



Economy and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

24 October 2024 at 6:00PM

Meeting Venue: Council Chamber at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

[Livestream Link](#)

Membership:

Councillor M Follows (Chair)
Councillor J Whitehouse (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M Bird
Councillor P Bott
Councillor S Cheema
Councillor P Gill
Councillor F Hassan
Councillor A Hicken
Councillor I Hussain
Councillor R Larden
Councillor K Margetts

Portfolio Holder(s):

Councillor G. Perry – Leader of the Council and Strategy, Partnerships and Communities
Councillor A. Andrew – Associate Leader and Economic Growth and Regeneration
Councillor G. Flint – Health and Wellbeing
Councillor A. Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support
Councillor P. Kaur – Education and Skills
Councillor K. Murphy – Street Pride

Quorum:

4 Members

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="719 118 1406 226">(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or<li data-bbox="719 264 1406 519">(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public Session

- 1. Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.
- 2. Substitutions**
To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.
- 3. Minutes**
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024.
(Enclosed p6 - 11)
- 4. Declarations of Interest and party whip**
To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.
- 5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
- 6. Protection of Trees, Wildlife and Biodiversity**
For Members to receive an overview of the Council's statutory duties in respect of protecting trees, wildlife and biodiversity.
(Enclosed p12 – 25)
- 7. Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29**
For the Committee to consider the draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025-2029 for the Economy and Environment directorate.
(Enclosed p26 – 41)
- 8. Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring for 2024/25**
For the Committee to consider Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring in respect of 2024/25.
(Enclosed p42 – 51)
- 9. Areas of focus – 2023/24**
To consider the areas of focus for the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.
(Enclosed p52 - 54)
- 10. Forward Plans**
To receive the latest Forward Plans in respect of the following:
 - Executive Forward Plans.
 - Black Country Joint Executive Committee.
 - West Midlands Combined Authority Board.*(Enclosed p55-74)*
- 11. Recommendations Tracker**
To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.
(Enclosed p75)
- 12. Date of next meeting**
To note that the next scheduled meeting will take place on 21 November 2024.

Minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Walsall Council House

Tuesday, 10 September 2024 at 6.00p.m.

Committee Members present: Councillor M Follows (Chair)
Councillor J Whitehouse (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Cheema
Councillor Gill
Councillor Hassan
Councillor Hicken
Councillor Larden

Officers present: Dave Brown – Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities.
Irena Hergottova – Head of Community Building and Cohesion
Craig Goodall – Principal Democratic Services Officer

82. Apologies

Apologies was received from Councillors Bott, Margetts, Singh-Sohal and Murphy.

83. Substitutions

There were no substitutions submitted for the duration of the meeting.

84. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

85. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

86. Minutes

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 9 July 2024 was submitted. [annexed].

Resolved

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

87. Portfolio Presentations and Update on the Chemical Spill

The Chair introduced the item and stated that it aimed to inform the Committee about Portfolio Holder priorities for the municipal year.

Councillor P. Kaur presented the priorities for her portfolio of (Education) Skills. Priorities included creation of meaningful opportunities for all, ensuring that people's lives were improved through access to high quality education and training. Another priority was addressing unemployment, which was above the national average in Walsall – detail was provided on the methods used to support individuals back into work. Special consideration would be given to Youth Unemployment, noting that the Council was part of a Combined Authority taskforce to tackle this issue.

Councillor G. Perry presented his priorities as Leader of the Council and Strategy, Partnerships and Communities. This presentation also included priorities on Economic Growth and Regeneration and Street Pride. The Leader provided an update on current work streams along with upcoming challenges and priorities for Regeneration and Street Pride. It was noted that 'rewilding' consultation would be taking place in October and Members were encouraged to engage.

The Committee was advised that a review would also take place in relation to sparking, traffic management and speeding in the Borough. Priorities included:

- Delivery of the Walsall Plan.
- Community development and diversity – 'Team Walsall' was established.
- Community safety – including knife crime.
- Community protection.
- Environment health – food safety was taken seriously.
- The strategic use of assets was noted as key to supporting the financial stability of the Council.
- Changes to planning policy would be worked through, with protection of green belt land being prioritised.
- Transport, regional pressure in relation to public transport was acknowledged and it was suggested that the Committee may wish to focus on strategic public transport.

Councillor Perry paid tribute to the Emergency Planning team in their response to the chemical spill in Walsall which worked at pace to protect the community and environment from harm.

Councillor G. Flint provided detail in relation to priorities relating to Health and Wellbeing. Further information was given on rewilding and the benefits this provided. Priorities included development of volunteers due to the benefit this

provided to the community and to individuals themselves. Work was being done through the community litter watch programme delivered with schools to educate children in relation to littering and recycling. Members were also advised that heritage and culture was an area of cross portfolio working which was prioritised as part of the Walsall plan.

Councillor A. Garcha outlined her three main priorities in relation to her portfolio - Resident Access and Housing Support. This included:

- Walsall Connected – which had been shortlisted for awards. Progression of this service would be continued to ensure residents needs were being fulfilled.
- Details of the modernisation of Customer experience centre were provided and technology was used to modernise and grow the service.
- The launch of a new housing allocation policy to ensure housing was allocated in according to need.

There then ensued a period of questions in relation to Portfolio Holder presentations. The Leader stated that the views of communities and business were very important in shaping the regeneration of town, citing the 2040 plan and the consultation of businesses. A Member expressed concern that this was not adequate, and reassurance was provided that this would continue to be prioritised. In response to questions relating to overcrowding within rental accommodation, it was noted that any issues should be referred to the Housing Standards and Improvement who had the power to investigate.

The Executive Director stated that there were currently no active plans for Friars Road Waste Centre, and this would be progressed in the near future.

Members requested that the following items be added to the work programme:-

- Review of the Regeneration of District Centres.
- Voluntary Sector –Team Walsall.
- Community Safety and knife crime recommendation to Scrutiny Overview Committee.
- Strategic public transport point and bus networks.
- Information on the number of successful prosecutions on Fly Tipping and litter offences. Outcomes of 'Educate before enforcement' programme.
- Community protection of environmental crime (success of enviro crime scenes).

The Executive Director provided an update on the recent canal chemical spill, informing Members that there was an ongoing investigation being conducted by the regulators. The incident had highlighted that the canal network was a real asset to the Borough. This incident occurred on 12th August (estimated) in Pleck, and the Committee was informed that 4,000 litres of Sodium Cyanide plating solution was discharged into the canal - the immediate impact of this was severe. It was declared as a major incident by West Midlands Police, and Walsall Council became the Lead Authority dealing with the incident – the

governance of this was described. Although no longer considered a major incident, a 'Recovery Coordination Group' continued to meet. The actions taken by the Council to protect the community and wildlife were described. Specialists were working on a strategy to remediate the silt within the canal, and the Environment Agency would continue to investigate the incident. A full debrief report would be prepared to ensure that lessons were learnt for the future.

Members commended the Council for taking the lead on the incident, and the communications used to inform residents. It was requested that a full report be considered at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- 1. That Portfolio Holder presentation and update on the chemical spill be noted.**
- 2. That the following items be added to the work programme:**
 - **Review of the Regeneration of District Centres.**
 - **Voluntary Sector –Team Walsall.**
 - **Community Safety and knife crime recommendation to Scrutiny Overview Committee.**
 - **Strategic public transport point and bus networks.**
 - **Information on the number of successful prosecutions on Fly Tipping and litter offences. Outcomes of 'Educate before enforcement' programme.**
 - **Community protection of environmental crime (success of enviro crime scenes).**
- 3. A debrief report on the Chemical Spill be considered a future meeting.**

88. Community Cohesion

The Head of Community Building and Cohesion introduced the report and highlighted the salient points. Social cohesion in Walsall had been a priority for a long time, with a cross-party working group considering the issue. Evidence from communities had fed into the Council's first strategy in 2018 and as a result, the Council was invited to be part of a Government pilot which led to the 'Walsall for All' programme.

The Committee was advised of work that was undertaken during the covid lockdown to continue community cohesion and connection. The work of 'Walsall for All' was evaluated and subsequently nominated for regional and national awards. Further detail was provided on how the community cohesion team were involved with these areas of work.

Members were advised that the multi-agency partnership was working closely with other partnerships to co-design the third reiteration of the Community Cohesion strategy. It was noted that it would be a good time for the Committee to consider the draft strategy and actions to consider how it could be embedded.

There then ensued a period of questions, Members were informed that any potential community tension was considered at the Walsall Community Resilience Forum at which all four localities were represented and where challenges were discussed as part of a constant dialogue. It was noted that an all-encompassing approach had been taken in the recent years– it was suggested that this work should be taken to the Local Government Association (LGA) conference next year.

The Leader expressed his pride of the team and described the variety of work that had taken place to encourage community cohesion and their excellent leadership.

Resolved

That the Committee note their support for the current approach to community cohesion.

89. Areas of Focus

A Member asked if Planning enforcement could be considered, Officers agreed to consider if this would be appropriate for the remit of the Committee.

A discussion was held on the membership of the two established working groups. The Chair requested that Democratic Services e-mailed the Membership of the Committee to seek further volunteers to sit on the working groups.

Resolved:

The following Membership of the Working Groups were agreed:

High Streets Working Group

- **Councillor Cheema**
- **Councillor Hicken**
- **Councillor Larden**

Enforcement Working Group

- **Councillor Cheema**
- **Councillor Hicken**
- **Councillor Larden**

90. Forward Plans

The Committee considered the forward plans.

Resolved

That the forward plans were noted.

91. **Recommendations Tracker**

The Principal Democratic Services Officer updated Members on the recommendations from previous meetings of the Committee. [annexed]

Resolved:

That the progress on recommendations from the previous meeting be noted.

92. **Date of next meeting**

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7:20 p.m.

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 24 October 2024.

Signed:

Date:

24 October 2024

Protection of Trees, Wildlife and Biodiversity

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces

1. Aim

- 1.1. The council has statutory duties to protect trees, wildlife, and biodiversity including conserving biodiversity, ensuring wildlife protection, promoting biodiversity net gain, and overseeing green space management

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the committee members note the work being undertaken by the council to protect trees, wildlife and biodiversity.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1. About a third of Walsall is green, open space. This includes parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, children's play areas, woodlands, countryside sites, nature reserves, and allotments. Additionally, there are numerous roadside verges, canal tow paths and small pockets of green space on housing and industrial sites. Much of this land is managed by the council, as is case nationally.
- 3.2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of our green space was put into sharp focus, particularly its positive impact on both our physical and mental health. As custodians of this space, it is important that it is valued and managed in a way that protects it for future generations.
- 3.3. The Environment Act 2021 sets biodiversity targets including a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for developments, halting species decline by 2030 and improving species abundance by 2042. It aims to restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, implement Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and strengthen protection for designated conservation sites.

What is biodiversity?

- 3.4. Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on Earth, encompassing all species of plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms, as well as the ecosystems they form. It includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.

Why is biodiversity important?

- 3.5. Biodiversity is important for several reasons:

1. **Ecosystem Stability:** Biodiversity contributes to the stability and resilience of ecosystems. Diverse ecosystems are better able to withstand environmental stressors like disease, climate change, and natural disasters.
 2. **Human Health:** Many medicines are derived from natural compounds found in plants and animals. A loss in biodiversity could limit the discovery of new treatments and cures.
 3. **Food Security:** Biodiversity ensures the availability of a rich variety of crops and livestock, which is crucial for food security. It also supports pollination, soil fertility, and pest control.
 4. **Economic Benefits:** Biodiverse ecosystems provide resources for industries such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and tourism. They also offer ecosystem services like water purification, air quality maintenance, and climate regulation.
 5. **Cultural and Recreational Value:** Many cultures value biodiversity for spiritual, aesthetic, and recreational reasons. Natural landscapes and wildlife are integral to cultural heritage and provide opportunities for recreation and tourism.
- 3.6. Protecting biodiversity is essential for maintaining the health of our planet and the well-being of all its inhabitants.

The biodiversity crisis

- 3.7. There has been a significant decline in the variety and abundance of wildlife and natural habitats across the country. In fact, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, ranking in the bottom 10% globally and last among the G7 nations.
- 3.8. Nearly one in six species assessed in the UK is at risk of extinction. This includes a wide range of wildlife, from insects to mammals. Many important habitats are in poor condition due to factors like urbanisation, agriculture, and pollution. This degradation affects the ecosystems that support various species.
- 3.9. The loss of biodiversity can lead to ecological imbalances, affecting everything from food chains to climate regulation. Efforts are being made to address this crisis through conservation projects and policies aimed at restoring habitats and protecting endangered species. However, significant challenges remain.
- 3.10. Preventing biodiversity loss is crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems and ensuring the survival of various species, including humans. There are various steps that can be taken including:
 1. **Protect Natural Habitats:** Establishing and maintaining protected areas like national parks and nature reserves helps conserve critical habitats.
 2. **Sustainable Practices:** Support and buy products that are sustainably sourced, such as Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance certified goods.

3. **Reduce Pollution:** Minimise the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture and everyday life, including the use of pesticides.
4. **Combat Climate Change:** Reduce your carbon footprint by using energy-efficient appliances, reducing waste, and supporting renewable energy sources.
5. **Promote Biodiversity-Friendly Policies:** Advocate for and support policies that protect biodiversity, such as regulations against deforestation and overfishing.
6. **Restore Ecosystems:** Participate in or support reforestation and habitat restoration projects.
7. **Educate and Raise Awareness:** Spread knowledge about the importance of biodiversity and how to protect it. Education can lead to more informed decisions and actions.
8. **Reduce Invasive Species:** Be mindful of introducing non-native species into new environments, as they can disrupt local ecosystems and manage those that are present.

Natural capital benefits

- 3.11. As of 2020, the total asset value of natural capital in England was estimated to be £1.4 trillion. This includes the value of various ecosystem services such as recreation, tourism, and health benefits, which together were valued at £35.7 billion annually.
- 3.12. Natural capital encompasses resources like clean water, productive soils, and biodiversity, all of which support human life and the economy. It's a crucial part of understanding the broader concept of inclusive wealth.
- 3.13. West Midlands Combined Authority has recently released figures, estimating its value to the region, this includes the following:
 - West Midlands tree stock provides £73,446,000 of ecosystem services annually (Carbon sequestrations, pollution removal, avoided run-off).
 - Natural capital assets can provide benefits worth an estimated £21bn to the WMCA area over the next 60 years.
- 3.14. Furthermore, it is estimated that at least 50% of GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature. Continued deterioration of the natural environment could result in GDP being up to 12% lower than it would have been otherwise by the 2030s (as a comparison the COVID pandemic caused an 11% reduction).
- 3.15. Storm Doris (2017), the heatwaves of 2019-20 and the floods in August 2023 cost the region £21.6m. The annual economic cost to the WMCA region by 2050 could be the equivalent of £1.5 – 2.9bn per year.

Protection of natural habitats

- 3.16. Protection can be done on an individual basis, for example a tree preservation order can be placed on individual trees. There are also protections in place for individual species, e.g. bats, badgers, great crested newts.
- 3.17. Protection can also be undertaken on a landscape level. In England, there are several types of habitat protection aimed at conserving biodiversity and ensuring the survival of various species. Listed below are some of the key types:
 1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs): These are areas designated for their unique flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. They form the backbone of habitat protection in England.
 2. National Nature Reserves (NNRs): These are some of the most important natural and semi-natural ecosystems in the country, managed to conserve their habitats and species.
 3. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): These are protected areas designated under the European Union's Habitats Directive to conserve habitats and species of European importance.
 4. Local Nature Reserves (LNRs): These are designated by local authorities and provide opportunities for both people and wildlife to thrive.
 5. Protected Landscapes: This includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), which are designated to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
 6. Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats: These are habitats identified as priorities for conservation under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 3.18. These protections are supported by various laws and regulations, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- 3.19. There are further non-statutory designations used to protect valuable wildlife habitats at a local level in England, these include: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs).
- 3.20. SINCs are designated to protect areas that are important for wildlife but may not meet the criteria for national designations like SSSIs. They are also known as Local Wildlife Sites. A site may qualify as a SINC due to the presence of notable species, important habitats, or both. The criteria for designation are based on national guidelines and local biodiversity priorities.
- 3.21. SLINCs are like SINCs but are generally considered to be of lower conservation value. They still play a crucial role in maintaining local biodiversity and ecological networks. SLINCs focus on areas that contribute to the overall ecological health of the region.

- 3.22. Both SINC and SLINC are essential for conserving local biodiversity and ensuring that even smaller, less prominent habitats receive protection and management.
- 3.23. For details of all the sites protected in Walsall, please visit <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/parks-and-green-spaces/conservation-and-the-environment>.
- 3.24. The government is committed to meeting the targets for national biodiversity set through the Environment Act 2021 on species abundance, species extinction and habitat creation and restoration. This is in addition to the international target of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030 (30by30), and our legally binding targets on marine protected areas, woodland and trees, water pollution, and air pollution.
- 3.25. Meeting the Environment Act targets requires creation, restoration and connection of wildlife-rich habitat, reducing pressures on species (for example from habitat fragmentation and climate change), and taking targeted action to recover specific species.
- 3.26. The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a growing national network of wildlife-rich places that are bigger, better, and joined-up across the country. The NRN will help to address biodiversity loss, climate change, and improve access to nature, supporting health and wellbeing.

Habitat Restoration - Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project

- 3.27. The Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project is one of 12 national NRP's and is a collaborative project led by Natural England. Partners include Walsall Council, Lichfield Council, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust and local landowners. The project spans up to 12,000 hectares on the fringes of the West Midlands conurbation and is a long-term initiative focusing on restoring and connecting fragmented heathlands to create a mosaic of heathlands, wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands. Ultimately joining up Cannock Chase SAC in Staffordshire down to Sutton Park NNR in Birmingham.
- 3.28. The goal is to improve biodiversity, manage the environment, and protect species such as the very rare Tormentil mining bee. It is one of eight sites in the West Midlands that are known to support almost half of Britain's bee and wasp fauna. The project involves various activities, including tree removal, scrub control, and planting acid grassland species. It has received recognition, such as the Public Sector Award at the West Midlands Combined Authority Natural Environment Awards on March 21, 2023.
- 3.29. So far, the project has seen 40Ha of habitat restored in Walsall, five sites in Walsall have been enhanced for rare bees and wasps with bare earth scrapes and the propagation of Tormentil flowers for the S41 Tormentil mining bee. Seven Walsall sites have had BNG surveys completed with two more in the pipeline and two being developed to full investment readiness.

- 3.30. To better connect people with nature, four interpretation panels have been installed (two at Barr Beacon and two at Shire Oak) and a bee safari event was held for residents, led by a PhD student studying pollinators.

Significant programmes

- 3.31. There are several projects of national or regional significance that the Healthy Spaces team and other officers from across the council are involved with including:

1. Biodiversity Net Gain: The Environment Act 2021 created a new biodiversity net gain condition for planning permission. This is an approach to development and land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a better state than it was before. It involves creating and improving natural habitats to ensure a positive impact on biodiversity.
2. The development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England is a new initiative aimed at reversing the decline of biodiversity and enhancing the natural environment. They are designed to drive coordinated, practical, and focused actions to help nature recover, creating a network of habitats that support wildlife and improve the overall health of the environment. There are 48 strategy areas covering the whole of England, ensuring no gaps or overlaps. These strategies are part of a broader effort to build a national Nature Recovery Network, aiming to leave the natural environment in a better state for future generations. All Public Authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must “have regard” to relevant local nature recovery strategies in the process.
3. The Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme is an initiative by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) aimed at enhancing the region’s natural environment. Funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), the programme seeks to attract private finance to support natural capital projects. Key goals include:
 - a) Restoring Habitats and Biodiversity: Creating a nature-positive future by restoring habitats and improving biodiversity.
 - b) Nature-Based Solutions: Addressing climate risks, improving water quality, reducing flood risk, sequestering carbon, and enhancing air quality.
 - c) Socio-Economic Benefits: Improving access to green spaces to address health inequalities.
 - d) Building Capacity: Enhancing the capability of local leaders and partners to attract and manage investments.

The programme aims to build a regional pipeline of natural capital projects and develop a Natural Capital Finance Strategy by March 2025.

4. Urban Forest – Forest of Mercia is one of twelve community forests established across England to create well-wooded landscapes for wildlife, work, recreation, and education. Located in southern Staffordshire and Walsall, it covers an area of 92 square miles (23,000 hectares) and is part of the National Community Forest Partnership. Key aspects of the Forest of Mercia, managed from the Innovation Centre at Chasewater, near Burntwood include:
 - a) Environmental Improvement: The forest aims to regenerate communities by planting new trees, improving green spaces, and creating new walkways and cycle paths.
 - b) Community Engagement: It involves local partnerships, including councils and community groups, to manage and develop the forest.

Projects in Walsall – large scale

- 3.32. Large scale programmes currently being delivered by the Healthy Spaces and Environment team to tackle biodiversity loss include:
 - Habitat Management - Countryside Stewardship
 - Tree Planting - Urban Tree Challenge Fund
 - Tree Planting - UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 - Tree Planting - Woodland Accelerator Grant
 - Tree Planting - Other

Habitat Management - Countryside Stewardship

- 3.33. Walsall Council has been in receipt of a 10-year Countryside Stewardship grant from Defra, which was extended for a further 5-years in 2023. The grant is used to directly fund operational staff and work in priority habitats, including Brownhills Common SSSI and Barr Beacon LNR and other LNRs. Without the funding the council would have a reduced ability to deliver well maintained, accessible green spaces.

Tree Planting - Urban Tree Challenge Fund - £205,000 and £338,000

- 3.34. The council has had two successful grant awards from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, one for £205,000 and a second for £338,000. The grant provides 80% funding for the costs associated with planting and maintaining trees, including the supply of containerised standard trees, staking, protection, and tree maintenance (replanting, watering, weeding) for three years following planting. The remaining costs are met through match funding, either in the form of money or labour.

Tree Planting - UK Shared Prosperity Fund - £407,000

- 3.35. The UKSPF has been used to recruit a Countryside Estate Officer, whose focus is to improve the maintenance of infrastructure, and to provide capital to upgrade access features, and undertake habitat management works to improve biodiversity at sites like Walsall Arboretum Country Park, Hayhead Wood, Cuckoos Nook and The Dingle, and Lodgewood and Longwood Coppice.

- 3.36. A total sum of £407,000 was awarded. In 2024/25 £35,000 is allocated towards the Countryside Estate Ranger position and £150,000 to implement habitat and access improvements. Access improvements have been completed at Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve, Merrions Wood and Pelsall North Common. Walsall Arboretum Country Park, Cuckoos Nook and The Dingle and Rough Wood are due to be improved this Autumn. Numerous countryside events and volunteer events have been supported through the funding.

Tree Planting - Woodland Creator Accelerator Grant- £149,600

- 3.37. The Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) is a government initiative designed to provide financial support to increase the capacity of specialist skills within local authorities. The fund aims to accelerate the delivery of tree planting and woodland creation commitments, particularly in response to the climate change and biodiversity crises. The ultimate goal is to enable more trees to be planted, especially during the winter seasons of 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 3.38. Two officers are currently employed to deliver the woodland accelerator programme: the Woodland Creation & Rewilding Officer and the Community Woodland & Rewilding Officer.

Tree Planting - Other

- 3.39. Over the last few years there have been a lot of grants that will support tree planting. Additional awards to support the council's programme have come from:
- Coronation Living Heritage Fund, from Defra, £63,000.
 - Trees for Climate, from The Forest of Mercia, £40,000.
 - Private Donation, £1,000.

Tree Planting – Achievements

- 3.40. From October 2023 until March 2024 the various tree planting schemes enabled us to plant 6.92 hectares of trees during 2023 (a total of 19,341 trees on 27 sites). In 2024-25, 31,450 trees are due to be planted on 16 Ha of land.

Projects in Walsall – localised, led by Health Spaces and Environment

- 3.41. Localised, site specific projects Healthy Spaces and Environment have been leading on include the following:
- Bailey's Pool
 - Fibbersley LNR – Master Plan
 - Merrion's Wood LNR – Master Plan
 - Reedswood Park – Master Plan

Bailey's Pool, Bloxwich

- 3.42. Improvement work at Baileys Pool, Bloxwich, has been the result of a successful partnership between Walsall Council and the Canal and River Trust,

supported by a grant from Enovert Community Trust. A total sum of £42,000 has been used to enhance the environmental and recreational value of the pool, making it a more enjoyable space for the community. Key improvements that have significantly improved the aesthetic and ecological health of Baileys Pool, making it a valuable asset for the residents of Walsall include:

1. Environmental Restoration: Efforts have been made to clean and restore the pool, removing over 1.5 tonnes of scrap and rubbish.
2. Pathway Improvements: Over 600 metres of pathway improved making the site safer and more accessible to all residents.
3. Habitat Enhancement: The project has created a better habitat for local wildlife, with families of coots and other species now making the pool their home.
4. Community Engagement: Local groups including Walsall Community Litter Watch and Blox Busters have been actively involved, fostering a sense of community ownership and pride.

Fibbersley LNR

- 3.43. The Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Masterplan outlines key improvement works for the reserve which include the following:
- 3.44. Priority Recommendations: The masterplan includes proposals for improving public access, including disabled footpath routes, and creating a diverse and rich habitat experience. The aim is to achieve SSSI designation.
- 3.45. Management Plan 2022: This plan, developed by the Walsall Council Healthy Spaces Team, covers the period from 2019 to 2024. It includes sections on the significance of the reserve, site description, facilities, designations, and legal covenants.
- 3.46. Support from Friends of Fibbersley Nature Reserve: The organisation provides key support for the sustainable future management of the reserve. Regular work parties on site undertaking work such as litter picks, bench/post installation and making benches and bird/bat boxes.
- 3.47. Work at Fibbersley has cost in the region of £90,000, with £6,000 from S106, and £50,000 grant from The Enovert Environment Trust and a further £75,000 award from The Veolia Environmental Trust. A sum of £2,060 was awarded by the Tree Council for hedge improvements.
- 3.48. As well as removing old steps and replacing with a more accessible ramp, a total of 700m of new pathway has been installed, some of which was at some of the worst areas of the site which were impassable in poor weather. Other improvements include a new ladderboard/notice board and sculpture elements, de-vegetation and pond improvement works, and the planting of five fruit trees, three standard oak trees and 200m of new hedgerow.

Merrion's Wood LNR

- 3.49. The Merrion's Wood Masterplan is designed to enhance and preserve this beautiful local nature reserve in Walsall. Key elements of the plan include:
1. **Habitat Conservation:** The masterplan focuses on maintaining and improving the diverse habitats within Merrion's Wood, including oak and beech woodlands, fields, and hedgerows. This is crucial for supporting local wildlife, such as bats and various bird species.
 2. **Community Involvement:** The plan encourages community engagement through the Friends of Merrion's Wood group, which organises events and volunteer activities to help maintain the wood and promote its use.
 3. **Recreational Facilities:** Enhancements to recreational facilities are a significant part of the masterplan. This includes maintaining trails for walking, bird watching, and other outdoor activities, ensuring the park remains a popular spot for picnics and family outings.
 4. **Educational Programs:** The masterplan includes educational initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of conservation and the natural history of Merrion's Wood. These programs aim to engage schools and local groups in learning about the environment.
 5. **Sustainability Efforts:** Efforts to improve sustainability within the park include managing invasive species, promoting native plant growth, and ensuring the long-term health of the woodland ecosystem.

Reedswood Park – Master Plan

- 3.50. The Reedswood Park Masterplan is a comprehensive initiative aimed at revitalising and enhancing the park's facilities and natural spaces. Here are some key elements of the masterplan:
1. **Wildlife Habitat Restoration:** One of the primary goals is to restore the park's ponds to create a thriving wildlife habitat. This includes improving water quality and planting native vegetation to support local biodiversity.
 2. **Community Engagement:** The plan emphasises community involvement through various activities and events. This includes educational programs and volunteer opportunities to engage residents in the park's upkeep and development.
 3. **Recreational Facilities:** Upgrades to recreational facilities are a significant part of the masterplan. This includes enhancing the children's play area, outdoor gym, and sports facilities like the basketball court and football pitches.
 4. **Green Flag Status:** Reedswood Park was awarded Green Flag status in July 2023, recognising its high standards of maintenance, safety, and community involvement.
 5. **Art and Culture:** The masterplan also integrates art and cultural elements, such as the installation of sculptures and the creation of spaces for community art projects.

- 3.51. The masterplan aims to make Reedswood Park a vibrant, accessible, and ecologically rich space for all visitors and will be funded through the Bloxwich Towns Fund.

Projects in Walsall – localised, led by partners

- 3.52. Localised partnership projects Healthy Spaces and Environment have been supporting on our sites include the following:

- Bee Inspired
- Froglife

Bee Inspired

- 3.53. The Walsall Bee Inspired Project is an innovative initiative by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust aimed at promoting bumblebee conservation through community engagement and volunteering. Key highlights include:

1. **Volunteering Hub:** A Bumblebee Volunteering Hub has been established in Walsall, which serves as a model for engaging volunteers from diverse communities.
2. **Sculpture Trail:** A new sculpture trail was installed at Reedswood Park, featuring captivating bumblebee sculptures created by artist Daisy Askins. This trail aims to blend art and nature, encouraging visitors to explore and reconnect with their surroundings.
3. **Community Engagement:** The project works with local charities and organisations to create Bumblebee Champions who inspire their communities to take positive actions for bumblebees, such as growing more flowering plants.
4. **Educational Impact:** Through various activities, events, and training sessions, the project educates the public about the importance of bumblebees and how to support their conservation.
5. **Funding and Support:** The project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which has been instrumental in supporting the initiative and ensuring its success.

Froglife

- 3.54. The Froglife project in Walsall, known as Coalface to Wildspace, is an exciting initiative aimed at conserving amphibians and reptiles while engaging the local community. Key aspects of the project include:

1. **Habitat Improvement:** The project focuses on creating Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors to improve habitats for reptiles, amphibians, and other wildlife. These corridors act as green stepping stones, connecting larger green spaces across Walsall.

2. **Community Engagement:** Froglife ran Wildlife Gardening Workshops where community members learn about native amphibians and reptiles and how to support them in their gardens and local greenspaces. These workshops also involve practical habitat improvements.
 3. **Educational Initiatives:** The project includes educational components like the Frogglebox film, which explores Walsall's geological and natural history. This immersive digital experience connects the area's deep history to its current wildlife and people.
 4. **Creative Activities:** In 2023, the project hosted creative workshops where members of the community-built LEGO® models reflecting Walsall's geological time periods. These models are now displayed in local libraries.
 5. **Speaking Sculptures:** The final phase of the project involved creating wildlife-themed Speaking Sculptures through community art workshops, adding an artistic element to the conservation efforts.
- 3.55. The project is funded by grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and West Midlands Combined Authority has provided £67,000 for pond improvement work. The project runs from 2022 to the end of 2025.

Future

- 3.56. Although a lot has been achieved, there is still so much more to be done. Work is ongoing to identify suitable tree planting locations and embed a financially sustainable approach to the ongoing maintenance and management of both the tree stock and borough's health land.
- 3.57. The ultimate ambition is to create a thriving and sustainable nature recovery network between Cannock Chase and Sutton Park that is resilient to climate change. Successful implementation would deliver improved biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape value, to be enjoyed by people in a sustainable way. The programme of work aims to link and buffer these sites and also increase the value that people and businesses put on local biodiversity and the landscape, providing collaborative exemplar, demonstrating how nature and people can live and work together in a balanced way.

Conclusion

- 3.58. The Walsall Plan has undertaken a call for sites and the council will need to carefully balance the various competing demands placed on land.
- 3.59. Nationally and locally, nature needs our help. We not only need to prevent a further decline in biodiversity, but we also need to reverse it. We need to provide nature with space to thrive, ensuring that habitats are linked, and of necessary scale to support our precious wildlife. This is not only good for nature it is good for the economy, and it is essential for good health and wellbeing.

4. Financial information

- 4.1. The majority of the council's countryside management work is grant funded as outlined above.

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1. Biodiversity and access to nature help reduce social and economic inequalities by improving health, creating economic opportunities, and fostering community resilience. Exposure to green spaces enhances physical and mental health, reducing disparities in conditions like obesity, heart disease, and depression, particularly in low-income areas. Nature-based solutions also create jobs, while ecosystem services like clean air, water, and pollination support sustainable livelihoods, especially in marginalised communities.
- 5.2. Nature access enhances educational outcomes and social cohesion, reducing the achievement gap for disadvantaged students and fostering stronger community networks. Additionally, biodiverse environments strengthen climate resilience by buffering against extreme weather events, which disproportionately affect poorer communities. Protecting ecosystems helps reduce the vulnerability of these groups to environmental risks and economic losses.
- 5.3. Culturally, nature reinforces identity and well-being, particularly for indigenous and local populations. By promoting balanced rural-urban development and integrating green infrastructure into cities, equitable access to nature is expanded, helping to alleviate inequalities in quality of life and economic opportunity

6. Decide

- 6.1. Committee members are asked to note the content of the report

7. Respond

- 7.1. At a strategic level, the borough has many attractive areas of open space and places for nature. The borough local plan will make sure that new homes and places of work are in the right locations but also seek to protect valuable open space and nature conservation sites.
- 7.2. At an operational level, work will continue to secure appropriate grant funding that empowers the council to continue delivering against our statutory duties and ambitions in respect to trees, wildlife and biodiversity.


8. Review

- 8.1. The council will continue to monitor environmental impacts, compliance with biodiversity targets, and stakeholder engagement. Long-term monitoring and comparison to baseline data will help determine progress toward ecological restoration and conservation goals.

9. Background papers

9.1. None

Author

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24 OCTOBER 2024

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr A Andrew – Associate Leader Economic Growth and Regeneration
Cllr G Flint – Health and Wellbeing
Cllr P Kaur – Education and Skills
Cllr K Murphy – Street Pride

Executive Summary:

The draft budget, as reported to Cabinet on 16 October 2024, includes an update on the medium term financial outlook (MTFO) for the four-year period from 2025/26 to 2028/29. It also outlines the draft revenue budget for 2025/26 to 2028/29 (including savings proposals identified to date for consultation), the draft capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, and sets out the process and timescale for setting a legally balanced budget for 2025/26.

Our MTFO has been updated for all known pressures, including best professional assumptions around the cost-of-living impact, and that on rising demand on our services. Due to the size and breadth of cost pressures, this has had a significant impact on the assumptions in relation to the 2025/26 budget, with additional growth and demand pressures now required of c£48.87m, resulting in a budget gap of c£11.05m.

The Council is legally obliged to set a one-year balanced budget (2025/26), however a medium-term approach is beneficial to allow for sound financial planning and to support future financial stability. The proposals set out in this report do not yet balance the budget for 2025/26, so there will be a requirement to report back on changes and options to close the gap at the January 2025 meeting of Cabinet. All draft proposals are subject to changes arising from the Autumn Budget due on 30 October 2024, and the local government finance settlement yet to be received (provisional settlement anticipated mid December 2024 and final settlement in early February 2025). A number of draft saving proposals are also included for 2026/27 to 2028/29, with further options being identified to allow for a balanced budget over the MTFO period aligned to the Council Plan.

The 2025/26 draft budget includes a proposed 2.99% increase in general council tax along with an additional 2% precept for Adult Social Care, which aligns with current referendum guidelines. The government is yet to confirm its policy on council tax referendum principles and the future status and rate of the Adult Social Care precept, which are anticipated to be detailed in the provisional 2025/26 settlement expected in December 2024.

The draft capital programme for 2025/26 totals £80.14m. It sets out capital investment funded from the council's own resources of £48.95m (funded by capital receipts and borrowing) and externally funded schemes of £31.19m (funded by capital grants) and represents a balanced

programme for 2025/26. In addition, the report sets out a further three years of indicative proposals to 2028/29. Despite reductions in capital funding in recent years and going forward, the draft capital programme contains significant investment into regeneration initiatives, highways, education, and into adults and children's social care and housing to support vulnerable households.

This report provides an extract of the draft revenue savings proposals and growth and demand pressures for 2025/26 – 2028/29 by the ambitions of the new Council Plan, which fall within the remit of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It also provides a summary of the draft capital programme for schemes within the remit of this Committee.

Feedback from the Committee on the draft revenue and capital proposals to date will be reported back to Cabinet in January 2025 for consideration.

The revenue proposals set out in the report to Cabinet on 16 October 2024 do not yet balance the budget for 2025/26, so there will be a requirement to report back on changes and options to close the remaining c£11m gap at the January 2025 meeting of Cabinet, and subsequent report to this committee should any changes relate to services within the remit of this committee.

The final draft budget will be considered by Cabinet on 12 February 2025 for recommendation to Council on 26 February 2025. Any changes to draft revenue and capital budget proposals as a result of equality and health impact assessments and consultation will also be fed into the final budget report.

Reason for scrutiny:

To enable consultation of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for services within the remit of this Committee.

Recommendations:

That:

1. The Committee are recommended to consider the draft revenue budget proposals to date as attached that relate to the remit of this committee as shown in **Appendices 1 and 2**, and that feedback will be presented to Cabinet in January 2025.
2. The Committee note that the revenue budget for 2025/26 is currently not balanced, with a gap of c£11m, and therefore a further report may be required to this committee if any changes to draft proposals outlined relate to services within the committee's remit.
3. The Committee are recommended to consider the draft capital schemes included in the draft capital programme attached that relate to the remit of this committee as shown in **Appendices 3 and 4**, and that feedback will be presented to Cabinet in January 2025.

Background papers:

Various financial working papers.

Resource and legal considerations:

Cabinet on 16 October 2024 were presented with a list of draft revenue savings proposals for consultation and a list of growth and demand pressures, along with a draft capital programme over the period 202/26 to 2028/29.

The full Cabinet report can be accessed at the following link:

[Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 - 2028/29 - Cabinet 16 October 2024](#)

Further to the changes in assumptions, the draft budget 2025/26 – 2028/29 includes growth and demand pressures of c£129m (£48.87m of this is in 2025/26). Those growth and demand pressures relating to the remit of this Committee are shown at **Appendix 1** and total £5.16m over 4 years.

Savings proposals

The current budget proposals include £28.88m of savings to be delivered for 2025/26 (including the review of the £10.38m identified in the budget report to Council in February 2024). There is also £18.96m identified for 2026/27, £12.35m for 2027/28 and £12.10m for 2028/29. Current savings proposals total to £72.29m over the 4 years of the MTFO. Savings are classified into two categories:

1. Policy Proposals - which require an Executive decision to proceed, and which will be referred for public consultation and equality and health impact assessment. These total £0.51m in 2025/26 (remains the same over the four years to 2028/29).
2. Operational Proposals – savings which officers have delegations to implement; examples include restructures, back-office savings, operational efficiencies. These total £28.37m in 2025/26 (£71.78m over the four years to 2028/29).

Some proposals require investment to support delivery. Such investment will only be allocated if the relevant saving proposal is included within Cabinet’s final budget report in February 2025, once consultation and equality and health impact assessments has concluded.

Savings proposals outlined in the report to Cabinet on 16 October 2024 will assist in closing the gap over the four years to 2028/29. A gap of £11.05m remains after the delivery of the £28.88m saving identified for 2025/26. Directors continue to work on identifying additional options for Members consideration, and further reports will be presented to Cabinet outlining further options to balance the budget for 2025/26 onwards.

Those savings proposals relating to the remit of this Committee are shown at **Appendix 2** and total £5.12m over 4 years.

The following table summarises the net change in the budget position by Directorate for 2025/26.

Directorate	Growth and Demand pressures	Savings	Net
	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	25.03	(8.87)	16.16
Children's Services and Education	10.62	(7.45)	3.17
Economy, Environment and Communities	4.12	(3.80)	0.32
Resources and Transformation	2.00	(1.55)	0.45
Central / Capital Financing*	7.09	(7.21)	(0.11)
Total Net Growth and Demand Pressures by Directorate	48.87	(28.88)	19.99

*Central growth and demand pressures includes £6.21m of pay and pension costs which will be allocated to services following a detailed review of salary budget requirements.

Based on the current proposals all Directorates would see a net increase in their budgets for 2025/26.

Draft Capital Programme

The draft capital programme for 2025/26 is balanced and totals £80.14m. It sets out new capital investment funded from the council's own resources of £48.85m (funded by capital receipts and borrowing) and externally funded schemes of £31.19m (funded by capital grants). In addition, the report sets out a further three years of indicative proposals to 2028/29.

Those council funded schemes relating to the remit of this Committee are shown at **Appendix 3** totalling £70.26m over 4 years. The external funded schemes within the remit of this committee are included in **Appendix 4** and total to £39m over the 4 years.

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APPENDIX 1

Summary of Growth and Demand Pressures 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan relating to the remit of this Committee

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Efficient and effective services							
Economy, Environment & Communities	36	Contractual inflation	530,147	373,548	440,851	440,851	1,785,397
	37	Domestic and garden waste agency staffing costs	70,502	74,027	74,027	74,027	292,583
	38	Increase in disposal costs for mixed dry recycling waste	800,000	0	0	0	800,000
	39	Increase in number of local buildings and the increased cleaning and caretaking responsibilities	700,000	0	0	0	700,000
	40	Pressure due to reduced demand for market stalls, reduction in opening days and loss of income due to reduced stall rates, (Walsall Market)	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	41	One-off reduction in demand leading to income pressure on cremations income due to local competitor	680,000	(680,000)	0	0	0
	42	Reduction in opening hours for Fryers Road and Merchants Way household waste recycling centres saving in 2024/25 not being implemented - reversal of saving in 2025/26	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	43	Fall out of street lighting private finance initiative grant when contract ends	0	0	0	1,600,000	1,600,000
	44	Traffic control - reduced income pressure	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	45	Vehicle lease costs for green waste previously funded by lease reserve - link to potential charge for green waste	170,000	0	0	0	170,000
	46	Greener Bloxwich - revenue impact of capital investment	80,000	40,000	20,000	0	140,000
	47	Increased rental hire for road sweepers	70,000	0	0	0	70,000
	48	Increase in landfill tax from Apr 25 (103p/tonne to 126p/tonne)	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	49	Increased costs of water for corporate council buildings due to deregulation (linked to asset review)	180,000	0	0	0	180,000
	50	Energy reductions - removal of 2025/26 saving (linked to saving (OP29)	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
51	Saddlers Centre - regeneration project temporary impact on income generation	0	900,000	(900,000)	0	0	
Resources & Transformation	55	Additional resources to support external funding team (linked to saving OP42)	122,123	(19,110)	(25,574)		77,439
Central	57	One off increase energy costs - fall out of 2024/25 investment	(1,360,000)	0	0		(1,360,000)
Total Efficient and effective services			2,742,772	688,465	(390,696)	2,114,878	5,155,419
Total Growth and Demand Pressures relating to the remit of this Committee			2,742,772	688,465	(390,696)	2,114,878	5,155,419

APPENDIX 2

Savings for 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan relating to the remit of this Committee.

A: Summary of Policy Proposals 2025/26 – 2028/29

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Policy Proposals	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Accessible services and connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P1	Charge for amendments to planning applications	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Total Accessible services and connected places			(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Efficient and effective services							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P2	Phased changes to school crossing patrols	(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Total Efficient and effective services			(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Resilient and empowered communities							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3	Seek sponsorship for festive decorations	(30,000)	0	0	0	(30,000)
Total Resilient and empowered communities			(30,000)	0	0	0	(30,000)
Safer streets, safer people							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P4	Introduce more rewilding	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Total Safer streets, safer people			(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Supporting business and inclusive growth							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P5	Relocation of the leather museum	(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Total Policy Proposals relating to the remit of this Committee			(510,000)	0	0	0	(510,000)

B: Summary of Operational Proposals 2025/26 – 2028/29

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A clean and green future							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP1	Income from introduction of electrical vehicle charging points	0	0	0	(500,000)	(500,000)
	Total A clean and green future		0	0	0	(500,000)	(500,000)
A skilled and engaged workforce							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP2	Introduce an annual administration charge to facilitate free parking permits for staff	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
	Total A skilled and engaged workforce		(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Accessible services and connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP5	Commercialisation of services - potential to develop services to be self-funding - Registrars	(1,410)	(1,452)	0	0	(2,862)
	OP6	The New Art Gallery to move to a Trust	0	(210,000)	0	0	(210,000)
	OP7	Increase parking charges by 20%	(70,000)	(20,000)	0	0	(90,000)
	OP8	Increase in citizenship income	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Total Accessible services and connected places		(121,410)	(231,452)	0	0	(352,862)	
Celebrating our culture and heritage							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP9	Arts & events income - introduce new online shop sales and ticketing	(10,000)	(25,000)	(25,000)	0	(60,000)
	Total Celebrating our culture and heritage		(10,000)	(25,000)	(25,000)	0	(60,000)
Efficient and effective services							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP28	One public estate – income from partners	(250,000)	0	0	0	(250,000)
	OP29	Energy reductions	(200,000)	0	0	0	(200,000)
	OP30	Reduction in running costs as a result of rationalising the council's property portfolio	(500,000)	(150,000)	0	0	(650,000)
	OP31	Amalgamation of facilities management	(100,000)	0	0	0	(100,000)
	OP32	20% reduction in post room costs	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP33	Review of cleaning and caretaking in Council buildings.	(320,000)	0	0	0	(320,000)
	OP42	Generation of additional external funding to be used against existing costs	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Total Efficient and effective services		(1,570,000)	(150,000)	0	0	(1,720,000)	
Living active and healthy lives							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP50	Leisure health checks based on 5% forecast take up	(20,125)	0	0	0	(20,125)
	OP51	Leisure review and health initiatives	(645,000)	(95,000)	(90,000)	(75,000)	(905,000)
	OP52	Review of coffee shop operations	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Total Living active and healthy lives		(675,125)	(95,000)	(90,000)	(75,000)	(935,125)	

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Safer streets, safer people							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP57	Increase bulky waste collection charges by 20%	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP58	Reduction in costs linked to waste strategy/Sherbourne	(400,000)	(400,000)	0	0	(800,000)
Total Safer streets, safer people			(420,000)	(400,000)	0	0	(820,000)
Supporting business and inclusive growth							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP70	Increase in fees & charges	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
	OP71	Markets review	(60,000)	0	0	0	(60,000)
	OP72	Rental income from Park Place and Lex site	(400,000)	0	400,000	0	0
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			(610,000)	0	400,000	0	(210,000)
Total Operational Proposals relating to the remit of this Committee			(3,416,535)	(901,452)	285,000	(575,000)	(4,607,987)

Total Savings Proposals	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	Total £
A - Policy Proposals	(510,000)	0	0	0	(510,000)
B - Operational Proposals	(3,416,535)	(901,452)	285,000	(575,000)	(4,607,987)
Total Savings Proposals	(3,926,535)	(901,452)	285,000	(575,000)	(5,117,987)

APPENDIX 3

Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan – Council Funded Schemes relating to the remit of this Committee.

Rolling Programme Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Accessible services & connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Traffic Signals Infrastructure	The council has a statutory duty to maintain all its traffic signal infrastructure. This programme of planned pedestrian crossing replacements will ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians across the borough (Traffic Management Act 2004). Also supports delivery of the council’s carbon reduction targets.	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance- Pothole Funding	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance- Pothole Funding	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Provision of Community Dropped Crossings	These are dropped kerbs at strategic points along footways which permit access for wheelchairs, pushchairs, mobility scooters etc. to cross roads. The investment will allow the council to provide a rolling programme of community crossing points.	0	0	0	0	0
	Highways Maintenance Programme	As Highway Authority the council has a legal responsibility to maintain the highway network. Failure to do so inevitably leads to a deterioration of our roads, increasing the likelihood of accidents and would ultimately expose the council to increased risk of third party claims.	1,300,000	1,300,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	8,200,000
	Promotion of Community Health and Safety	Ongoing funding of road safety schemes, to address local community concerns, which fail to achieve the strategic priorities associated with the Local Transport Plan funding in terms of casualty reduction. In supporting the delivery of these local schemes it is possible to improve local quality of life and safety creating safer communities.	160,000	160,000	180,100	120,000	620,100

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Total Accessible services & connected places			1,860,000	1,860,000	3,380,100	3,320,000	10,420,100
Efficient and effective services							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Memorial Safety Management in Cemeteries	The continued inspection and making safe of memorials in Walsall cemeteries and to discharge the council's duty of care within the cemeteries. Increased safety of memorials benefits the residents of Walsall by delivering a safer environment within Walsall cemeteries.	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
Total Efficient and effective services			20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
Total Rolling Programme Schemes			1,880,000	1,880,000	3,400,100	3,340,000	10,500,100

Prior Year Approval Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Vibrant towns							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Street Lighting Inspections	Capitalisation of electrical Inspections of Street Lighting- Health and Safety	62,469	35,793	63,091	0	161,353
	Future High Streets Fund	To invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street at this challenging time (External funding announced by MHCLG (now DLUHC – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) on 26 December 2020.). The additional £4.49m has been added from previously reports for the refurbishment of the Saddlers Centre including the transformation of the public realm area from the centre to the bus station with additional works to the train station concourse. This will be part of the transformative investment in Walsall Town Centre around the rail and bus stations. £4.49m increase - £3.471m in 2024/25, £1.02m in 2025/26.	12,153,616	17,484,313	83,072	0	29,721,001
	Regenerating Walsall St Peter's Church Repairs Development Team Structure	Regenerating Walsall	223,206	0	0	0	223,206
		St Peter's Church Repairs to surrounding wall	29,569	0	0	0	29,569
	The Development Team structure is currently a Team Leader and 4 officers. Capitalising posts will enable further capacity to be introduced to the team to support delivery of the pipeline.	405,298	327,649	327,649	327,649	1,388,245	
Resources and Transformation	Town Deals	Walsall Towns Deal - council contribution.	1,779,600	0	0	0	1,779,600
		Bloxwich Towns Deal - council contribution.	3,700,000	0	0	0	3,700,000
Economy, Environment & Communities	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Saddlers - Car Park Surfacing works, Electric Vehicle charging, Changing Places and toilets plus further capital works to units during/post connected gateway scheme.	650,000	150,000	0	0	800,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Total Vibrant towns			19,003,758	17,997,755	473,812	327,649	37,802,974
Accessible services & connected places							
Economy, Environment and Communities	Yorks Bridge (Top Up)	Yorks Bridge is currently the subject of a 7.5 tonne weight limit. Replacement scheme funded using council capital funding and the Department for Transport Maintenance Block.	1,697,786	0	0	0	1,697,786
	Active Public Places	To deliver the full project scope of public realm works, canal bridge and basin works (approved by Cabinet)	1,744,000	0	0	0	1,744,000
	Hatherton Road Car Park	Hatherton Road Car Park	211,456	0	0	0	211,456
Total Accessible services & connected places			3,653,242	0	0	0	3,653,242
Supporting business and inclusive growth							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Enterprise Zones	Required for the Council to cash-flow borrowing costs associated with capital investment into the Enterprise Zone. Financial modelling forecasts that these costs are expected to be recovered from future business rates generated from within the zone, although the Black Country LEP are the decision making body in relation to where business rates within the zone are invested. Therefore, on the basis that the BCLEP approve that costs on Walsall sites can be recovered through the business rates mechanism, then the Council will only be required to cash-flow these costs.	2,178,246	0	0	0	2,178,246
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			2,178,246	0	0	0	2,178,246
Homes for all							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Willenhall Masterplan	Willenhall Garden City Phase 1 is part of a housing-led regeneration programme with public sector intervention in land assembly and gap funding required to support private sector delivery of new homes.	0	5,089,768	0	0	5,089,768
	New Homes Bonus	New Homes Bonus	76,999	0	0	0	76,999
Total Homes for all			76,999	5,089,768	0	0	5,166,767

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
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Living active & healthy lives							
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Economy, Environment & Communities	Children's Play Equipment	Installation of 6 new outdoor gyms and the improvement of 13 main play sites at a total cost of £1.644m to enhance the quality of play and fitness provision for young people and adults. This will be funded from S106 monies (£229k) and £1.07m council funded and seek to find the remaining fund externally. £580k in 2023/24 is the remaining amount out of £1.07m approved as council contribution.	132,668	0	0	0	132,668
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Total Living active & healthy lives			132,668	0	0	0	132,668
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Efficient and effective services							
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Economy, Environment & Communities	Civic Centre Plumbing	Civic Centre Plumbing	66,600	0	0	0	66,600
	Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm	Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm	248,920	0	0	0	248,920
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Council House Internal Decoration	30,218	0	0	0	30,218
	Civic Centre Heating Improvements	Civic Centre Heating improvements linked to public sector decarbonisation	946,328	0	0	0	946,328
	Council House Windows	Council House Windows	945,570	0	0	0	945,570
	Council House Heating	Council House General Heating	1,523,105	0	0	0	1,523,105
	Walsall Council Modern Secure Reception	Walsall Council Modern Secure Reception		0	0	0	0
	Ways of Working	Ways of Working	188,665	0	0	0	188,665
	Public toilets	Public toilets	78,641	0	0	0	78,641
	Council House Roof Repairs	Council House Roof Repairs	1,488,000	0	0	0	1,488,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Total Efficient & effective services			5,516,047	0	0	0	5,516,047
A clean and green future							
Economy, Environment & Communities	HWRC station - Middlemore Lane	This is additional budget required to cover the uncontrollable increased inflationary / construction pressures on the existing project. To provide a new Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and large Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Middlemore Lane in Aldridge.	4,566,836	0	0	0	4,566,836
	Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	23,885	0	0	0	23,885
	Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock	Linked to revenue savings option. Wheeled bin stock capitalisation	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	720,000
Total A clean and green future			4,770,721	180,000	180,000	180,000	5,310,721
Total Prior Year Approval Schemes			35,331,681	23,267,523	653,812	507,649	59,760,665
Total Draft Capital Programme – Council Funded Schemes within the remit of this Committee			37,211,681	25,147,523	4,053,912	3,847,649	70,260,765

APPENDIX 4

Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 – External Funded Schemes relating to the remit of this Committee.

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Vibrant towns							
Economy, Environment & Communities	Willenhall masterplan - LPIF funding	£3.2m of LPIF Funding as part-funding for the willenhall Masterplan project to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall jobs, parks and new rail station.	0	3,200,000	0	0	3,200,000
Resources & Transformation		Walsall Towns Deal	8,201,605	0	0	0	8,201,605
		Bloxwich Towns Deal	7,076,781	0	0	0	7,076,781
Total Vibrant towns			15,278,386	3,200,000	0	0	18,478,386
Accessible services & connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	LTP Highway Maintenance Programme	This capital funding, known as the maintenance block, is distributed by the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA). As the Highway Authority we have an extremely high profile duty to maintain our highway network. This money is provided by the Department for Transport via the ITA with the condition that it should be spent on the classified road network. Includes allocation for potholes and bridge strengthening.	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	14,274,800

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Local Network Improvement Plan	The Government provides each locality with grant funding to help implement the Local Transport Plan in their area. The grant is used for the implementation of small scale capital schemes; development of major capital schemes and to part fund major schemes implementation costs. The programme is designed to address road safety issues, progress the Council's major scheme aspirations; and resource the required 'local contributions' to approved major schemes. (Department for Transport / West Midlands ITA).	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	6,252,400
Total Accessible services & connected places			5,131,800	5,131,800	5,131,800	5,131,800	20,527,200
Total Draft Externally Funded Capital Programme			20,410,186	8,331,800	5,131,800	5,131,800	39,005,586

24 OCTOBER 2024

**CORPORATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 2 (P6) FINANCIAL MONITORING
POSITION FOR 2024/25**

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor A. Andrew – Associate Leader Economic Growth and Regeneration
Councillor K. Murphy – Street Pride
Councillor G Flint – Wellbeing, Leisure, and Public Spaces
Councillor P Kaur – Education and Skills

1. Aim

To provide the budget monitoring position for Period 6 2024/25. The Chair requested that this item be considered by the Committee.

2. Recommendations

The Committee are requested to:

- 2.1 To note the revenue and capital forecast for the financial year-end 2024/25 for the services that fall under the remit of the committee.

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 This report summarises the forecast revenue and capital financial position for 2024/25, based on the position to September 2024, for services within the remit of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as reported to Cabinet on 16 October 2024. The full Cabinet report can be accessed by the following link:

[Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 - Cabinet 16 October 2024](#)

The current net forecast position on the £35.542m revenue budget is an overspend of £2.705m after the net use of reserves. The current net capital position is a proposed £51.463m carry forward.

3.2 Reasons for the current revenue position are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Reasons for revenue outturn variance		
Service	Variance £m	Explanation of Forecast Year End Variance
Cultural Service	(0.015)	The underspend is due to staffing vacancies.
Planning Services & Building Control	0.202	£0.09m relates to software, £0.08m relates to staffing, other minor overspends amount to £0.032m.
Regeneration & Economy	(0.000)	Nil Variance - £0.26m Red STP 23/24 carried forward with no delivery plan mitigated by one-off grant funding of posts.
Environment	0.027	There is an over recover of income of £0.022m offset by overspends on staffing £0.017m and supplies £0.032m.
Leisure	(0.130)	£0.112m underspend on staffing due to vacancies, £0.057m overspend on non-staffing, £0.078m over recovery of income along with other overspends of £0.003m.
Commercial	1.030	£0.694m (Inc £0.094m RED STP) a reduction in crematorium income due to new competitor in the market. £0.055m STP not achieved on new memorial garden, £0.147m pressure on salaries, £0.135m under recovery of income from Walsall Market. Other 0.001m underspend.
Highways & Transportation	0.008	£0.329m additional income from moving traffic enforcement offset by overspends of £0.071m postage, £0.157m maintenance, £0.040m STP on festive lighting and other overspends of £0.053m
Operations	1.074	Highways and Transportation overspend of £0.127m which is made up of various small overspends. Clean and Green overspend of £0.947m. This is made up of overspends of £0.970m comingled waste, £0.558m staffing costs and overspends on the waste disposal contract of £0.099m. £0.150 Fryers Road STP not achieved, offset by over recovery on income, WR2 energy £0.633m, trade waste £0.215m, fuel STP brought forward £0.075m. The balance is various smaller overspends that total £0.093m.
Housing Standards and Improvements	(0.120)	(£0.087m) additional income from HMO fines and (£0.033m) income from grants to fund posts.
Corporate Landlord	(0.114)	£0.225m red STP- One Public Estate. £0.175 overspend on water offset by rental income for existing properties (£0.151m) and additional income from Lex site and Park Place (0.336m).
Soft Facilities Management	0.744	Internal cleaning & caretaking pressure of £0.700m and £0.040m red STP non delivery.
EE Management	0.001	Minor variances of £0.001m.
Total Services within remit of this Committee	2.705	

3.3 The forecast revenue position by service is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2- Forecast Revenue Outturn 2023/24					
Service	Annual Budget £m	Year End Forecast Variance £m	Planned Use of Reserves £m	Action Plan £m	Variance after Reserves & Action Plan £m
Cultural Service	0.882	0.069	(0.084)	0.000	(0.015)
Planning Services & Building Control	1.169	0.426	(0.224)	0.000	0.202
Regeneration & Economy	0.444	0.431	(0.171)	(0.260)	0.000
Environment	0.678	0.367	(0.339)	0.000	0.027
Leisure	(1.046)	(0.130)	0.000	0.000	(0.130)
Commercial	(1.864)	1.030	0.000	0.000	1.030
Highways & Transportation	5.524	1.854	(1.846)	0.000	0.008
Operations	22.624	1.403	(0.254)	(0.075)	1.074
Housing Standards and Improvements	0.114	(0.064)	(0.056)	0.000	(0.120)
Corporate Landlord	5.574	1.485	(1.599)	0.000	(0.114)
Soft Facilities Management	1.150	0.744	0.000	0.000	0.744
EE Management	0.291	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001
Total Services within remit of this Committee	35.542	7.615	(4.575)	(0.335)	2.705

3.4 Reasons for Movements – Quarter One to Quarter Two

The June forecast position reported to Cabinet for services within the remit of this committee in July 2023 was an overspend of £2.608m therefore, there is a net increase in the overspend of £0.097m over the period. The key reasons for movements are detailed in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Reasons for movement		
Service	Movement £m	Reason for movement
Cultural Service	0.004	Minor variances of £0.004m.
Planning Services & Building Control	0.111	There has been an increase in the forecast on pay of £0.099m and £0.012m on other minor variances.
Regeneration & Economy	(0.000)	No movement
Environment	0.021	Minor variances of £0.021m
Leisure	0.012	Minor variances of £0.0012m
Commercial	(0.081)	The forecast income from the crematorium has decreased by £0.127m along with a decrease in expenditure of £0.046m.
Highways & Transportation	(0.064)	The forecast for maintenance has increased by £0.157m with pay reducing by £0.077m. Other minor movements total £0.016m.

Operations	0.573	The movement relates to £0.178m increase in comingled waste transport costs and increased landfill tax of £0.183m.
Housing Standards and Improvements	(0.120)	The movement relates to an increase in income of £0.120m.
Corporate Landlord	(0.363)	This relates to income from new property purchases in 24/25.
Soft Facilities Management	0.004	Minor variances of £0.004m
EE Management	0.001	Minor variances of £0.001m
Total Services within remit of this Committee	0.097	

3.5. Reserves

The total allocated reserves for Economy and Environment in 2024/25 are £22.256m of which net £4.575m has been used or committed to date. Table 4 below details the current net use of reserves included within the forecast.

Table 4 - Summary of use of reserves and transfer to reserves				
Reserve Details	Allocated reserve	Use of reserve	Transfer to reserve	Balance of reserve
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Cultural Service	0.189	(0.084)	0.000	0.105
Planning Services & Building Control	0.422	(0.224)	0.000	0.198
Regeneration & Economy	3.630	(0.171)	0.643	4.102
Environment	1.064	(0.339)	0.000	0.725
Leisure	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Commercial	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Highways & Transportation	14.713	(1.846)	0.000	12.867
Operations	0.254	(0.254)	0.000	0.000
Housing Standards and Improvements	0.284	(0.056)	0.000	0.228
Corporate Landlord	1.699	(1.599)	0.000	0.100
Soft Facilities Management	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
EE Management	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total Reserves	22.256	(4.575)	0.643	18.324

3.6. Risks

For the services under the remit of this committee, there is a high risk totalling **£1.00m** for additional property maintenance costs which have not been included within the above forecast. At this stage the risks are not certainties and as such are not included in the monitoring position. High risks of **£1.000m** are included in the corporate monitoring report to CMT. If the risks become certainties, they will need to be included in the forecast position as overspends unless alternative action can be identified to mitigate these costs.

3.7 Service Transformation Plan Benefits

Included within the budget for 2024/24 for services within the remit of this Committee are £3.859m of approved savings. Table 5 gives an early indication of the progress towards implementing these benefits:

Each benefit is “BRAG” categorised as follows:

- Blue (delivered);
- Green (on track to be delivered with no issues at year end of 2023/24);
- Amber (not guaranteed at this stage but no major issues expected, some management action needed to ensure delivery) or,
- Red - (at high risk of not being achieved either in part or in full and therefore a robust delivery plan is required);

Table 5: Delivery of 2023/24 approved savings – services within the remit of this Committee					
Saving	Total savings	Delivered	To be delivered by 31/03/24	Not fully guaranteed	Not achieved
	£m	(Blue)	(Green)	(Amber)	(Red)
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
P1 Leisure health checks based on 5% forecast take up	0.005	0.003	0.003	-	-
P2 Registrars change of name deeds	0.003	-	0.003	-	-
P3a Outsource Outdoor Pursuits Service to a community group	0.013	-	0.004	-	0.009
P4 Increase in bulky waste charges from £10 to £30 for up to 3 items, £50 for 4-6 items and £70 for 7-9 items	0.136	-	0.121	-	0.015
P4 Street lighting dimming & trimming during the evening	0.160	-	-	-	0.160
P5 Seek sponsorship of all festive lights - saving agreed in Feb 24 cabinet report	0.040	-	-	-	0.040
P6 Rewilding of all urban grassed areas - to manage public grassed open spaces and verges for biodiversity rather than visual appearance. Most areas would only receive one cut per year; however, pitches, visibility splays, paths and edges would be cut more	0.050	0.050	-	-	-
P6 Closure of Fryers Road and Merchants Way Household Waste Recycling Centres for 1 day (7 to 6) - saving on contract spend	0.150	-	-	-	0.150

P12 Parking dispensation charging of £15 per vehicle per day	0.015	-	0.004	-	0.011
OP4 Increase On Street Parking charges	0.020	-	0.015	-	0.005
OP5 Increase Off Street Parking charges	0.055	-	0.041	-	0.014
OP7 Traffic enforcement income model	0.025	0.025	-	-	-
OP16 Enhancement of Darlaston Pool - implement new water features to improve teaching pool facilities and attract 'new business' - linked to capital investment	0.015	0.008	0.008	-	-
OP17 Development of Oak Park office space to create more functional fitness space to expand classes - linked to capital investment	0.038	-	0.038	-	-
OP18 Improvement to DD collection processes	0.010	-	-	-	0.010
OP26 Review of coffee shop operations	0.010	0.005	0.005	-	-
OP21 Increase rental income from Park Lodges	0.004	-	-	-	0.004
OP23a Income generation review of fees and charges - increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	0.053	-	0.053	-	-
OP23b Income generation review of fees and charges - increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	0.094	-	-	-	0.094
OP34pt Fees and charges - Registrars, Crematorium	0.062	-	0.055	-	0.007
OP34pt Fees and charges - Active Living	0.171	-	0.171	-	-
OP27 Above inflation increase to fees and charges	0.020	-	0.020	-	-
OP28 Bereavement services new memorial garden at North Walsall Cemetery (linked capital investment of £480k required)	0.055	-	-	-	0.055
OP29 Leisure personal training	0.008	0.002	0.002	-	0.005
OP30 Leisure commercial courses	0.004	0.002	0.002	-	-
OP31 Leisure programme review	0.015	0.008	0.008	-	-
OP32 Active Living Centres income generation	0.180	0.089	0.018	-	0.074

OP33 Commercialisation of services – potential to develop services to be self-funding - Registrars	0.047	-	0.047	-	-
OP34pt Fees and charges - Parks, Community Activity, Fleet, Waste, Environmental Health	0.050	0.006	0.045	-	-
OP66 Additional Trade Waste Income	0.068	-	0.068	-	-
OP54 Charge developers for travel plans	0.030	-	0.030	-	-
OP1 Street lighting energy savings	0.263	-	-	-	0.263
OP34pt Fees and charges - H&T	0.007	-	0.007	-	-
OP67 Capitalisation of highways maintenance potholes to replace undeliverable 2023/24 saving	0.200	0.200	-	-	-
OP68 Increase parking penalty notices income target to reflect demand	0.020	-	0.020	-	-
OP69 Other waste disposal - (e.g. grey bin, plasterboard, textiles)	0.280	0.280	-	-	-
OP70 W2R (Waste to Recycling) reconciliation credit	0.150	-	0.150	-	-
OP71 Trade waste increase in income	0.100	0.100	-	-	-
P3 Arena income - To introduce new online shop sales and ticketing	0.015	-	-	-	0.015
OP4 Regeneration & Economy team review	0.260	-	-	-	0.260
OP1 Income generation review of fees and charges - increase planning development charges by 5%	0.001	-	0.001	-	-
OP49 One public estate – income from partners	0.250	-	0.025	-	0.225
OP52 Potential further restructure of Corporate Landlord	0.070	0.047	0.023	-	-
OP53 Energy reductions	0.200	-	-	-	0.200
NEW Solar panels on our buildings	0.016	0.016	-	-	-
OP2 Income from Enterprise Zone due to historic business rates	0.147	0.147	-	-	-
OP3 Arena restructure	0.007	0.007	-	-	-
OP34pt Fees and charges - Cultural	0.040	-	0.027	-	0.012
OP34pt Fees and charges - Planning	0.012	-	0.012	-	-

OP8 Alternate funding of Building Control officer posts from Local Authority Building Control funds for 1 year only	0.086	0.086	-	-	-
OP9 One off use of Biodiversity Net Gain grant allocation (linked to investment 6 for new Ecology officer post)	0.010	-	0.010	-	-
OP41 Replace Evolutive with in house system	0.010	0.010	-	-	-
OP50 Restructure of post room	0.020	0.020	-	-	-
OP51 Council House / Town Hall events	0.040	-	-	-	0.040
OP35 Explore full cost recovery for admin of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) by fee charging	0.050	-	0.050	-	-
Total	3.859	1.109	1.084	-	1.667

3.8 Capital Summary

The capital programme budget for the services under the remit of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee is £131.698m with the current forecast position projected to £80.234m for Period 6 (September) as detailed in Table 6 below. The proposed £51.463m carry forward is split across a number of service areas.

Table 6- Capital Forecast 2024/25					
Service	Annual Budget	Actual Year to Date	Forecast	Year End Variance	Proposed carry f/wd to 2025/26
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<u>Council Funded</u>					
Environment Services	1.213	0.256	1.027	(0.186)	(0.186)
Leisure and Commercial	0.194	0.008	0.190	(0.004)	(0.004)
Highways, Transport and Operations	7.574	1.698	6.241	(1.333)	(1.333)
Regeneration & Economy	16.304	6.570	4.542	(11.763)	(11.763)
Housing Standards & Improvements	0.081	(0.011)	0.081	0.000	0.000
Integrated Facilities Management	7.346	0.669	3.330	(4.016)	(4.016)
Asset Management	0.671	0.164	0.671	0.000	0.000
Total Council Funded	33.383	9.352	16.082	(17.302)	(17.302)
<u>Prudential Borrowing</u>					
Environment Services	28.592	5.744	28.592	0.000	0.000
Total Prudential Borrowing	28.592	5.744	28.592	0.000	0.000
<u>External Funded</u>					
Environment Services	2.589	0.107	0.744	(1.845)	(1.845)
Leisure and Commercial	0.504	0.000	0.504	0.000	0.000
Highways, Transport and Operations	10.002	3.393	9.616	(0.386)	(0.386)
Regeneration & Economy	30.679	0.756	8.968	(21.711)	(21.711)
Programme Management	23.046	0.281	12.826	(10.220)	(10.220)
Housing Standards & Improvements	1.442	0.574	1.442	0.000	0.000
Integrated Facilities Management	1.462	0.006	1.462	0.000	0.000
Total Externally Funded	69.723	5.117	35.561	(34.161)	(34.161)
TOTAL	131.698	20.213	80.234	(51.463)	(51.463)

4 Financial information

- 4.1 The financial implications are as set out in the main body of this report. The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget and to ensure it has an adequate level of reserves. The council will take a medium-term policy led approach to all decisions on resource allocation.

5. Reducing Inequalities

- 5.1 Services consider and respond to equality issues in setting budgets and delivering services. Irrespective of budgetary pressures, the Council must fulfil equal opportunities obligations.

6. Decide

- 6.1 To approve the recommendations as set out in this report.

7. Respond

- 7.1 The Interim Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, with finance in support will be working with Directors and Heads of service to review the forecast, to continue to implement actions for any further forecasts and to consider these financial implications in line with the council's budget setting process.

8. Review

- 8.1 Regular monitoring reports are presented to Cabinet to inform them of the financial forecast for 2024/25, including an update on risks and impact on the budget for 2025/25 and beyond.

Background papers: Various financial working papers

Contact Officers:

Ross Hutchinson, Head of Finance – Deputy Section 151 Officer
☎ 07415 308513, ✉ ross.hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk

Sundeep Sangha – Strategic Finance Business Partner
☎ 01922 653018 ✉ sundeep.sangha@walsall.gov.uk

Dave Brown
Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Communities

Economy and Environment – Area of Focus – 2024/25

9 July 2024	10 September 2024	24 October 2024	21 November 2024	14 January 2025	24 February 2025	10 April 2025
Prioritisation of work programme	Community Cohesion Portfolio Presentations	Draft Budget and Capital Programme Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Protection of Trees, Wildlife and Biodiversity Terms of Reference for High Streets Working Group	Rewilding and Grass Cutting Terms of Reference for Enforcement (All Encompassing) Working Group		Flood Management (Pending) Net Zero Strategy (Pending)	

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee’s Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.

Economy and Environment – Area of Focus – 2024/25

Items to be scheduled	Notes
Public Toilets Pilot Update	
Cycling Infrastructure Programme	
Government Recycling Strategy	
Darlaston Town Funding – Referral by SOC	
Recommendation Monitoring:	Regeneration Update (Masterplan) – Considered by Cabinet on 7 February 2024.
	Fly Tipping Enforcement and Activity – Considered by Cabinet on 17 April 2024.
	Derelict Sites Taskforce Update – Considered by Cabinet on 11 September 2024: <i>The Cabinet is leading on strengthening the Councils approach to derelict properties and has set up a cross-service Taskforce to provide focus and leadership. The Taskforce is leading on a review to develop a policy/strategic plan on actions required to improve the Council's approach to addressing the challenging issue of derelict properties including tackling landowners, long term void sites and identifying what resources across council services are required to make an impact across the borough.</i>

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee’s Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.

Economy and Environment – Area of Focus – 2024/25

Prioritisation topics to be scheduled:

Town Deals and Review of District Centres
Willenhall and Darlaston Train Stations
Voluntary Sector – Team Walsall
Derelict Building Taskforce
Devolution Deal and Levelling Up.
Recycling and Waste Collection (Super Tip)
Heritage Assets
Decarbonisation Building Programme
Underutilisation of Community Assets (Walsall Town Hall)
Strategic Public Transport point and bus networks
Community Protection of environmental crime (success of enviro crime scenes)
Debrief on the chemical spill and lessons learned.

*Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee's Agenda unless specially requested by the Committee.



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

7 October 2024

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
NOVEMBER 2024 TO FEBRUARY 2025
(07.10.2024)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	
7						
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
58/24 (17.9.24)	<p>Contract Award for Interpreting, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read Service:</p> <p>To approve the award of a contract for the Interpreting, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read service and to delegate authority to the Executive Director to enter into a contract.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Irena Hergottova Irena.Hergottova@walsall.gov.uk Harjinder Lal Harjinder.Lal@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Statham	16 October 2024
52/24 (2.9.24)	<p>Disposal of Links to Work Building, Stephenson Avenue, Beechdale, Walsall, WS2 7HF</p> <p>To approve the disposal of the Links to Work Building.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Ian Jeavons Ian.Jeavons@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024

40/24 (1.7.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including savings proposals.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
41/24 (1.7.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 6 months to September 2024.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
53/24 (2.9.24)	Children and Young People Strategy: To approve the Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Isobel Vanderheernen Isobel.Vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Children and young people	Cllr Elson	16 October 2024
60/24 (7.10.24)	Schools Local Funding Formula 2025-26 To approve the proposed schools local funding formula for 2025/26 and note that once funding allocations have been confirmed by the DfE, a further report will be presented to Schools Forum in January 2025.	Cabinet Key Decision	Tanya Collier Tanya.Collier@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	16 October 2024

54/24 (2.9.24)	<p>Local Area Network (LAN) contract award:</p> <p>To award a contract for provision and support of the Council's Local Area Network (LAN).</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
55/24 (2.9.24)	<p>Service Channel Management Platform contract award:</p> <p>To award a contract for the continued provision the Councils Service Channel Management Platform.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
56/24 (2.9.24)	<p>Middlemore Lane Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) & Waste Treatment Service Operational Arrangements:</p> <p>To approve a short-term service contract for the operational management of the new waste facility at Middlemore Lane and the existing HWRC at Fryers Road and approve a new finance lease agreement for the operational equipment, HWRC containers, and other physical resources at Middlemore Lane.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy	16 October 2024

<p>59/24 (17.9.24)</p>	<p>Procurement of consultancy support for transformation projects in ASC and Commissioning:</p> <p>To commission external consultancy support to accelerate the delivery of key transformation projects in Adult Social Care and Commissioning of People services.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Kerrie Allward Kerrie.Allward@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal services</p>	<p>Cllr Pedley</p>	<p>16 October 2024</p>
<p>47/24 (5.8.24)</p>	<p>Council Plan 2025-2029:</p> <p>To consider the final version of the Council Plan following consultation and recommend this to Council for approval.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)</p>	<p>Cllr Perry</p>	<p>11 December 2024</p>
<p>61/24 (7.10.24)</p>	<p>Making Connections Walsall:</p> <p>To approve a contract extension for 1 year (April 2025 – March 2026) to enable collaboration and partnership discussions regarding a new social prescribing delivery model for Walsall residents.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Sarah Oakley Sarah.Oakley@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Perry</p>	<p>11 December 2024</p>

<p>48/24 (5.8.24)</p>	<p>Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 – Update:</p> <p>To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including update to savings proposals, impact of Autumn Statement, and progress on budget consultation to date including feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft revenue and capital budget.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Statham</p>	<p>11 December 2024</p>
<p>49/24 (5.8.24)</p>	<p>Treasury Management Mid-Year Position Statement 2024/25:</p> <p>To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the mid year report for treasury management activities 2024/25 including prudential and local indicators.</p>	<p>Cabinet Council Non-key Decision</p>	<p>Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Statham</p>	<p>11 December 2024</p>
<p>32/24 (4.6.24)</p>	<p>Appointment of Contractor for Civic Centre and Council House Decarbonisation Works:</p> <p>To appoint a contractor for decarbonisation works at the Civic Centre and Council House.</p>	<p>Cabinet Key Decision</p>	<p>Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Internal Services</p>	<p>Cllr Andrew</p>	<p>11 December 2024</p>

	<i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
46/24 (5.8.24)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): To approve a draft SPD for consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 December 2024
63/24 (7.10.24)	The Walsall Borough Local Plan (WBLP) - revised Local Development Scheme (LDS): To approve the progression of the WBLP under a revised LDS, and the publication of the revised LDS, to include other development plan documents and planning policy documents.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 December 2024
70/24 (7.10.24)	Gasholders- Black Country Enterprise Zone: To approve entering a Funding Agreement with City of Wolverhampton Council for site preparation works and the approach to progressing project delivery. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Caroline Harper Caroline.Harper@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 December 2024

62/24 (7.10.24)	Adoption of the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy: To approve the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and establish a council-led steering group to undertake ongoing monitoring.	Cabinet Key Decision	Black Country PPOSS - Overarching Strategic Framework Jaki Brunton-Douglas Jaki.Brunton-Douglas@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	11 December 2024
71/24 (7.10.24)	Net-Zero 2041 Strategy: To approve the draft Net-Zero 2041 Strategy and the establishment of a 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' to deliver the borough-wide elements of the Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	11 December 2024
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	11 December 2024
39/24 (1.7.24)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029: To approve the final version of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy following consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024

57/24 (2.9.24)	IT Goods, Software and Associated Services contract awards: To award a contract for the provision of IT Goods, Software and Associated Services.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024
64/24 (7.10.24)	Council Plan 2025-2029 Baseline Performance Report: To consider baseline performance data aligned to the corporate priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2024-2028.	Cabinet Key Decision	Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	12 February 2025
65/24 (7.10.24)	Place Based Strategy: That Cabinet approve the Walsall Place Based Strategy (PBS) that sets the vision and delivery plan for the Single Settlement.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	12 February 2025
66/24 (7.10.24)	Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and investment Strategy 2025/26: To recommend the final budget and council tax for approval by Council.	Cabinet Council Key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr Statham	Cabinet 12 February 2025 / Council 27 February 2025

67/24 (7.10.24)	<p>Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25:</p> <p>To report the financial position based on 9 months to December 2024.</p>	Cabinet Non-key Decision	<p>Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Internal Services	Cllr Statham	12 February 2025
68/24 (7.10.24)	<p>Determination of School Admission Arrangements 2026-27:</p> <p>To determine school admission arrangements for the 2026-27 academic year.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	12 February 2025
69/24 (7.10.24)	<p>Middlemore Lane and Fryers Road Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRC) & Waste Treatment Service:</p> <p>To approve the new long-term service provision for the operational management of two new waste facilities at Middlemore Lane and Fryers Road and approve the pre-tender budget for the operational management of a waste transfer station and two household waste recycling centres.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk</p> <p>Stephen Johnson Stephen.Johnson@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy	12 February 2025

Black Country Executive Joint Committee Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Published up to February 2025

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
Black Country Enterprise Zone				
05/08/2024	<p>Gasholders</p> <p>Approval of the Gasholders project (Walsall Council) for grant funding from the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ) business rate surpluses.</p> <p>Approval for the City of Wolverhampton Council and Walsall Council to proceed to enter into a separate Grant Agreement which will set out the terms and conditions of the funding.</p>	<p>Simon Tranter simon.tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p>	<p>Walsall Council</p>	<p>November date to be confirmed</p>
Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)				
02/09/2024	<p>Approval for the remaining LPIF programme funds to be awarded, either on an equal grant sum split or on a full grant sum award to a single project basis; with the projects being Alfred Gunn House (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) and Oxley</p>	<p>Tammy Stokes tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk</p>	<p>Sandwell Council</p> <p>Wolverhampton City Council</p>	<p>November date to be confirmed</p>

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	<p>Health & Wellbeing Facility (Wolverhampton City Council).</p> <p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Alfred Gunn House project (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) if funding recommendation is agreed.</p> <p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Oxley Health & Wellbeing Facility project (Wolverhampton City Council) if funding recommendation is agreed.</p>			



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Forward Plan

Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
<p>WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)</p>
<p>Update on Bus Network Proposals from January 2025 To consider proposals for the region's bus network in 2025.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Part exempt</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Bus Franchising: Audit Outcome and Decision To Consult To consider the outcome of the audit, and to agree to undertake public consultation on the next steps.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Ring & Ride / Demand Responsive Transport Target Operating Model To consider the proposed outcome of the introduction of the revised target operating model of the West Midlands Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport service.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Bus Depot Strategy To approve the funding strategy for Transport for West Midlands to acquire sites for bus depots.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 Endorsement of the Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 following completion of public consultation and validation from the Regional Road Safety Strategic Group.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
<p>Best Value Fare Capping for Bus (cEMV Broker) To consider the Full Business Case for the national cEMV Broker pilot and West Midlands roll-out which will enable best value fare capping for bus users to be delivered for travellers using their contactless debit card or other device. The Board will also be asked to approve the legal partnership arrangements with the collaborating delivery entities.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Wednesbury Brierley Hill Metro Extension Phase2 Report to seek approval to release funding to complete construction of the Phase 2 WBHE Metro.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Culture, Creative and Heritage Infrastructure Programme To seek permission to undertake the Culture, Creative & Heritage Infrastructure programme of activity.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)</p>
<p>Exemplary Region for Disabled People To consider the evidence, purpose, ambitions and recommendations to make the West Midlands an exemplary region for disabled people, focusing on on the WMCA's core functions, data and intelligence, health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Director of Employment, Skills, Health & Communities (Helene Dearn)</p>

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
Innovation Update To provide an update on recent highlights from the Innovation Board, including the current position regarding the Innovation Accelerator.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Regional Energy Strategy To consider the WMCA's Regional Energy Strategy.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Draft WMCA Budget 2025/26 To consider the draft budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year.	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Contract Procedural Rules Update To update the Contract Procedural Rules	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Director of Law & Governance (Helen Edwards)
WMCA Budget 2025/26 To approve the 2025/26 budget.	WMCA Board 7 February 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 14 March 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position and provisional outturn for the 2024/25 financial year.	WMCA Board 13 June 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
Local Investment in Natural Capital Local Investment in Natural Capital	WMCA Board 13 June 2025	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Key Route Network Review 2023/24 To gain approval to update the Key Route Network.	WMCA Board 13 June 2026	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)

The Forward Plan

This document sets out known 'key decisions' that will be taken by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) over the coming months.

Forthcoming key decisions are published online to meet the statutory 28 day notification rule for each meeting where a key decision will be taken. Where it has not been possible to meet the 28 day rule for publication of notice of a key decision or an intention to meet in private, the relevant notices will be published as required by legislation as soon as possible.

What is a key decision?

A 'key decision' means a decision of the Mayor, WMCA or officer which is likely:

- (a) to result in the WMCA incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income amounting to £1m or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the WMCA.

The report relating to a decision, together with any other documents being considered, will be available five clear working days before the decision is to be taken (unless the documentation contains exempt information).

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
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The forward plan also provides notice of when the WMCA may decide to exclude the press and public during consideration of a particular matter due to the potential for disclosure of confidential or exempt information. The grounds upon which local authorities can exclude the press and public are specified by law and details of the exempt categories are available on request from the Governance Services team (governance.services@wmca.org.uk).

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

- make a representation about why a matter should be heard in public, or
- submit information to the decision-making body about an item in the forward plan, or
- request details of relevant documents, or
- seek advice about the WMCA's decision-making arrangements,

should contact the Governance Services team: governance.services@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation Tracker

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
23 November 2023	Draft Budget and Capital Programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost benefit analysis in respect of preventative measures with fly tipping compared to 2022. 2. Clarification on whether the Council could recover costs associated with fly tipping from a Magistrates' or Small Claims Court. 	Dave Elrington	In progress	TBC	
16 January 2024	Off-Road Vehicles	Conviction data relating to off-road vehicles to be circulated to the Committee.	Dave Elrington	In progress	TBC	