

Cabinet – 17 March 2024

Resilient Communities – Safer Streets update

Portfolio: Councillor Perry - Deputy Leader & Resilient Communities

Related portfolios: All

Service: Resilient Communities

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

1.1 The Safer Streets programme is a strength-based approach designed to improve the safety and feeling of safety within our communities.

2. Summary

2.1 The resilient community approach adopted by the Council in 2019 has proved a successful tool in empowering and supporting communities. The approach is based on themes of personal responsibility, community response, integrated services and integrated enforcement which work together to support our communities.

2.2 One Palfrey Big Local and Blessed 2 Bless will be in attendance to present the asset based approaches to their work.

2.3 There is a general update on Safer Streets progress across a wide range of groups including the support for a new community group in Rough Hay.

2.4 The report showcases work by One Palfrey Big Local and Blessed 2 Bless. Both organisations will highlight their work and the importance of trust when delivering successful change for our residents' council.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet notes the update to the safer streets programme and further commits to develop strength based approaches within the Council.

3.2 That Cabinet will receive an update on the Safer Streets initiative in six months.

4. Report detail - Know

Context

- 4.1 In October 2019, Cabinet approved a report on resilient communities entitled 'Resilient Communities – A New Model of Personal Responsibility, Community Led Solutions, Integrated Community Safety and Community Protection and Enforcement'. This introduced the concept of resilient communities, which is a resident led, strength-based approach that, where appropriate, utilises individuals and communities to support themselves and underpins that support with integrated services and integrated enforcement.



- 4.2 **Personal responsibility** – focusing on individuals and families. It looks to ensure that people are communicated with effectively and then asks people to act responsibly in their everyday lives. This approach can be used across a full range of activities from litter to more complex criminal activity. It seeks for people to understand what they can do for themselves
- 4.3 **Community Led solutions** – the community response to COVID-19 and the involvement of many of our community organisations was remarkable. The services delivered throughout the pandemic could only be achieved with a strong community sector. The sector provided high quality and adaptable services focused on the needs of our communities. Community organisations have a strong track record of delivery.
- 4.4 **Integrated Services** – the holiday activity fund (HAF) programme and Walsall Connected work with Money Home Job are good examples of integrated services delivering joined up programmes of work with resilient communities playing a part in supporting council activities. Ensuring that teams have a joined-up approach for the benefit of residents is key.
- 4.5 **Integrated Enforcement** – we must work effectively with our partners to ensure residents are supported and protected. Walsall is a nice place to live and work and those that want to create issues for residents through fly tipping, ASB or

other illegal activities are not welcome. There is and will continue to be better work with partners to ensure residents of Walsall have good partnership responses

- 4.6 The COVID-19 pandemic-focused attention on the efficiency and effectiveness of local communities and the voluntary sector in tackling issues and taking responsibility for solutions. The strength-based approaches identified have proved a great success. Lessons from this difficult period include:
- a) Building trust between communities and statutory services is a key design feature of a resilient community's approach. This trust is slow to gain and quick to lose. It requires good honest communication, a listening style and respect for communities.
 - b) Communities are happy to play their part in solutions if they are appropriately supported. The creation of a street pastor service for the town centre and community work across the borough provides evidence of this willingness.
 - c) Small investments build large increases in social capital.
 - d) Residents respond positively to speedy resolution of issues.
- 4.7 The community and personal responsibility element of safer streets is built on trust built up through a different approach to supporting communities. At the heart of the approach is asset-based community development (ABCD). We look for, celebrate and support community assets and community strength through our innovative community development approaches. These approaches receive national recognition
- 4.8 Research, published on the 14 February 2024, led by the University of Kent, and Belong (the cohesion and integration network) identifies a “virtuous circle between volunteering and social cohesion. The research identified that “when people feel part of a more cohesive community, they are more likely to volunteer to support others. Furthermore, those who volunteer to support others subsequently come to feel they are part of a more cohesive community”
- 4.9 Two organisations have been invited to Cabinet to talk about their work, as set out below.

Blessed 2 Bless

- 4.10 Blessed 2 Bless were originally based in Birmingham. This faith-based group found themselves in difficulty, needing to move from previous accommodation quickly. Walsall Council stepped in to support the group with some short-term accommodation which re-focused the group's efforts on Walsall. This support has led to support for those impacted by the current economic challenges through the following:
- A facility created in the Manor Hospital to support those leaving hospital avoiding unnecessary delays in discharges. In addition, the foodbank supports staff in need.

- Created a mobile foodbank visiting places where high demand has been identified.
- Championing a dignity led approach to supporting our communities.
- Created a street pastor service, to be launched in 2023 providing support for vulnerable people late at night.

4.11 The street pastor service is supported by partners including the council, West Midlands Police and St Johns Ambulance Service. Volunteers have been trained by the Ascencion Trust; a Christian inter-denominational organisation focused on empowering individuals to work together within their local communities.

One Palfrey Big Local

4.12 One Palfrey Big Local celebrated its tenth year in December 2023. They have followed an asset-based approach and are now planning the next steps in relation to their activities as the Big Local project is ending. One Palfrey Big Local will describe their journey.



4.13 One Palfrey Big Local is Lottery funded but the approaches are strongly aligned to our resilient communities approach.

General Updates

4.14 In response to recent concerns from residents, the Palfrey Nash Dom and One Palfrey Big Local are supporting community safety activities within the area. Both organisations focus on strength-based approaches within their communities. Key initiatives from the organisations include:

- Working with the James Brindley Foundation on the availability of knife amnesty bins within the Palfrey and Caldmore areas.
 - Creation of a community safety hub (in collaboration with The Watch) in Sun Street.
 - Encouraging and youth organisations and activities within the local area.
 - Supporting the use of specialist organisations (Lionheart challenge, Terrier's project) to help positively influence young people within Walsall.
- 4.15 Both organisations are focused on collaborating with each other and with others who want to make a difference in the area.
- 4.16 In addition to the two schemes in focus there is also continued positive community activity in areas supported by the Safer Streets programme
- 4.17 Blakenall – Support for additional resources and activities in the area including the following:
- Additional outreach services
 - The Lionheart Challenge
 - Open days and community events
- 4.18 Bloxwich Community Partnership are the community lead for the work in the area and have been granted additional funding of £100,000 from Walsall Council and a further £40,000 from other sources to pursue this work.
- 4.19 Ryecroft Community Hub are planning an intervention focusing on providing safety equipment to vulnerable adults.
- 4.20 Short Heath – Short Heath Lest We Forget are working on a project to link the war memorial in Short Heath to the Falkland Islands. A video is now on display in a Buenos Aires museum.
- 4.21 Proffitt Street – Mindkind continue to deliver strongly with a fathers group focusing on mental health and positive parenting. Work with Childrens Services Early Help team with two members of the group delivering parenting support. Five members have been trained to deliver wellbeing walks across localities.
- 4.22 Alumwell – The community facility has received conditional planning agreement. The Church at Junction 10 are developing their local network to support community safety activity as part of operation Caldmore, Palfrey and Pleck.
- 4.23 Mossley – Ongoing support for the community building, services are being fine-tuned through the disabled facilities grant and assistance with development.
- 4.24 Black Country Innovate – The Safer Walsall Partnership contracted with Black Country Innovate and De Montfort University to deliver hate crime research which was unveiled at a conference on the 29 th February 2024. This research will enable partners to focus on this key issue.
- 4.25 Rough Hay residents group – The Council are supporting, through its safer streets programme, a resident group in George Rose Park. This initiative is in its

early stages but will focus on community safety initiatives and is aligned to the Long Term Plan for Darlaston, a levelling up initiative.

- 4.26 The small investments within the safer streets programme and the different approach to decision making, faster cheaper and more focused on supporting assets in the community, is creating stronger links with our communities. This groundwork has allowed us to support more projects within the community. These projects including Walsall Connected which has co-design and coproduction at its heart. Council resources are stretched, this approach continues to leverage social value into our community approach and our We are Walsall 2040 vision.

Council Plan Priorities

- 4.27 Our Resilient Communities approach supports all the “We are Walsall 2040” priorities. The Resilient Communities approach has empowered communities through our asset-based locality approach and has started to build happy and building a community that cares utilising the virtuous circle identified by the Belong network and University of Kent research.

Risk management

- 4.28 There are no significant risks in relation to Safer Streets. There will be a risk register supporting each of the agreed interventions.

Financial implications

- 4.29 There are no direct financial implications relating to this report.

Legal implications

- 4.30 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.31 There are no direct procurement implications for this report and any resulting procurement processes must comply with the Council's Contract Rules.

Property implications

- 4.32 There are no direct property implications relating to this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.33 Building confidence in our communities alongside giving residents the opportunity to join in activities for community good will have a positive impact on Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.34 There is strong connectivity between Public Health outcomes and our approaches to Community Development. Resilient Communities approaches often develop prevention solutions which support health and wellbeing outcomes.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.35 Approaches that increase social value and kindness will have a positive impact on reducing inequalities and accelerating the virtuous circle between our work and social cohesion.

Staffing implications

- 4.36 There are no direct staffing implications relating to this report.

Climate Impact

- 4.37 There are no direct climate change implications to this report

Consultation

- 4.38 Safer Streets initiatives are co-designed and delivered by our communities.

5. Decide

- 5.1 The following options have been considered:

- a) Do Nothing – The council could decide to disinvest in resilient community approaches. This would lead to reversal in community confidence and would negatively impact the council's priorities.
- b) Seek other ways of inspiring and involving our communities through non-asset-based approaches. These are generally not as sustainable as asset-based approaches.
- c) Re-confirm cabinet's commitment to the resilient communities approach and in particular the safer streets initiative. This is the preferred option as resilient communities has a track record of successful delivery.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Further work to embed strength-based approaches within the Council will be identified and delivered. Cabinet will receive further safer streets update in six months.

7. Review

- 7.1 A Resilient Communities external evaluation report will be commissioned and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

Background papers

Research from University of Kent demonstrating the synergy between social cohesion and volunteering (February 2024): [New research demonstrates synergy between social cohesion and volunteering - News Centre - University of Kent](#)

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