Councillor Andrew

West Midlands Growth Company

Councillor Andrew

West Midlands Combined Authority Board

Councillors Andrew and Murphy (Members) and Councillors Flint and Elson (Substitutes)

WMCA Investments Board

Councillor M. Statham

WMCA - West Midlands Investment Zone Joint Committee

Councillor Andrew

WMCA Housing and Land Delivery Board

Councillor Andrew

WMCA Economic Growth Board

Councillor Andrew

WMCA Wellbeing Board

Councillor Flint

WMCA Environment & Energy Board

Councillor Flint

West Midlands Pension Fund Committee

Councillors Hicken and Ward (Substitute)

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Councillors Rasab and Martin (Substitute)

West Midlands Shareholders Airport Committee

Councillor Kaur (x2 Observer vacancies)

West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership Board

Councillor Garcha

(b) Charities

Barr Beacon Trust

Councillors Andrew, Bains, Bird, Cooper, Flint, Kaur, Murphy, Pedley, Samra, Towe and, Wilson.

Blanch Woollaston Charity (3 years)

Councillors C. Bott and Nawaz

Fishley Charities (5 years)

Councillor Martin

Harper, Marsh and Crumps Almshouses

Councillor Mehmi

Merrions Wood (4 years)

Councillor Hussain

School Holiday Camp Fund of Walsall (Bryntysilio)

Councillor Coulson

(c) Advisory and statutory bodies

Fostering Panel

Councillor Murphy

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Councillors M. Statham, C. Statham, I. Hussain, Singh Sohal, Nahal, Mehmi, and Nawaz

20. **Recommendation of Cabinet:**

Surveillance and Access to Communications.

The report to Cabinet held on 17 April, 2024 was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 ('IPA') Corporate Policy and Procedures be approved.

The meeting terminated at 6.21 p.m.

Mayor:

Date:



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 3 June, 2024, at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Present

Councillor A. Harris (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillors: G. Ali
A. Andrew
H. Bashir
M.A. Bird
C. Bott
P. Bott
R. Burley
S. Cheema
S.J. Cooper
M. Coulson
S.K. Ditta
S. Elson
K. Ferguson
G. Flint
M. Follows
N. Gandham
A. Garcha
P. Gill
N. Gultasib
L. Harrison
A.J. Hicken
A. Hussain
I. Hussain
K. Hussain
S.B. Hussain
T. Jukes
P. Kaur
R. Larden
N. Latham
E. Lee
R. Martin
R. K Mehmi
E. Morgan
J. Murray
L. Nahal
S. Nasreen
A.A. Nawaz
K. Pedley
G. Perry
W. Rasab
L.J. Rattigan
S. Samra
K. Sears
G. Singh Sohal
P. Smith
C.A. Statham
M.A. Statham
C.D.D. Towe
V.J. Waters
J. Whitehouse
T. Wilson

20. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Chapman, Margetts, Murphy, Ward, Russell, Parkes, and Bains.

21. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

22. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

Resolved

There were no items in private session.

23. **To Determine Leadership of the Council**

The report was submitted [annexed].

The Mayor called upon Councillor Bird to make an announcement, during which he formally resigned as Leader of the Council. Following the announcement, several members paid tribute to Councillor Bird during his tenure as Leader.

Further to debate, it was **moved** by Councillor Bird, seconded by Andrew and:

Resolved

That Councillor Perry be appointed Leader under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for a four-year period commencing 3 July, 2024.

The meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.

Mayor:

Date:

Meet the Cabinet Portfolios

4 June 2024



Walsall Council

 **IMPROVE**
outcomes and
customer experience

 **IMPROVE**
employee satisfaction
and engagement

 **IMPROVE**
service efficiency
and performance

Leader of the Council – Strategy, Partnerships and Communities

Cllr Garry Perry

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Partnerships 	<p>Chief Executive – Emma Bennett</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and strategy including Council Plan & Walsall 2040 • Transformation and Change 	<p>Resources and Transformation – Judith Greenhalgh</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community development and diversity • Community associations • Voluntary and community sectors • Community cohesion, community safety • Prepare and Protect • Emergency planning • Community Protection including Anti-Social Behaviour, Statutory Nuisance & Environmental crime enforcement, Environmental Health 	<p>Economy, Environment and Communities - Dave Brown</p>

Partnership Board Membership

Black Country Joint Executive Committee
 Association of Black Country Councils
 WMCA

Associate Leader* - Economic Growth & Regeneration

Cllr Adrian Andrew

* Statutory Deputy Leader as required by Schedule A1 of the Local Government Act 2000

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regeneration• Economic Development• Planning Policy (inc. Walsall Borough Local Plan)• Planning and Building Control Service• Employment Growth• Strategic Housing• Strategic Use of Assets• Strategic transport• Markets• Corporate Landlord	Economy, Environment and Communities – Dave Brown

Partnership Board Membership

Walsall Economic Forum

Town Deal Board

WMCA: Board, Economic Board, Land & Delivery Board, Investment Zone Committee

West Midlands Growth Company

West Midlands Employers Shareholder Board

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Financial Planning including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget• Medium Term Financial Strategy• Commercial Strategy• Budget management & accountancy• Financial & Transactional Services• Internal Audit Risk & insurance• Treasury Management• Procurement & Contract Management• Walsall Pound	Resources and Transformation – Judith Greenhalgh

Partnership Board Membership

WMCA Investments Board

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage, Tourism and Culture including New Art Gallery, Walsall Arena, Museums • Leisure, including Active Living Centres, • Bereavement and registration services; cemeteries/ crematoria • Healthy spaces (parks and open spaces) • Climate Change/ Net Zero 	<p>Economy, Environment and Communities - Dave Brown</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health functions and activities including commissioning services that prevent ill-health and protect the long-term health of residents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health visiting & school nursing, • Alcohol and drug services, wellbeing services • Health protection for local outbreak and incident management, screening and immunisations • Health inequalities and advice to the NHS • Mental and emotional wellbeing 	<p>Adult Social Care and Public Health – Kerrie Allward</p>

Partnership Board Membership

Member of Health and Wellbeing Board

WMCA Wellbeing Board

WMCA Environment & Energy Board

River Trent Regional Flood & Coastal Committee

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion• Human Resources• Organisational Development• Administration & Business Support• Technology Strategy and delivery• Information Governance and Digital Records Management• Business Insights• Communications, Marketing and Brand• Legal & Democratic Services	Resources & Transformation – Judith Greenhalgh

Partnership Board Membership

None

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Learning • Skills • Not in Employment, Education or Training • Apprenticeships and internships 	<p>Economy, Environment and Communities – Dave Brown</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions and school place planning • Quality, standards and performance of Schools and Academies • Governance of schools • Early Years • Home Education; Alternative Provision • Virtual School for Children In Care • Children Missing Education • Home to school transport • Statutory Education, Health and Care Plan assessment service • Children with SEND • Inclusion & attendance • Ofsted/CQC Inspection 	<p>Children’s Services - Colleen Male</p>

Partnership Board Membership

Observer at Schools Forum

Walsall Learning Alliance

Walsall Employability and Skills Board

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Access Management • Walsall Connected • Customer Experience Centre • Revenues and Benefits - Council Tax, Business Rates • Household Support and Welfare • Homelessness • Asylum & Migrant Support • Housing Advice 	<p>Resources & Transformation – Judith Greenhalgh</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries 	<p>Economy, Environment and Communities – Dave Brown</p>

Partnership Board Membership

Homelessness Steering Group

*Statutory role as Lead Member for Children's Services

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services for children in need of help and protection• Children looked after and care leavers• Participation of children, young people and families• Services for children with disabilities and complex needs• Transition arrangements between Children's and Adult Social Care• Locality Family Safeguarding• Corporate Parenting• Residential Services• Family Placement Services• Ofsted/CQC/HMI Inspection• Children's transformation & reform• Early Help• Family Hubs• Youth Justice• Children's Strategic Alliance• Safeguarding Partnership	Children's Services -Colleen Male

Partnership Board Membership

Chair of Corporate Parenting Board

Member of Health and Wellbeing Board

Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust



Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operations – household waste collection, grounds maintenance, street cleansing, highway asset management, trees, flood risk management and fleet services.• Waste Infrastructure – trade waste, waste disposal, HWRCs, waste strategy and waste education.• Highway Network – street lighting, traffic signals, parking and moving traffic enforcement, street works permitting, permanent traffic manage and winter service.• Transportation – road safety, highway structures and minor highway improvements• Environmental protection	Economy, Environment & Communities - Dave Brown

Partnership Board Membership

Project W2R Contract Management Board

River Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Sherbourne Recycling Ltd – Stakeholder Board

Areas of Responsibility	Lead Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Care services for older people and people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health needs• Health partnerships• Integrated Care Board health interface lead• Safeguarding• Protection for vulnerable adults• Transition arrangements between Children’s and Adult Social Care• Early intervention and prevention• Ofsted and CQC• Adult Social Care transformation & reform• Adult Social Care Commissioning• Market Shaping & Management• Adult Social Care Brokerage	Adult Social Care and Public Health – Kerrie Allward

Partnership Board Membership

Member of Health and Wellbeing Board

Cabinet Support Assistants

Areas of Responsibility	Cabinet Support Assistant
<p>To specialise in a particular area(s) be involved in briefings with directorates, opposition members, partners and stakeholders, and lead work streams as required by Portfolio Holders.</p> <p>To undertake work and complete research that will inform policy development and other proposals requiring approvals. This will include assisting consultation with local communities, partners, stakeholders and other Councillors, as appropriate.</p> <p>To input into and inform the discussions at meetings between Portfolio Holders and Executive Directors.</p> <p>To provide relevant input into preparing policies, strategies and proposals.</p>	<p>Councillor Poonam Gill</p> <p>Councillor Izzy Hussain</p>

Council – 8th July, 2024

Committee, Charity and Outside Body Appointments

1. Summary of report

To approve changes to membership of Committees, Charities and Outside Bodies since appointments were made at Annual Council on 20th May, 2024.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That, subject to any further nominations being received, Council approves the following appointments: -

1. Personnel Committee

Chair - Councillor P. Gill

Vice Chair - Councillor Hicken

2. West Midlands Combined Authority Board

Main representative: Councillor Perry (replaces Cllr Murphy)

Substitute: Councillor M. Statham (replaces Councillor Elson)

3. Merrion's Wood Trustee (until July, 2028)

Councillor S. Sohal

4. Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

Councillor M. Statham

3. Background information

3.1 At the meeting of the Council held on 20th May 2024, Council appointed to Committees, Chair and Vice Chair positions and Outside Bodies.

3.2 In the intervening period, several changes have been requested and a request to appoint a representative on the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA) has been received. These require Council approval and are set out below:-

1. Personnel Committee

Chair - Councillor P. Gill

Vice Chair - Councillor Hicken

2. West Midlands Combined Authority Board

Main representative: Councillor Perry (replaces Cllr Murphy)

Substitute: Councillor M. Statham (replaces Councillor Elson)

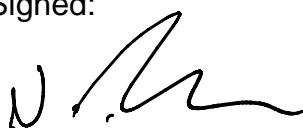
3. Merrion's Wood Trustee (until July, 2028)

Councillor S. Sohal

4. Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

Councillor M. Statham

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Picken', written over a horizontal line.

Neil Picken
Principal Democratic Services Officer

Date: 28th June, 2024

Council – 8 July 2024

Annual Scrutiny Report for 2023/24

Service: Legal and Democratic Services

Wards: All

1. Summary of report

This is the annual report to the Council outlining the work of the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the 2023/24 municipal year.

The report provides an analysis of the work undertaken by the Committees during this period.

A copy of the annual report is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Recommendations

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/24 be noted.

3. Resource and legal considerations

Scrutiny is a key aspect of the governance framework and an integral part of how the Council makes effective decisions. Good scrutiny can help to inform policy making and help ensure that decisions taken by the Cabinet are effectively considered prior to implementation. The role of Scrutiny is defined in Article 6 of Walsall Council's Constitution.

4. Council Plan Priorities

This report reflects the Council Plan priority on *Internal Focus – Council services and customer focussed, effective, efficient and equitable* as reflection and evaluation on the previous year's scrutiny work enables lessons to be learned and taken forward.

Further to this the report is structured around the Council's five Council Plan priorities to demonstrate how scrutiny committees have contributed to the achievement of the organisations strategic plan.

5. Risk Management

The role of scrutiny is fundamental in ensuring that the most effective and informed decisions are taken whilst delivering value for money for residents.

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the overview and scrutiny committees, which helps to achieve these objectives.

Asking Members to recognise and review past achievements and consider the potential items to scrutinise helps to ensure that the overview and scrutiny committees focus their attention on the main issues that have strategic relevance and importance to the council as a whole. Incorporating an effective scoping process enables a risk-based approach to be taken in the development of potential work programmes; focussing on the key issues that affect the performance of the Council, impact on service delivery or potentially result in service delivery that does not meet resident expectation or offer value for money. The Council's priorities and pledges are all considered when looking at potential work programmes for the following year and frequent performance monitoring reports are presented to individual overview and scrutiny committees.

6. Financial implications

Overview and scrutiny committees continually monitor the financial position of the Council and undertake an annual scrutiny process of draft budgets. There are no direct financial implications from this report.

7. Legal implications

Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution requires overview and scrutiny committees to report annually to the Council on their working and to make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods, if appropriate.

8. Property implications

There are no direct property implications from this report.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

Work and reviews undertaken by overview and scrutiny committees seeks to have a positive impact on resident's health and wellbeing through influencing the service provision of the Council and its partners. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from this report.

10. Staffing implications

There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

11. Reducing inequality

This report details all of the work that has been done across the whole Borough. Scrutiny Members represent a number of wards across the Borough and actively work with residents to best represent their views at overview and scrutiny committees. This helps to ensure the delivery of the Council equality duties through promoting a thorough understanding of the needs of our diverse communities and supports the delivery of the Council's vision that: *Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised.*

12. Consultation

Individual committees have sought expert opinion and views from witnesses, where appropriate, to ensure that a balanced perspective is provided against any of the work topics under consideration. Evidence has been brought to the committees by officers, members of the public, officers from other authorities, partners and independent experts.

Authors:

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Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24



Walsall Council

Forward by Councillor Murray, Chair of the Scrutiny Overview Committee

I am pleased to introduce the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023 – 2024.

This report showcases the achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from our scrutiny function at Walsall, as well as the impact and value of our recommendations on the policies and services of the Council and its partners.

For the 2023 – 2024 period, Members established two working groups to review and deep dive into Primary Care and GP Access, which was led by Social Care and Health OSC and Housing Standards, which was led by Members of the Scrutiny Overview Committee. Both working groups examined complex challenging topics and achieved positive outcomes and made subsequent recommendations to various stakeholders.

Each Scrutiny Committee also reviewed the progress and implementation of previous recommendations and responded to consultations and referrals from the executive and other bodies.

Some of the highlights of Scrutiny's work in 2023/2024 include:

- Assessing the Council's infrastructure funding secured through Section 106 planning obligations and gaining assurances on the process of committed funding.
- Scrutinising the progress and ongoing delivery of the locality working and family hubs across each of the localities in the Borough. This included supporting the work of the Council, especially with the voluntary and community sectors.
- Examining the effectiveness and feasibility of the Walsall Masterplan, including debating the future vision of housing in the Borough to support 'We are Walsall 2040'.
- Evaluating the performance and outcomes of the Council's role in reducing the number of children missing education. This included investigating the issues and challenges facing disadvantaged children and making a number of recommendations to the Secretary of State for Education.
- Providing challenges on matters relating to mental health, including improving access to provisions and services provided by health partners across the Borough and the wider Black Country.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed, and hope that our report will inform and inspire further action and improvement of Scrutiny. I look forward to continuing our work in the 2024/2025 municipal year.

Councillor John Murray
Chair of the Scrutiny Overview Committee

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Overview of Corporate Plan priorities and the four principles of good scrutiny
3. Economic
4. People
5. Internal
6. Children
7. Communities

Introduction

The report provides the opportunity to review activity within overview and scrutiny and to highlight some of the key developments.

This report details the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the period from May 2023 to April 2024. It is not an exhaustive account of the work that Members have undertaken but it gives an overview of the wide variety of work that has taken place, and which is centered on the priorities of the Council Plan. This demonstrates how the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees are contributing to the Council's strategic direction by helping to create the golden thread from a strategic plan into action. The priorities in the Council Plan are:

- **Economic** – enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses
- **People** – encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing
- **Internal focus** – Council services are customer focused, effective, efficient and equitable
- **Children** - have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well
- **Communities** – 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

Following on from this, the contributions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been cross-referenced with the Centre for Governance and Public Scrutiny's four principles of good scrutiny. This helps to demonstrate the wider contribution that was made by Members.

The four principles of good scrutiny are:

- Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public
- Carried out by independent minded councillors who lead and own the scrutiny process
- Drives improvement in public services

Many other issues have also been examined by the Committees but have not been mentioned here due to the limitations of this report. However, further details of all the Overview and Scrutiny meetings can be found on the Council's committee management website.

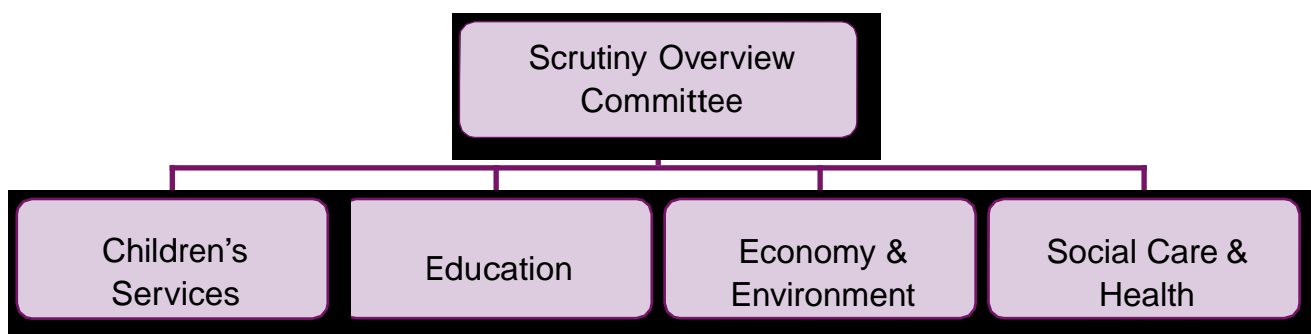
What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are made up of non-executive Members from across all political parties and they exist to provide accountability to the Council and its partners. The Committees have four key roles:

- Holding the executive to account for their decisions.
- Scrutinising local partners (e.g. NHS Walsall).
- Reviewing and developing policies and making recommendations to Council and Cabinet on these; and
- Reviewing services to ensure they are providing value for money and meeting local needs.

Scrutiny also has a vital role in enabling the voices of local residents to be heard through community engagement. All meetings are open to the public to attend (except in exceptional circumstances where something has to be taken in private session). The public can also suggest items for the Committees to consider.

At its meeting in May 2023, the Council set the Committee structure and remit for the year ahead, which included the following Committees:



More details on the role of scrutiny can be found at www.walsall.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Economic, enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses.

1. Town Funds Projects Master Plan including Willenhall Masterplan

The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on the regeneration activities that were taking place across the Borough.

Following a presentation from the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, it was highlighted that £1.5 billion was being invested into transforming the Borough with several interventions to regenerate and support economic activity, increase housing choice and make Walsall a better-connected destination for businesses and residents.

Members were informed that interventions included the Connected Gateway project, which secured £11.4m from the Government's Future High Street Fund and was supported by the Council's capital programme. It was noted that this project would create a public transport gateway between the bus station and rail station, modernisation of the Saddlers Shopping Centre, transformation of the public realm in Park Street and improved accessibility of the Walsall Rail Station.

The Committee also noted the programme of works relating to the Bloxwich Town Deal, which included several commercial and community works for the area. The Construction Skills Through Regeneration programme would enable the area to build on local capacity to deliver the Borough's Housing targets through the development of apprenticeships and local training schemes.

Members raised concerns about issues of drugs and criminal activity within the town centre. Members were reassured that the Council was working with West Midlands Police on both issues and CCTV had been introduced as a crime prevention deterrent. In addition, the Council had drone technology at its disposal which would complement the presence of rapid-response Police cars to reduce criminal activity in the town centre.

How did this item provide a critical friend challenge?

The Committee provided constructive challenges to the Cabinet about the rollout and development of the Council's Master Plan and subsequent projects. Members questioned the Portfolio Holder on aspects relating to Walsall Town Centre including issues on crime, traffic management and future development to improve public footfall.

2. Heritage Strategy

The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the Council's Heritage Strategy on 16 January 2024.

The Committee heard that the strategy was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to create opportunities for celebrating past, present and future generations by identifying heritage assets in consultation with public, private and third-sector partners within the Borough. In addition, there was a significant task to identify challenging heritage assets, which had fallen into a state of disrepair or neglect to secure a long-term future.

A discussion took place on how the Council could work with partners and private landowners to safeguard and protect cultural heritage in the Borough. One notable example was the securement of the Grade 2 listed Guildhall in Walsall, which in partnership with a non-profit organisation, planned to create a suitable space for local makers within the creative industry.

Members were supportive of the work enabled by the Heritage Strategy, however, there was a consensus that further work was needed to work with communities across Walsall to identify suitable cultural and historical assets for future preservation. As such, the Council embarked on several engagement activities to promote such as the heritage forum which enabled consultation with a variety of consultees and stakeholders.

How was this item carried out by independent people who took responsibility for their role?

Through detailed debate and discussion, Members took an independent approach to examining the topic, with a particular focus on how to enable and support the strategy. A suggestion was made for the Council to establish local pop-up events in communities, which would enable local people to get involved in the Heritage Strategy and identify cultural assets within their local communities.

People, encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing.

1. Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group

The Committee established the Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group at its meeting on 28 September 2023 after hearing items on the topic at previous meetings.

The Working Group sought to focus on GP Services provided in the Borough and how improvements could be made to access for residents. The Working Group examined the existing GP commissioning model and upcoming national improvement projects. They also looked into making services digital and the NHS workforce strategy for the whole country.

Through its work, the Working Group made the following findings:

- There had been increasing demand on health systems and a shortage of trained clinicians including GPs which created an acute problem for residents who needed to access services.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been an acceleration in the use of technology and digitisation in accessing care and there was a risk of leaving vulnerable residents behind.
- While there had been an increase in the percentage of patients who viewed GP services as poor, the vast majority expressed a positive view of services, and this was a testament to the hard work being carried out by clinicians across the Borough.
- Some of the digitisation already undertaken through the NHS had not delivered what had been expected and further improvements were needed.
- It was clear that the current and projected demand for primary care services outstripped the supply of clinicians, and the only long-term solution was to increase the number of training positions for doctors and other clinicians.
- Improving the pay and conditions of current staff would help improve the recruitment and retention problems being experienced in the short and long term.
- While much of the Working Group's findings and recommendations focused on national policy it was the consensus that the Council and its partners could pursue local changes which could aid residents to access primary care and push for changes at a national level.

The report was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2024 and Members supported the final report's findings and recommendations. They agreed that an update on the response to the report be presented to the Committee in the new municipal year.

How did this scrutiny amplify the voices and concerns of the public?

The Committee through the Working Group, worked effectively with NHS partners and others to voice the concerns of residents. Using the experience and concerns of residents to work with partners to identify the causes of the issues in primary care and access and GP service delivery and formulate solutions to help alleviate those concerns.

2. Social Prescribing

The Committee received a report and presentation on the current work being undertaken by the Council and its partners through the Walsall Together Programme which had commenced by Public Health and was now run by Resilient Communities who had since expanded the original programme.

The Committee was attended by several partner organisations which included: The Black Country Integrated Care Board, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, Walsall Housing Group, Mindkind (Manor Farm Community Association) and The Old Hall Peoples Partnership.

Members were informed of the work being undertaken by organisations within the Borough in the area of social prescribing and how their work had changed since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee were informed that there had been a shift in social prescribing referrals since the pandemic from social isolation to health and mental health, and poor living conditions. There had been an increase in the support offered by social prescribers to help residents navigate complex systems about accessing further support and healthcare.

There was a consensus that social prescribing was saving lives and making a direct impact on communities. However, there was a consensus, especially amongst partners that many people in communities did not know what social prescribing meant. Members of the Committee were supportive of the work already taking place around social prescribing and offered their support for raising awareness of it in the Borough.

How was this item carried out by independent people who took responsibility for their role?

Questions were raised by Members to understand the work of partners and the Council on social prescribing and what it entailed. Furthermore, Members sought to understand how social prescribing fit into the larger health and well-being offering to residents and whilst acknowledging its importance understood that it could not replace frontline statutory services. The Committee also understood that a wider understanding of social prescribing was needed and agreed to support this aim.

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Internal focus, Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable.

1. Draft Revenue & Capital Budget 2024/25 to 2027/28

The Scrutiny Overview Committee considered the draft revenue and capital budget for 2024/25 to 2027/28.

Members were informed of the Capital Development Investment Scheme, which outlined that there were several capital pipeline schemes which were subject to business case approval. The majority of the schemes related to regeneration activity such as the Walsall Gateway project. The pipeline schemes enabled the Council to be ready and perceptive to Government funding allocations as and when announced. Members raised concerns about the increased costs of bed and breakfast accommodation as a result of the national trend of temporary homelessness. The Committee made several recommendations including a request for consideration to be given to further investment in the base budget for the Youth Service subject to satisfactory feedback data.

Provide constructive “critical friend” challenge.

The Committee provided a constructive challenge to the executive on several issues relating to the draft revenue and capital budget. Examples include scrutinising the proposed savings within Adult Social Care, Public Health and the Hub as well as how the Council was increasing its competitiveness for traded services.

2. Recruitment and Retention of Council Employees

The Scrutiny Overview Committee considered an item on recruitment and retention of Council employees. Members discussed the challenges facing the Council to recruit and retain workers due to the evolving technological advancements, globalisation, competition and financial constraints which provided a challenging environment to retain talent.

The Committee noted that with the creation of a workforce strategy, it was envisioned that the Council would develop future leaders, embrace technology, upskill and create a positive and psychologically safe culture that engages with its workforce.

The Committee were informed of the breakdown of the workforce profile which was based on data from March 2023. Members were eager to discuss and note the progress made with fulfilling senior management roles by individuals from an ethnic minority background. Members welcomed the establishment of staff networks for underrepresented groups as such groups were crucial to encourage existing staff to fully realise their potential.

Members recognised the importance of a workforce strategy. As such, the Committee welcomed a future report in this respect to monitor the effectiveness of policies.

Provide constructive “critical friend” challenge.

The Committee reflected on the Workforce Strategy and provided questions and challenges, especially with the recruitment and retention of job positions which were hardest to fill such as Social Workers. They also provided feedback on how the Council could engage with local schools to coordinate learning skills to fulfil future job roles.

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

1. Youth Justice Partnership – Reduction of Youth Violence

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the issues relating to the reduction of youth violence in Walsall. The Committee was informed that reducing violence was one of the five priorities of the Youth Justice Service 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan. This priority was aligned with the Safer Walsall Partnership.

The Committee was 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.

Partners from the Safer Walsall Partnership attended the scrutiny meeting to assist the Committee in understanding and scrutinise the issue, this included:

- West Midlands Police.
- Violence Reduction Unit.
- Community Safety.
- Youth Justice Team.

Information was provided on the serious violence duty which required specified authorities to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence, for Walsall the Safer Walsall Partnership led this area of work.

Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision-makers.

The partnership was questioned on the action being taken on children and knife crime, and the Committee was informed of the range of activities which took place with children and within schools to prevent such activity.

A challenge was provided about the collection of data about 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. A further challenge was provided on the unmet health needs of children entering the youth justice system and the increased vulnerability to exclusion from school which could put children at greater risk of youth violence.

In response to a series of questions from Members, Officers stated that the success of the service was fewer children in the system and when they did enter the system they did not re-enter.

The Committee supported the direction of travel of the partnership and congratulated the team's success in lowering the reoffending rate amongst children. However, Members remained concerned that attendance and exclusions appeared 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.

2. Inclusion

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee used a thematic approach to scrutinise 'Inclusion' which included reports on the following:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Developments.
- The Inclusion Hub.
- Transitions in Special Educational Needs.
- Learning Recovery programmes.

The Committee received an update on the Inclusion Hub and heard that the aim was to improve the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. A key focus had been to reduce the number of exclusions alongside tracking children who had been excluded from school to offer them support. Members heard that there had been an increase in the number of referrals to the Inclusion Hub, and the Team had worked with the Youth Justice Service to assist children on remand. It was agreed that this should remain an area of focus for the Committee.

Members received an overview of the developments and achievements of the SEND Service. The SEND system was designed to identify and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The EHC system was a legal framework that provided comprehensive support for children and young people with complex or severe special educational needs and disabilities. It was stressed that the Council had a robust SEND system in place with effective systems for recruiting to this service. This meant that the service was better able to communicate well with parents and had helped to reduce the Education Health Care (EHC) plan backlog.

A Challenge was provided by the Committee in relation to meeting the 20-week deadline for EHC plans, and it was assured that the Council was operating well above the national average. It was further noted that the caseload for EHCPs was not more than the national average. Members questioned how the Council would improve the Ofsted rating of SEND and were provided with details of the growth in new projects, strengthened pathways with social care and improvements in EHC plans process and delivery. Members heard that the successes of the Team would be built upon to further improve the service provided in Walsall.

The Committee considered a report on key transitions for children and young people with an EHC plan. Members learned that transitions could be difficult for children with an EHC and stressed the importance that transitions were well planned and coordinated. Concern was raised by Members in relation to the backlog of EHCP annual reviews, however, assurance was provided that new processes aimed to clear the backlog.

When considering the learning recovery report, Members heard that the pandemic had disrupted education for young people, and the Council had launched several programmes to support children in recovering from this disruption. These programmes encompassed a wide range of initiatives and strategies to help students catch up academically and promote well-being. Members were provided with details of these programs and the support available. Challenge was provided in response to outcomes for year one phonics, as a result of this concern it was further considered at a subsequent meeting.

Work done to further improve the gap between Walsall and national was described and it was stressed that phonics was a key area of focus for the service. It was agreed that this would be recommended to remain an area of focus for the Committee.

Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision-makers.

The thematic approach allowed the Committee to consider items in the wider context of the issue and select areas for further investigation. Members had the opportunity to challenge a variety of approaches. The Committee provided effective challenges to ensure that improvements were delivered promptly for the benefit of residents.

3. Attendance, Skills and development and Alternative Provision

As part of other themes within the areas of focus, the committee have also considered items on attendance, skills and development and alternative provision.

The Committee monitored attendance as it was important nationally and locally, and although improved, unauthorised absence remained higher than the national level and a main concern for the Committee.

Skills, linked to employment and training for young people was within the remit of the committee but not one focused on previously. The Committee received information on the Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) provision and noted concerns regarding the level of funding. The Committee decided to continue prioritising this issue because many people who are NEET or likely to become NEET often belong to disadvantaged groups.

How was this item carried out by independent people who took responsibility for their role?

The Committee examined the quality assurance process for alternative provision and learned that the team will enhance the offer in Walsall to cater to the varied needs of pupils while ensuring high-quality provision with strong safeguarding measures in place. Members agreed that this should remain a focus of the Committee moving forward to ensure continuous improvement, especially in the area of SEND support.

Communities, that are empowered so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community.

1. Violent Crime

On 9 November 2023, the Scrutiny Overview Committee considered an item on violent crime and policing in Walsall.

There was a presentation about the Council's responsibilities regarding policing, community safety and the duty of cooperation through Community Safety Partnerships. The Committee noted that there had been a change in the organisation of local policing through the establishment of Local Policing Area models. As such, the Chief Superintendent's responsibilities and control regarding specific resourcing had increased and performance had improved. This was demonstrated by the inclusion of statistics relating to arrests, intelligence submissions, expired bail and response times.

The Committee were given assurances about partnership work which had taken place concerning Bloxwich and Blakenall impact area zones. Engagement and building trust with communities was important, especially for the collection of intelligence data which enabled and embedded police work.

Members identified that road safety and tackling road harm was an area in which partnership work could be improved and community involvement could be an important part of this. The Chief Superintendent highlighted the need to 'design out' rather than 'enforce out' some highway risks. Further partnership work between West Midlands Police and the Council's Community Protection Team was welcomed.

Provide constructive "critical friend" challenge.

The Committee challenged partners with the delivery of the policing within Walsall. In response to numerous questions and answers concerning road safety, the Committee resolved for Cabinet to identify further partnership and collaboration with West Midlands Police to improve road safety and reduce the incidents on roads within the Borough. Members welcomed and commended the work of representatives from West Midlands Police and the work carried out by police officers within Walsall including the Council's community safety team.

2. Litterpicking and Volunteers Programme

The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the Council's Litterpicking and Volunteer Programme on 27 February 2024. Members noted that the programme was designed to support and empower local people to help keep streets and open spaces across the Borough free from litter. In addition, the programme enabled:

- Community and enhance wellbeing.
- Development of Civic Pride.
- Improvement of the environment.

To strengthen the programme, the Council created a Community Litter Watch, which was championed by two volunteer coordinators. The Committee welcomed the creation of the reporting portal, which would provide opportunities for volunteers to request equipment, bags, stickers and report bag collections.

Members noted the aspiration to engage with education establishments across the Borough to educate young people about recycling and promote responsible rubbish disposal. Following a lengthy debate about the effectiveness of littering enforcement, there was a view that stricter enforcement was needed to act as a deterrent.

Overall Members expressed their admiration for the Borough's 10 green spaces which had been green flag accredited.

How did this scrutiny amplify the voices and concerns of the public?

The Committee successfully amplified the voices of residents and volunteers on the issues surrounding littering and fly-tipping in the Borough. Members challenged the programme supporting volunteers and thanked volunteers for their hard work.

3. Housing Standards Working Group

During the 2023/24 municipal year, the Scrutiny Overview Committee established a working group to consider housing standards in the Borough.

The Working Group commenced its work in January 2024, The Working Group conducted research and examined the following topics:

- Enhancing Energy Efficiency
- Quality of Housing
- Promotion of Housing Standards
- Housing Supply and Demand
- Healthy Spaces and Communities
- Local Planning Policies and the Housing Strategy

Due to the limited timescales, there was an onus on independent research and study. To complement this work, the Members invited representatives from Social Housing Landlords, private landlord representatives and Walsall Council teams such as regeneration, strategic housing standards and customer engagement.

In total, the Working Group made 23 recommendations across all of the aforementioned topics to the Cabinet for their consideration.

In particular, there was support for the Council to build on existing work to establish a Derelict Land Taskforce, to unlock the Borough's land supply to identify underused sites by existing tools and engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority and/or Homes England to assist with unlocking of this supply.

How did this scrutiny amplify the voices and concerns of the public?

Through the detailed reports, discussion and witness testimony, Members amplified the voices and concerns of residents about the issues centred around the housing sector in Walsall. Throughout its work, the Group actively involved the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and supported good policy development such as Article 4 Direction initiatives.

