

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Draft Council Plan 2024-2029

Portfolio:	Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council
Related portfolios:	All
Service:	Council Wide
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

This report presents to Cabinet the draft new Council Plan that is aligned to ‘We are Walsall 2040’, articulating what the Council will do over the next four years to help achieve our Walsall 2040 vision. It further feeds into the Council’s considerations for the next phase of Proud transformation as well as budget setting processes, which are being reviewed and developed along analogous timelines.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to produce a Council Plan. It acts as a comprehensive roadmap for the public, Council officers and Members of the priorities the Council wants to achieve over a short term period and ensures that as a Council we can consider those priorities in budget setting processes.
- 2.2 A new Council Plan has been developed to ensure alignment with our 2040 We are Walsall ambitions for the borough and to reflect our continued mission to improve and drive forward better outcomes for residents.
- 2.3 The draft Council Plan has been developed through consideration of the We are Walsall strategy framework, consideration of the extensive engagement information and consultation feedback in the development of that 2040 programme as well as significant engagement with Council staff during 2024. It articulates what the Council will do until 2029 to deliver excellent services, continuously improve and remain on track in our shared 2040 ambitions.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the content of the report and agree the draft Council Plan to go out for consultation with public, staff and partners.
- 3.2 That Cabinet note the review and creation of a new Corporate Quarterly Performance reporting process including review and refresh of the Council Corporate Performance Management Framework based on the new Council Plan.

4. Report detail - know

- 4.1 The current Council Plan, 'Our Council Plan' 2022-2025, was approved at Cabinet in February 2022. It aims to reduce inequalities and maximise potential and was produced to reflect the Council's journey as it emerged from the impact of Covid-19 and continued its Proud transformation and customer journey.
- 4.2 Since 'Our Council Plan' was approved in early 2022, the Council has worked with partners to develop a long-term strategic vision for the borough with our 'We are Walsall 2040' strategy agreed at June Cabinet 2023. Furthermore, we have undergone a recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process as well as being the recipient of several national awards that highlight our improvement progress and validate our planned next steps on that improvement journey. It is important that we now take time to reflect on the journey for the Council with respect to We are Walsall 2040 delivery, change and transformation, and to continue to implement good practice and processes laid down from the peer review.
- 4.3 The Council Plan currently consists of 5 areas of focus (EPICC), 10 outcomes and 20 'markers of success – statements of intent across key priority areas. These EPICC areas of focus and the markers of success have determined the quarterly performance framework used by the Council to monitor performance in delivery across the organisation against the Council Plan. Whilst the vision of the current Council Plan is commendable and aligns with the key aims of 2040 around improving the borough and addressing entrenched inequalities and deprivation, there are significant themes not currently represented in this iteration of the Council Plan. Furthermore, the current phrasing of the markers of success limit the type of metric and milestone/output measures that can be considered for monitoring.
- 4.4 Due to these considerations, the time is right to bring forward the next Council Plan to ensure that we have the right strategic arch stone in place that underpins our Council strategy framework as we move forward along our 2040 trajectory.
- 4.5 A new Council Plan enables the design of a clear organisational framework for how the Council will deliver against its strategic 2040 objectives: what is the Council's role in achieving our vision for the future of the borough. The development process has facilitated dialogue and engagement with our staff and furthermore informs the Council's budget setting process and the focus of project work in service and transformation plans across the authority.

4.6 The deliverables in development and to be developed include:

- Our Council Plan – a published and collectively shared document highlighting what the Council will prioritise to deliver over the next 5 years against its 2040 ambitions. Draft attached for agreement.
- A 'Plan on a Page' - to be developed for ratification for Cabinet and Council December 2024 (Cabinet) and January 2025 (Council).
- A revamped and re-designed corporate performance reporting process, including a new approach to quarterly performance monitoring for approval alongside the final Council Plan document in December 2024 and January 2025 (Council).

4.7 Key considerations in the development of the Council Plan include:

- Co-design with services across the Council.
- Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty which will be a key tenet across the plan.
- Alignment to the We are Walsall 2040 Strategy
- Alignment to the Council Proud Promises and with the work to underpin and determine the next phase of Proud transformation.
- Ensuring transparency and accountability.
- Use of effective listening and engagement with staff and follow consultation good practice.
- Effective reporting and governance through a revamped and benchmarkable (where appropriate) performance framework.

4.8 The plan has been developed through a series of internal workshops and discussions with key stakeholders and staff throughout 2024, alongside an analysis of existing data and needs assessments from the extensive 'We are Walsall' engagement.

4.9 The Council Plan draft comes to Cabinet in July for approval to go out for consultation. The Consultation process will mirror the successful consultation carried out on the We are Walsall 2040 strategy draft last year. It will last 8 weeks over the summer and into September to give sufficient time for engagement outside of school holiday periods. The ambitions and objectives will be shared with the public through Commonplace – whereby the public, staff and others can comment and respond with their thoughts on the strategy. Whilst Commonplace is an online forum for engagement, we will be sharing posters and leaflets with the QR code link across the Council estate (e.g. libraries, leisure centres) and community venues (Walsall Connected Hubs, Community Centres). Those that do require a hardcopy will be able to request one, and we will provide additional support where required. Furthermore, we will write to all partners across the borough, including community sector partners, to ensure they have an opportunity to comment.

4.10 The consultation will end on 18 September and any required amends made before taking the draft through to Scrutiny Overview Committee, Cabinet in December and on to Full Council for ratification in early January 2025.

- 4.11 The ambitions within the draft Council Plan are closely aligned to those within the We are Walsall 2040 strategy. It is vital that we as a Council outline our intent and focus as a key public anchor organisation in Walsall – articulating how we will deliver against the vision and ambitions of the 2040 Borough Strategy. We have therefore retained the four 2040 ambitions and supplemented with a fifth internally focussed ambition that ensures we have the right people, process, policies and programmes to maintain our improvement journey. The five ambitions are:
- We are Healthy and Well.
 - We are Thriving and Happy.
 - We are Prosperous and Innovative.
 - We are Proud of our Borough.
 - We are Continuously Improving.
- 4.12 The ‘We are Continuously Improving’ ambition encapsulates the strong improvement focus we have as a Council, aligns to our Proud promises and outlines our commitment to keep on learning, focus on what matters to residents, productivity, value for money and delivering efficient and effective services.
- 4.13 Underneath each of these five ambitions there are three objectives that highlight what the Council will do to deliver against the 2040 trajectory and to ensure we continue to build a strong Council that delivers the right things in the right way for Walsall people. These objectives, whilst supporting the 2040 strategy, do have some nuanced deviation in language to reflect the range of service delivery within the Council rather than the whole place partnership scope within the 2040 strategy and to further reflect our current political pledges, and internal Council culture, values and journey.
- 4.14 The draft Council Plan also outlines supporting cross cutting principles that are key drivers for the Council in ensuring outcome focussed delivery. These are linked to key strategies in the Council, and we will ensure across all ambitions and objectives that we embed these principles. These include:
- Focussing on prevention
 - Ensuring equity
 - Working in partnership
 - Being insight-led
 - Acting sustainably.
- 4.15 A Performance framework aligned to the ambitions and objectives in the draft Council Plan is in development. It will ensure that we are measuring the right KPIs/metrics to demonstrate progress against each ambition and objective within the Plan for Members and the public. The new Council Plan performance framework will have a strengthened approach to benchmarking against our regional nearest neighbours through inclusion of common metrics where appropriate and will incorporate any national or regional metrics of relevance.

Risk management

- 4.16 There are no significant risks associated with the Council Plan or associated work programme.

Financial implications

- 4.17 Whilst there are no direct financial implications of this report, the Council Plan will act as a strategic framework for the Council when setting the overarching direction of financial investments in forming strategic decision-making. The process of strategic thinking, workshops and engagement will run analogously with/to budget setting processes.

Legal implications

- 4.18 There are no direct legal implications from this report. The development of a Council Plan is a statutory requirement for local authorities.
- 4.19 An Equality Impact Assessment will be developed as part of the Council Plan development process, and equality considerations will be monitored on an ongoing basis alongside delivery of the plan. Equity is a key principle and foundational tenet of this plan.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.20 There are no direct procurement implications from this report.

Property implications

- 4.21 There are no direct property implications from this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.22 There are no direct implications in this report. The Council plan will align with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy and We are Walsall 2040 and work is already underway to take a health in all policies approach in any new strategy work to support delivery.

Staffing implications

- 4.23 There are no direct staffing implications from this report. Staff have been engaged in the development of this strategy and staff will be asked for their views as part of the public consultation on the strategy and associated objectives.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.24 The Council Plan will align to We are Walsall 2040, which has several outcomes and ambitions around reducing inequalities and addressing entrenched deprivation.

Climate Change

- 4.25 There are no direct implications. Climate Change is a key consideration under A clean and green future within the Plan.

Consultation

- 4.26 The draft Council Plan has been developed through engagement with staff and key stakeholders and takes account of the extensive engagement information and data generated to create the We are Walsall 2040 borough strategy – collated in 2022-2023 through conversations and consultation with approximately 8,000 people and organisations. Furthermore, following draft approval at June Cabinet 2024 the draft Plan will be formally consulted upon with partners, community organisations and the public through late spring and summer, before the final Plan is drafted and ratified by Cabinet and Council in the autumn.

5. Decide

Agreeing to the draft Council Plan will ensure we align our strategic framework and priorities with the borough ambitions and vision in We are Walsall 2040 and will provide a clear trajectory for our transformation and budget setting aligned to the 2040 outcomes.

6. Respond

Following Cabinet agreement for the draft to proceed to consultation we will embark on a public consultation exercise seeking views on the document. We will use these views to consider/make amends and take the final document through the Cabinet and Council in December and January 2025 for ratification.

Work is already underway to process map and assess metrics and measures used by our nearest neighbours in the region and from similar authorities to ensure that we are considering a new approach to quarterly performance monitoring that provides insight and supports a culture of learning and enables benchmarking and integrated financial, HR and place-based measures.

7. Review

- 7.1 The Council Plan will be monitored for delivery through quarterly reporting of the Council Plan performance framework to senior officers (via Corporate Management Team and Cabinet).

Background papers –

Annexes:

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Signed

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Resources and Transformation

15 July 2024



Signed

Cllr Perry

Leader of Council

15 July 2024

