

Cabinet – 17 January 2007

Vision Pledges 2007/08

Portfolio: Councillor Marco Longhi –
Transformation & Performance Management

Service Area: Corporate

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan: No

Summary of report

This report sets out for approval a set of 24 council vision pledges for 2007/08, for inclusion in the forthcoming Corporate Plan and budget.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to approve the set of vision pledges for the year 2007/08, for inclusion in the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

Resource and legal considerations

The 24 pledges set out in this report are key drivers of the council's revenue budget and capital programme.

Citizen impact

The pledges set out in this report have been developed in the context of the council's on-going analysis and assessment of the borough, its communities and local needs and priorities. Also the pledges reflect views expressed by partners, organisations and residents through consultation including consultation towards the council's budget for the year ahead. The achievement of the Council's pledges will significantly improve local services for the benefit of residents. The achievement of the pledges will enable local people to judge how well the Council is doing and should have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Feedback on progress will be provided to citizens in the Council's publication, Walsall Pride.

Community safety

One of the Council's ten strategic priorities is to *ensure all people are safe and secure*, and two pledges are directly targeted at improving community safety.

Environmental impact

Ensure a clean and green borough is one of the Council's ten strategic priorities and three of the proposed pledges are linked directly to this priority.

Performance and risk management issues

The Council has a hierarchy of plans within the Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF) to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into detailed plans throughout the organisation. Pledges are incorporated into the corporate plan and other key corporate documents (including the budget plan) which set out high level corporate priorities for the authority. These are underpinned by directorate, service and team plans which set out more specific targets and improvements necessary to achieve our priorities. Each pledge will be identified in the appropriate directorate, service and team plan, currently being developed for the year ahead. These plans including the achievement of these pledges are risk assessed as an integral part of service planning processes.

Pledges are monitored by the relevant directorate and the Executive Management Team, with regular reviews presented to Cabinet as part of the Beacon Index.

Equality implications

Equality is an integral theme within Vision 2008, with our commitment to build an inclusive borough where cultural diversity is recognised as one of Walsall's key strengths. Some of the pledges set out in this report focus on addressing the needs of BME communities, vulnerable households, and those with limited incomes. As previously, all pledges will be implemented mindful of the council's equality duties.

Consultation

Vision 2008 was developed in 2003 and adopted in January 2004 following extensive consultation with partners, staff and residents. Consultation towards the council's budget for 2007/08 has used as a focus for discussion the council's vision, including the ten strategic priorities. Consultees have confirmed that the council's priorities remain relevant, and have provided detailed comments in relation to our services, and areas for improvement or additional council input.

Vision 2008

The current vision for Walsall Council has been renewed annually, set out in an annual corporate plan and in other documents, each time including a set of pledges for the year ahead, each addressing one of the council's ten strategic priorities which underpin the overall vision for the borough. Work is underway in developing a longer term vision for the Borough in conjunction with partners, including consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. These pledges directly relate to delivery of the current vision and will contribute to longer term aims and objectives.

Background papers

All published.

BACKGROUND

1. For the past three years, the council has prepared and agreed a set of pledges which have been developed specifically as “targeted action to provide a firm foundation for the future – for the Borough and for the Council”, to provide “local people and our partners with clear measurable evidence of whether the Council is achieving its objectives along the road to our longer term vision”.
2. As in previous years, pledges have been developed so as to reflect key issues and local priorities. They are each:
 - based on and support the council's agreed vision and its strategic priorities
 - build upon previous years' pledges, where appropriate
 - reflect key outcomes of public consultations and customer feedback, through the year, including the recent consultation towards the budget
 - reflect the council and its services' knowledge and understanding of the borough, its communities, and the needs and aspirations of local people, including full use of census and other population data, and other information including forward projections
3. Likewise the pledges have each been prepared so as to be:
 - directly relevant to the day to day experience of citizens and service users
 - measurable - sufficiently specific so that all stakeholders can see whether the council has fulfilled the pledge by the end of the year
 - achievable within the financial year
 - provide a tangible enhancement or improvement to previous levels of service.
4. Once agreed, these pledges will each be:
 - reflected in directorate, service and team plans
 - embedded within the council's budget plan
5. Pledges have been developed within directorates, and with the close involvement of portfolio holders, based upon evidence of need and citizen priority, and specifically from a detailed analysis of:

- demographic and other statistical information held by the Strategic Partnership Information Resource (SPIR), including Census data, and population and other trend projections, and also
- consultation and other customer feedback, including the outcomes of surveys of the citizens' panel over the past year, evidence from complaints, and most recently the detailed feedback received from residents, organisations and partners towards the forthcoming council budget set out in reports to cabinet on 20 December 2006.

6. **Appendix 1** shows a set of diagrams each relating to one of the council's ten strategic priorities, and including feedback and comment. Also included are the relevant draft pledges for the year ahead, which have been developed in that context. The pledges also appear as a combined integrated list.

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Carole Evans
Executive Director

8 January 2007



Councillor Marco Longhi
Portfolio Holder

8 January 2007

Draft Vision Pledges 2007/08

Ensure a clean and green borough

1. We will introduce clear standards of quality and service in the twenty-five major parks in Walsall and we will publish these standards for residents and visitors
2. We will extend the garden waste collection service to a further 16,500 households across the borough
3. We will run at least one clean up campaign in each LNP area

Make it easier for people to get around

4. We will trial a taxi marshalling scheme and temporary taxi ranks so that visitors to Walsall town centre find it easier and safer to get home at busy times
5. We will, working with our private sector partners, increase the number of publicly available car parking spaces in Walsall town centre by 1000 spaces'
6. We will improve our public rights of way by tidying them up and improving signage

Ensure all people safe and secure

7. We will provide information for local communities on crime in their area and how this is being tackled
8. We will tackle environmental crimes such as littering, fly tipping and dog fouling by issuing 300 fixed penalty notices and naming and shaming the culprits

Make our schools great

9. We will increase the number of young people obtaining 5+ A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths from 1333 to 1510 (13.3% increase)
10. We will spend at least £15 million on improving the quality of school buildings

Make Walsall a healthy & caring place

11. We will increase by 15% the number of people in receipt of care packages within our BME communities. This amounts to an increase of approximately 50 episodes of service
12. We will increase the percentage of vulnerable households in the private sector living in a safe and decent home to 67.9%

Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

13. We will spend £400,000 on further improving our major transport corridors and entrances to the borough and £500,000 on local environmental improvements throughout the Borough
14. We will implement a community cash scheme through our Local Neighbourhood Partnerships offering small grants of up to £400 to community and voluntary groups

Make it easier to access local services

15. By March 2008 we will deliver a further seven Children's Centres across the borough, increasing the total to sixteen such centres in all
16. We will refurbish libraries at Pleck, South Walsall, Streetly and Walsall Wood as part of our programme to deliver modern, locally based and customer focussed library services
17. We will improve local access to council services by introducing a mobile access point that will visit neighbourhoods and communities across the borough

Strengthen the local economy

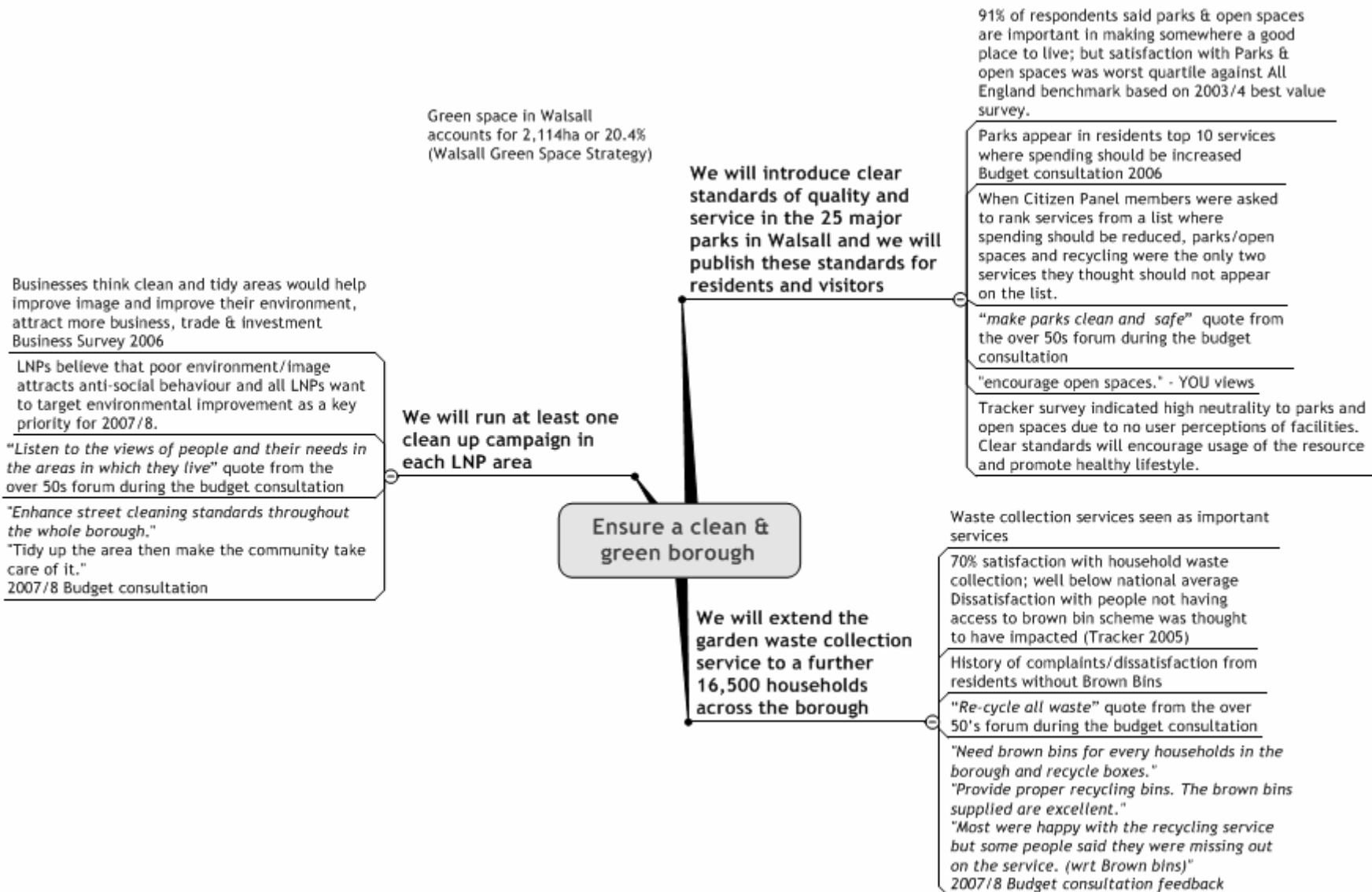
18. We will continue to work with Walsall Regeneration Company to progress a series of economic and physical projects including St. Matthew's phase 3, Littleton Street Office Corridor and Darlaston Strategic Development Area, and to assist the start on site of Waterfront phase 1, the new college and Shannon's Mill
19. We will commence payment of benefit for new claims more quickly, improving our performance by 10%, increasing the health, wealth and well being of our citizens

Listen to what local people want

20. We will use new online consultation facilities through our website to enhance our consultation with citizens
21. We will establish or support existing business forums in the five main District Centres to help improve communications with existing and new businesses

Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

22. We will reduce the amount of office space we use by 20% over a five year period by making better use of accommodation we have in the town centre
23. We will deal with your householder planning application within 7 weeks unless it needs to go to the Development Control Committee
24. We will implement our transformation programme, bringing greater efficiency and savings of £2 million for the benefit of Walsall



Recent physical surveys of public rights of way indicate that parts of the network need improvement in order to encourage residents to have access to the countryside and promote healthy lifestyle.

"Encourage residents to take pride in their own street, e.g. keep verges neat" quote from a Walsall carer of someone with a mental health need during the budget consultation

"Deterioration of local footpaths and roads." 2007/8 budget consultation

We will improve our public rights of way by tidying them up and improving signage

Length of public rights of way in Walsall= 85km

Make it easier for people to get around

Better parking will help town centre business Business Survey 2006

77% of parking related complaints concerned lack of town centre parking
Tell Us Snapshot Sept/Oct 2006

"Please provide more parking spaces, especially for the disabled" quote from a Walsall carer during the budget consultation

"Provide parking in town for the disabled and clamp non disabled drivers that use disabled parking ..." quote from a Walsall carer

"I have difficulty walking and I find parking in Walsall centre is too far away from where I want to shop."
"Keep traffic flowing, provide more park & ride."
"People can only get around if you provide car parks."
"Better parking; Walsall is becoming a Ghost town."
"Improved car parking"
2007/8 budget consultation (YOU, Over 50s forum, Princess Royal Carers Trust)

We will, working with private sector partners, increase the number of publicly available car park spaces in Walsall town centre by 1,000 spaces.

We will trial a taxi marshalling scheme and temporary taxi ranks so that visitors to Walsall town centre find it easier and safer to get home at busy times

Total recorded crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Walsall town centre = 4,572 (2005/06 West Midlands Police)

Follows feedback from town centre customers and demand from taxi drivers.

Residents wish to have a safer environment.

Vision 2021 participants want to improve the image of Walsall's night time economy

"Support night economy in Walsall by providing night services for people to get home rather than fighting over a limited number of Taxis"

2007/8 budget consultation

Cleanliness perception is THE No 1 key satisfaction driver

97% residents see clean streets as single important factor in making neighbourhood a good place to live

Cleanliness standards a big issue across social rented sector areas

Thinking area is dirty/litter was top reason given for resident dissatisfaction with their area as a place to live

Clean Streets is in Top 5 list of areas for improvement (36%) - Tracker 2005

Improvements to litter and fly-tipping would reap overall satisfaction improvements across all services, and reduce complaints

"Need people on patrol and fines for culprits" quote from a Walsall carer during the budget consultation

"Community wardens can tell people not to drop litter" quote from budget consultation with Making Our Choice group, Learning Disability Service Users

"More policing of littering to change culture."

"Dog fouling a big problem."

"Make more bins available for litter and dog fouling."

"More street cleaning."

"Enforce anti-litter laws."

"Fine people who drop litter"

"Chewing gum is a problem"

"Encourage the people of Walsall to put litter in bins."

"Dog fouling around the Meadow View School."

"More bins - teach people to use them."

"Encourage recycling." "increase fines for littering."

More panel members felt that levels of fly tipping, anti-social behaviour and therefore image of the borough had got worse.

2007/8 Budget consultation (Over 50s forum, YOU, Carers, Disabled)

We will tackle environmental crimes such as littering, fly tipping and dog fouling by issuing 300 fixed penalty notices and naming and shaming the culprits.

Ensure all people safe and secure

We will provide information for local communities on crime in their area and how this is being tackled.

Total crime 05/06 = 26,424 or 103.4 per 1,000 population
Burglary dwelling 05/06 = 1,499 or 14.8 per 1,000 households
Vehicle crime 05/06 = 4,187 or 16.5 per 1,000 population
Criminal damage 05/06 = 5,166 or 20.4 per 1,000 population

Tracker survey respondent views on top reasons for dissatisfaction include:
Local area is overlooked/forgotten about.
Don't listen to people.
Levels of crime in the area.

31% felt that council didn't keep them well informed about benefits it brings.

34% said they were not well informed about whether the council was delivering on its promises.

27% believe that they do not receive enough information.

41-47% of respondents prefer to receive information by leaflets, newsletter/magazine, posters, newspapers, television and radio.

Walsall businesses perceive that lack of qualified young people is a barrier to business growth. In particular employees lacking basic skills like Maths and English.
Business Survey 2006

Children and young people feedback: Learning Options are important to enable children and young people to achieve economic wellbeing quotes include:
"learn about different qualifications and about a kind of job course that will suit you"
"Choose options that will suit you"
"GCSEs are important"

"Good standard of education system" quote from the over 50s forum during the budget consultation

No 1 aspiration for education expressed by Citizen Panel members was raising pupil aspirations.

"Set more educational standards for all children."
"Young people are the future." - YOU view
2007/8 Budget Consultation

We will increase the number of young people obtaining 5+ A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths from 1333 to 1510 (13.3% increase).

Make our schools great

We will spend at least £15 million on improving the quality of school buildings

5+ GCSE A*-C including Maths and English 2005 = 35% (DfES)
% of 16 to 18 year olds NEET in Walsall = 10.4% (2005/06 BC Connexions)

Physical learning environment being improved ranked 4th in list of top 5 education aspirations
Citizen Panel 2006

Priorities where the council should consider increasing its expenditure included schools (22%)
2007/8 budget consultation

Residents and businesses recognise the importance of a well maintained environment for children to learn in.

"Better buildings and teachers" quote from the over 50s forum during the budget consultation

"More modernisation on schools" quote from budget consultation with the service users empowerment group

"More funding needed by schools" quote from budget consultation with the service users empowerment group

"New schools, better facilities - don't close schools."

"Rebuild our schools." - YOU View
2007/8 budget consultation

% BME population = 34,434 or 13.6% (2001 Census)

It was felt that many older people in the black and minority ethnic communities were not aware that they might be eligible to receive a community meal if in need and that this might also partially explain the very low level of demand. Information from community meals consultation exercise

We will increase by 15% the number of people in receipt of care packages within our BME communities. This amounts to an increase of approximately 50 episodes of service.

In consulting BME groups it was felt that often access to services was affected by not having access to information. There were a number of suggested ways expressed for increasing the access to information on services thus increasing service take up. BME project by service users Empowerment July 2006

Make Walsall a healthy & caring place

Priorities where the council should consider increasing its expenditure included social care (10%)
2007/8 budget consultation

"We need help for people with a learning disability to buy their own house" quote from budget consultation with Making Our Choice group, Learning Disability Service Users

"Sheltered housing for those with mental health problems. 24 hour supervision" quote from a Walsall carer of someone with a mental health need during the budget consultation

"Provide supported living for people with mental health problems" quote from a Walsall carer of someone with a mental health need during the budget consultation

We will increase the percentage of vulnerable households in the private sector living in a safe and decent home to 67.9%

Male life expectancy in Walsall = 75.6 yrs (02-04 tPCT)
Female life expectancy in Walsall = 80.4 yrs (02-04 tPCT)
Gap in life expectancy between most deprived wards and rest of Walsall for men is 8.7 yrs and for women is 7.4 yrs (01-05 tPCT)

Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

We will spend £400,000 on further improving our major transport corridors and entrances to the borough and £500,000 on local environmental improvements throughout the Borough

“Improve our roads” quote from the over 50s forum during the budget consultation

“No rubbish on floor, cleaner in Walsall” quote from budget consultation with the service users empowerment group

When asked about dreams for the future both citizen panel members and Vision 2021 participants in 2006 clearly state improved transport infrastructure, and less congestion as key wishes for the future.

“Improve the area so that people can be proud of it.” YOU View 2007/8 budget consultation

We will implement a community cash scheme through our Local Neighbourhood Partnerships offering small grants of up to £400 to community and voluntary groups

49% of respondents to tracker survey said top reason for being dissatisfied with opportunities for decision making was ‘no opportunities to be involved’

One fifth of respondents overall would like to be more involved in the decisions the council makes that affect the local area (21%).

GVA for Walsall (and Wolverhampton) = £14,319 per head (2004)
• Increasing productivity of local firms

80% agreement that local access points to services would be valued by residents in particular elderly residents for general enquiries and council tax payment.

A survey undertaken during customer services week Oct 2006 found that 99% of visitors to the new first stop shop thought it was good/very good.

"Walsall Civic Centre First Stop Shop have a very good system of looking after the requests and needs of people as soon as they enter and I think the system should be used elsewhere to great advantage for everybody. In my experience the staff were exceedingly helpful in every respect."
Quote from customer services week survey

Promote services and the contribution to the community including tackling barriers to access of services locally

"Re-open neighbourhood offices" quote from a Walsall carer of someone with a mental health need during the budget consultation

"More one stop shops in local Areas."
"Local services should help."
2007/8 budget consultation

We will improve local access to council services by introducing a mobile access point that will visit neighbourhoods and communities across the borough

Make it easier to access local services

By March 2008 we will deliver a further seven Children's Centres across the borough, increasing the total to sixteen such centres in all.

Top priority coming through recent research indicates strong perception that Anti-social behaviour will be reduced if C&YP have facilities provided to occupy their time.

C&YP say they need more/better facilities to spend their free time.

We will refurbish libraries at Pleck, South Walsall, Streetly and Walsall Wood as part of our programme to deliver modern, locally based and customer focused library services

Extensive library research has been undertaken and this has been used to help develop the library modernisation programme.

Feedback from library users following previous library modernisation indicates that investment in library facilities is welcomed and appreciated.

Library visitor figures increase significantly post modernisation and this encourages access to a rich resource of material.

Households within a 400m radius of a GP = 52.6% (1998-2001)

Households within a 400m radius of a library = 34.9% (1998-2001)

Households within a 400m radius of a district centre = 59.7% (1998-2001)

Number of businesses in Walsall = 6,194
(Market Measures 2006)

- Improve access to jobs for local people

We will continue to work with Walsall Regeneration Company to progress a series of economic and physical projects including St. Matthew's phase 3, Littleton Street Office Corridor and Darlaston Strategic Development area, and to assist the start on site of Waterfront phase 1, the new college and Shannon's Mill

Strengthen the local economy

Borough's image needs to be improved

Business Survey 2006

Vision 2021 participants have expressed a compelling longer term vision for the borough including a town centre for all with good quality new facilities.

Bring theatre to Walsall quote from a Walsall carer of someone with a mental health need during the budget consultation

More gyms and other places for young kids to go other than the pubs, like cafes, bowling, etc quote from a Walsall carer Dec 2006 budget consultation

Participants in the 2007/8 budget consultation thought the regeneration of Walsall town centre shopping area was very good "It looks lovely". Others are pleased to see new buildings going up in the centre.

We will commence payment of benefit for new claims more quickly, improving our performance by 10%, increasing the health, wealth and well being of our citizens

Reducing waiting times are seen as a priority for improvement when accessing services
Citizen Panel 2006

The council should continue to work on and support schemes to maximise the income of elderly and vulnerable households.

Community & Voluntary focus group - 2007/8 budget consultation

Poverty - 40% of people live within the 10% most deprived areas in Walsall

1 in 3 feel they are not well informed; BME groups in particular

27% of respondents did not feel well informed about how to get involved in decision making - tracker survey 2005

"Listen to what people want."
"More consultation"
"By speaking your mind ensure local people have more of a say."
"Reflect what people want."
"Don't close the doors on people - open up to them and listen to their views - you can learn."
"Suggestion boxes - questionnaires."
"Consultation in the whole of the borough. Listen & take note."
"Yes a listening forum will help."
"Survey once a year for peoples priorities."
"Consultation with general public before spending thousands of pounds."
"The authority needs to listen to the people not just hear what they say."
"Not just listen, act on our requests."
2007/8 budget consultation (over 50s forum, YOU, Princess Royal Carers group, Citizen Panel)

We will use new online consultation facilities through our website to enhance our consultation with citizens

Listen to what local people want

We will establish or support existing business forums in the five main District Centres to help improve communications with existing and new businesses

133 Businesses who responded to a recent survey would welcome new/greater opportunities for involvement in future decision making in partnership with the council and other key stakeholders
Business Survey 2006

"Encourage business rather than put obstacles in their way" quote from the over 50s forum during the budget consultation

Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

We will deal with your householder planning application within 7 weeks unless it needs to go to the Development Control Committee

Extensive research through previous planning user surveys and dialogue with service user panel indicates that customers value a speedy response to their planning applications, especially where they are straightforward householder applications.

We will reduce the amount of office space we use by 20% over a five year period by making better use of accommodation we have in the town centre

45% of respondents to the tracker survey 2005 thought that the council was not efficient/well run, 53% thought that the council does not spend its money wisely, and 61% thought the council does not provide value for money

Council tax is too high for services provided was 5th on a list of top 5 reasons for dissatisfaction with the Council - tracker survey 2005

Participants of latest budget consultation felt that general public were quite ill informed about financial issues with regard to the Council.

We will implement our transformation programme, bringing greater efficiency and savings of £2 million for the benefit of Walsall