

## **Council – 17th November 2014**

### **Regeneration Portfolio Briefing to Council**

The following information provides an overview of the Regeneration portfolio, with particular reference to the current challenges faced in regenerating Walsall, the key achievements of the directorate over the last year and an outline of some of the priorities looking forward.

#### **Context for Walsall's Regeneration**

Despite evidence of a slight upturn in activity, Walsall continues to face economic challenges which have a significant impact on our businesses and people. This compounds some of the challenges Walsall already faced such as low skills; an economy over reliant on traditional sectors; an underperforming private sector; high levels of unemployment particularly amongst our young people; and a historical lack of investment in the borough particularly in our key centres.

The Council's regeneration approach is absolutely focussed on understanding and addressing these challenges and promoting economic growth, as reflected in the Council's Corporate Priority and the Walsall Economic Board purpose of:

***Creating the conditions for sustained economic growth by supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work.***

We are doing this by focussing on 10 key objectives:

- **Understanding our customers and designing our services against demand**
- **Supporting economic growth**
- **Creating the right sites & conditions for business growth**
- **Improving our Town and District centres**
- **Providing the most appropriate transport infrastructure**
- **Managing our assets effectively**
- **Addressing unemployment**
- **Improving skills**
- **Delivering new and better homes**
- **Securing and maximising funding**

These objectives directly support the emerging corporate priorities:

- **Creating Jobs and helping people get new skills**
- **Helping local high streets and communities**
- **Support with the cost of living**
- **Helping create more Affordable Housing**
- **Support with Cost of Living**
- **Improving Educational Achievements**

## **Walsall's 20,000 jobs challenge**

Walsall suffers significant structural economic challenges that manifest across its people, place and business themes.

The starkest issue we face is the lack of jobs per adult. We need approximately **20,000** net new jobs in the Borough to get to national average of jobs per head of population for a population of our size.

Area	Adults 16-64	Employment	Jobs per adult	At National Level	Shortfall	% Shortfall
Walsall	167,300	98,400	0.59	117,900	19,500	20%
Dudley	193,900	109,600	0.57	136,600	27,000	25%
Sandwell	196,200	124,700	0.64	138,300	13,600	11%
Wolverhampton	159,600	110,700	0.69	112,500	1,700	2%
Black Country	716,900	443,400	0.62	505,200	61,800	14%
England	3,430,700	24,177,600	0.70	24,177,600	0	0

*Source: ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, 2012; ONS Mid-2012 Population Estimates*

## **Understanding our Customers**

### **The challenge**

- To understand the needs of our customers (employers and those seeking employment) and work with them to achieve what they want, how they want it. We will regularly review and use this understanding to deliver better services and work with partners to a common objective in support of the regeneration of Walsall.
  - Current employer demand.
  - Business as current employers employing Walsall people.
  - New and future business growth.

### **Achievements in last year**

- A sustained programme of business engagement to understand customer needs.
- This has been undertaken by developing greater knowledge of Walsall's strategic companies and medium-sized businesses
- Establishing and implementing an effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system as a tool to support this business engagement - Evolutive
- Walsall has played a key supporting role in development of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the LEP's strategic agenda.
- Continued to support the business-led Walsall Economic Board.

### **Future Priorities**

- To continue to forge links with our strategic companies through direct employer engagement, which will require at times a high level political input to facilitate strong relationships with key employers in the Borough.
- Maximise the role that businesses themselves can play in promoting Walsall as a business location, and raise participation in corporate social responsibility initiatives

- Develop and expand the use of the CRM system to further support business engagement that has been implemented this year
- Bringing forward new sites and development opportunities including those identified in the Local Growth Fund
- Continuing to promote new and future business growth by understanding the investment and development market in Walsall, the wider Black Country and nationally to facilitate development activity
- Understanding our indigenous business base and current employer land and property demands to support their growth and expansion.

## **Supporting Economic growth**

### **The challenge**

- Identifying and supporting the development of businesses operating in key sectors and attracting new employers.
- Maximising Supply chain opportunities for Walsall businesses.
- Delivering targeted effective business support, to promote longer term sustainability.
- Ensuring local people hold the skills and abilities required by employers

### **Achievements in last year**

- Re-launched [www.walsall.com](http://www.walsall.com) as a single point of entry for online business portal to capture investment and business growth enquiries.
- Created the Employment Growth Team to deliver a sustained programme of targeted, active business engagement rather than simply reacting to the demands of all businesses
- Between April 13 – October 14, the teams have engaged with 993 companies.(569 57%, in the first 7 months of this year)
- 219 (25%) of the enquiries received were from businesses seeking financial assistance. 126 of these enquiries were successfully completed as a direct result of officers input, securing £6.364 million investment, assisted by £4 million of public sector investment, that will create 286 jobs, for Walsall
- Successful completion of the WNF Programme which supported 400 businesses to grow.
- Developed and now managing the new Black Country wide inward investment service – Invest Black Country (IBC), which is now working collaboratively with both Marketing Birmingham and UKTI, So far IBC has levered in to the Black Country around £11.8million of new investment. IBC has now established contact with 25 overseas embassies, it has launch an online automotive supply chain site, called The Black Country Bullet, and has been placed 10<sup>th</sup> in the UK for foreign direct investment (up from 29<sup>th</sup> position, the year before)
- Site identification, property advice and advice on access to finance support to Walsall Businesses and Inward Investment opportunities working closely with Invest Black Country
- Leading on the delivery of the ERDF funded Black Country Business Property Investment Programme (BCBPIP).
- Providing advice and support to pre- starts, start-ups and SMEs on a range of business development enquiries by working directly with businesses and local providers such as the Black Country Growth Factory partners and local colleges.

- Facilitating through the delivery of new commercial development a rise in business rate in order to grow the income base for Walsall Council, and through business support assist to safeguard the existing income from our strategic companies and significant retail businesses.
- The new European Union 2014 – 2020 programme has been launched and Walsall Council officers are supporting its development with active roles in the development of the BC EU Investment Strategy, which once approved could lever in up to £200m of new funding for the Black Country.
- Walsall Council Officers actively participated in the development of the SEP (Strategic Economic Plan) for the Black Country, providing leadership on many themes. This is successfully leveraging in resources, with over £20million earmarked for Walsall projects.

### **Future Priorities**

- The delivery of the approved new Economic Growth Programme provides around £5million of new investment until April 2015 and is targeted to achieve the following outcomes: 5000 local people supported into work or training, 3000 people supported into employment, 750 qualifications achieved, 500 businesses assisted, £5million of new business linked to / secured by Walsall employers
- Continuation of services that directly support the growth of employment levels within Walsall, including the following key employment sectors: Advanced & Traditional Manufacturing, Business & Financial Services, Environmental Technologies, Construction, Health & Social Care, Logistics, Food Production / Sales, Retail
- Continue managing and developing the IBC, Inward Investment service to continue to secure new investment and the stimulation of new job growth.
- Successful delivery of the Black Country Business Property Investment programme
- Continued engagement with our Strategic Companies as a baseline for our future business engagement and have developed meaningful relationships with our top 50 companies to facilitate their expansion and relocation aspirations.
- Facilitating through the delivery of new commercial development a rise in business rate in order to grow the income base for Walsall Council, and through business support assist to safeguard the existing income from our strategic companies and significant retail businesses.
- Working to take the SEP from outline approval to delivery stage, with £17.47m of approvals for Walsall Projects (Goscote Lane Corridor, Bentley Lane and Junction 10 of the M6) received, together with a possible 25% (£3million) share of the Accessing Growth Programme of £12m.

### **Creating the right sites and conditions for business growth**

#### **The challenge**

- Ensuring current & future businesses have the right sites and premises in the right place, at the right time, with fit for purpose infrastructure, by working with private sector land owners and investors to bring forward key commercial and employment sites.

- Undertaking activity to de-risk development opportunities with the private sector by brokering and negotiating development solutions that create the conditions for growth and prosperity.
- Delivering the right transportation projects that open up future employment sites and aid the movement of traffic throughout and through Walsall.
- Ensuring an integrated end to end Development and 'Business friendly' planning service to improve the attractiveness of Walsall as a business location.

### **Achievements in last year**

- Work has continued on producing a borough-wide Site and Allocation Document (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP).
- Successfully identifying, facilitating developing a programme of interventions to acquire remediate and bring land forward for development underpinned by the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan attracting over £20million of funding to Walsall projects.
- Successfully attracted Local Growth Fund investment of £170m, including the development of the M6 Junction 10 transport scheme to improve both internal traffic movement and access to wider national networks (see transport section below).
- Leading the programme management and delivery of the Black Country Enterprise Zone key projects such as Phoenix 10, through the Black Country EZ Investment Strategy and finance model on behalf of the BC LEP.
- Continuing to support the delivery of the City Deal- Black Country Investment Fund.
- Leading on work to explore best practice and identify innovative ways to utilise resources and assets to support regeneration projects and increase our credibility within the investment market and amongst our strategic partners.
- Supporting the Built and Natural Environment through the delivery of our statutory duties in support of the Planning process and supporting the protection of our heritage and natural assets, including the delivery of the TPO and Conservation services along with ecological advice and policy along with the Landscape Design function supporting the delivery of Council led initiatives.
- Commencement of the Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) transport access to jobs improvements.

### **Future Priorities**

- Adopt the SAD and AAP through the statutory process including an Examination in Public in 2016.
- Potential investment within the Enterprise Zone- with the phased delivery of these sites creating approximately 65 new jobs and create 4,000sqm of floorspace by 2015/16, approximately 450 new jobs, and 32,000sqm of floorspace by 2017/18, and 2,000 new jobs in the Darlaston element by 2038.
- Continue to work on projects that have the ability to deliver 17,000 jobs, creating approximately 500,000sqm of development attracting £500m of investment
- Continue to work with our partners the Homes & Communities Agency to deliver a market- facing solution for the Phoenix 10 project contributing significantly to the job creation forecasts for the Enterprise Zone.
- Identify and progress specific site acquisitions and assembly, to provide a portfolio of sites reflective of future demand
- Develop and deliver grant funding mechanisms to assist relocation and expansion.

- Continue with the delivery of the DFSDA transport access to jobs programme that assists with opening up the Darlaston Enterprise Zone for new investment (see transport section below).
- Continue with the development of the M6 junction 10 major scheme business case, for further funding consideration (see transport section below).
- Accessing and maximising the opportunities for funding and programme development / delivery to support local businesses to grow employment levels, provided through the new European Programme (2014 – 2020) for the Black Country.

## **Supporting our Town and District Centres**

### **The challenge**

- To stimulate investment in Walsall Town Centre as our key Strategic centre, whilst also supporting the economic viability of our district centres.
- To improve the visitor experience in our centres to encourage footfall and protect the town and district centres from competing / inappropriate developments

### **Achievements in last year**

- £460 million of investment within last 5 years creating circa 3,000 jobs
- 1 million sq feet of investment delivered in Walsall town centre
- 600 new residential units developed in Walsall Waterfront
- Direct development of Phase 1 of the Old Square redevelopment to support a new Primark Store and a Co-Op store
- Leading the delivery of key town centre projects in Walsall Waterfront, Walsall Gigaport and St Matthew's Quarter through direct interventions and development in retail, office and leisure-led sectors all to underpin the economic success of the town centre because of the important role it plays to the prosperity of the wider borough.
- Actively supported 'Kier' and 'Cordwell' property developers in their respective leisure-led development opportunities and approved planning permissions for two cinema and restaurant based developments at Waterfront and in Littleton Street, which are hoped to commence in 2014
- Directly supported Walsall College in the submission of a successful funding application and approved a planning application for the new Business and Sports Hub adjacent to the college in Littleton Street which is on site.
- Supporting Norton and Proffit in the delivery of their proposed £12m retail scheme and granting of planning permission which will create 200 new jobs
- Continued to support the Town Team in Walsall
- Supported new and relocating businesses during the last 12 months creating new jobs.
- Innovation fund successes
- Facilitated in the reduction of vacant units in the districts centres
- Markets Service, working towards a first-class offer within the town and district centres that contributes successfully to the vitality and vibrancy of our centres.

## **Future priorities**

- Walsall Town Centre – Continue to work with in partnership with Threadneedle to secure further phases in the Old Square redevelopment following the commencement of the initial phase.
- Continuing to secure a long term solution for Walsall Market to deliver a permanent and fit for purpose market.
- Complete the remediation of the former Noirit site to enable the delivery of the scheme as granted planning permission in April 2014 for an office based development for Jhoots Pharmacy HQ and two other buildings with Jessop developers; and as supported by external funding secured with the input of the Council.
- Walsall Waterfront – develop deliverable and viable plans/options for Waterfront north sites (either with or without the Kier Cinema based development) together with the Lex site.
- Pipeline projects ‘the next 8 town centre projects’ to be developed in Walsall town centre creating an additional £145m investment and 4,400 jobs.
- Continue to support the innovative work of the Town and District Centre Management team work to look after and manage our Centres today through activity that supports business to directly contribute to the prosperity and success of their localities through our town centre partnerships and their programmes of intervention and support to locally-led projects
- Deliver the Town Centre Area Action Plan

## **Providing an effective transport infrastructure**

### **The challenge**

We need to provide an up to date transport infrastructure that supports our economic growth, by allowing the effective movement of traffic and people both within and through our borders, utilising all national networks.

### **Achievements and future priorities**

- The Black Country LEP prioritised its major transport schemes for 2015 to 2019 in summer 2013. These included the development of a major improvement scheme for M6 Junction 10 and a new rail station at Aldridge (coupled with electrification of the line).
- Successfully bid through the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) to implement the design stages (£650k) of the £50m+ improvement scheme at M6 J10 in partnership with the Highways Agency, who have pledged almost £30m towards the project. Other improvement works have also been approved as part of an ‘Access to Growth’ transport package, including access improvements to development sites at Bentley Lane and the former Willenhall Sewage Works, and at two busy junctions on the A461 corridor at Salter’s Road and Shire Oak.
- Full approval gained for the delivery of the ‘Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) Access Project’ works and means that highway works totalling almost £10million which has started on site. These will build on advance works that have already been successfully delivered to clear sites and build a new rail bridge in Bentley Road South.
- This Access Project will support the physical regeneration and commercial potential of the nearby existing and future employment sites within the Black Country

Enterprise Zone. The works will be further supported by the Council's desire to pursue proposed improvements at M6 J10 via the Black Country Local Growth Fund. In-turn, this will support existing employers and help to catalyse new inward investment into the Borough.

- Officers are working with Centro to address connectivity to the proposed HS2 rail stations. It is anticipated that this will involve upgrading some aspects of the local rail network, so that good connections are achieved and the benefits of HS2 are fully realised for Walsall businesses and residents alike.
- Officers are also working with Network Rail to manage the implementation of works within the Borough to electrify the Chase Line railway from Walsall station to Rugeley Trent Valley. Several bridges are being improved as part of this scheme, which will see electric rolling stock, with greater seating capacity and improved reliability, running on the line from 2018.

### **Future priorities**

- Continuing with the development and delivery of the DSDA access to jobs Transport programme
- Continuing with the development of the business case for the M6 Junction 10 following the successful Local Growth Fund allocation
- Securing Walsall schemes as both local and national funding priorities
- Working with Network Rail to continue with the development of improvements to our rail infrastructures.

### **Managing our Assets Effectively**

#### **The challenge**

- Ensuring our property assets help stimulate the Borough's regeneration.
- Manage our properties efficiently, responsibly, and at less cost to the Council

#### **Achievements in last year**

- Supporting capital investment and regeneration through the disposal of surplus property assets generating capital receipts for the council Managing and maintaining property assets including on behalf of schools and other services to ensure continuity of services to customers
- Completed a review of all the Council's Property assets and develop property solutions which help to achieve the council's priorities and outcomes
- Completed the delivery of the £8 million 'Smarter Workplaces' programme, to rationalise office accommodation in the Civic Centre, improve the quality and flexibility of working environments for staff and generate significant ongoing savings.

#### **Future priorities**

- Greater strategic focus around how we use our assets to support the Corporate regeneration agenda.
- Actively manage operational properties to meet customers' needs and remove unnecessary property related expenditure and costs.



- Completed a review of all the Council's Property assets and develop property solutions in line with market requirements which help to achieve the council's priorities and outcomes
- Work with others in all sectors to optimise property solutions
- Develop a programme of targeted site acquisitions to assemble more viable development opportunities and support key regeneration projects, and to be endorsed by the Asset Strategy Group.

## **Addressing Unemployment**

### **The challenge**

- Addressing the greater than national average levels of worklessness in the Borough.
- Organising and delivering activity with key partners to directly assist unemployed people into work
- Ensuring that local communities have access to new job opportunities and employer influenced training.
- The sustainability / development / continuation of programmes, specifically accessing funding and support through sources including the Lottery and the new European Programme.

### **Achievements in last year**

- There has been a reduction of JSA claimants from a rate of 6.3% to 3.7%, 4360 fewer people. Youth unemployment has dropped from 3285 to 1660 claimants.
- Continued to deliver the Walsall Works programme which has;
  - Supported 438 young people into sustainable employment through apprenticeships with local employers.
  - Supported 395 young people back into learning in preparation for a full apprenticeships.
  - Given over 2493 young people information, advice and guidance regarding apprenticeships
  - Given 220 employers financial incentives to take on local young people as apprentices
  - Leveraged over £5 million of additional funding to the borough for the training, grants and employment of young people as apprentices and learner. This money is in the form of Skills Funding Agency training contributions, National Apprenticeship Grants and employer salary contributions.
- Successful completion of the WNF 'Worklessness' programme which supported 3000 local people into work.
- Facilitated and attended 58 employment support events which have attracted nearly 2000 local people to attend and secure help with their job search and have engaged with 72 business representatives.
- Secured a commitment from the Black Country LEP through the City Deal to increase the number of engineering apprenticeships in the High Value manufacturing sector by 1,500 throughout the Black Country over five years.
- Implementation of the Employment, Training and Supplier Plan to ensure that Walsall residents are able to benefit from future housing and commercial developments in the borough. The plan has been tested with developers of major

- projects and contracts in order to guarantee a certain number of job vacancies, training opportunities and employer-school engagements for the local community.
- Worked with Revenue and Benefits colleagues to embed employment support within different customer facing areas of Walsall Council – ensuring that Walsall Council customers who may need employment support the most, are made aware of it, and are referred to partner agencies where appropriate.
  - Secured funding to delivery the Working Together, a Housing, Jobs and Prosperity pilot project with Accord housing and other housing association partners. Walsall Council will be the accountable body for this £5.6 million scheme that will seek to increase the employability and employment of 2,800 long-term unemployed and economically inactive Black Country residents.
  - Commenced delivery of the BC Talent Match programme in partnership with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations and the Big Lottery Fund. The Black Country will receive over £10 million, the largest grant allocation in the country, and will support over 1,400 of the most disengaged young people in the Black Country back into employment or training.
  - Worked closely with BC LEP in preparation of the BC Local Economic Plan around the theme of 'People' which resulted in a capital funding award of £25m for 2015/16
  - Development of the EUSIF Strategy in relation to the ESF funding themes of social inclusion, workforce development, worklessness, youth unemployment.

### **Future Priorities**

- The co-ordination of activities to address Worklessness, provided through a range of partners and the delivery of contracted services that support local people directly into work.
- The continuation of the Walsall Works Apprenticeship scheme and the development of a sustainability strategy for 15/16 and beyond.
- The sustainability / development / continuation of programmes, specifically accessing funding and support through sources including: The Lottery and the new European Programme.
- Accessing and maximising the opportunities for funding and programme development / delivery to support local people into employment, provided through the new European Programme (2014 – 2020) for the Black Country.

### **Improving Skills - in response to employer needs**

#### **The challenge**

- Ensuring Walsall people have the skills and experiences required by local businesses to get and sustain employment.
- Ensuring skills provision reflects current and future employer needs.

#### **Achievements in last year**

- Supported local people to achieve vocational qualifications, in support of their aims in seeking progression and ultimately sustainable employment through apprenticeships and in-work learning.
- Worked with a range of key agencies including; the Skills Funding Agency, Jobcentre Plus, Further Education colleges, training providers and others to influence, and assist with the design, delivery and referrals to a number of key skills

initiatives such as Skills up, Black Country Skills Factory, Adult Learning, Traineeships and Study Programmes.

- Worked with Walsall College and two other local training providers to submit outline business cases for skills capital funding for infrastructure improvements in training facilities that align to the BC transformational sectors ie engineering, manufacturing and construction sectors.

### **Future Priorities**

- Understanding and meeting existing Walsall businesses skill requirements especially in key growth sectors, ensuring that Walsall Businesses remain competitive.
- For potential Walsall businesses, understanding the predicted need of the marketplace and working with suppliers to influence their future delivery plans and strategies, to ensure a match.
- Develop forward thinking programmes which are helping to equip people with the skills required to secure employment in the future
- Working to draft plans and strategies that will influence future local and national spending, ensuring a match with our employer's future skills needs and requirements, for example through the evolving Black Country City deal.
- Accessing and maximising the opportunities for funding and programme development / delivery to support local people to acquire the skills they need to gain employment, provided through the new European Programme (2014 – 2020) for the Black Country.

### **Delivering new and better Homes**

#### **The challenge**

- Supporting housing development and unlocking stalled / viability challenged housing schemes to improve the provision of new homes across the borough
- Ensuring Walsall people have access to a range of affordable housing options that reflect their needs

#### **Achievements in last year**

- Affordable housing provision: approximately 380 affordable new homes completed in 2013/14
- Supported Walsall Housing Group to secure planning consents and implementation of new housing units in Goscote, Moxley and Brownhills following the production of masterplans and frameworks providing the strategic vision for these locations. In particular Keepmoat have now been selected by whg to develop 400 mixed tenure homes in Goscote, and Kier are on site delivering the Harrowby Road site in Moxley. 2013/14 also saw completion of the award nominated Whitworth Close development in Darlaston, the first timber framed development by Accord from the new Beechdale factory, providing high levels of energy efficiency and low heating bills. In addition, the development of 47 affordable homes at Wood Street, Willenhall by Accord saw a longstanding derelict brownfield site be redeveloped as a potential kickstart to further regeneration of Willenhall
- 33 applicants have bought their first home using Walsall's Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, administered by Lloyds bank

## **Future priorities**

- Continue to provide support to stimulate the housing market within Walsall, whilst also securing income from Council owned land disposals for residential purposes; working with public and private house builders and landlords.
- Maximise the number of affordable homes provided through the 2015/18 HCA grant funding regime, with a particular refocus on ensuring mixed tenure, rather than mono tenure schemes
- Increase the number of new energy efficient homes.
- Reduce the impact of welfare reform and stem the increase in homelessness by encouraging developers to provide suitable housing developments, which take into account the impacts of bedroom tax.
- Support whg in the attraction of Local Growth Funding to support the delivery of the transformational housing programme in Goscote

## **Securing and maximising funding**

### **The Challenge**

The EU releases funding to support Economic Growth and to promote Social Inclusion through a 6 year funding allocation to each EU country, with the next programme beginning in 2014. The UK government is allocating a proportional amount to each of the 39 LEP's, the Black Country's provisional allocation is around £151m (177m euro), consisting of both ESF (European Social Fund) and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund).

The funding allocation is to be spent against key delivery themes, which include:

- Innovation, research and Technology
- SME Competitiveness
- Low Carbon Economy
- Skills, Employment and Social Inclusion
- Sustainable Transport

To access this EU funding, together with ensuring that we continue to deliver the current 2007 – 2014 EU programme, we established (on behalf of the Black Country) a new Technical Assistance (TA) External Funding Team. Managed by Walsall Council, this team is now providing the specialist knowledge and expertise required to access and secure EU and complementary match funding.

### **Achievements**

- Establishing and delivering the successful Black Country (TA) External Funding Team
- To be able to access funding, the LEP had to submit a Strategic Investment Strategy for the sub-region, setting out the priorities for spend, our proposed initiatives, projects and resultant outcomes and expenditure profiles to include sources of match funding (at a rate of 50%).

- Feedback from Government stated that our strategy was very good and we were congratulated on our submission, which could secure up to £200m for the Black Country.

### **Future Priorities**

- Continuing the work of the Black Country (TA) External Funding Team and its sustainability.
- National Operational Programmes are currently being finalised, with an expected approval date of November 2014, we will continue to support this process.
- First calls for proposals from Local Projects are expected to begin in December 2014, with first spend early 2015, we will continue with the development of submissions.
- The continued development of the project pipeline to ensure projects are ready for submission for first call for proposals
- Production of a Black Country Prospectus detailing the priorities and types of interventions that are likely to be funded.
- Capacity building activity to ensure that local organisations are able to effectively submit and bid for monies

### **Conclusion**

Despite the ongoing economic challenges, we continue to see considerable achievements, which have compensated in part for some of the issues the Borough has faced and which provide a basis for optimism about the future. Despite the obvious challenges, Walsall has sustained a steady stream of investment over recent years across the Borough - in part due to our external reputation as a Council that is open for business and which is focussed on making things happen. We need to continue this momentum in securing investment and our overall aim of creating jobs for Walsall people.

In order to do this we will retain a clear focus on the desired outcomes that we need to achieve in delivering our purpose of creating the conditions for sustained economic growth. This will need to be done in a number of ways, but critically through promoting investor confidence, supporting businesses to thrive and increasing employment opportunities.

The attraction of investment, the creation of new jobs, the retention of existing jobs and the continued emphasis on the up-skilling of Walsall people will provide a stimulus to Walsall's wider economy, and will help reduce the burden on a range of Council support services. In turn this will help continue the commitment to make Walsall a place in which its residents and communities are proud to live and work.

Councillor M Nazir  
Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Regeneration  
7 November 2014