

# Cabinet Member Briefing – Street Pride



## Introduction

### Our Council Plan - Priorities

Our residents have told us that they want Walsall to be somewhere that is seen as “a thriving, safe and clean place to live.” Delivering cleaner, greener streets and open spaces is a key part of realising this aspiration and something that I am passionate about as the Street Pride portfolio holder.

## Our Service Delivery

Over the past 12 months, our operational teams have continued to deliver efficient, high performing services.

### Highway maintenance and parking services

The council maintains around 520 miles of local road network. Over the past year more than 4,000 defects have been repaired and 11 miles of road have been resurfaced. Around 37,000 drains have been cleaned and 10 miles of road markings have been refreshed. Throughout the colder months, our winter service team kept the roads safe, completing 25 gritting runs at all hours of the day and night. Reflecting the success of the service, in November, the council were shortlisted as a Best Performer in the APSE Performance Networks Awards for Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance.

Over the past two years, the council have changed over 21,000 streetlights to energy efficient LED lanterns. The project has delivered significant energy savings and the implementation of a central monitoring system now allows us to identify issues remotely to ensure a timely response.

Road safety continues to be a priority and in July the council secured moving traffic enforcement powers. By September enforcement was underway at ten school street locations, helping to ensure that our school gates are safe places and, that our children and young people have opportunities to safety walk, cycle and scoot to school. The income generated by enforcement is now being reinvested to deliver more measures that will make our school gates and the surrounding roads safer.

### Household waste collection

The reliability of our household waste collection services continues to exceed the national average with 6.5 million bin collections completed on time. Once again, we offered our residents fortnightly garden

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waste collections throughout the summer season of 2023. The 2024 collections are now underway and once again, the services is free of charge to the borough's residents.

### **Street cleansing and grounds maintenance**

This year the teams have continued to tackle litter and fly-tipping head on. Multi-agency working has included skip days and targeted operations to clear waste and educate residents and landlords about how best to dispose of their waste. The Environmental Crime Scene project has continued to go from strength to strength, representing a groundbreaking approach to tackling fly-tipping. In the worst affected wards, up to 73% of fly-tips targeted were removed before the council returned to clear the waste. This project has been hugely successful, engaging local communities and other stakeholders such as Walsall Housing Group, all working together to reduce environmental crime within Walsall.

As spring arrives, the council has resumed grounds maintenance services including the treatment of weeds on the highway, paths and in our town and district centres. Once again, the service will be embracing greener methods of working, using an electric quad bike to deliver the treatment of weeds. Introduced in 2023, this has already been noted within the industry with others looking to follow Walsall's lead.

As well as reducing our carbon footprint, we are working hard to tackle biodiversity loss. The council's grass cutting programme has been reviewed over the past 12 months. Over the coming year, residents will see a new regime being delivered around the borough that stives to balance aesthetic appearance with longer grass to benefit wildlife and offer improved access to nature.

### **Tree Inspections**

The council maintain around 40,000 trees and various areas of woodland which enhance the boroughs street scene and create valuable biodiversity. A contract for tree inspections is continuing to operate successfully and ensuring that the borough's trees are checked and maintained in a timely manner and to a safe standard.

### **Our Staff**

Some of the teams delivering the street pride portfolio were the first to engage with the council's fantastic apprenticeship programme 7 years ago. Since then, over 20 staff have successfully completed their HGV driver apprenticeship which is great for the individuals and great for the service. Additionally, this year, operational managers and team leaders have been some of the first to complete the council's new Connected Working management programme which promotes a learning and continuous improvement culture. The success of the programme has been such that the work at the depot has been shortlisted for a national award.

## **Our Strategies**

### **Waste Strategy**

To achieve our commitment to be a net zero borough by 2041 we will need to manage our waste in a sustainable way. A long-term waste strategy will provide a framework for achieving this and work to develop our strategic approach has continued this year.

Developed in line with new statutory duties, as set out in the Environment Act 2021, the strategy will set out how the council will work towards achieving the national target of recycling 65% of municipal waste by 2035 and to send less than 10% of municipal waste to landfill within the same timescale.

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The strategy will set out the council's long term investment strategies necessary to deliver the required waste infrastructure to ensure that all waste is processed in the most sustainable way. Several of these exciting initiatives are already underway and the lessons learned throughout the implementation of the new materials recycling facility are informing how we approach future projects.

Finally, if we are to tackle some of our biggest challenges, we need to shift consumer behaviours. Over the past 12 months we have been engaging with our customers to better understand why they make the choice they do and how we can better promote the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. As we look to the new year, this valuable input from our customers will shape the approach we take to promoting those behaviours that make the greatest contribution to carbon reduction and efficient resource management.

### **Our Projects**

#### **MRF Joint Venture – Sherbourne Recycling Limited (SRL)**

In October, there was an exceptionally smooth transitional period as Sherbourne Recycling Ltd, a council part owned by the council, began processing Walsall's recycling. This new state of art waste facility will provide the Council with a long-term solution for disposing of dry mixed recycling materials and drive-up recycling rates. The materials recycling facility [MRF] is now fully operational and an excellent example of the council working with seven other local authorities to deliver the most advanced MRF in Europe using artificial intelligence to sort materials in the most cost-effective way.

#### **Middlemore Lane – Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and a large Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC)**

The design stage for the new waste transfer station and household waste recycling centre at Middlemore Lane was completed earlier this year following a revision to the planning permission in November. This new facility will enable the Council to future proof waste services and deliver a number of benefits to the residents of Walsall. There will be increase capacity for accommodate future housing growth, improved HWRC facilities, including a reuse shop, and the elimination of vehicles queuing at the HWRC site and surrounding areas. With construction due to start over the summer, this is will be a fantastic service improvement for the residents of Walsall.

#### **Innovation in garden waste**

Not only has the council been exploring ways to reduce waste and increase recycling, but we have also sought innovative opportunities to generate a financial return from the waste we collect. This year a project has commenced to explore the potential to turn our garden waste in energy using innovative pyrolysis technology. Feasibility work has progressed and we look forward to continue developing the opportunity in the year to come.

#### **Food waste collection**

In October 2023, the government announced that weekly collections of food waste will be introduced for most households across England and work is well underway to deliver this service in Walsall, commencing in 2026. Food waste collections will significantly reduce the amount of organic waste going to landfill and promote a more sustainable approach to waste management. As we develop our plans, we will consult with residents about how best to help them recycle their household waste, including food waste. Recycling rates are not where we would like them to be and therefore it is essential that we deliver this service in an accessible and convenient way to encourage active participation.

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### Thank you!

Finally, I want to conclude my report to Council by recognising the significant contribution made by our staff, our partners and our communities.

Highway maintenance and parking services strive to keep the road network safe and keep traffic on the move, providing access to work, education and leisure. Our frontline teams work hard throughout the year, in all weathers, to ensure that waste is collected on time, litter bins are emptied, streets are cleaned, and the council's soft landscape is maintained. A large proportion of our workforce are also our residents, and they demonstrate genuine commitment and passion as they carry out their daily tasks in a borough that they're proud to also call home.

The council cannot create a cleaner, greener borough in isolation. Over the past 12 months, collaboration with our supply chain and partners has continued to grow and is something we look forward to building on further in the year to come.

Finally, our community groups and volunteers do invaluable work to supplement the services the council provide. The council spend £1.5m tackling the problem of litter dropped by an inconsiderate minority. Our local volunteers do a great job giving their support to us in our fight against litter as a part of all our efforts to make Walsall an attractive place to live, work and visit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kerry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cllr Kerry Murphy, Cabinet Member - Portfolio Holder for Street Pride