

Cabinet – 7 February 2007

Corporate Plan 2007/08

Portfolio:	Councillor Tom Ansell – Leader of the Council
Service Area:	Corporate focus (links to performance management)
Wards:	All
Forward Plan:	Yes
Key decisions:	Yes

Summary of report

This report presents the council's Corporate Plan for 2007/08, which sets out the main objectives the Council will be pursuing to improve the services provided to citizens and make Walsall a better place.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the 2007/08 Corporate Plan for adoption by the Council as a key part of the Council's policy framework, and that the Executive Director (Corporate Services) be delegated authority to make any final changes.

Resource and legal considerations

The Council pledges and key service activities identified in the corporate plan are accounted for within the draft 2007/08 budget, which is elsewhere on tonight's agenda.

Citizen impact

The priorities and pledges for 2007/08 have been developed in the context of the council's on-going analysis and assessment of the borough, its communities and local needs and priorities. The pledges also reflect views expressed by partners, organisations and residents including during budget consultation. The achievement of the pledges will significantly improve local services for residents and enable local people to judge how well the Council is doing, evidenced through customer satisfaction feedback. Progress will be reported to citizens in the publication, Walsall Pride.

Community safety

One of the Council's ten strategic priorities is to *ensure all people are safe and secure*, and two pledges are directly targeted at improving community safety.

Environmental impact

Ensure a clean and green borough is one of the Council's ten strategic priorities and three of the proposed pledges are linked directly to this priority.

Performance and risk management issues

The Council has a hierarchy of plans within the Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF). This ensures that the high level corporate priorities of the Corporate Plan are translated into detailed directorate, service and team plans which set out specific targets and improvements. All pledges and key actions are identified in the appropriate detailed plans, currently being finalised for the year ahead. These plans are risk assessed as an integral part of service planning processes.

Pledges are monitored by the relevant directorate and the Executive Management Team, with regular reviews presented to Cabinet as part of the Beacon Index.

Equality implications

Equality is an integral theme within Vision 2008, with our commitment to build an inclusive borough where cultural diversity is recognised as one of Walsall's key strengths. The Plan makes specific reference to the Race Equality Scheme and Equality and Diversity Strategy of the Council, and to work at directorate, service and team level. Equality impact assessments are undertaken to ensure that services meet the needs of all local residents. Some of the pledges focus on addressing the needs of BME communities, vulnerable households, and those with limited incomes.

Consultation

Vision 2008 was developed in 2003 and adopted in January 2004 following extensive consultation with partners, staff and residents. Budget consultation has used the council's vision and ten strategic priorities as a focus for discussion. Consultees have confirmed that the council's priorities remain relevant, and have provided detailed comments about our services, areas for improvement and additional council input. This has been used, with other information about the borough and its communities, in the drafting of this plan and the council's budget for the year ahead.

Vision 2008

The current vision for Walsall Council has been renewed annually, set out in an annual corporate plan and in other documents, each time including a set of pledges for the year ahead, each addressing one of the council's ten strategic priorities which underpin the overall vision for the borough. Work is underway in developing a longer term vision for the Borough - a vision of the borough in 2021 - in conjunction with partners, including consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The pledges directly relate to delivery of the current vision and will contribute to longer term aims and objectives.

Background papers

All published.

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Signed



Carole Evans – Executive Director

19 January 2007



Cllr T Ansell – Leader of the Council

22 January 2007

Walsall Council

Corporate Plan

2007 - 2008

February 2007

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

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1. Setting the scene

We are pleased to introduce Walsall Council's corporate plan for 2007/08; a plan focussed on transformation across the council, and its services.

Transformation is what the whole council is about. The world is changing fast, as is local government. Changes driven by external factors from the government white paper *Strong and prosperous communities* and the review by Sir Michael Lyons supplement local drivers of change - based on our knowledge of the borough and local communities, and our understanding of customer and citizen needs, priorities and expectations. This plan reflects the council's vision for Walsall developed in 2003 and adopted in 2004 following extensive consultation. In an environment of constant change it is important to keep a clear focus on the horizon, so that our transformation agenda is fixed on a consistent vision of a borough that is prosperous, forward-looking, self confident and optimistic; a place where individuals and groups can thrive and develop. If we are to achieve this ambition, we need to address the key priorities for local residents wanting to live in safer, greener and cleaner neighbourhoods.

The past 12 months have proved to be another significant year for the council, providing further evidence that we are moving forward in line with our vision for the borough. In December 2005 the Audit Commission announced that Walsall was now a three star council, judged to be improving well, and during 2006 we have sought to demonstrate by our actions - providing services, meeting local needs and priorities, working with our partners for the good of the borough - that we are worthy of this rating. In 2006, our assessment for the effective use of resources demonstrates continued progress along our path to excellence, as does the evidence of consultation processes and the analysis of performance data in terms of housing, environment, children's social care, and customer satisfaction. We will build on this position during 2007/08 which we see as a year of continuing transformation of our council, and this plan sets out how we will achieve this over the year ahead, maintaining our focus on improving our services, building customer satisfaction and citizen confidence in the council, and addressing local aspirations to make Walsall - the whole borough from Moxley to Brownhills, from New Invention to Streetly - a better place. Children are our future and the council is investing in our Change for Children programme which will transform our services so that 'growing up in Walsall is as good as it can be'. This plan will:

- Focus the efforts of all the employees of the council on the issues that matter to citizens
- Ensure we put resources firmly behind their priorities
- Strengthen our joint working with our partners through the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement
- Enable local people and our partners to judge how well we are doing and whether we are achieving our objectives.

This plan also sets out the part that the council will play in the collective efforts of the Borough Partnership.

We hope you find this plan interesting and informative and welcome any comment you have about it.

Councillor Tom Ansell
Leader of the Council

David Martin
Interim Chief Executive

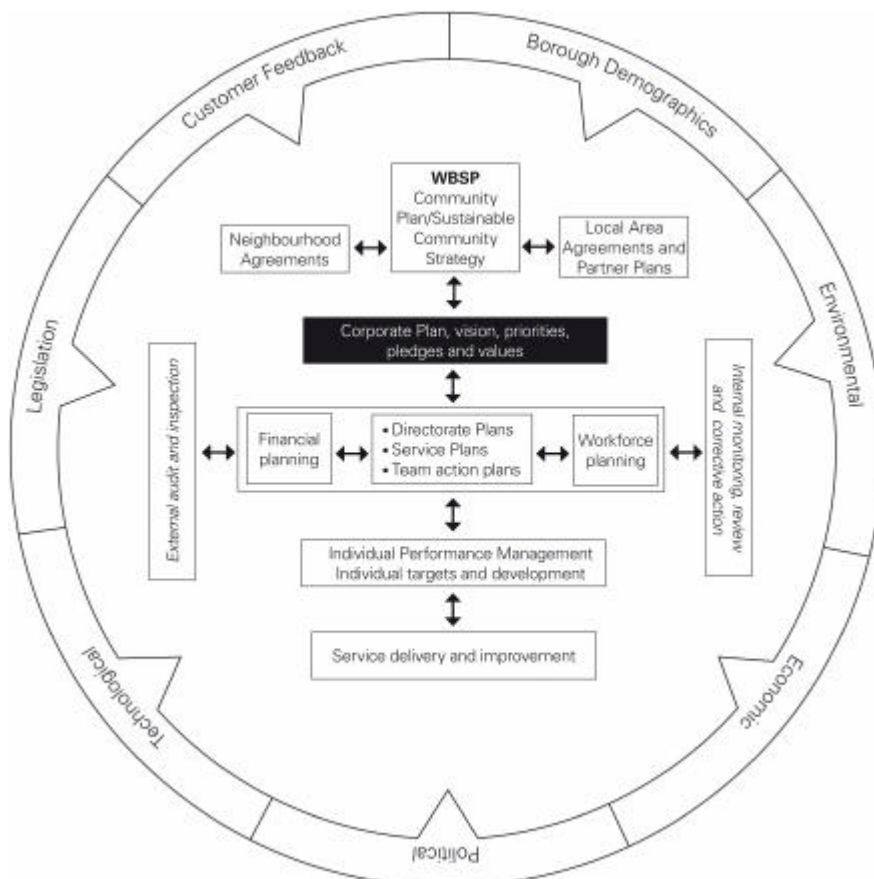
2. The purpose of this document

The council publishes its Corporate Plan each year as a key element in its corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF), to set out succinctly the council's vision for the borough, its aims and objectives, and the key priorities for the year ahead of the council corporately, and of each of our directorates. The plan reflects the council's contribution to the work of the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership, and the Community Plan (Sustainable Community Strategy) and the Local Area Agreement for the borough.

The Corporate Plan is published alongside the council's budget for the year, and to 2011/12, and is a key driver in setting the budget for the year. The Corporate Plan, the budget, and other key plans and strategies of the council, and of the wider partnership, are informed by an understanding of the people, nature and demographics of our borough, captured within a comprehensive document 'People & Place Perspectives: a picture of our community' which is available on the council's web site. This combines a range of primary statistical and trend data, and customer feedback, and analysis of that information, and has been used along with other information to undertake needs analyses to support the design and delivery of our services, through service planning, and through to this Corporate Plan and the council's budget proposals.

The CIPPF diagram set out below shows how our services are designed, delivered and performance managed, and how our service delivery and our financial planning are reflected in, and informed by this Corporate Plan. Further details relating to the CIPPF can be found in chapter 8.

Figure 1: The Council's Corporate Integrated Planning & Performance Framework



3. Our vision of Walsall in 2008: our priorities, and pledges for 2007/08

In 2004, following detailed consultation with local people and with local agencies and organisations, we launched our vision of the sort of place we want Walsall to become by 2008. Our vision is based around ten strategic priorities, each of which is critical to our achieving the type of community we are aiming to build in our borough. This Plan sets out those priorities; and describes how the council is working with the community and our partners to achieve our vision.

Our strategic priorities to achieve our vision for 2008 are to:

1. Ensure a clean and green borough
2. Make it easier for people to get around
3. Ensure all people are safe and secure
4. Make our schools great
5. Make Walsall a healthy and caring place
6. Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall
7. Make it easier to access local services
8. Strengthen the local economy
9. Listen to what local people want
10. Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

We believe these are critical issues for a successful Walsall that will demand sustained effort to 2008, and in the years beyond. We are already committed to working with our partners to deliver the Community Strategy for the borough, through to 2010 (*see section 6*) and, through the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership, we are embarked upon a major consultation exercise, across the borough, seeking to engage all with an interest and a stake in the future of Walsall, to build upon our present vision and develop a longer term vision of Walsall in the year 2021.

Our own vision for 2008 is a major contributor to the future of our borough, and we believe that the 24 pledges, each one linked to one of our 10 strategic priorities, will provide further clear evidence of significant progress in key areas and of service improvement over the next 12 months:

Ensure a clean and green borough

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will introduce clear standards of quality and service in the twenty-five major parks in Walsall and we will publish these standards for residents and visitors
- We will extend the garden waste collection service to a further 16,500 households across the borough
- We will run at least one clean up campaign in each LNP area

Make it easier for people to get around

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will trial a taxi marshalling scheme and temporary taxi ranks so that visitors to Walsall town centre find it easier and safer to get home at busy times
- We will, working with our private sector partners, increase the number of publicly available car parking spaces in Walsall town centre by 1000 spaces
- We will improve our public rights of way by tidying them up and improving signage

Ensure all people are safe and secure

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will provide information for local communities on crime in their area and how this is being tackled
- We will tackle environmental crimes such as littering, fly tipping and dog fouling by issuing 300 fixed penalty notices and naming and shaming the culprits

Make our schools great

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will increase the number of young people obtaining 5+ A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths from 1333 to 1510 (13.3% increase)
- We will spend at least £15 million on improving the quality of school buildings

Make Walsall a healthy and caring place

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will increase by 15% the number of people in receipt of care packages within our BME communities. This amounts to an increase of approximately 50 episodes of service
- We will increase the percentage of vulnerable households in the private sector living in a safe and decent home to 67.9%

Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will spend £400,000 on further improving our major transport corridors and entrances to the borough and £500,000 on local environmental improvements throughout the Borough
- We will implement a community cash scheme through our Local Neighbourhood Partnerships offering small grants of up to £400 to community and voluntary groups

Make it easier to access local services

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- By March 2008 we will deliver a further seven Children's Centres across the borough, increasing the total to sixteen such centres in all
- We will refurbish libraries at Pleck, South Walsall, Streetly and Walsall Wood as part of our programme to deliver modern, locally based and customer focussed library services
- We will improve local access to council services by introducing a mobile access point that will visit neighbourhoods and communities across the borough

Strengthen the local economy

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will continue to work with Walsall Regeneration Company to progress a series of economic and physical projects including St. Matthew's phase 3, Littleton Street Office Corridor and Darlaston Strategic Development Area, and to assist the start on site of Waterfront phase 1, the new college and Shannon's Mill
- We will commence payment of benefit for new claims more quickly, improving our performance by 10%, increasing the health, wealth and well being of our citizens

Listen to what local people want

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will use new online consultation facilities through our website to enhance our consultation with citizens
- We will establish or support existing business forums in the five main District Centres to help improve communications with existing and new businesses

Transform Walsall into an excellent authority

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will reduce the amount of office space we use by 20% over a five year period by making better use of accommodation we have in the town centre
- We will deal with your householder planning application within 7 weeks unless it needs to go to the Development Control Committee
- We will implement our transformation programme, bringing greater efficiency and savings of £2 million for the benefit of Walsall

4. Listening to local people

Effective consultation and engagement activity ensures that our focus, in our policies, our plans and service strategies, and our budgets, is firmly on the issues and concerns of our communities, our stakeholders, and our citizens. We aim to be a listening organisation and we use a wide range of methods to understand better what matters to residents. This section highlights some of the consultation activities we have been involved in over the past year, key themes that have emerged and outlines how we will intend to develop our approach to consultation and engagement for the year ahead.

Our approach reflects the Community Engagement Strategy, agreed by all the partners in the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership. We also respect the principles of the Local Compact (see chapter 6).

The council undertakes a great deal of consultation and community engagement activity each year. We do this to:

- obtain valuable feedback about our services to enable us to tailor them to meet the needs of all our users and citizens
- identify the changing needs and priorities of local communities, ensuring that we can move fast to change our services accordingly, and develop services to meet local needs
- generally, plan our services better, and ensure that we use our resources appropriately and effectively.

Consultation and engagement for the council covers a wide range of activities, and includes the use of a wide variety of different approaches, tools and techniques including:

- The nine Local Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Our 1,250 resident Citizens' Panel
- Groups and panels of users of specific council services
- Youth Opinions Unite, our umbrella group for the views of young people
- Schools councils
- Resident focus groups
- Consultation via the council's web site
- Liaison with community and voluntary organisations
- Liaison through the Community Empowerment Network, and fora such as the Disability Forum and the BME Alliance
- Mystery customers
- Use of creative arts techniques
- friends of local parks groups

Some of the key themes and messages identified in recent consultation activity have included:

- 56% of the council's Citizens' Panel, and also 56% of residents surveyed by the 'Tracker' survey have indicated that they were satisfied with the way that the council runs things overall, an increase of 22% from a similar survey in 2003; the results of the 2006 'Best Value' satisfaction survey results are currently awaited, and will provide an update on these figures

- satisfaction levels are highest in Pelsall & Rushall Sheffield and Brownhills & Aldridge North LNP areas, lowest in Blakenall & Bloxwich and Darlaston LNP areas
- satisfaction levels are highest amongst 18-24 year olds, lowest amongst long-standing residents
- key factors influencing satisfaction levels are litter, activities and facilities for young people, road and pavement repairs, speeding traffic, crime & vandalism, and levels of council tax (Tracker survey)
- similarly, Citizens' panel members identified a cleaner environment, a safer environment, and improved roads with less congestion as their top three issues for improvement for the future
- a skilled 21st century workforce, pupil skills including vocational and life skills, a first class town centre for all with top class facilities, and better transport infrastructures to reduce car congestion including better public transport were identified by the first phase of the Vision 2021 consultation as key longer term priorities for the borough

Looking at specific vision priorities, consultation has highlighted:

- high levels of satisfaction with the improvements made to recycling facilities in the borough - but at the same time a desire to recycle more, and different materials
- that local parks and open spaces are valued by the community, but seen as in need of investment and improvement
- satisfaction levels are high with local bus services, but there is concern about evening services, and transport for elderly and vulnerable people
- that crime prevention measures have had an impact, but that anti-social behaviour remains a key concern, and a priority issue
- the quality of local schools - the buildings, equipment, and the teaching - is the top priority for young people
- the important role of the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to the support provided to vulnerable people - likewise the role played by carers
- a high proportion of people are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live and have a strong sense of belonging - the borough's green spaces, living near friends and family, and the borough's central location are valued by local people - but more needs to be done to make people proud of the borough
- the First Stop Shop is appreciated, with high satisfaction levels for customer contact, particularly face to face - local access points for services along these lines are a priority, particularly for older residents

In 2007/08, consultation and community engagement remain a key priority for the council. We will:

- Contribute fully to the Partnership Engagement Forum established in 2006 by the WBSP as a means to coordinate consultation activity across the range of partners, and to share our results
- Continue to work closely with the nine Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs)
- Make full use of our Citizens' Panel of 1,250 residents, undertaking another programme of surveys providing strategic information on current issues and priorities
- Ensure that the results of consultation activity including the programme of budget consultation and the Best value surveys undertaken in 2006/07 are fed through to services, analysed and acted upon
- Implement action plans to manage improvements identified through the 'tracker' survey of public satisfaction organised by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now

the Department for Communities & Local Government) to ensure that our services address the views and meet the expectations of residents and service users

- Develop new means to use the council web site as a key consultation tool
- Continue to build upon the existing strong links with Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) as the formal mechanism by which young people can be consulted regarding any issue that may impact directly or indirectly on their lives.

5. A fast improving council; maintaining the momentum

Following recognition through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment that Walsall Council is a 'three star' authority, which is improving well, the council and our services need to maintain our focus, and maintain our momentum along our path to excellence. This chapter of the Plan sets out the key priorities for the council and for each of our directorates during the year ahead, that will be reflected and set out in more detail in directorate, service and team plans; it also demonstrates how, at a corporate level, and across all that we do, our focus is on transformation.

Our Values

Whilst we move ahead, and seek to transform all of our services to the benefit of the community and our service users, we reaffirm our core values which will continue to guide us in our day to day work and support the council's vision of building a better borough. Our five core values of **respect, integrity, equality, listening** and **excellence** signal to everyone the beliefs, behaviours and principles that underpin all that we do. They are central to our approach, and will guide us towards our vision for the borough and its people. These shared and agreed values set out what the council stands for and how it will behave.

Cross-cutting, council-wide issues

Our recent achievements have been based on commitment, considerable hard work by every council service, all our staff, and everyone who is a part of the council. As we build for the future, we are committed - across the council as a whole - to focus *as one* on these key cross-cutting issues:

- Transformation - working to deliver better services
- Performance improvement across every one of our key service areas - delivering what matters to local people
- Sound, prudent budgeting - the effective use of our resources
- Improving the customer experience
- Working to be an excellent employer
- Serving the needs of our neighbourhoods
- Developing partnerships - working closely with key players in the public, private and third sectors
- Valuing equality and diversity

Transformation - working to deliver better services

Our transformation programme continues to support our strategic priorities building on the successes in 2006 and savings of £1.2m. In 2007/08 we will realise £2m of cashable savings which will provide opportunities for further re-investment in frontline services and efficiency projects.

We have launched our new-look Council web site and will be working with our partners to continuously improve this facility for citizens and staff; launching new services and greater on-line interaction and consultation. We will also continue to improve the customer

experience through our new telephone contact centre and are redesigning our back office processes to shorten the time taken to respond to and resolve queries.

We will maintain focus on streamlining support services and processes so that we can deliver ongoing improvements in value for money and efficiency and our new procurement strategy means that we continue to reduce the operating cost of the Council. Technology is a key enabler and the implementation of our new IT strategy and organisation will mean that we will be better placed to take full advantage of technology efficiencies and be better able to support frontline services. We also intend to rationalise our office occupation through our new model office project which will improve space utilisation.

However, transformation is not just about the corporate programme. In 2007/08, we will embed this activity as the 'day job' for all our services, and for all our teams across the Council, recognising the many smaller transformational improvements implemented at service level. We intend to really engage elected members, staff and partners to share best practice and join up our activity. This will enable us to provide a better framework to enable delivery of frontline services to citizens across the borough and transform Walsall into an excellent authority.

Performance improvement across every one of our key service areas - delivering what matters to local people

We are committed corporately and at a service level to deliver good quality, value for money services which are modern, efficient and effective, and fit for purpose. We seek through our good practice performance management framework and by our knowledge of the borough and its needs - based upon an understanding of local needs and priorities gained through customer feedback and an analysis and use of facts and figures - to ensure that our budgets reflect what matters to local residents.

Sound, prudent budgeting - the effective use of our resources

The council develops and sets its budget to enable the delivery of the council's priorities, ensuring that our resources are allocated according to our vision for the borough, aims and objectives, and our pledges. Our understanding of the borough, underpinned by the analyses within *People & Place Perspectives: a picture of our community*, helps us to ensure that our resources are used where they are needed; our financial systems then ensure that those resources are used effectively.

Improving the customer experience

Local people want council services to be available in the right way, the right place and at a time to suit them. Our customers want to sort out their business with the council simply and quickly; with one visit to the council's offices, or one phone call, rather than several. The development in 2005 of the Civic Centre First Stop Shop, and the establishment in December 2006 of a new customer contact centre are examples of how we are transforming our customer facing services to improve customers' experience of those services and of the council.

Working to be an excellent employer

As the largest employer in the borough, the council is committed to achieve a workforce that is representative of the communities that we serve. We will work to ensure that our

employees are treated fairly at work in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.

Serving the needs of our neighbourhoods

The council is committed to work with our partners, borough wide and within the nine Local Neighbourhood Partnerships, to ensure that our services and our work generally reflect the needs and priorities of our localities. In partnership, we will work to deliver the aspirations, and the key actions sought by our LNPs, through their Neighbourhood Agreements.

Developing partnerships - working closely with key players in the public, private and third sectors

Effective local partnership working will be at the heart of our plans for the future of the borough, as we work through the WBSP to develop a new Sustainable Community Strategy. The Local Area Agreement, Children's & Young People's Plan, and our health & social care provision all demonstrate partnership working and reflect the fact that the key issues - the 'wicked issues' - are cross-cutting, and best tackled by joint working between partners.

Valuing equality and diversity

Valuing diversity is at the heart of the work of the Council and runs through the whole breadth of our vision and key priorities. During the last year, working with our partners, we have:

- With the Walsall Multi-Faith Forum, continued to promote community cohesion through the Stand Together Against Racism (STAR) programme and events
- Developed a Disability Equality Scheme
- Drafted and consulted on Age and Gender Equality Schemes
- Conducted an annual audit of our Race Equality Scheme
- Published the annual Equalities Employment Monitoring Report
- Carried out equality impact assessments on key council services and functions
- Produced a Multi-Faith Calendar

In 2007/08, we will:

- Work with partners to develop a community cohesion strategy
- Develop and consult on a Welfare to Work strategy
- Publish the final Age and Gender Equality Schemes
- Develop Multi-Faith and Sexual Orientation Equality Schemes
- Develop Harassment recording form and procedure to support the public in reporting incidents
- Achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, setting equality objectives and targets for our core activities.

Our directorates' priorities

Within the context provided by these cross-cutting, council wide issues, our five directorates have each developed their own directorate plans. Set out below are the key priorities for each directorate for the year ahead:

Children and Young People

During 2007/08, the directorate will provide partnership leadership and excellent services to deliver its vision; 'To make growing up in Walsall as good as it can be'. Our 'Change for children' programme will transform services to promote children's well-being by integrating governance, strategy, processes and front-line delivery across all partner agencies. Leadership is delivered through the Children and Young People's executive group and the Children and Young People's Plan, which coordinates all partner agencies' activities.

Our priorities in 2007/08 are to:

- Ensure children are healthier, safer, enjoy and achieve more, make a positive contribution, and achieve increased economic well-being:
 - Deliver plans for those not in employment, education and training.
 - Improve achievements and attainments of all pupils, especially boys, BME, looked after children and more able pupils
 - Improve vocational opportunities for young people
 - Reduce final warnings and cautions given to looked after children
- Deliver the Change for Children Programme and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery by increased integration of; governance, commissioning, processes and front-line services:
 - Deliver Children Centre provision
 - Listen to and engage with children and young people to improve services
 - Deliver education re-configuration
 - Reduce waiting times for CAMHS
- Establish an effective CYP Executive Group that engages all services and provides clear leadership and decision making and ensures delivery of the CYPP improvement targets:
 - Implement the 14 to 19 strategy
 - Establish the Children's Trust
- Provide more economic, efficient and effective service delivery that demonstrates improved value for money:
 - Improve management of referrals and repeat referrals
 - Improve timeliness of initial health assessments for looked after children
 - Reduce the number of core assessments
 - Reduce number and cost of looked after children

Corporate Services

The main focus of the directorate is to provide a modern, effective and efficient corporate infrastructure to enable services to continually improve. This includes a wide variety of activity including the leadership of the transformation programme, and the HR, finance, performance management and legal services. In addition, the directorate includes key front line services such as revenues and benefits and insurance. During 2007/08 the directorate's priorities are to:

- Deliver the transformation programme, securing modernisation of service delivery, value for money and savings
- Improve performance in the welfare benefits service so that benefits are paid earlier
- Finalise the fundamental restructure of the Human Resources & Development service
- Continue to optimise our strong performance management and improvement arrangements to support delivery of better services for local people
- Continue to build on our strong arrangements for use of resources
- Continue to deliver effective financial management and planning and a secure financial future
- Prepare for the council's corporate assessment and Joint Area Review due in January 2008
- Implement the Business Support function restructure, making savings
- Establish service level agreements for key support services
- Embed the new Constitution and Finance and Contract Rules.

Neighbourhood Services

During 2007/08 the directorate's priorities will be:

1 Improve customer experience

- Develop the contact centre to provide a wider range of telephone call handling
- Introduce a Customer Service Bus to provide local access to council services in neighbourhoods
- Establish, for all our services, the standards which customers can expect to receive

2 Focus on neighbourhoods

- Deliver the LNP development plan and undertake partnership self assessments in each area
- Publish neighbourhood charters for each LNP, which set out service standards in neighbourhoods
- Implement the greenspaces strategy, driving up standards in our parks
- Improve perceptions of local neighbourhoods, especially street scene, crime levels, safety and anti social behaviour
- Continue the Town Centre Transport Package in order to reduce congestion and improve air quality

3 Manage our resources better

- Implement lease arrangements for Community Associations and Neighbourhood Resource Centres
- Address the legacy of under investment in the local infrastructure including highways and public buildings

- Develop our corporate asset management plan, making more efficient use of our land and property
- Continue the reduction in sickness absence in our workforce

4 Raise our performance levels

- Build on our track record of excellence in environmental practice to improve participation in recycling, reduce waste to landfill, increase energy from waste and improve street cleanliness
- Develop a range of programmes with partners to reduce overall crime, domestic violence, fire in public buildings, anti social behaviour, drugs & alcohol and re-offending rates
- Improve the health of the borough's residents through increased participation in sport, recreation and volunteering activities.
- Join up our enforcement activity to provide, with our partners, a more efficient way of tackling environmental crime and providing public reassurance.
- Implement new arrangements for voluntary sector grants and work with WBSP to align activities to the LAA.

5 Transform key services

- Continue the modernisation of the library & heritage services .
- Develop strategic options for the future management of leisure centres and the highways maintenance function.
- Continue to modernise how the council manages its land and property assets focusing on client service, efficiency and energy management.

6 Promote learning

- Complete the improvement plan for the College of Continuing Education, establishing stronger links with other council activity
- Introduce a programme of basic skills learning for targeted services
- Implement a strategy for consultation and engagement with the local communities.

Regeneration

In 2006/07, we made real progress on a range of key projects, including Shannon's Mill, the Business Learning Campus, and Waterfront resulting in the granting of Planning Consent for some £350m worth of development. In addition we are now responsible for functions around development control, building control and searches which are all achieving top quartile performance. We believe we now have a more focussed approach and more robust processes in a way that can influence inward investment from inception to completion. We are proud that we have stimulated range of new agendas central to the continued economic development of the borough.

Our priorities in 2007/08 will be to deliver our Vision 2008 pledges, fulfil our statutory responsibilities, and meet public expectations, focussed upon:

- Support and develop district and local centres
- Transform Walsall Town Centre (competitive)
- Enhance strategic corridors/routes
- Stimulate enterprise and business competitiveness
- Address worklessness and help improve skill levels
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Deliver our statutory services in a customer focussed way
- Influence the external strategic (and policy) agenda
- Develop a supportive policy and strategy base
- Support Delivery of the LAA corporate agenda (Children's, Safer and Stronger, Health)
- Develop an appropriate transport Infrastructure

Social Care and Inclusion

During 2007/08 our priorities are to:

Maximise health, well-being and life chances by reducing inequalities and promoting independence:

- We will deliver our assessments and services more promptly
- We will enable more people to live in their own home
- We will promote access to housing
- We will increase the availability of housing for people with specific housing needs (including extra care)

Ensure safety and protection:

- We will ensure our services safeguard the needs of users and vulnerable people
- We will optimise the continuity or recovery of directly provided and purchased services in the event of disruptive challenge

Deliver accessible services that are socially inclusive and responsive to user views:

- We will deliver services which reflect the views, needs and aspirations of local people and service users
- We will develop more locally accessible services offering greater choice
- We will continue to increase our understanding of the specific needs of Black & ethnic minority citizens and will improve services

Become an excellent employer:

- We will continue to improve development of our staff teams to deliver more effective services
- We will improve the quality of the physical working environment by continuing to progress our asset management and best use of our property portfolio
- We will implement a workforce management plan

Deliver more efficient business processes:

- We will utilise information and performance management systems in order to promote a culture of continuous improvement
- We will regularly review our business processes and will design and implement a single pathway to directorate services and council activities
- We will deliver our medium term financial plan within budget and service parameters whilst ensuring Gershon efficiencies
- We will continue to manage demands and competing priorities

Ensure effective partnership work to support delivery of our shared objectives:

- We will continue to deliver more integrated and co-ordinated services with Health partners
- We will continue to work closely with other Council services to ensure a holistic approach to meeting people's needs
- We will continue to develop good partnerships, specifically with the voluntary sector, to ensure delivery of improved quality of life outcomes.

6. Working together; developing our Sustainable Community Strategy and delivering our Local Area Agreement

We recognise that to be successful in achieving our objectives we need to work with a wide range of other organisations including other public agencies, voluntary and community groups, and the private sector

Effective and inclusive partnerships, focussed on specific outcomes, are fundamental in enabling us to deliver our priorities and objectives. The council participates in the work of many local partnerships, formal and less formal, strategic and operational, contractual and based on pooled resources, statutory and voluntary.

Central to partnership working within the Borough is the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership, established as the local strategic partnership required by law. The Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) brings together the Council's leadership with key partners - police, health economy, housing providers, local business, community and voluntary organisations, schools and colleges. The WBSP is responsible for the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), and, jointly with the council, for the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which will help deliver that plan.

The SCS, and the LAA, both reflect WBSP's long term goal "to create an inclusive, prosperous and competitive Borough, in which our diverse communities feel involved, safer and healthier". The SCS is currently under development, with WBSP taking the lead in moving forward the existing Community Plan into a new format which positions it as the over-riding plan for the Borough. The LAA develops the strategy by identifying a set of key outcomes that we want to achieve.

Sustainable Community Strategy

During 2007/08, the council is committed to work with our partners through the WBSP as it prepares a Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough which reflects local needs and priorities and requirements of the recent white paper *Strong and prosperous communities*, and which focuses on an integrated approach towards social, economic, environmental and land use issues, for April 2008. The council and WBSP see this process as an opportunity to further align our key plans and strategies, including consultation arrangements towards those documents, for the benefit of the borough, its local communities and its residents. For 2007/08, the Community Plan 'Working together for a stronger future', launched in September 2005, has been reviewed, and a progress report 'Working towards a sustainable community strategy' has been produced summarising achievements to date across the four key 'Pillars' - Children & Young People, Safer Stronger Communities, Healthier Communities & Vulnerable People, and Economic Development & Enterprise - which also provide the framework for our LAA.

The LAA

Our LAA was signed off in March 2006 and provides a detailed framework for delivery of the Partnership's priorities over the next three years. It is grouped into four 'Pillars' as noted above and progress is managed through Partnership structures to which the Council makes a full and active contribution.

Children & Young People

- Being healthy: tackling teenage conception, childhood obesity, infant mortality and improving access to services for vulnerable young people
- Staying safe: tackling incidences of abuse and neglect
- Enjoy and achieve: tackling school absence, raising achievement numbers getting A* to C at GCSE
- Making a positive contribution: tackling youth re-offending, improving lives of Looked after children
- Making a contribution: increasing numbers of 16-18 year olds in employment, education or training

Safer Stronger Communities

- Reducing overall crime: tackling domestic violence, criminal damage, business related crime, crime in town and district centre
- Reducing fear of crime: tackling Anti-social behaviour, building feeling of community safety, reducing numbers of fires and arson
- Reduce harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol: more people receiving treatment
- Improve community cohesion: increase numbers of people who report getting on well with neighbours
- Community leadership and active citizens: increase numbers taking part in LNPs, establish community fora, increased capacity of voluntary and community sectors
- Cleaner, greener Walsall: waste minimisation, increase environmental awareness, more sustainable travel, increase user satisfaction with parks and green spaces

Healthier Communities & Vulnerable People

- Improved health of the population: increase life expectancy, reduce mortality rates from cancer strokes and heart disease, increase number of smoking quitters, reduce number of falls, developing expert patient and health trainer programmes, reducing the gap between the worst and best areas in the Borough.
- Improving quality of life and independence: reduce number of emergency bed days, reduce care admissions and increase direct payments and speed of provision of adaptations, make workplaces healthier, increase physical activity of the population, decent homes for vulnerable people.
- Promoting social inclusion: improve access to services by people from black and other minority ethnic groups, increase day sessions for people with learning difficulties, reduction in number of low birth weight babies in Walsall.

Economic Development & Enterprise

- Increase economic growth: increasing earning, numbers of business growing, more VAT registered businesses
- Increase employment and reduce unemployment: close gap between Walsall and England and West Midlands and, within Walsall, focus initiatives on groups and individuals not accessing the job market
- More competitive town and district centres: reduce number of vacant shop units, increase shopping centre yields

- Support sustainable growth of locally owned businesses: increased business confidence, increase amount of public sector procurement within Walsall
- Increase skill levels with reference to business need: job related training, increase skill levels of population
- Increase total entrepreneurial activity amongst the local population: more enterprises created, community based ICT infrastructure developed
- Physical regeneration of borough linked to previously economically inactive residents
- Attracting appropriate inward investment to the borough

Under all these headings there are a series of specific measures to enable us to identify our success. Additionally a numbers of the targets have been identified for Performance Reward where, subject to delivering substantial agreed improvements over and above our original intentions, central government will pay up to £8.56m reward grant.

Our Local Compact - working with community and voluntary organisations

Central to our Agreement, and to our approach to partnership working within the WBSP and generally, are community and voluntary groups, and the role of the community generally. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships will make sure that the impact of the Local Area Agreement is experienced at a very local level, just as working through the WBSP and with the community through the Community Empowerment Network and Walsall Voluntary Action, we are confident that our LAA reflects issues and concerns that are key to local people.

In September 2005 a revised and expanded Local Compact was launched alongside our Community Plan. The Compact is an agreement between public services including the council, the local NHS, and others, with the community and voluntary sector, operating within the framework provided by the WBSP. It has been developed by joint working between the agencies, and will help ensure effective joint working towards our common goals and vision for the borough of Walsall. The Compact provides clear standards and makes clear the way in which we should work together. It includes a set of detailed policy statement on effective joint working in terms of information and communication, consultation and engagement, funding issues, volunteering, learning and development, and in respect of disability organisations and black & minority ethnic community organisations. The Council is committed to the Local Compact and will continue to work with partners to ensure that the principles are reflected in all that it does in particular the on-going work on Local Area Agreement.

7. Making effective use of our resources

Our budget and capital programme are constructed in accordance with the principles set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); an integral aspect of our Corporate Integrated Planning & Performance Framework (CIPPF). This robust way of working has been in place for several years and governs our policy-led, medium term approach to financial planning and management. The MTFS contains eight key objectives that demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that financial activities contribute to the transformation, development and improvement of the organisation and that the budget enables delivery of our priorities, vision, aims objectives and pledges and stable, sustainable financial health. The audit commission has scored the council 3 out of 4 in the corporate assessment.

Consultation

Managers are accountable for delivering services to standard, on time and within budget, and are involved in constructing the base budget, bidding for investment and in working up savings options. Cabinet and EMT lead the budget process and fully participate throughout. Budget consultation takes place with a wide range of stakeholders; residents, service users, business and third sector representatives, employees and unions, and informs the process. Scrutiny panels examine the draft budget twice and their views are taken into account by cabinet before making a final recommendation to full Council. Risk management principles have been used throughout.

Delivering the vision

The budget and each investment and efficiency option is assessed as to its contribution or impact on delivery of the vision, the pledges and on service performance and quality. Capital investment is determined from the appraisal of capital proposal forms submitted by services and assessed against a similar framework and in accordance with the capital strategy.

Headlines for 2007/8

- The net budget requirement is £212.924m
- The Band D council tax will be £1,246.87; a 3.89% increase over last year
- Efficiencies of £2.776m, fees and charges of £1.591m and other savings of £3.399m will be implemented
- There is investment of £2.473m and corporate pressures of £3.965 m
- Opening general reserves will be £4.620m in line with the MTFS
- Central contingency will be £0.391m in line with the MTFS
- Funding for education is now through a Dedicated Schools Grant of £167.840 m
- The capital programme totals £66.820m, comprising mainstream schemes of £32.233 and grant funded projects of £34.587
- This will be funded by £9.573m supported borrowing, £17.660m of unsupported borrowing (Prudential Code) £5.000m of capital receipts and £34.587m of capital grants
- A leasing programme of £20.274m will be implemented.

Efficiency and value for money

The 2007/8 budget will fully deliver our Gershon efficiency targets and demonstrate value for money. The audit commission has scored the council 3 out of 4 in the corporate performance assessment for value for money.

More information

The CIPPF, MTFS, capital strategy, revenue budget and capital programme provide extensive details on the issues summarised in this section of the plan.

Statement on contracts

Set out below are details of contracts during the past financial year which have involved a transfer of staff under TUPE. All transfers complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

Transfers out of the authority are as follows:

100 employees transferred to Pinnacle Cleaning Services Ltd. (December 2006); of those, 45 people totally left the Council's employ, whilst 55 people were dual employed and have remained with the council to continue in their other posts

Transfers into the authority are as follows:

5 employees transferred in from the Children's Trust (April 2006)

4 employees transferred in from Blackwood Youth Service (January 2007)

8. Making things happen; our performance management framework

We recognise that robust and comprehensive performance management is essential in delivering service and corporate excellence. The purpose of performance management is to raise and maintain at a high level the performance levels of individuals, services and the authority as a whole to ensure that we deliver high quality, cost effective services. Performance management will make a significant contribution in delivering the council's vision of excellence.

The council's corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF) set out in diagrammatical form in chapter 2 presents key elements of our performance management process clearly and simply. This framework is continuously refined and developed over time with the assistance of our partners.

It is recognised that strategic risk management, as a corporate self diagnostic tool, provides demonstrable evidence of the organisation's capacity to improve. Hence risk management is an integral part of every planning process within this framework.

The diagram illustrates the relationship between the various elements that when jointly managed ensure continuous improvement and effective service delivery. Delivery of our vision for the borough of Walsall is managed through the various elements outlined in the diagram.

As with all council functions and policies, equality is a key foundation within our performance management framework and features within our service planning and individual performance management processes.

Performance management processes

1. Community Plan (Sustainable Community Strategy)

The overarching influence is the community plan and our relationship with the community and our partners. The community plan outlines the aspirations of the communities of Walsall which are further interpreted by the LAA and our own vision, priorities and pledges.

We are working closely with our partners on WBSP to develop the community strategy which builds on the existing community plan and addresses the requirements of the local government white paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities.

- Neighbourhood Agreements

These are plans developed by each of the nine local neighbourhood partnerships to address local issues and needs. They are intrinsically linked to the community plan as they represent the aspirations and priorities of local areas within the borough.

- Partner Plans

Increasing services are being delivered in partnership with other organisations as greater efficiencies are sought and consequently the priorities and plans of our partners influence those of the council.

- Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The LAA is a delivery plan for the WBSP setting out intentions that have been agreed with the government. It contains challenging targets for the improvement of services for the people of Walsall, promoting partnership working across all key service providers to achieve greater efficiencies and improved outcomes for residents and communities.

2. Corporate Plan, vision, priorities, pledges and values

The corporate plan outlines the main priorities and pledges for the organisation to achieve the vision and transform service delivery

3. Financial Planning

This encompasses all financial decision making processes from the medium term financial plan decision conferences, and strategic choices exercises through to the formal annual budget setting process and the individual management of budgets at service level. The various elements that jointly inform and deliver our financial planning and management are illustrated below.

Table 2 Financial aspects of the CIPPF

FINANCIAL STRATEGIES, PLANS & PROCESSES WITHIN THE CIPPF					
CATEGORY	OVERALL	REVENUE	CAPITAL	TREASURY MANAGEMENT	RISK MANAGEMENT
Strategies	MTFS				
			Capital Strategy	Treasury Management Strategy	Risk Management Strategy
Guidance	CIPFA & technical guidance	Budget Guidelines	Capital Guidelines	CIPFA Code of Practice for TM	Risk Management Toolkit
Plans	MTFP	Annual Budget	Capital Programme & AMP	Treasury Policy Statement	Risk Management Action Plans
Governance	Constitution	Budget Management & Control Manual & SIC		Prudential Indicators & Annual Report	Risk Register reporting and regular review
	Contract & Finance Procedure Rules				Audit Cttee Reports & annual report
	Internal & External Audit Plans and our response to inspection and audit				

4. Directorate plans, service plans and team plans
Recognising the strategic importance of the corporate plan, key statutory documents and neighbourhood agreements and partner plans, this element also includes all planning processes from the directorate plan through to the service and team plans produced that detail the actions being taken to deliver the priorities. There are various influences upon the planning process which are related to external and internal factors as detailed below. For example consultation is a key influence and driver for service delivery and improvement and can be either a corporate process, e.g. the Citizens Panel, or service based.
 - Directorate plans detail how each directorate will contribute towards the corporate plan
 - Service and team plans are more detailed plans for individual council services and teams, setting out specific targets and improvements to be achieved over a three period but focussing on the current year.
5. Workforce Planning
Major improvements in performance come when the right people with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours are deployed appropriately. Workforce planning is the process of analysing the future skills and competencies that are needed to deliver new and improved services, and assessing the strengths and development needs of our current workforce against these requirements. This element is informed by the IPM process and includes both corporate and directorate workforce development plans and training programmes. It is closely linked to the council's organisational development and human resources strategies and is influenced by external and internal factors in the same way as service planning.
6. Individual Performance Management Plans
The IPM process provides a framework for managers and staff to meet and discuss work targets and personal development and training needs. It allows managers to give constructive feedback on employee performance and is the forum through which priorities are translated from service and team plans into individual actions. IPM is an integral element of the CIPPF and applies to all employees.
7. External audit and inspection
Audit and inspections are a key process for assessing the performance of a service or function and for identifying ways improvements can be made. External inspections (e.g. CPA) also provide an opportunity to benchmark the performance of the council against other authorities and to share best practice.
8. Internal monitoring, review and corrective action
The continual monitoring, review and implementation of required corrective action is vital to ensure continuous improvement and is undertaken at every level of the financial, service and individual planning processes. In addition this ensures that we take action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better than they would have otherwise been. It is recognised that both officers and elected members play key roles in the deliver of effective performance management to deliver continuous improvement. Key to this is the way services react and learn from the monitoring they undertake whether it is in the form of customer feedback or as a performance action plan.

9. Sources of further information

The council produces a wide range of information, including other key plans and strategies, as described in chapter 8. Details of these plans can be found on the **council's web site**, www.walsall.gov.uk, or obtained from the directorate or service concerned.

Of particular note are the **Corporate Budget Plan**, covering the five years from 2007/08 to 2011/12, published each year, the document '**People & Place Perspectives: a picture of our community**' which is available on the council's web site and provides a detailed insight into the borough, and its people and their needs, through the provision and analysis of demographic and other statistical information, the results of consultation and other customer feedback. Also published each year is a set of key **Performance Data**, which is produced in June as a supplement to this Corporate Plan and contains a wide range of key performance information relating to our services. This is supplemented by the quarterly progress reports on key performance targets, including the council's pledges, set out in our Beacon Index reports. Current performance data can be found on the council's web site.

Also available is the borough's **Community Plan** (Sustainable Community Strategy), prepared by the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership. This is available on the WBSP's own web site at www.wbsp.org.uk, along with a range of other information on the Borough Strategic Partnership.

Also available on the council's web site are full details relating to the **council's decision making processes**, including the council's **constitution**, and details of the role of the cabinet, the scrutiny & performance panels, the standards committee and regulatory committees for development control and licensing, and at a local level details relating to the nine local neighbourhood partnerships. Details of **forthcoming meetings**, as well as reports and minutes, are available on the web site, as are details relating to elected **councillors**, their electoral wards and local 'surgeries'. Details can also be obtained from local libraries.

The council operates in accordance with the **Freedom of Information Act** (FOIA) and related legislation. Information held by the council and by council services which is not already available publicly can be requested in line with the FOIA, and the council will respond within 20 working days. In some instances, where the council may be unable to release information, a reason will be provided. For more information, visit the council web site at www.walsall.gov.uk.

Comments, complaints and compliments about council services can be made at any council service, by letter or using the council-wide Tellus form, or via the council web site. Complaints will be acknowledged promptly, and a full response will normally be provided within 15 working days.