

Cabinet – 7 February 2007

Towards a sustainable Community Strategy/Community Plan 2005-6 Progress Report

Portfolio: Councillor Tom Ansell, Leader of the Council

Service: Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership

Wards: All

Key decisions: No

Forward plan: No

Summary of report

Walsall Borough's second Community Plan was launched in September 2005 and set out the work being undertaken to achieve the borough's vision that ***“Walsall will be a prosperous, inclusive and competitive Borough in which its diverse communities feel involved, safer, healthier and can take pride in its future”***.

The document, which is attached to this report, sets out the progress that has been made towards achieving this vision and, in particular, developments that have taken place in the key areas of Community Engagement and Community Cohesion. It also sets out the route map for developing a Sustainable Community Strategy by early 2008. This will replace the Community Plan and will meet the requirements set out by Government in October 2006, in the Local Government White Paper, Strong and prosperous communities.

Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:

- (1) To approve the Community Plan Progress Report/Towards a Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough developed by Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership attached as **Appendix 1**
- (2) To note alignment of this updated plan with the Council's Corporate Plan and annual budget for 2007/2008 as set out within the Corporate Integrated Performance Planning Framework (CIPPF) which is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- (3) To refer the Plan onto full Council for its adoption
- (4) Delegate to the Executive Director of Regeneration authority to finalise any further amendments

Resource and legal considerations

The Local Government Act of 2000 gave local authorities the responsibility, with their partners, to draw up a Community Strategy for their area, setting out a shared long term vision. Article four of the Constitution sets out under our policy framework, the responsibility of Council to approve, amongst other things, the borough's Community Strategy.

The recent Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, strongly encourages local authorities to integrate the core strategy of the local development framework within the Sustainable Community Strategy to ensure that the key spatial planning objectives for an area are fully aligned with the priorities identified within the Sustainable Community Strategy. Walsall will work to achieve this integration through the development of the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy in alignment with local consultation on the development of the Black Country Core Strategy during this summer.

As the Sustainable Community Strategy should aim to reflect the collective vision of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Council has delegated responsibility for the development of borough's Sustainable Community Strategy to Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP).

Citizen impact

The Community Plan sets out the strategic vision for the borough and as such encapsulates the key priorities of the residents and communities of Walsall. This is the primary document from which all other plans and strategies take 'due regard'. It also provided the basis for the targets chosen within the Local Area Agreement.

Community safety

The Safer Stronger Communities Partnership (formerly known as the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership) sits within the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership framework. Crime and disorder reduction is a key priority within the Safer Stronger Communities theme/pillar within the Local Area Agreement. The progress report highlights the success made in reducing the total number of recorded crimes in Walsall.

Environmental impact

The Local Area Agreement contains targets to improve the environment and to work towards addressing climate change issues, priorities set out in the Community Plan. In line with good practice a sustainability assessment will be built into the processes for developing the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Performance and risk management issues

There is a robust performance management framework in place to deliver the priorities and targets within the Community Plan and Local Area Agreement. This is based around an Executive Committee which monitors overall performance and reports directly to the WBSP board and four pillar executive groups and stakeholder boards which focus on the achievement of the targets within their own pillar.

Equality implications

The progress report sets out the work that is taking place by the equalities partnership on developing a borough-wide community cohesion strategy and an equality impact assessment will be built into the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy.

Consultation

The Community Plan was the subject of extensive consultation when it was first drafted in 2005. One such event was the 'Big Conversation' which was held in February of that year. As the Sustainable Community Strategy is develop throughout this year, further consultation events will take place with stakeholders, LNPs and residents. In addition, there is the requirement to consult on the core strategy, issues and options, this July.

Vision 2008

Vision 2008 is the current vision for the Council. The Community Plan sets out the partner's collective vision for the borough. Work is underway with the Vision 2021 project in developing a longer term vision for the borough in conjunction with partners, which includes consultation/conversations with a wide range of stakeholders and residents.

Background papers

Walsall's Community Plan 2005 – 2010: Working Together for a Stronger Future

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Tim Johnson
Executive Director

30 January 2007



Councillor Tom Ansell
Leader of the Council

30 January 2007

Appendix 1

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**Walsall's Community Plan 2005 – 2010
Progress Report 2005 - 2006**

Working Towards a Sustainable Community Strategy

Foreword

Chief Superintendent Bruce Gilbert, OBE

Chair of Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership

As the Chair of Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership may I welcome you to the first progress report on our Community Plan. Since its launch in September 2005 there have been many changes and improvements throughout the Borough which are detailed here.

We also go on to say how we intend to develop this Community Plan into a Sustainable Community Strategy by April 2008.

It is clear from the work of the Partnership that Walsall faces an exciting and challenging future, but the overriding aim of this partnership strategic plan continues to be that of making Walsall a prosperous, inclusive and competitive Borough in which its diverse communities feel, involved, safer and healthier and can take pride in its future.



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1. Introduction

Walsall Borough's second Community Plan was launched in September 2005. This plan highlights the work being undertaken to make a 'step change' over the next five years to meet the borough's vision that ***“Walsall will be a prosperous, inclusive and competitive Borough in which its diverse communities feel involved, safer, healthier and can take pride in its future”***.

This update report sets out the progress that has been made towards achieving this vision and in particular developments that have taken place in the key areas of Community Engagement and Cohesion. It also sets out our route map for developing a Sustainable Community Strategy by early 2008. This will replace the Community Plan and will meet the requirements set out by Government in October 2006, in the Local Government White Paper, Strong and prosperous communities.

The Sustainable Community Strategy will be a very different document from our current Community Plan as it will integrate land use, economic and environmental development of the borough with community aspirations. This will ensure that shared visions and objectives are developed within a spatial dimension. This is a unique opportunity for Walsall as this summer we will be consulting on the core strategy, which will guide future development decisions and planning applications, at the same time as the development of a range of key policy strategies which will all feed into the Sustainable Community Strategy.

In order to embark on the development of this strategy, we need to identify and update the external drivers, the social, economic, environmental and demographic trends and projections and our strengths and opportunities, which will inform the strategic policy context of the strategy. In section 2 of this report we highlight some key trends, benchmarking information to guide our thinking.

2. The Borough of Walsall – Context and Strategic Drivers

Set out below are the key drivers at a global, national, regional, sub-regional and local level which have and continue to influence the choices and priorities for Walsall in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and in the development of its Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategic policy framework is set out in diagrammatical form in figure 1. Also highlighted are some of the unique opportunities which are now helping to transform Walsall.

Global Influences and National Drivers:

In Walsall we are aware of changing global economics. Competition from emerging economies such as India and China, in terms of low labour costs in manufacturing and increasing skills levels, has an impact on our traditional industrial base and poses challenges in developing our niche. The low cost of air travel and increased accessibility to data and telecommunications means that Walsall has to operate within a global community.

The unprecedented rate of climate change, demand for fossil fuels and perceived increased risks of terrorism also contextualise the world in which we now live.

The European Union is expanding and people are more able to migrate.

The UK is one of the most heavily populated countries in the world. Nationally, the demand for housing outstrips supply. The gap between GDP in the south and the north of the UK is marked, with government strategy focused on developing more competitive regions.

Regional and Sub-Regional Drivers:

The West Midlands is characterised by a heritage of manufacturing. However, the aims of the Regional Economic Strategy (currently under revision) are to diversify our economy by identifying and supporting 'business clusters', promoting the development of high technology 'corridors' and focusing activity in 'regeneration zones'. The spatial strategy for the West Midlands identifies the need to redevelop brown field sites and to create a greater density of population by bringing more people to live in our cities and town centres. Developing skills for existing and new industries is a priority.

Within the West Midlands local authorities, including Walsall, are collaborating to compete jointly more effectively in a City Regions initiative, recognising that cities are the key driver within a region.

The Black Country Study sets out a 30-year vision for the sub-region which comprises Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall. Overall the aim is to reverse trends in population decline by enhancing the Black Country as a place to live, work and invest. Four corridors of high quality improvement sites are proposed, expanding existing town centres, improving the quality of housing, increasing skill levels, integrated transport and developing the sub-region as an urban park, are all part of the agenda.

Local Strategic Drivers:

Demographics

Walsall has a total population of 253,463 (2005 mid year estimates), this is 0.3% slightly more than the previous year estimates. Despite this, population projections predict a gradual decline in the population of Walsall. 2005 mid year estimates also illustrate that Walsall has a greater proportion of young people (under 25 year olds) at 32.6% compared to the national average of 30.9% although future population predictions suggest a gradual decrease in number. However, Walsall has a greater proportion of older people (50 years and over), 34.6% compared to national average of 32% and this is predicted to increase over the next decade adding pressure on service provision. There is also predicted a large increase in very old people.

Walsall has a BME population of 13.6% (34,434) which is greater than the national figure of 9.1%. Minority ethnic residents' backgrounds are predominately Indian (40%), Pakistani (27.1%), Bangladeshi (7.3%) and Black groups (10.2%). 72% of people in Walsall are Christian and the other religious groups in Walsall are Muslims (3%), Sikhs (0.6%) and Hindus (1.6%) which are greater than the national comparison.

Partnership Working

'Partnership' has become the 'way we do things' in Walsall. We recognise that by planning services together we can make better use of resources, improve what we do and more effectively meet the needs of our communities.

The Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) has established its credibility as the overarching partnership in Walsall. The Board of the WBSP includes senior members of the key organisations across Walsall.

Through the WBSP Walsall signed off our first Local Area Agreement with the government, comprising of over 140 targets to be achieved over 3 years. Action plans have been prepared with partners reviewing and prioritising activities offering the greatest impact and value for money. In this process, better use of resources has been achieved, but more importantly a change in culture to one in which organisations communicate with one another and jointly solve some of our most challenging problems by working with communities has begun.

'Partnership Working' has become a 'management buzz word'. However, in Walsall it is a meaningful way of working together which makes a measurable difference in the outcomes of our work. There is a strong sense of the need to 'seize the moment' and make the most of the fantastic regeneration of our town centre by making sure there is something for everyone and that local people benefit most from the jobs and opportunities created.

Children and Young People

Walsall has shown gradual improvements in GCSE attainment (% Pupils Achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSE's) since 2002 and this is also reflected in national figures. Recent 2006 unverified figures suggest Walsall has closed the gap slightly with England and Wales to 9% compared to a gap of 11% in the previous year.

In the first quarter of 2006/07 Walsall had a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) percentage of 10.4% compared nationally to 8.6%. The spread of those who are NEET across the borough correlates strongly with the most deprived areas.

The Children and Young People's service, through the Change for Children agenda will continue to focus its energies on creating and delivering better services across Walsall. Over the next few months a series of Locality Partnership Events will be held seeking the views of the local community and key partners to help inform future service design.

Healthy Communities and Older People/Vulnerable Adults

For men in Walsall life expectancy has increased from 73.5 years in 1995-97 to 75.4 years in 2001-03. For women in Walsall life expectancy has increased from 79.2 years in 1995-97 to 80.4 years in 2001-03. This is an increase of 1.2 years and compares favourably to 1.04 years across England and Wales. However, this remains lower than the national average and there remains a strong east/west divide with life expectancy being greater in the east of the borough

39.4% of households have one or more residents with a long term illness compared with 34.1% nationally. Disability Living Allowance Claimants by Ward 2005 also correlate to areas of the borough suffering from multiple deprivation.

As well as the challenges the LAA throws up for us and our partners there are many opportunities inherent in this new way of working. One of the most exciting of these is the opportunity to widen our partnership to include the further involvement of the voluntary and community sector. Currently the VCS play an important role in advising and endorsing our different programmes of work, with future planned investment that will further develop the sector we look forward to a time where this sector can become more active partners in the delivery of services, both in line with the spirit of the LAA and current government thinking.

Safer and Stronger Communities

Total crime in Walsall has gradually decreased over the last 6 years compared to England and Wales which has fluctuated. Recent figures for 2005/06 shows total crime currently stands at a rate per 1,000 population of 104.2 in Walsall compared with 106.8 nationally. Despite total crime reducing over time to less than the national average, some key crime types including burglary dwelling, vehicle crime and violence against a person are above national rates for 2005/06.

A resident satisfaction survey in 2005 revealed what residents think about the area in which they live. Overall in Walsall, 73% are happy with their area as a place to live. Looking at this in further detail, people living in Pheasey and Pelsall are most satisfied with residents from Darlaston South least satisfied with their area as a place to live. Litter, activities/facilities for the young and road and pavement repairs are some of the key issues which residents feel need improving.

Due to the intensive road network and certain heavy industrial operations Walsall has relatively challenging issues in relation to its air quality. The entire borough has recently been declared an *Air Quality Management Area* due to levels of nitrogen dioxide. A significant proportion of Walsall lies within the Black Country which because of its industrial heritage has left a legacy of contaminated land which can often go undetected.

An opportunity to make a major impact on crime statistics is the new focus in the LAA on tackling alcohol related crime as 43% of all reported crime in the borough is committed by people under the influence of alcohol. Another emerging opportunity is the impact of the State of the Environment report and action plan. There is the potential to link this action to local environmental priorities identified by the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and engage our communities in producing a sustainability charter for the borough.

Economic Development and Enterprise

Walsall's unemployment rate (claimant count as a proportion of working age population as at mid 2004) has been rising for the last twelve months; as at October 2006 it was 4.6% which is higher than the rate for West Midlands (3.3%) and Great Britain (2.5%). St Matthew's and Blakenall wards have the highest concentration of unemployment across the borough of 13.8% and 11.6% respectively.

Walsall's qualifications are lower for all levels of NVQ when compared with regional and national figures. Walsall is higher than the West Midlands average and the national average in percentage of people with no qualifications (21.8% compared with 17.7% and 14.3% respectively).

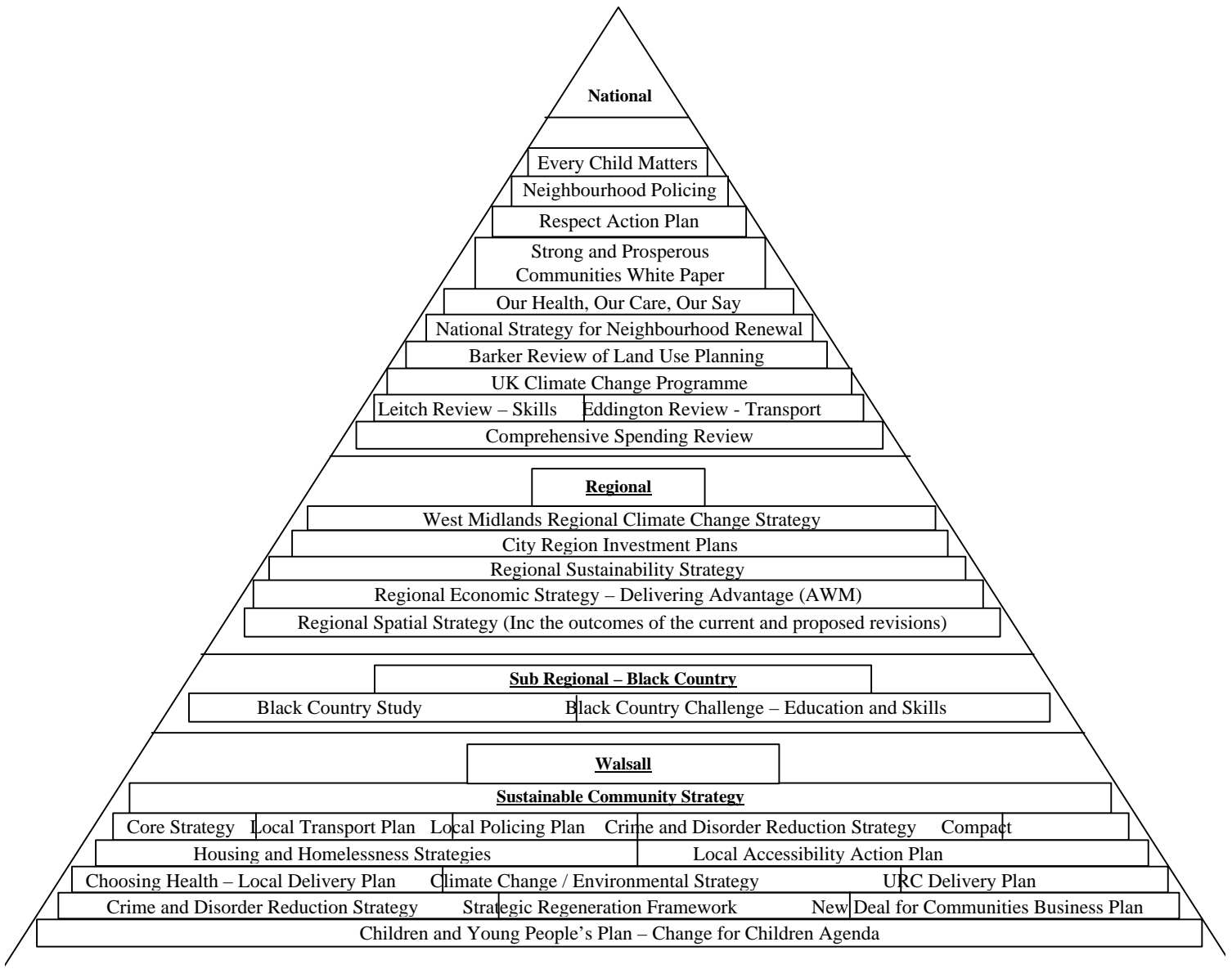
Walsall's new transformational agenda has been developed by Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) one of the most respected Urban Regeneration companies in the UK. WRC is spearheading a dramatic change in Walsall's Economic Development and Enterprise fortunes over the next 10 Years. A clear and concise delivery plan is already achieving and exceeding against a range of key strategic targets and objectives focussed on positioning Walsall as a town for Enterprise, a place to invest, work and live.

With over £500m of investment already secured Walsall's foundations for transformation are being laid. The WRC plan encompasses encouraging better skills, creating an improved quality and choice of housing and developing on office market infrastructure that will help develop, encourage and retain disposable income within the local economy. This agenda coupled with the LAA directly aims to ensure that those ward areas with lowest skills, highest rates of unemployment and limited life and enterprise related chances begin to reap the benefits from the levels of investment planned.

Charts relating to the statistics above can be found at the back of this report and more detailed information can be found in the People and Place Perspectives 2006/07 – A Picture of Our Community report which is on the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership website – www.wbsp.org.uk or by contacting the Shared Partnership Information Resource (SPIR) team on 01922 652464 or spir@walsall.gov.uk.

Figure 1

Strategic Policy Framework



3. Our Delivery Approach – Local Area Agreement

Following the launch of the Community Plan in September 2005, the borough was successful in being included as one of the areas for a Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Our Local Area Agreement which was approved in March 2006 is now the key delivery vehicle for the Community Plan. The LAA was negotiated with Government Office and sets clear targets and priorities for Partners to deliver based on those set out in our Community Plan. It contains over 100 targets which will be delivered over the next three years through our commissioning process.

However, the LAA is not the totality of all activity within the borough. Other actions and targets are set out in service specific plans which sit under the Community Plan e.g. the Children and Young People's Plan and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. Of particular note is the work around the physical regeneration of the borough which is set out in the Walsall Regeneration Company's Prospectus for Growth, the Future Foundation's Zone Improvement Plan and the Council/Walsall Housing Partnership's strategic regeneration framework.

Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership has also improved its delivery structures to reflect the Government's four key Pillars of activity common to all LAAs:

- Healthy Communities and Older People/Vulnerable Adults
- Children and Young People
- Safer Stronger Communities
- Economic Development and Enterprise

The Pillar Executive and Stakeholder groups ensure that commissions and programmes of work are consistent with the strategic priorities of their respective pillar.

The key priorities that will deliver the community plan for each pillar are as follows:

Healthy Communities and Older People/Vulnerable Adults:

- Improving the health of the population: increase life expectancy, reduce mortality rates from cancer strokes and heart disease, increase number of smoking quitters, reduce number of falls, developing expert patient and health trainer programmes, reducing the gap between the worst and best areas in the Borough.
- Improving quality of life and independence: reduce number of emergency bed days, reduce care admissions and increase direct payments and speed of provision of adaptations, make workplaces healthier, increase physical activity of the population, decent homes for vulnerable people.
- Promoting social inclusion: improve access to services by people from black and other minority ethnic groups; increase day sessions for people with learning difficulties, reduction in number of low birth weight babies in Walsall.

Children and Young People:

These are the outcomes determined within the national Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda which have been adopted locally:

- Being healthy: tackling teenage conception, childhood obesity, infant mortality and improving access to services for vulnerable young people
- Staying safe: tackling incidences of abuse and neglect
- Enjoy and achieve: tackling school absence, raising achievement numbers getting A* to C at GCSE
- Making a positive contribution: tackling youth re-offending, improving lives of Looked after children
- Making a contribution: increasing numbers of 16-18 year olds in employment, education or training

Safer Stronger Communities:

- Reducing crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and reassuring the public
- Empowering local people to have a greater voice and influence over decision making and the delivery of services by creating participative community leaders and active citizens
- Securing a cleaner, greener environment so as to improve the quality of life at a neighbourhood level
- Minimising the generation and maximising the recycling of waste
- Reducing arson and accidental fires
- Building respect in communities and reducing anti-social behaviour

Economic Development and Enterprise:

- Increasing employment and reducing unemployment and inactivity in the locality
 - Developing people's skills to help those in unemployment gain employment
 - Connecting those individuals seeking work to those employers requiring workers
- Increasing the skill levels of the population with clear reference to business need
 - Providing increased opportunities for getting on the skills 'ladder' with a clear focus on providing relevant employer led training
- Increasing economic growth and enterprise development
 - Enterprising Futures – Engaging schools and pupils in enterprise related activities to broaden understanding about business and entrepreneurship.
 - Developing new support mechanisms that help encourage and nurture new entrepreneurs to develop sustainable businesses
 - Increasing Inward Investment – Developing an offer to businesses that positions Walsall a key location to invest and grow.
 - Succession Planning – Helping existing business owners plan a confident future
 - Developing the Town and District Centres

These priorities are aimed at ensuring that all LAA commissioned activity has a direct impact on improving the Economic Performance of the Borough. The agenda of activities has been developed through PoWER (Partnership for Walsall Enterprise and Regeneration) which is a strong partnership of public and private agencies.












How we have progressed against these strategic priorities is set out overleaf.

4. Measuring Our Progress So Far (April to December 2006)

Following the approval of Walsall's LAA, it is now the main delivery driver for successfully achieving the outcomes / priorities set within the Community Plan.

Set out below for each LAA pillar is a snap shot for the 9 month time period April to December 2006 of the outcomes / priorities and how they rate in terms of performance, direction of travel and risk. There are a number of indicators within each of the outcomes which are monitored annually and are not possible to assess at this current stage, for this purpose, these have been taken out.

Children and Young People

Pillar Overall / Outcome Summary	RAG to Date*	Direction of Travel*	Risk*
PILLAR OVERALL		↑	
Being Healthy (teenage conceptions, child obesity, perinatal mortality)	-	↔	
Staying Safe (vulnerable children)		↑	
Enjoying and Achieving (GSCE, Key Stage attainment, absences)		↑	
Making a Positive Contribution (looked after children, children and young people re-offending)		↑	
Achieving Economic Well-being (NEETs)		↑	

* - note that the data is representative of the period April to December 2006

Commentary:

Being Healthy - One of our targets within our plans is the reduction of Teenage Conceptions. We already have an effective multi-disciplinary teenage pregnancy strategy which has helped reduce conception rates across the Borough. However, after several successful years of a steady decline in the number of conceptions a slight increase encouraged us to re-visit the work we were undertaking.

Staying Safe - We work together to keep children and young people safe from abuse and harm by providing a range of preventative services to meet these needs. For example, using the Child Concern Model, teachers, health professionals etc concerned about a child utilise the common


assessment framework which determines the child's likely needs. For those children or young people who are deemed as vulnerable or who have complex needs, systems are in place, such as single referral point, which allows for access to the relevant service required. Several targets for reducing the number of looked after children across the Borough sit within our plan. To-date we have reduced the number of looked after children by 5% and we have action plans in place to continue this success.

Enjoy and Achieve - We have developed a joined-up approach for raising attainment and achievement for Children and Young People across the Borough. We are conscious that although we have made real progress on our attainment rates we still have some way to go on narrowing the attainment gap. The attendance of our children and young people at school has seen improvement over the past 12 months, for which the DfES has confirmed that Walsall is ahead of its trajectory to meet its 07/08 absence target. This has been achieved via various strands of work, one of them being Targeted Support – additional support, through the deployment of Attendance Support Workers, to priority schools, identified by DfES for Walsall Priority Schools Action Group. The performance of young people at Key Stage 3 has seen a steady improvement over the past few years and suggested figures for 2006 reveal an improvement in the attainment rate of 5+ A*-C GCSEs.

Make a Positive Contribution - Children and Young People participate in decision making and supporting the community through forums such as Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) and the Youth Parliament. Representatives of YOU were fully involved in the development of this Community Plan. Members of YOU are meeting with the Local Neighbourhood Partnership's Committees advising them on how they can further increase the involvement of young people. There have been significant improvements in the behaviour of children and young people in Walsall. Fixed term and permanent exclusions from school have been significantly reduced and youth offending rates are satisfactory when compared with national figures.

Achieving Economic Well Being - The Black Country has one of the highest percentages of NEETS in the country; consequently it is a key target for Walsall. Working with the key service providers we have seen a reduction of this targeted group from 12.5% in December 2004 to 10.4% in December 2005. Targets have been set to see a continuation of this reduction to 9.1% by 2008/9.

Healthier Communities and Vulnerable Adults

Pillar Overall / Outcome Summary	RAG to Date*	Direction of Travel*	Risk*
PILLAR OVERALL			
Improved health of the population (smoking, life expectancy, mortality, obesity)			
Improving quality of life and independence (direct payments, Employment Retention Project, vulnerable households)			
To promote social inclusion (low birth weight babies, screening)			
















* - note that the data is representative of the period April to December 2006









Commentary:

The Healthy Communities and Vulnerable Adults Partnership Board and Executive Group have achieved substantial gains in the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Walsall. Life expectancy has increased for both men and women; we have increased the numbers of supported admissions of older people to permanent residential homes, ensured that more of our citizens from the BME communities receive assessment and services, improved health and welfare support for those struggling at work through the Employment Retention Project, and increased the numbers seen by the Mental Health Primary Care Team.

Working in partnership in this way has enabled us to develop joint commissioning plans for all our user groups, and allowed us to develop targeted action plans to respond quickly and effectively to support any outcome that is not being achieved. For example we have not had the success we wished for in reducing the incidence of low weight babies (LBW) within our communities. Following an intensive audit that looked at figures both for LWB and perinatal and infant mortality, what services are currently provided, consultation with community members, and best practice nationally and internationally, a detailed improvement plan is currently being drawn up for each organisation/service area which will enable us to make further progress against this outcome.

Safer and Stronger Communities

Pillar Overall / Outcome Summary	RAG to Date*	Direction of Travel*	Risk*
PILLAR OVERALL			
To reduce crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and to reassure the public, reducing the fear of anti-social behaviour (total crime, business related crimes, ASB, young people as victims of crime)			
To reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol including substantially increasing the number of drug misusing offenders entering treatment through the CJS (people in treatment)			
To reduce overall crime in line with CDRP targets and narrow the gap between the worst performing neighbourhoods and other areas across the district (crime in Darlaston LNP)			
To minimise the generation of waste and maximise the recycling of waste so as to reduce the amount of land fill, at least in line with			

Government policy (waste recycling)			
To increase the awareness of environmental issues, particularly in relation to key target groups, so as to influence personal behaviour in line with sound environmental principles as reflected in international, national and local policies (environmental awareness sessions in schools, schools involved in Walsall in Bloom)		↑	
To secure a cleaner, greener environment so as to ensure improved quality of life at neighbourhood level and a borough that is more attractive to inward investment (LNP environmental action plans, air quality action plans)		-	
Improve the quality of the local environment by reducing the gaps of liveability between the worst wards / neighbourhoods and the district as a whole, with a particular focus on reducing levels of detritus (litter, graffiti, fly posting)		↑	
To reduce arson and accidental fires (accidental fires in dwellings, arson, deliberate fires in vehicles)		↑	

* - note that the data is representative of the period April to December 2006










Commentary:

The Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board has achieved notable success in reducing the total number of recorded crimes, which continues to fall across the borough. This can be attributed to the effective management of prolific and persistent offenders and the contribution made by the drugs intervention programme. The programme for tackling crime hot spot areas through partnership interventions (CSIG) has proven to be extremely effective in reducing crime and the fear of crime. It has recently targeted Darlaston and is now working in Walsall town centre.

A recent Statement of the Environment report produced in partnership with Walsall Council and the Environment Agency highlighted the importance of climate change to the partnership. We are pleased that our schools are already contributing positively to this agenda through two key environmental initiatives - Walsall in Bloom and Eco-schools. The targets are 10 and 7 respectively with both targets achieving 17 schools involved so far. Local neighbourhood partnerships have raised the profile of these initiatives in their locality and encouraged greater participation by schools and the local community.

A recent Student Voice Day, promoted through the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) and supported by a range of partners including Youth Opinions Unite, the Police and Fire Service, raised the profile of local democracy with our secondary school councils and is leading to positive interaction with LNPs and contributions to their neighbourhood agreements about issues affecting some of our young people. LNP Neighbourhood Agreements have been finalised and are being used to inform, in particular, the Council's planning process for 2007/08. Walsall's Community Empowerment Network has worked in partnership with the Council to organise an intercultural leadership seminar in January 2007. This initiative is aimed at young adults aged 20-30 years who aspire to be community leaders of the future.

Economic Development and Enterprise

Pillar Overall / Outcome Summary	RAG to Date*	Direction of Travel*	Risk*
PILLAR OVERALL			
Increase employment and reduce unemployment and inactivity in the locality (reduce worklessness) (employment, unemployment)	 see note 1 below		 see note 1 below
Increase skill levels of the local population with clear preference to local business need (job related training, NVQ's)			

* - note that the data is representative of the period April to December 2006

Commentary:

2006 has seen an unprecedented level of partnership activity to support the economic development and enterprise agenda in Walsall. Having developed the new Partnership for Walsall Enterprise and Regeneration (PoWER) during 2006 it is clear that the level of engagement with partners is generating significant benefits through a focussed agenda on worklessness, skills and enterprise development. Involving partners collectively in the development of a wide and comprehensive range of delivery plans will help address the current levels of performance in Walsall.

Note 1 - When considering the measurement data for this pillar it is important to emphasise that a significant time lag exists between published data and activity planned and underway. It is clear that many of the delivery plans will only begin to have an impact on data that will be available in 6 to 12 months time.

A more detailed version setting out progress against all the LAA targets is available by contacting the Shared Partnership Information Resource (SPIR) team on 01922 652464 or spir@walsall.gov.uk

5. Working on a Vision for Walsall in 2021

Background

The importance of long term, sustainable planning for Walsall is recognised by the partners in WBSP. In order to plan far reaching and complex changes, consultation with members of the public and a wide range of other stakeholders is essential.

Our starting point for sustainable change has been to think about a vision for the year 2021 – what do the people who live and work in the Borough want Walsall to be like in 14 years time?

To this end, WBSP has commissioned Optimum Interventions Ltd to assist in developing a detailed vision for the Borough in 2021. Once the core components of a shared vision are finalised, a more detailed strategy with clear milestones over the next 14 years will be developed to take Walsall forward to 2021 which will be at the heart of the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy.

It is expected that the vision will cover the technological, physical, economic and social elements of life in Walsall.

Work is well underway on this and some main themes are already emerging.

Methodology

We are using an approach known as Appreciative Inquiry, which is deliberately positive in planning for the future. Appreciative Inquiry is a tool which small and large organisations, communities and partnerships have used all over the world to bring about change.

The methodology uses a range of questions which encourage people to identify what works well and also allows them to dream about what the future of Walsall might look like.

This creative and positive approach frees people from the negative thinking that can sometimes creep in and overshadow the things that have been achieved; that work well and that are strengths in an organisation, partnership or community.

So far 42 detailed conversations have taken place with a range of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors. A further 715 people who are members of the Council's Citizens' Panel have responded to some questions about the future of Walsall based on key themes from those initial detailed conversations. Some synthesis of this work has taken place and been shared at the annual WBSP event held in December 2006.

Themes emerging from A Vision for Walsall 2021

"...every place has a time that's theirs, where things happen. I believe that this is Walsall's time now, if we can grab it and make it our time"
(Tim Johnson)

- A 21st century transport infrastructure
- A skilled workforce for the 21st century

- A more flexible curriculum for children and young people
- A town centre offer – live arts and performance centre, café culture and great shopping
- Strong cross sector partnerships for long term planning and investment
- Safety in neighbourhoods and town centre
- Community cohesion – celebrating and building more understanding
- Preserving and improving green spaces in and around Walsall

Next Steps for a Vision for Walsall 2021

The challenge for 2007 is to hold more conversations with the residents of Walsall, including children and young people. Capacity building in this area is essential if a significant number of conversations are to take place and it is hoped to achieve over 1000 conversations by this autumn. There is a core team of 22 interviewers with a further 18 people signed up for training in January 2007.

A detailed vision will emerge in 2007, which will feed into the community consultation activity already planned this year to create a powerful and robust Sustainable Community Strategy leading Walsall to 2021.

6. Our Equalities Partnership and Community Cohesion

One of the key developments since the launch of the Community Plan has been in the establishment of our Equalities Partnership (EP). This group of senior stakeholders was established in the latter half of 2005 following a diversity conference in April 2004 and an audit of race equality in August of that year. The partnership reports directly to the WBSB board and provide a ready made high level strategic body to develop and lead further work on community cohesion. The Equalities Partnership has developed a specific focus on three key issues: reduction in domestic violence; reduction in teenage conceptions; and the reduction in admission to hospital of babies from disadvantaged communities/low birth weight babies. This was a useful starting point for the EP and good progress has been made on developing new and innovative approaches to tackling these difficult issues. Therefore, the Partnership is now developing their broader remit to improve community cohesion in the Borough.

The borough has not fared particularly badly in the past on cohesion issues and a BVPI Survey in 2005 found that:

Over two thirds of all respondents agree to some extent that the local area (within 15/20 minutes walking distance) is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (70%), with just 4% disagreeing, rising to 8% amongst BME residents.

Overall 73% of respondents agree that their local area (within 15/20 minutes walking distance) is a place where residents respect ethnic differences between people, with just 3% disagreeing.

We are, however, aware that the population is increasingly dynamic and that we need to be able to respond to changing demands and views. Furthermore, extremist groups, from different sections of the community, have sought on occasion to spread misinformation and stir up trouble. Also the most recent BVPI survey carried out in the autumn of 2006 found that:

55% of residents in the local area perceived people not treating one another with respect and consideration as a very or fairly big problem.

Community Cohesion is also becoming a much bigger part of the Government's strategy, forming a central part of the new Local Government White Paper and the subject of a further review by the new Commission for Integration and Cohesion. We can expect to have to respond to a new range of policies and programmes and can do much to anticipate these developments.

Therefore, the Equalities Partnership engaged the services of the Institute of Community Cohesion to help it to complete the following work programme by 31st March 2008:

- develop Walsall's own vision for Community Cohesion
- establish the leadership and architecture to achieve this vision
- engage all the communities of Walsall with the work of the Partnership
- devise a community cohesion communications strategy
- improve the borough's ability to collect and analyse hard data and intelligence
- develop a process to gather and analyse soft information derived from community engagement
- produce a borough Community Cohesion Strategy

6. Community Engagement

Our Community Engagement Strategy was launched in October of last year following consultation with communities and partners. This strategy sets out what community engagement is, why we do it and the aims and actions which support it. It is about building on the good practice which already exists in the Borough and making it better. The strategy also acknowledges the genuine desire of all partners within WBSP to work more closely together for the benefit of local residents. Crucially, it seeks to ensure that the many different 'communities' in Walsall have a voice in the debate around improving the delivery of local services and thus having a positive impact on life and work in the Borough.

To help us achieve our goal of effective community engagement we have:

- established a Partnership Engagement Forum which will be a multi-agency group to co-ordinate engagement activity
- identified key posts within each partner organisation to be responsible for the implementation of this strategy
- used the Partnership's Shared Partnership Information Resource (SPIR) team to maintain details of activities and to promote these via our website

Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs)

LNPs have evolved substantially since the launch of the Community Plan. In April 2006, Council approved the establishment of the existing nine LNPs as neighbourhood strategic partnerships linked to the governance structure of WBSP. In addition, the number of partner representatives was increased and the frequency of meetings. These developments are to help achieve community leaders and active citizens who participate in local decision making, and are able to influence service delivery and the achievement of our LAA targets at a local level.

Since June of last year, each LNP has been supported by two Community Action Groups (CAGs); a Safer and Stronger Communities CAG and Health and People CAG. These act as 'one stop shops' for the neighbourhood where local people can report issues such as fly-tipping or anti-social behaviour and get a co-ordinated response from service providers. This development will allow the LNPs to take a more strategic role in improving and changing the way public services are delivered.

The main focus of work over the next twelve months will be to:

- implement an LNP stakeholder and member development programme
- introduce nine neighbourhood agreements which set out service standards and pledges for the LNP area

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Walsall Voluntary Action (WVA) is the key infrastructure organisation representing and supporting voluntary and community sector businesses in the borough. Over the last twelve months, WBSP has supported the organisation to make significant changes in its governance arrangements in order for it to fulfil this key role. WVA will now be in a position to:

- help move VCS service providers from a grant to a contract environment
- influence how mainstream commissioning is carried out
- increase the number of VCS organisations represented in WBSP structures and LAA delivery
- achieve back office efficiencies by providing services to other VCS organisations
- take the leading role in promoting volunteering

Community Empowerment Network (CEN)

The CEN is also in a period of change as it redefines its role to complement that of the changing roles of LNPs and WVA. The role that is now being developed with WBSP is to provide a:

- 'deep and wide' network for two way communication between groups and individuals within the voluntary and community sector
- vehicle for providing co-ordinated community consultation
- borough wide equalities forum through engaging communities of interest organisations in Walsall's equality agenda

Our Community Engagement Strategy is available at www.wbsp.org.uk .

8. Route to a Sustainable Community Strategy

Purpose of a Sustainable Community Strategy

Following the recent Local Government White Paper there is now a requirement for the borough to have a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). This is a very different entity from our current Community Plan. In essence our SCS needs to have a stronger focus on integrating social, economic, environmental and land use issues and in tackling our longer term and more global impacts. Sustainable Community Strategies play a vital role in helping to deliver genuinely sustainable communities, which are places where people want to live, now and in the future, and which respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally. The SCS will be the primary document from which all other plans and strategies take 'due regard'.

A Unique Opportunity

We have a real opportunity to be at the leading edge in the development of our SCS because this summer we will be consulting on the core strategy which will form the basis of our Local Development Framework. In addition, by this time, Vision 2021 will be giving us significant information on community aspirations. This will ensure that the shared priorities and objectives of our communities are fully aligned to the key spatial planning objectives for the borough. A number of other threads will be woven into this work throughout 2007 as we identify other key strategies and plans to which the SCS must have 'due regard', as set out in the white paper, and confirm the time frames within which those documents are operating and the possibility for shared community engagement. Aligning consultation will also meet the government's requirement to reduce consultation overload and duplication and demonstrate our ability to deliver a 'comprehensive engagement strategy'.

Timescales

With consultation starting now on a number of key strategies, culminating in large scale community consultation events this summer, our SCS can be written in the autumn with the intention to present to Cabinet, Council and WBSP board for approval by end of March 2008.

Framework

As we work towards building our new SCS, we will organise our strategy around the four themes in the LAA; Children and Young People, Healthier Communities and Older People/Vulnerable Adults, Safer and Stronger Communities and Economic Development and Enterprise. There are also a number of cross cutting issues critical to our borough which are either not currently covered by the four pillars or are of sufficient importance to require an overarching, cross theme focus to support the existing work within the appropriate pillar. These issues will be the particular focus of the WBSP board over the next 12 months and are set out in the chart overleaf.

Figure 2

FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

To create a prosperous, inclusive and competitive Borough in which its diverse communities feel involved, safer, healthier and can take pride in its future.

- Community Cohesion
- Managing Neighbourhoods - LNPs
- Transportation & Access (Economic)
- Using the Voluntary Sector (Safer/Stronger)
- Sustainability (Economic)
- Climate Change (Safer/Stronger)
- People and Places (Safer/Stronger)
- Learning & Skills (Children's & Economic)
- Arts and Culture (Economic)

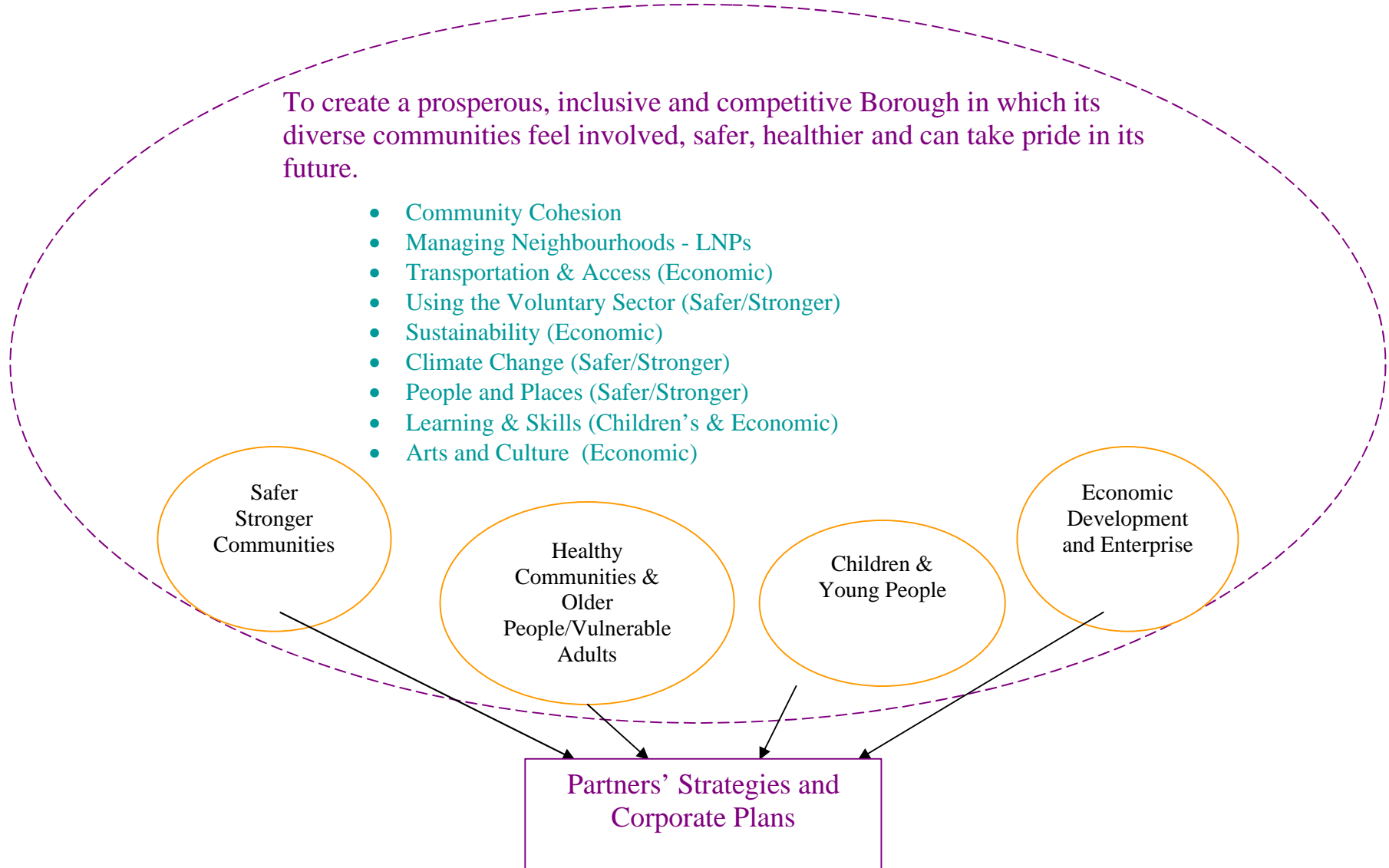
Safer
Stronger
Communities

Healthy
Communities &
Older
People/Vulnerable
Adults

Children &
Young People

Economic
Development
and Enterprise

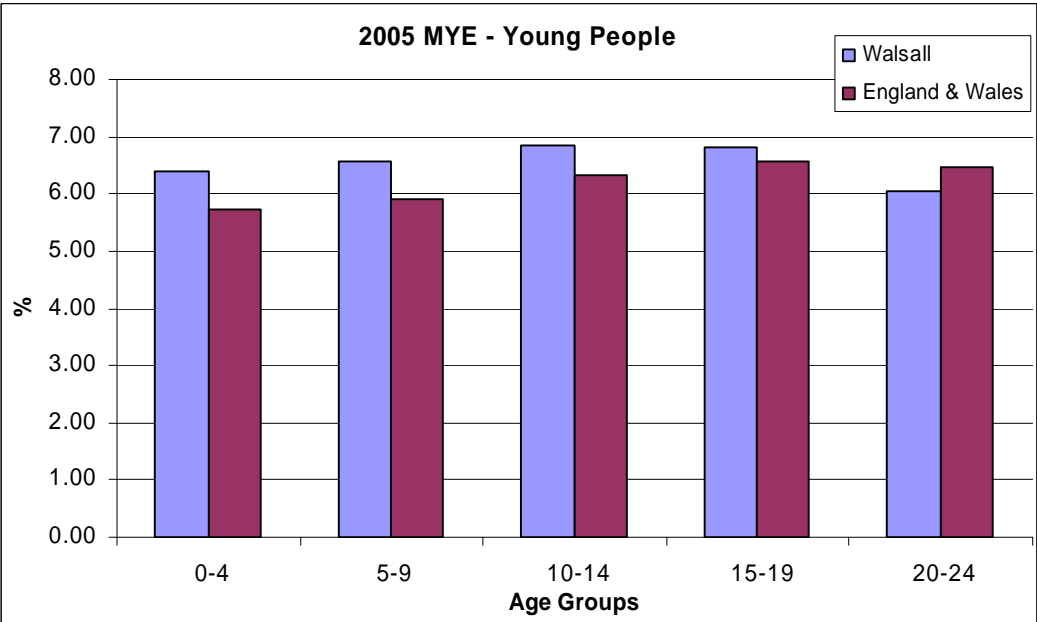
Partners' Strategies and
Corporate Plans



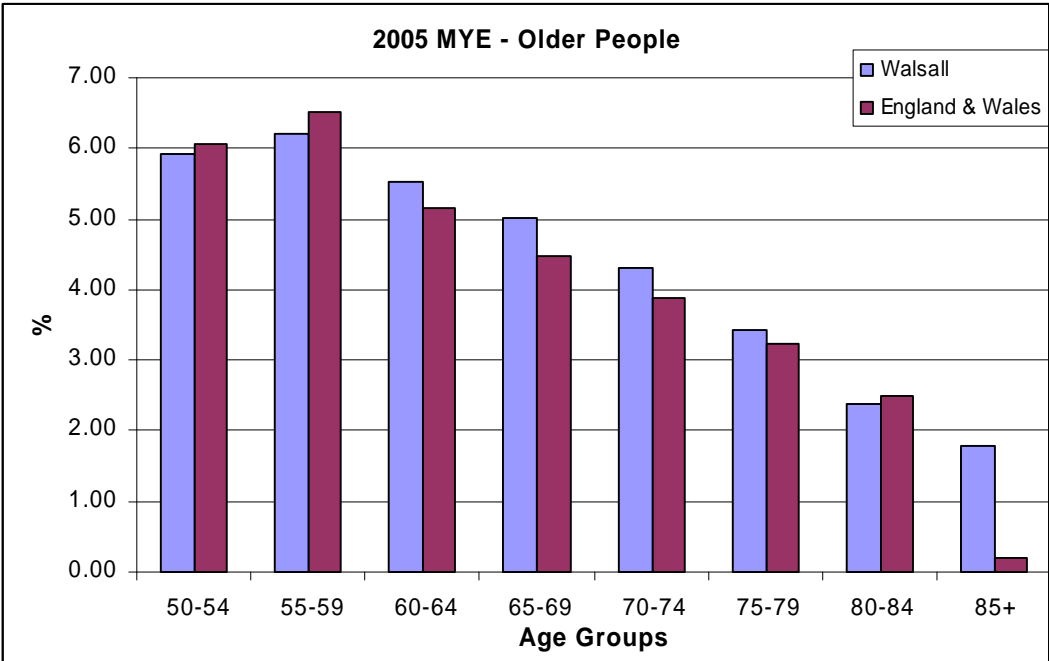
Appendix 1:

Demographics

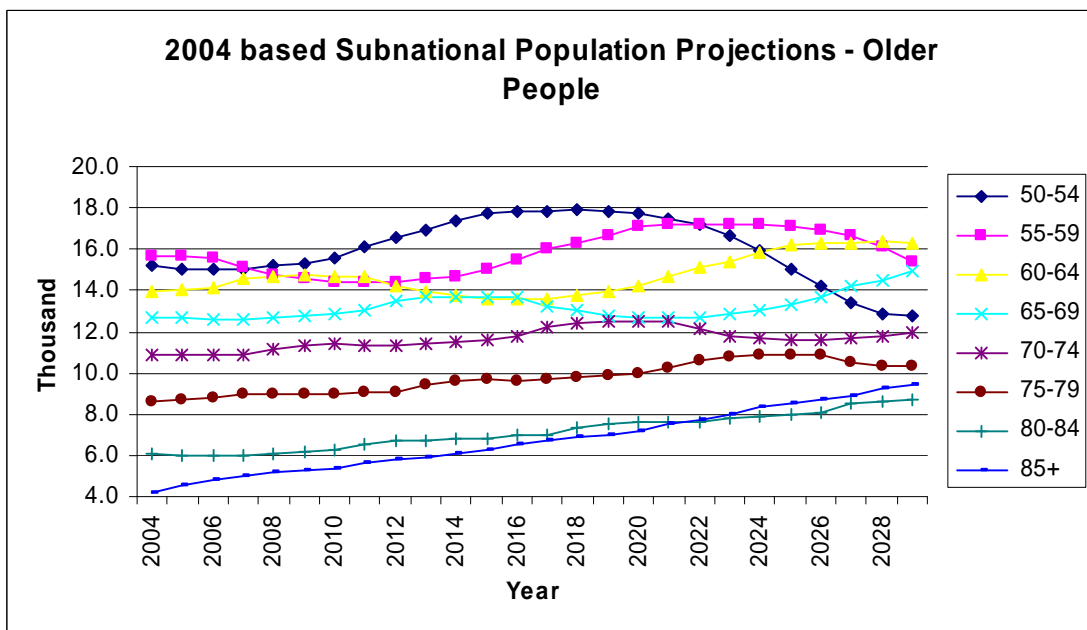
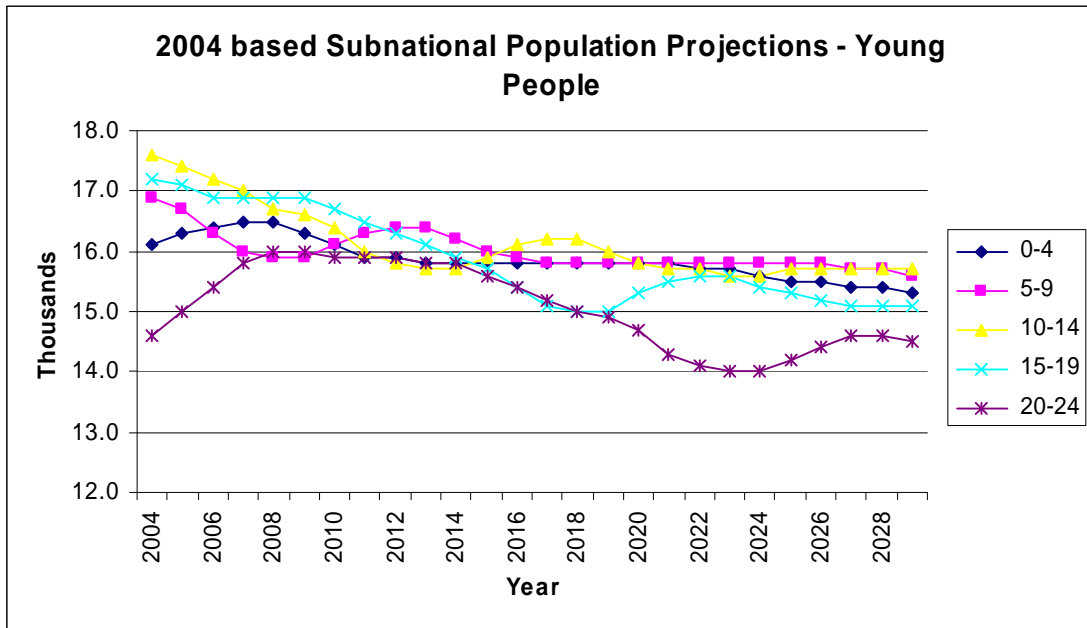
Young People



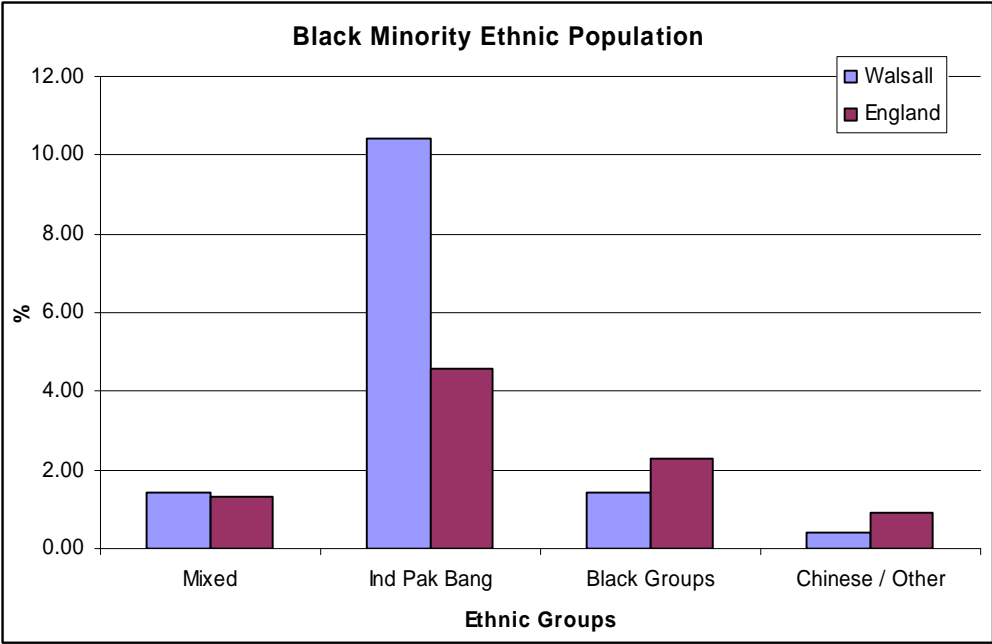
Older People



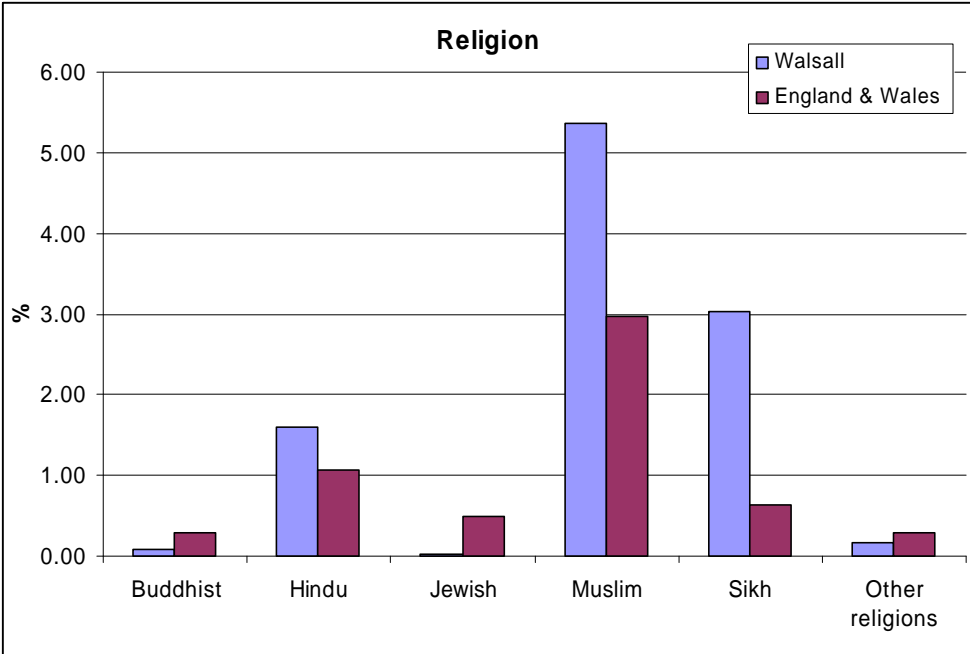
Population Projections



Ethnicity

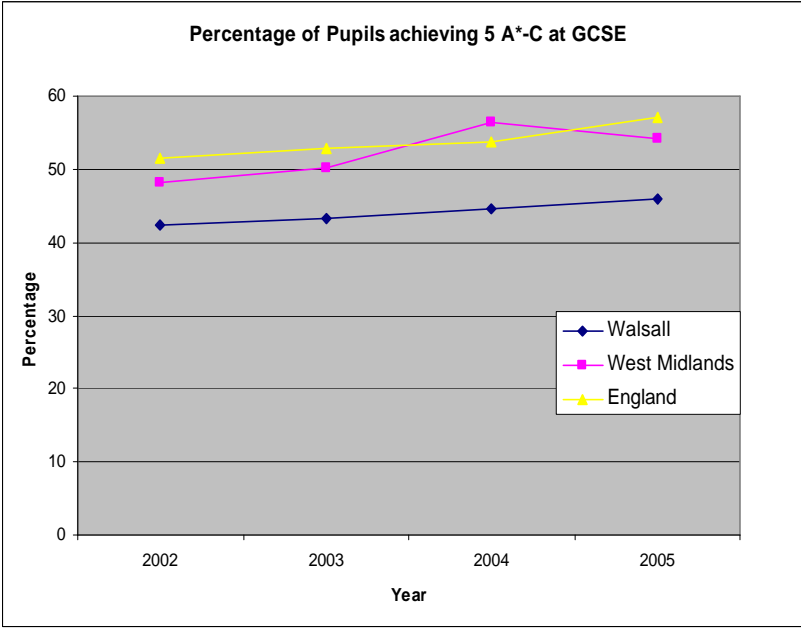


Religion

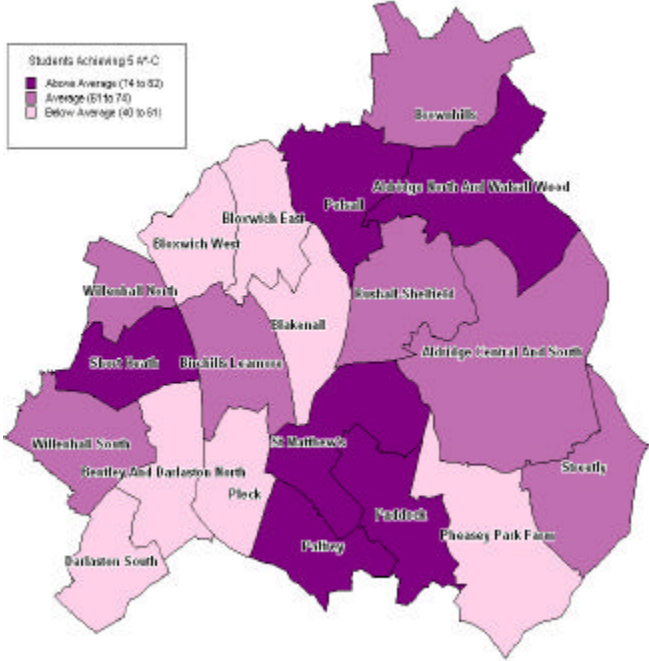


Children and Young People

% Pupils Achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSE's

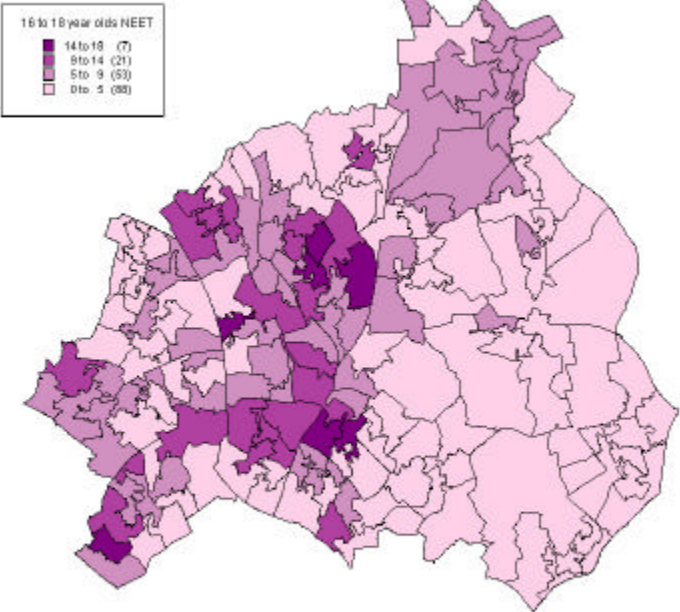


Map Showing the Number of Pupils Achieving 5 A*-C GCSE's by Ward



Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

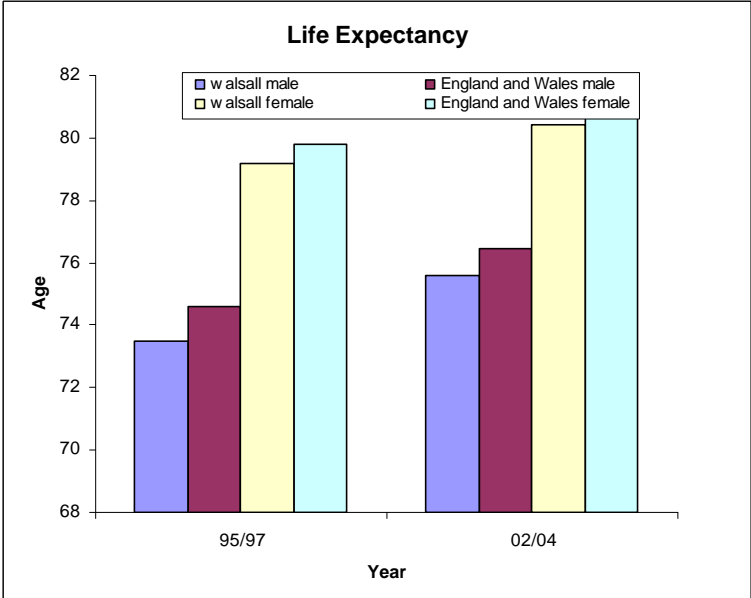
16 to 18 year olds NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

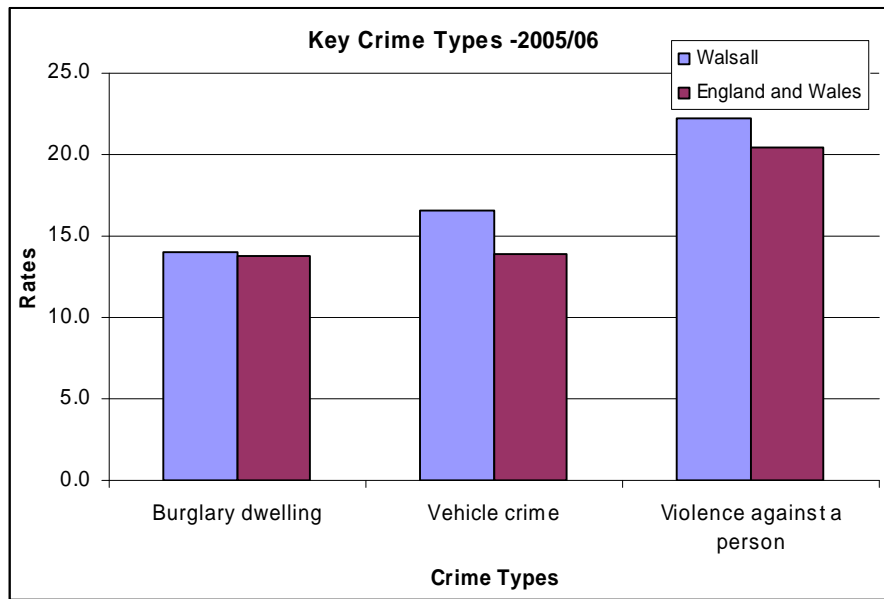


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Healthy Communities and Vulnerable Adults

Life Expectancy

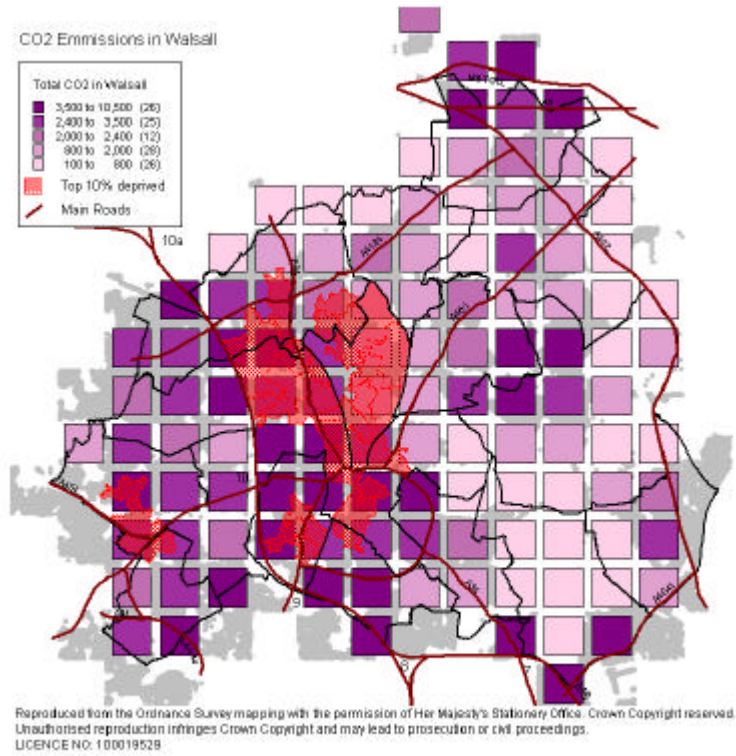




What People Think

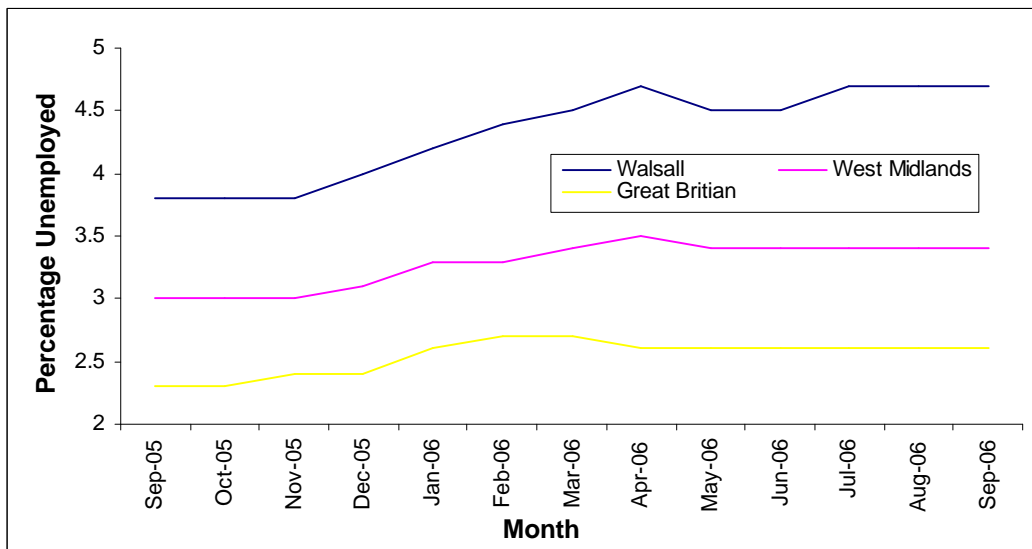


Greener Communities



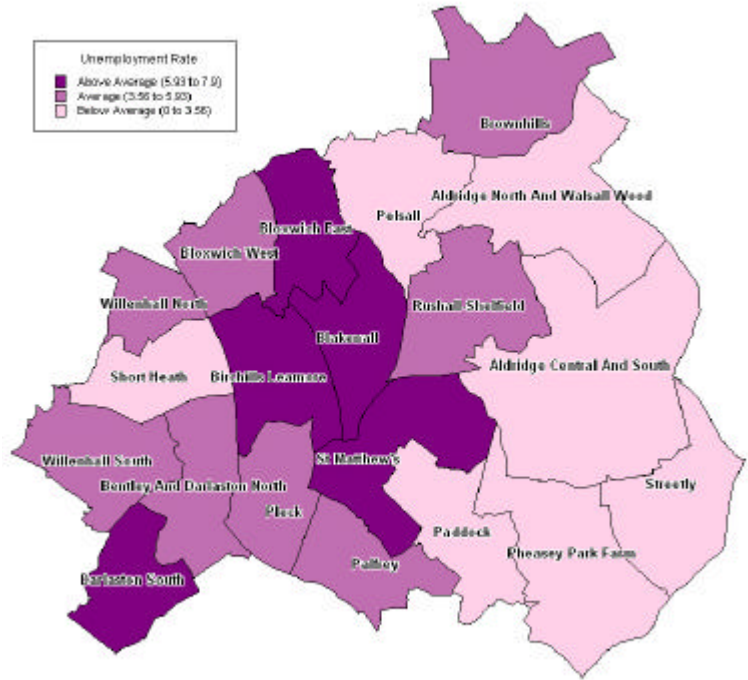
Economic Development and Enterprise

Unemployment



(Claimant count as proportion of resident working age population at Mid Year 2004)

Unemployment Rate by Ward in September 2006



NVQ Attainment

