

Cabinet



Walsall Council

Wednesday 17 July 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting venue: Conference Room 2, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall.

[Livestream Link](#)

Portfolios

Councillor G. Perry,
Leader



Councillor A.
Andrew,
Associate Leader,
Economic Growth
and Regeneration



Councillor M.
Statham, Deputy
Leader and Finance



Councillor G. Flint,
Wellbeing, Leisure
and Public Spaces



Councillor K.
Pedley, Adult Social
Care



Councillor E. Lee,
Internal Services



Councillor S. Elson,
Children and Young
People



Councillor P. Kaur,
Education and Skills



Councillor K.
Murphy, Streetpride



Councillor A.
Garcha, Resident
Access and
Housing Support



Quorum 3 members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: Craig Goodall Telephone: 01922 654765 Email: craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk
[Walsall Council Website](#)

**If you are disabled and require help to and from the meeting room,
please contact the person above**

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

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

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest</p>

	exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

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

Part 1 – Public session

1. **Apologies**

2. **Minutes – 17 April 2024**

(Enclosed)

3. **Declarations of interest**

4. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.

5. **Petitions**

(Note: For advice on how to submit petitions, contact Democratic Services. Contact details on the front page of the agenda).

6. **Questions**

(30 minutes will be allowed for pre-submitted questions from non-executive members and the public. All questions will have been submitted at least 7 clear days before the meeting. Answers will be provided at the meeting - no supplementary questions will be allowed.)

7. **Forward plan**

(Enclosed)

Leader of the Council: Councillor Perry

Key Decision

8. **Draft Council Plan 2025-2029**

(Enclosed)

Non-Key Decisions

9. **Council Plan 2022/25 – Markers of Success**

(Enclosed)

10. **Productivity Plan**

(Enclosed)

Deputy Leader and Finance: Councillor Statham

Key Decision

11. **Pre-Audit Outturn 2023/24**

(Enclosed)

Non-Key Decisions

12. Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 and approach to Budget Setting for 2025/26 *(Enclosed)*

13. Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24 *(Enclosed)*

Portfolio Holder for Children's: Councillor Elson

Key Decisions

14. West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder *(Enclosed)*

15. West Midlands Regional Independent Fostering Agency Framework *(Enclosed)*

16. Families First for Children – Pathfinder Programme *(Enclosed)*

Portfolio Holder for Internal Resources: Councillor Lee

Key Decision

17. Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028: Draft for Consultation *(Enclosed)*

Portfolio Holder for Street Pride: Councillor Murphy

Key Decision

18. Interim provision of street lighting services *(Enclosed)*

Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny

19. Recommendations from Scrutiny Overview Committee regarding the Housing Standards Working Group *(Enclosed)*

20. Recommendations from Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Primary Care Access and GP Access Working Group *(Enclosed)*

Part II – Private Session

Portfolio Holder for Street Pride: Councillor Murphy

Key Decision

21. Interim provision of street lighting services

[Exempt information under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)]

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Cabinet

Wednesday 17 April 2024

Minutes of the meeting held in Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall at 6pm.

Present

Councillor Bird (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Councillor Ali	Customer
Councillor Elson	Children's Services
Councillor Ferguson	Internal Services
Councillor Flint	Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Murphy	Clean and Green
Councillor Perry	Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor Pedley	Adult Social Care
Councillor M. Statham	Education and Skills

In attendance

E. Bennett	Chief Executive
D. Brown	Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Communities
C. Male	Executive Director – Children's and Customer
S. Darcy	Director of Finance, Corporate Performance Management and Corporate Landlord
S. Portman	Head of Law
J. Pugh	Director – Adult Care
C. Goodall	Principal Democratic Services Officer
A. Caville	Team Manager – Transition and Leaving Care Service
E. Cook	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – Public Session

4221 Welcome

Councillor Bird opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the Cabinet was meeting that evening in person and that the agenda and reports for this meeting were available on the Council's website. He explained that voting would be by way of a show of hands which would be witnessed and recorded by the Democratic Services officer in attendance.

4222 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew.

4223 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024 were submitted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024, a copy having been sent to each member of the Cabinet, be approved and signed as a correct record.

4224 Declarations of interest

The following declarations of non-prejudicial interest were received:

- Councillor Flint: Item 9 Resilient Communities – Safer Streets.
- Councillor Perry: Item 14 Extension of Contractual Arrangements for Local Healthwatch for Walsall under Reg 72 to allow for full design, tendering and implementation.

4225 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972

4226 Petitions

No petitions were received..

4227 Questions

No questions were received.

4228 Forward plan

The forward plan as of April 2024 was submitted:

(annexed)

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

4229 Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

Councillor Elson introduced the report setting out the proposal to treat ‘care experienced’ as a local protected characteristic.

(annexed)

Two care experienced young people addressed the meeting and answered questions.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Perry and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That 'Care Experienced' be treated as a local protected characteristic as part of Walsall Council's Equality Duty.

4230 **Resilient Communities – Safer Streets**

Councillor Perry introduced a report which updated Cabinet on the Safer Streets programme.

(annexed)

Representatives from two voluntary organisations, Palfrey Big Local and Blessed 2 Bless, addressed Cabinet and provided an update on their work.

Imrana Niazi, Colleen Jones and Maham Urooj from Palfrey Big Local provided an update on the organisation's work. The Charity was a resident-led organisation. The Project had focussed on small-scale projects, treating all people the same and after nine years, had invested the remaining funds available from the Big Local grant, into green spaces in the Palfrey area. Throughout, the Project had helped empower local people, invested in youth and improved green spaces.

Jenny Turner and Bishop Delroy Mason, from Blessed 2 Bless, provided an overview of the charity's work, including providing a food bank and participating in the street pastors scheme. Ms Turner thanked the Council for their support and embracing the organisation, following the charity's initially unplanned relocation from Birmingham.

Cabinet Members personally thanked the representatives and the organisations for their work and continued support in supporting the Council and partners throughout Walsall.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Perry and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

- 1. That Cabinet note the update to the safer streets programme and further commits to develop strength-based approaches within the Council.**
- 2. That Cabinet will receive an update on the Safer Streets initiative in six months.**

4231 Council Plan 2022-25 – Q3 23/24

Councillor Bird introduced a report which provided an update on performance vis-à-vis the Council Plan Markers of Success in Quarter 3 of 2023-24.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (by assent)

- 1. That Cabinet note the performance in Q3 relating to the period October – December 2023.**
- 2. That Cabinet note any key achievements, identified interdependencies and support required to achieve the Outcomes, set out in this report.**

4232 Surveillance and Access to Communications Data

Councillor Perry introduced a report which outlined a revised policy and procedures regarding the use of the powers available to the Council under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA).

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Perry and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 ('IPA') Corporate Policy and Procedures.

4233 Contract Award – Multi-Functional Printing Devices, Production Printing Devices and Associated Software

Councillor Ferguson introduced a report which sought to ensure the council had provision to continue delivering services using digital and paper records.

(annexed)

The decision was taken in the private session following consideration of exempt information (see minute 4239).

4234 Supply of Hired Compact Sweeper Contract

Councillor Murphy introduced a report which sought approval to award a contract for the supply of hired compact sweepers.

(annexed)

The decision was taken in the private session following consideration of exempt information (see minute 4240).

4235 Extension of Contractual Arrangements for Local Healthwatch for Walsall under Reg 72 to allow for full design, tendering and implementation

Councillor Pedley introduced the report which sought approval to extend contractual arrangements for Local Healthwatch for Walsall under Regulation 72.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Pedley and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

- 1. That Cabinet approves the extension of the existing contract with Engaging Communities Solutions CIC for a period of 10 months from 1st June 2024 to March 31, 2025, at a value of £158,708.**
- 2. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, Public Health and the Hub in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, to subsequently authorise the sealing of deeds and/or signing of contracts and any other related documents for the provision of such services as well as any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents should this be required throughout the duration of this contract.**

4236 Recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding Fixed Penalty Notices and Enforcement Legislation

Cabinet received and considered a report containing recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding fixed penalty notices and enforcement legislation.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Perry and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet will work with and support the Local Government Association to lobby Government to increase the financial levels of fixed penalty notices for littering and fly tipping and strengthen enforcement legislation.

4237 Exclusion of public

Resolved

That during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, the Cabinet considers that the items for consideration are exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the items in private.

Part 2 - Private Session

The following is a public summary of decisions taken in the private session.

4238 **Purchase of a Property in Pelsall for Operational Purposes**

Councillor Bird introduced a report which sought approval for the purchase of a property in Pelsall for operational purposes.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Murphy and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet approve the acquisition of the freehold interest in a property in Pelsall and delegate the approval of the final terms of the acquisition to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration on the proviso that:

- a) the legal due diligence currently being undertaken by the council's lawyers demonstrates that the property presents a good and marketable title; and**
- b) the transaction represents a purchase at best value.**

(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

4239 **Contract Award – Multi-Functional Printing Devices, Production Printing Devices and Associated Software**

Councillor Ferguson introduced a report which sought to ensure the council had provision to continue delivering services using digital and paper records, including exempt information.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Ferguson and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

1. That Cabinet approves the award a 5-year contract, with an associated value in the region of £1.6 million, to Konica Minolta Business Solutions (UK) Ltd, for the leased supply of multifunctional printing devices, production printing devices and associated printing software.
2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Resources to enter into subsequent lease agreements which may be taken out under this contract and to subsequently authorise the sealing or signing of any associated contracts, deeds or other related documents.
3. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Resources to vary the contract/leases during the contractual period to ensure the Council continues to achieve value for money and the service continue to meet the corporate priorities.

(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

4240 **Supply of Hired Compact Sweeper Contract**

Councillor Murphy introduced a report which sought approval to award a contract for the supply of hired compact sweepers.

(annexed)

It was **moved** by Councillor Murphy and **seconded** by Councillor Bird and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

1. That Cabinet award a contract for a period of three years from 18 November 2024 to 17 November 2027 to Dawsongroup with an anticipated contract value of £698,400 for the supply of compact sweepers.
2. That Cabinet approve the increase in cost of £75,589 to Clean and Green for five years inflation, however, this can be covered by the current revenue budget.
3. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green to subsequently authorise the sealing or signing of any associated contracts, or related documents.
4. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Economy and Environment to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for such services should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any contracts and provided they are in line with the Council's Contract Rules and any relevant legislation, including Public Contract Regulations 2015.

(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7:21 pm.

Chair:

Date:



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

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

2 July 2024

FORWARD PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.

- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
AUGUST 2024 TO NOVEMBER 2024
(02.07.2024)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
36/24 (4.6.24)	Council Plan 2022/25 – Q4 23/24: To note the Quarter 4 2023/24 (outturn) performance against the Markers of Success in the Council Plan 2022/25.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Sam Oliver Sam.Oliver@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	17 July 2024
25/24 (8.5.24)	Productivity Plan: To agree the publication of the Council's DLUHC Productivity Plan response document.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	17 July 2024
37/24 (18.6.24)	Council Plan 2024-2028: Draft for Consultation To consider the draft Council Plan and approve going out for a period of consultation.	Cabinet Key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services & Public	Cllr Perry	July 2024

24/24 (8.4.24)	Interim provision of street lighting services: To ensure the provision of street lighting between the end of the PFI and the start of the next term contract.	Cabinet Key Decision	Katie Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	17 July 2024
26/24 (8.5.24)	Pre-Audit Outturn 2023/24: To receive the pre-audit revenue and capital financial outturn position for 2023/24 and approve recommended carry forwards, and financial indicators for 2023/24.	Cabinet Key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024
27/24 (8.5.24)	Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the annual report for treasury management activities 2023/24 including prudential and local indicators.	Cabinet Council Non-key decision	Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024

28/24 (8.5.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 and approach to Budget Setting for 2025/26: To report the financial position based on 3 months to June 2024, and to set out our approach and timeline for the 2025/26 budget process and amendments to the Medium-Term Financial Framework	Cabinet Non-key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	17 July 2024
29/24 (8.5.24)	Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder bid: To approve the project delivery plan and accountable body status for the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder grant.	Cabinet Key Decision	Phil Rutherford Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk Rachael Phillips Rachael.Phillips@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024
30/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Fostering Agency Framework: To agree call off contracts with Independent Foster Care Agencies under a new framework arrangement.	Cabinet Key Decision	Paula Wilman Paula.Wilman@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024
31/24 (4.6.24)	Families First for Children – Pathfinder To agree receipt of a grant and to set out financial risks.	Cabinet Key Decision	Rita Homer Rita.Homer@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	17 July 2024
38/24 (18.6.24)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028: Draft for Consultation	Cabinet Key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services and Staff	Cllr Lee	17 July 2024

	To consider the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and approve going out for a period of consultation.		Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk			
32/24 (4.6.24)	Appointment of Contractor for Civic Centre and Council House Decarbonisation Works: To appoint a contractor for decarbonisation works at the Civic Centre and Council House. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	4 September 2024
42/24 (2.7.24)	Article 4 direction for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): To approve the making of a borough-wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the change of use from dwellinghouses to smaller HMOs. To issue public notice of the Article 4 direction for a period of at least 6 weeks to allow for representations.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	4 September 2024
23/24 (18.3.24)	Commercial Strategy: To agree the strategic approach to generating income, reducing costs, fostering an entrepreneurial culture,	Cabinet Key Decision	Michele McPherson Michele.McPherson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	4 September 2024

	forming partnerships, and investing in businesses to support local economies and social objectives					
33/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Childrens Residential Homes Framework: To agree call off contracts with Residential Children's Homes providers under the West Midlands Regional Framework.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sally Gamston Sally.Gamston@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	4 September 2024
57/23 (6.11.23)	Draft Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Climate Strategy: To approve for public consultation the draft Walsall Net-Zero 2041 Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Katie Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	4 September 2024
34/24 (4.6.24)	Temporary Accommodation Regulator Registration: To approve registration with the Regulator of Social Housing for the purpose of providing additional Temporary Accommodation for homeless people.	Cabinet Key decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	4 September 2024
43/24 (2.7.24)	Secondary School Sufficiency: To consider the expansions of secondary schools in Walsall to support the requirement for additional school places to meet the Local Authorities statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Kaur	4 September 2024

	available across the borough for all Walsall residents.					
40/24 (1.7.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including savings proposals.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
41/24 (1.7.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 6 months to September 2024.	Cabinet Non-key decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	16 October 2024
39/24 (1.7.24)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028: To approve the final version of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy following consultation.	Cabinet Key decision	Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024

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).

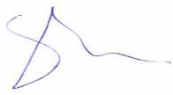
Background papers –

Annexes:

Author

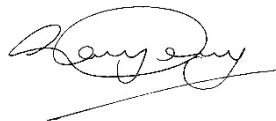
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Signed

Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director
Resources and Transformation
15 July 2024



Signed

Cllr Perry
Leader of Council
15 July 2024

Striving For Excellence:

Our Council Plan 2025-2029



Walsall Council

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Foreword

Our Council Plan 2025-2029 echoes the voices and priorities of the people of Walsall. Together with our partners, we have listened carefully to over 10,000 of our community groups, businesses and people who live, work, study and invest in the borough. They told us the type of place they want Walsall to be in the future: that in 2040 Walsall will be the most improved borough in the region, a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances. That vision – *We Are Walsall 2040* – now needs to be realised.

This Council Plan sets out what we will focus on as an organisation over the next four years, continuing to transform Walsall for the better as we move forward on our journey to 2040. It has been developed in partnership with all our staff through an extensive engagement exercise, so that everyone who works for Walsall Council understands the role they play in achieving our long-term ambitions. It acts as a stepping stone on the route to 2040 and ensures we continue to push ourselves forward as a Council, building on the magnificent work that enabled us to win 'Most improved Council' in 2024. It highlights our ambition and pride in our borough, from delivering an ambitious £1.5billion regeneration programme, working with partners to make safer streets, ensuring our towns and villages remain green and giving our young people the best start in life – whilst also ensuring we continue to deliver value and balance the budget. Through this plan, we will strive towards excellence and help the vision for tomorrow become the reality of today.

Leader of the Council: Cllr Garry Perry

Introduction

Welcome to Walsall's Council Plan for 2025-2029. This sets out our vision and priorities for the next four years, where our resources will be prioritised and how we will deliver against the We Are Walsall 2040 vision. It details the principles that we will adopt in all we do to deliver successful outcomes for all in the borough.

Recent years have left a challenging legacy for everyone. However, during difficult circumstances we saw partnership working flourish; we want to continue strengthening those relationships even further. We have had to take a much more agile and flexible approach to how we deliver services and accelerate the pace of the changes we had already started making. The benefits of this are now being seen through improved satisfaction rates amongst residents and staff and increased morale and engagement across the Council.

Since the publication of our last Council Plan, Walsall has been on an improvement journey. We have modernised our workforce, skills, and ways of working, bringing in talented leadership, ensuring innovation and change, and we have made great progress working across the Borough. Like other local authorities, we are now seeing increased demand for services at a time of greater financial challenge. Despite this, we continue to deliver outcomes, and have the right leadership, structures, skills, and tools in place to generate the innovative solutions that we need.

Our 'Proud Programme' started in 2019 – a whole-Council transformation programme that has helped us to deliver significant improvements in satisfaction, financial efficiency, and organisational capability. The transformation focused on changing our ways of thinking, behaviours, and how we get things done. This progress was highlighted by the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2023 and recently by Walsall Council winning the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) award for 'Most Improved Council 2024'. The judges noted that:

"[Walsall's] impressive journey of improvement and savings through investment, while recognising the residents' voice as central to their journey, is nothing short of remarkable. With their focus on continuous improvement and new leadership, Walsall's communities can be assured of a bright future ahead."

These are tough times for many, but Walsall's record of accomplishment of continuous improvement gives us a solid foundation to build on and has equipped us with the tools we need as we work together to become the borough that people want to see in 2040.

Chief Executive: Emma Bennett

Our Borough

1 page to include:

Map / photos

Walsall borough is made up of six towns – Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston, Walsall and Willenhall – and is home to 284,400 residents. Each of our **20 wards** has its own distinct identity and diverse characteristics. This brings a vibrant character to the borough, but also means we need to understand the range of needs faced by those living within all our communities.

Infographics to highlight key high-level challenges:

- Population growth
- Structure (younger/working age/older)
- Ethnicity
- Deprivation
- 3 or 4 relevant infographics within each ambition?

To be updated with map showing revised ward boundaries post-LGBCE publication.

Our Plan

We have adopted the *We Are Walsall 2040* ambitions as the overarching framework for our council priorities: Thriving & Happy; Healthy & Well; Prosperous & Innovative; and Proud of our Borough. In this way we can be sure that the Council's priorities are aligned to what the community told us is important for the future.

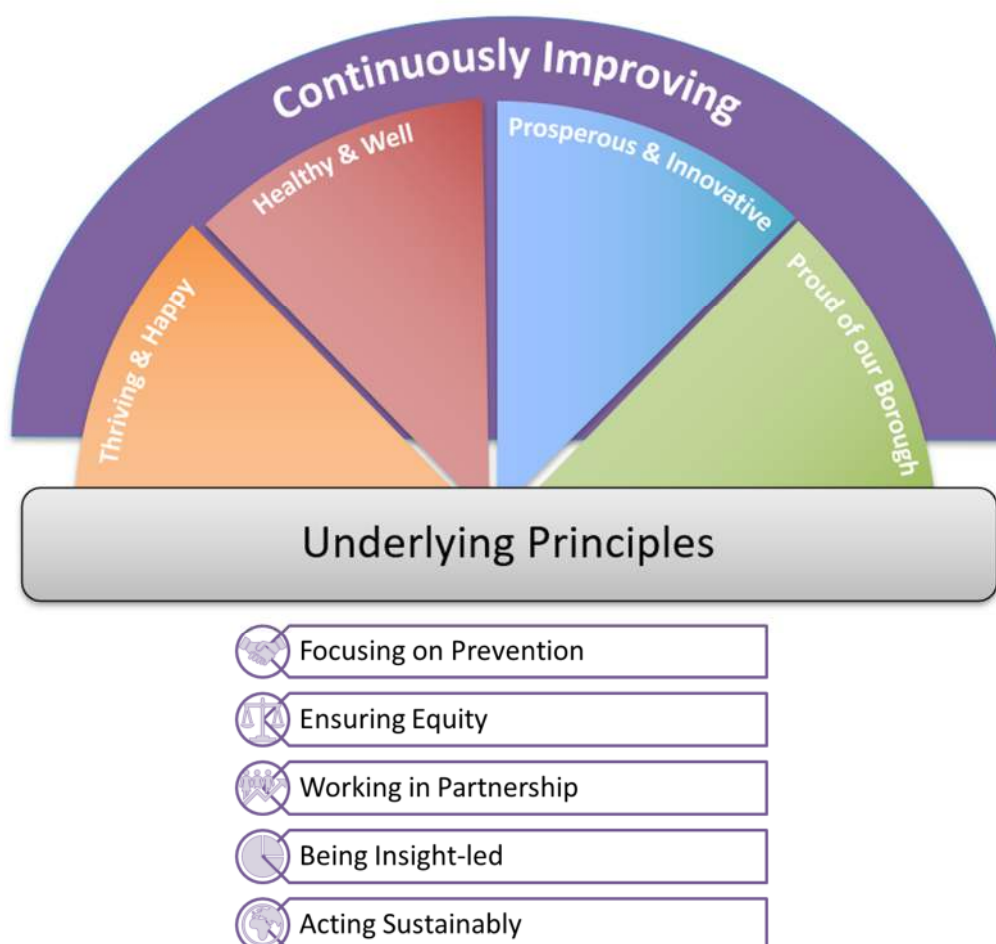
These 2040 ambitions are shared with our partners across Walsall, but we all have distinct roles to play in achieving success. For this plan we are outlining what the Council will do under these four ambitions, and to build on our transformation journey we have adopted a fifth internally focused ambition: Continuously Improving. This runs both alongside and throughout all our other ambitions.

We have also identified cross-cutting principles that apply across everything that we do to enable us to deliver all our priorities more effectively. Embedding these principles across all our services will support our future success.

Our vision acknowledges that while we have transformed as an organisation over the past few years, we will keep striving for excellence in our services and ensuring that everyone living and working in Walsall is able to reach their full potential:

Vision: to be a continuously improving council, delivering excellence, reducing inequalities and improving life chances for all

Our Ambitions



Our Principles

These five cross-cutting principles apply to everything that we do as an organisation and will enable us to deliver all our priorities more effectively. They were developed through engagement with staff right across the organisation. By taking these principles into account when designing and delivering our services, we will have a solid foundation to underpin successful outcomes.

Focusing on Prevention	
Reduced funding and increasing demands are leading to pressure across public services and a need to consider innovative solutions. Prevention is already at the heart of many of our services. Public Health is concerned with population-level initiatives that will benefit individuals' future health and wellbeing outcomes. Similarly, our Early Help service is designed to identify and support families before complex issues arise. All services must consider preventative rather than reactive approaches, to improve outcomes and yield financial benefits that can be reinvested.	
Supporting strategies	Health & Wellbeing Strategy Adults Prevention Strategy
Ensuring Equity	
Promoting equalities, tackling inequity, and fostering good relations across our diverse communities is at the heart of our work – with reducing inequalities and improving life chances forming the core of our vision. We have made great strides in recent years to support our workforce to represent the communities they serve, to strengthen our governance around Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and to ensure staff voice is heard at all levels. There is still more we need to do to understand the characteristics and needs of our communities and ensure services are designed to be equitable and accessible to everyone.	
Supporting strategies	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy
Working in Partnership	
Partnership working is central to our vision for the borough. We Are Walsall 2040 is owned by all our strategic partners who come together as the 2040 Partnership – aligning how we work to achieve the maximum impact for the borough. But partnership working happens at every level in our organisation: from macro-level partnerships like West Midlands Combined Authority or Black Country Integrated Care System; local partnerships including Walsall for All (community organisations), Walsall Together (health & social care) Children's Alliance or Team Walsall; right down to individual officers working with their counterparts in other organisations. This principle of looking 'up and out' is one that benefits everyone. Within the council, services need to work together to share learning and avoid duplication. And engaging our residents, communities, businesses and service users in the co-design of services that work for them will lead to better outcomes.	
Supporting strategies	We Are Walsall 2040

	Co-production Strategy
Being Insight-led	
<p>The data and intelligence that we hold is one of our organisation's most valuable assets. Harnessed effectively, it can drive evidence-based decision making, enhance service delivery, and improve the lives of the residents of Walsall. To achieve these benefits, we must nurture a culture that values our data and recognises the benefits of using it to inform insight. By investing in data infrastructure, promoting data literacy, and fostering collaboration, we can unlock the full potential of data to address complex challenges, focus on prevention, drive innovation, and create more sustainable and prosperous communities.</p>	
Supporting strategies	Data & Insight Strategy
Acting Sustainably	
<p>For all decisions we take, we must weigh any potentially short-term gains against the longer-term consequences. Consideration of climate change is well established, and the Council has committed to reach net zero by 2041, but the principle of sustainability goes further than this. Environmentally sustainable developments will enhance the quality of our local environment and not prove harmful to its future condition. Economically sustainable activities will not require additional financial commitments in the future, and ideally will eventually become self-sustaining or even return a profit. And socially sustainable policies will build capacity so individuals and communities can support themselves into the future, for example by equipping people with new skills or breaking inter-generational patterns of worklessness.</p>	
Supporting strategies	Climate Change Strategy Commercial Strategy

Thriving and Happy

Everyone feels safe, in communities where people are supported to help themselves and one another, and children have the best start in life.

Child-friendly borough

Experiences in childhood can set the blueprint for adulthood, so investing in the physical, emotional, and educational development of our children and young people will pay dividends for them later in life. Resilient children and thriving families are key to ensure Walsall's children and young people can achieve their potential and become successful now and into the future.

We want to provide services to support children and families, with access to a range of activities to have fun, grow, learn, and thrive locally. Walsall will be a place where all children, irrespective of background or ability, have access to good education and can lead fun, safe and healthy lives. We are taking a partnership approach through the Walsall Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance, because it is essential all organisations work together and align their resources and activities to support Walsall's next generation. Together we have listened to the voice of children, young people, and their families – over 500 of whom joined in the 'Big Conversation' – to inform our priorities and shape the delivery of actions that are meaningful to them.

We will:

- Continue to work with our partners through the Walsall's Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance to deliver the CYP Strategy and ensure that Walsall is a vibrant place where young people are proud to live.
- Work in partnership to focus on the early years, supporting the first one thousand days in a child's life to give them the best possible start.
- Work with families to ensure their children are school ready.
- Close the gap in child poverty and education inequalities, to help all children to reach their full potential.
- Continue to listen to our young people and their families, to co-design priorities and actions that matter to them.
- Further embed our Family Hubs and extend the impact these have for families in all localities.
- Ensure that we provide excellent support to children in our care to help them successfully transition into adulthood.
- Work with education providers and businesses to ensure young people have the right pathways to stay in education, employment or training.
- Work with all partners to develop a strong youth offer across the borough to give young people safe places to go.

Safer streets, safer people

Our listening and engagement activities tell us that being safe, and feeling safe, is the highest priority for people in Walsall. We want to create a borough where people feel safe in their homes, neighbourhoods and towns and are confident going about their lives day or night. As a member of Safer Walsall Partnership, we have a duty to collaborate with the police and other key partners to develop and implement local crime-reduction strategies. We will work together to address the root causes of crime (which include poverty and childhood trauma) and ensure people are safe from the effects of crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour.

There are also opportunities for us to use our wider powers to shape safer streets and communities. We can consider how we use planning and regeneration plans to create secure environments by 'designing out crime', for example in the redevelopment within the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan – where people told us they feel particularly unsafe. And we can use our enforcement powers to maximum effect, for example by improving road safety or clamping down on illicit trading.

We will:

- Target interventions to reduce crime, particularly violent and knife related crime.
- Tackle the root causes of crime, particularly issues such as deprivation and adverse childhood experience.
- Make full use of the tools, technology and powers available to us to improve safety across the borough.
- Effectively safeguard children and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation.
- Identify and support young people at risk of becoming involved in youth violence and criminal activities.
- Develop action plans to address issues such as domestic abuse, all age exploitation and modern slavery.
- Continue targeted multi-agency work in communities when issues arise, focussing on short-term intervention and longer-term solutions.
- Use vehicle mitigation measures to improve road safety in town and district centres.
- Work with partners to reduce and address anti-social behaviour.
- Work in partnership to mitigate and reduce the threat of extremism.
- Ensure community safety perspectives are considered in our development and regeneration plans.

Resilient and empowered communities

Strong and empowered communities have been shown to help people live happier and longer lives. Being active in our communities and having a voice in shaping the world around us can help to anchor us to our neighbourhoods, foster feelings of belonging, generate trust, reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, and create a sense of wellbeing. Empowered communities are more resilient to the challenges of everyday life; and by harnessing the assets available outside of the public and private sectors we can drive forward change and improvement in local areas. We want to create a Walsall where everyone has a voice and can get involved through volunteering and participating in community life.

We are fortunate to have a vibrant community sector in Walsall – which is integral to our partnership working – and it is important that we ensure sustainability of the sector. We have adopted a Resilient Communities model that focuses on harnessing the assets of our population: a citizen-led way of improving quality of life and reducing harm in our communities, allowing them to thrive and building capacity right across the borough.

We will:

- Work with partners to help our residents understand money and financial decisions.
- Explore how we as a Council can drive social value keeping Walsall money in Walsall and supporting community wealth building activities.
- Review how we work with and commission the community sector through a new local Compact
- Work to ensure the community sector is supported to develop, thrive and have a strong voice for local issues and people.
- Explore options for cross cutting prevention programmes that support and empower Walsall people and communities
- Connect more people to their communities and ensure they can be signposted about where to go when they need it.
- Work with partners locally to embed the Armed Forces Covenant across Walsall.
- Engage residents in the consideration, design and delivery of local initiatives and services to co-produce the Walsall we want together.
- Work with partners to encourage local volunteering and community participation.

Healthy and Well

A wellbeing-centred borough where people are healthy and live full and active lives, with the support they need to achieve a good quality of life, living in safe and suitable homes.

Living active and healthy lives

Walsall faces many challenges that impact on health and wellbeing. Healthy life expectancy is well below the national average and people in the borough spend a larger portion of their lives living in poor health. Creating the right environment to enable people to make healthy choices, (such as stopping smoking, eating healthily, maintaining a healthy weight, engaging in regular exercise, and reducing alcohol and drug intake) remains vital for the future health of our residents.

Mental health is just as important as physical health, and with local partners we have committed to focus on improving mental wellbeing for all our residents through increasing awareness and providing access to support. Mental wellbeing can be improved by exercise, being outdoors, engaging in cultural activities, and being part of a community – and the Council can help people to access those positive activities.

Residents' physical and mental wellbeing is not just important to them as individuals. Living in ill health creates barriers to employment, so promoting healthy lives is essential for the economic prosperity of the whole borough.

We will:

- Work with partners to recognise the importance of mental wellbeing and signpost to information and guidance – supporting people to find ways and activities that will improve their own wellbeing.
- Ensure excellent leisure facilities, parks and green spaces are available to support residents to live healthy and active lives.
- Consider health in all policies, decision making and service design.
- Work with our business community to support their employees' health.
- Provide public health support to enable Walsall people to consider stopping smoking, reducing alcohol consumption, and ending dependence on drugs.
- Provide opportunities and encourage our residents and communities to build exercise into their daily lives, be more aware of the foods they eat and maintain good sexual health.
- Use our enforcement powers to clamp down on licensing issues and the sale of illicit vapes, tobacco and goods, and new initiatives to tackle street drinking.
- Develop our wellbeing and early intervention offer.

Supported and cared for

People are at the heart of any community and in Walsall we want to put people at the centre of our services and decision-making. We want everyone to have choice, control, and flexibility – to allow people to live well, age well and die well. We will work with partners to ensure excellent care provision in Walsall that is designed and centred around the individual and their needs. We want people to be able to live independent lives and stay in their homes and communities as long as possible through provision of quality and timely support.

Nationally, carers contribute approximately £135billion in unpaid care and are the bedrock of social care support. One in ten Walsall adults provide unpaid care. Unpaid carers are more likely to suffer from poorer mental health and wellbeing, often struggling to manage their own needs alongside their caring responsibilities. We value our carers and recognise the vital role they play and want to support them to thrive.

We will:

- Ensure we have a clear and comprehensive carers strategy outlining how we will work with and support carers across the borough
- Work with partners to provide intermediate care and reablement to ensure more people can retain or regain independence.
- Work with partners to support people to leave hospital as soon as they are well enough.
- Communicate clearly with residents who need social care so they can understand the process, funding and are empowered to make choices that matter to them.
- Work with partners to ensure support to adults with learning or sensory needs so they are supported to thrive in their jobs, homes and communities.
- Protect and support vulnerable people at risk of harm and exploitation.
- Invest in technology and approaches that help people live independently for longer.
- Review the data we have and work with partners to understand how we can best reduce health inequalities across the borough.
- Work with our Walsall Together health and care partners to consider wellbeing outcomes in everything we do.
- Treat the bereaved with respect and dignity and provide excellent bereavement services.

Homes for all

Walsall residents should be able to live in a decent home that meets their needs and aspirations. A good home is fundamental to feeling safe and well. Good housing impacts on how people feel about where they live and the world around them. It impacts directly on people's mental health and poor-quality housing can directly affect people through ill health. Availability of quality homes of all types is also vital to ensure Walsall can continue to grow and flourish economically and socially.

Our Housing Strategy sets out our intention to deliver new homes, prevent homelessness, and help to improve the safety and energy efficiency of Walsall's homes. While the Council does not own or manage its own housing stock, we play an important strategic function, working closely with social landlords and private developers to ensure everyone has the home they need.

We will:

- Understand the changing housing needs of different groups – including those who need care – to promote independent living, health and wellbeing.
- Facilitate new home building, by bring together housing associations and developers with our regional and national public sector partners.
- Increase the number of long-term empty homes brought back into use – using our powers of compulsory purchase where appropriate.
- Seek to improve energy efficiency of new and existing homes.
- Work with landlords (especially the private sector) to make sure homes are safe
- Support those who are homeless, or at risk of being made homeless.
- Develop a new Local Plan by 2026 to ensure we have the right houses in the right locations.
- Work with developers to ensure developments are mixed tenures with a good supply of affordable homes across the borough.
- Continue to work closely with residents at risk of becoming homeless to support them to stay in their homes wherever possible.

Prosperous and Innovative

An economy that works for everyone, with skilled residents able to take up the opportunities created by local businesses, in a place that it is easy to get around, where people are confident to access services digitally.

Supporting business and inclusive growth

Inclusive economic growth is vital to ensure good jobs locally that pay sustainable wages and lead to an improved quality of life across all our communities. Our Economic Strategy aims to build a positive future: increasing the number of local businesses, growing local jobs and skills, and harnessing our economic assets of geography, connectivity, strong industrial sectors, and partnership working across anchor institutions.

The private sector is a key partner for our 2040 vision. Strategic businesses are already working with us to shape regeneration schemes across Walsall. There are over 8,000 businesses across the borough that we are supporting to grow and thrive. We want businesses to build roots in Walsall and invest in their future in the borough. This includes investing in both physical premises and infrastructure as well as investing in their employees through continuing staff development or apprenticeships. But beyond that, corporate social responsibility schemes will help to ensure that businesses also invest in our local communities and become key partners in the future prosperity and wellbeing of Walsall.

We will:

- Build relationships with our strategically important businesses across Walsall.
- Work to attract investors and new businesses to the Borough.
- Look for opportunities for the private sector to be involved in partnership arrangements to strengthen their effectiveness.
- Develop a clear opportunity for businesses to support the borough's priorities through effective and targeted corporate social responsibility activities, including using our contracts with local businesses to drive local social value.
- Understand where businesses interact with the council and streamline the support offer developing a joined-up approach across all Council services.
- Work with partners to continue to develop Walsall as centre of excellence for manufacturing and green jobs.
- Review our procurement processes to make it easier for local business to deliver our contracts.

Skills and jobs for all

Poor economic growth over recent decades has resulted in fewer jobs in Walsall with the population increasingly dependent on out-of-work benefits. Walsall has higher than national average levels of unemployment, high numbers on ill health related benefits and our economy is vulnerable to external economic challenges. Our successful 'Walsall Works' programme has proven that providing investment and support can create the conditions for sustainable employment growth and help people move into employment. However, we must address a significant skills gap to progress – one in ten adults have no formal qualifications at all. Skills shortages, lack of aspiration and low educational attainment means we face barriers in the local economy.

The children in Walsall's schools today are the workforce of tomorrow. We must connect the learning children and young people receive to the skills they will need to be successful adults. We must work with education providers and businesses to match skills and training with local need and provide opportunities to work. We must support people to access a range of pathways including traineeships and apprenticeships. Walsall has the capacity to produce highly skilled people so working with employers to ensure there are jobs in the borough for them to take up is vital to ensure people can work and live locally. However, learning doesn't finish in early adulthood. We need to offer working age people the opportunity to continually develop in their careers by evolving and expanding their skill set to meet changing economic demands and to reach their full potential.

We will:

- Narrow the gap in educational attainment across the Borough working with schools to raise attainment levels.
- Work with education providers to ensure they are offering the right learning opportunities to meet our business' needs.
- Increase investment in the borough to increase jobs especially highly skilled jobs.
- Work with partners to establish clear pathways for young people and unemployed adults to retrain and access employment in sectors where there are skills shortages.
- Support partners to develop our adult education offer to ensure a whole life course approach to skills development
- Work with businesses and partners to champion inclusive employment policies and procedures to encourage access and opportunities for all communities.

Accessible services & connected places

Walsall needs a range of transport options to ensure we are connected to the wider Black Country, the West Midlands and beyond. We want Walsall people to move around with ease and convenience, ensuring high class connectivity to drive economic prosperity. Work has been completed on M6 Junction 10 to improve traffic flow on one of the region's busiest motorway stretches. By investing in the quality and condition of our road networks, we will reduce congestion and improve journey times. We need a mix of transport solutions, so we are not reliant on cars for shorter, local journeys and where cars are needed, we need to invest in EV infrastructure and technology. We must ensure that the infrastructure and routes are in place to allow people a choice in how they get around. Our new railway stations at Darlaston and Willenhall, opening the Walsall-Wolverhampton rail route, will serve two of our district centres. Similarly, the proposed Aldridge station will mean greater connectivity to the east of the borough. Our plans to link Walsall and Bloxwich via the canal network will open this important artery for walking and cycling. Investment in such routes across the borough will help people feel safe however they travel.

Services are increasingly being provided virtually. We will invest in the technology and infrastructure we need for the future, such as access to 5G networks. However, we also need to ensure all those who wish to get online are supported with the skills and training they need to be digitally confident, with the capability to access the services they need. A digitally connected Walsall where people are skilled in how to navigate online will drive prosperity for the borough improving quality of life.

We will:

- Work with regional partners (West Midlands Combined Authority) to ensure large scale transport infrastructure projects are designed and delivered to benefit Walsall.
- Invest in better cycling and walking routes across the borough to enable people to choose transport options.
- Communicate and encourage our residents to choose cleaner and greener forms of travel where they can.
- Implement our EV strategy to ensure electric vehicle infrastructure and charging points are available across the borough.
- Work with digitally excluded residents to get them the support and skills they need to get online.
- Refresh our Digital Strategy and continue to roll out digital infrastructure and technology to make Walsall Digitally connected.

Proud of our Borough

Vibrant, clean towns with quality green spaces, where everyone takes responsibility to respect the environment and be climate ready, with communities that come together to celebrate our diverse heritage and culture.

A clean and green future

Clean, green, safe streets with strong communities help our residents feel pride and encourage people to live active healthy lives. We want Walsall's streets and neighbourhoods to be thriving and welcoming places where people want to live, participate, and enjoy being in the borough. The Council cannot create and maintain these streets and neighbourhoods alone; we need to work with our partners, residents and communities to create vibrant streets and neighbourhoods and to reduce, re-use and recycle our waste. Residents have told us how much they value and take pride in the parks and green spaces across the borough. Maintaining and promoting these as places for relaxation, leisure and community activities will play a vital role not only in protecting the quality of our environment but also in supporting the health and wellbeing of our borough.

Climate change will impact on the day to day lives and wellbeing of Walsall residents with climate effects such as increased rainfall and extreme temperatures increasingly becoming a lived reality. Walsall Council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and we have committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2041. Considerable progress has been made by reducing energy use and improving the efficiency of our buildings. However, to achieve the target we will have to go further and ensure that reducing emissions and increasing resilience is central to all we do (as set out in our principle of 'acting sustainably'). Our Climate Change Strategy will set out how we work alongside our partners, businesses and communities to build climate resilience into all we do – working to address the causes and mitigate the effects.

We will:

- Educate and raise awareness of how our behaviour can improve the world around us.
- Invest in our street cleansing tools and equipment to maintain clean streets.
- Enforce to curb fly tipping, dog fouling, environmental crime and unauthorised commercial activities that can impact the environment, and work towards eliminating unsafe behaviours that negatively affect our neighbourhoods.
- Invest in our waste management infrastructure to modernise, enhance and future-proof our recycling and waste disposal facilities.
- Effectively manage our designated sites (such as Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest) to safeguard the natural environment and promote biodiversity.
- Look for opportunities to create new habitats where flora and fauna can thrive, through initiatives such as rewilding.
- Develop and deliver an annual Climate Action Plan to remain on track towards our 2041 goals.

Celebrating our culture and heritage

Celebrating who we are is important: recognising our culture, our beliefs, our stories, and our history is central to creating pride, fostering cohesion, and driving forward prosperity and wellbeing. As the 'town of a hundred trades', Walsall has a rich industrial heritage, and our residents live amongst historic buildings, parks, and cultural sites. But they also have countless personal stories to share, of longstanding roots in the borough or more recent migration. So 'heritage' acknowledges not just our collective connections with the past but also what we chose to take forward as we look towards the future – celebrating our vibrant and diverse communities and places, with the aim of creating opportunities for present and future generations.

Our vibrant creative and cultural sector will be at the heart of our visitor and tourism strategy, celebrating the borough's eminent attractions – including Walsall Arboretum and the renowned New Art Gallery. The heritage and cultural sectors will also play a key role in Walsall's future by bringing residents and partners together to unlock new economic, environmental, health and wellbeing, and community benefits.

We will:

- Celebrate our Walsall history in the leather trade and safeguard the skills for future generations.
- Develop a Visitor and Tourism Strategy to maximise Walsall as a destination in the region.
- Promote the legacy of the Arboretum and maintain impact for future generations.
- Continue to support museums, galleries and libraries as important community assets.
- Develop a programme of cultural and arts events and activities across the borough.
- Celebrate and champion the diversity of peoples, cultures and faiths across the borough through our art, culture and community initiatives.
- Support and promote integration and cohesion of all communities across the borough

Vibrant towns

Through working with our partners and the private sector, and developing our Walsall brand, we have a £1.5billion investment programme underway to regenerate and transform the borough and create thousands of new homes and jobs. Residents, businesses and visitors have told us that they want Walsall town centre to be a focal point for the borough – a destination for shopping locally and participating in activities, sport, and leisure. Our Town Centre Masterplan sets out how we will improve Walsall, respond to economic challenges and shape our economy for the future.

Residents have also told us they want to retain the unique identities of our district centres, while strengthening the local offer for employment, retail, leisure and housing. There are a range of regeneration schemes planned that aim to rejuvenate these places and help them to thrive. In Bloxwich, £21million of Town Deal funding is being used to establish an incubation and digital access centre, enhance parks and open spaces and improve housing and skills. Darlaston is a recipient of long-term Town Deal funding, with a plan that will be shaped by the local voluntary and community sector. Our Willenhall framework will deliver our 10-year ambition for housing growth and healthy, prosperous communities. Darlaston, Willenhall and Aldridge are also locations for new planned rail connections to link them to Walsall town centre and the wider region.

The next few years will be devoted to the development of our Walsall Borough Local Plan – the overarching spatial and planning framework for Walsall. This long-term plan provides an opportunity to shape the geography of the borough so that we can realise our ambitions for the future and ensure there is space for homes, jobs, leisure and the environment.

We will:

- Continue to create a strong Walsall brand that attracts investors and developers to our towns and encourages retailers and leisure providers to the borough.
- Deliver the next phase of our regeneration programme: £500m to create 2,000 jobs and 1,000 homes.
- Support a range of cultural events and activities to draw people into our town and district centres.
- Realise the vision set out the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan to transform accessibility and public realm at the heart of the borough.
- Deliver the Willenhall Framework Plan to promote the town as a place that people aspire to live, work, and spend leisure time.
- Work with our public, private and voluntary sector partners to deliver successful Town Deal projects in Walsall, Bloxwich and Darlaston.
- Carry out a consultation process on our Local Borough Plan that ensures all residents, businesses, and partners can shape the borough for the future.
- Continue to develop a pipeline of development and regeneration schemes and look for opportunities to work towards successful delivery.
- Provide an effective and timely planning service to support our local growth ambitions.

Continuously Improving

Striving for excellence by providing efficient and effective services, supported by a skilled and engaged workforce to provide a high-quality experience for all those engaging with the council.

A quality experience for all

Walsall Council has put residents at the heart of everything we do, ensuring they can easily contact us when they need us, and they get good outcomes first time, every time. Our new digital offer means residents now have a variety of channels to engage with the Council. People can get online to request, book, and pay for a variety of services and our new telephony system and website makes it even easier to get clear and timely information. Our Walsall Connected programme ensures we have locality-based hubs across the borough for those that need them, offering residents advice and support and help with digital skills. We will ensure our services continue to be accessible and we will make every contact count. We will use available technology and data and work with our staff to ensure how we deliver our services is as important as what we deliver. We will invest in the right infrastructure to ensure our data and records are effective and that we work as one across the Council to ensure you only need to tell us once.

As a Council that has Ensuring Equity as a key principle, we will work to ensure all our diverse communities can access services, are treated fairly and where needed we will make reasonable adjustments. We will continue to deliver our Customer Experience Strategy ensuring we learn from what works, create a culture that puts residents and customers first and when things need to improve, we do so quickly. We will ensure we understand what residents need, their behaviours and choices and we will design our services from their perspective.

We will:

- Implement, review and refresh our Customer Experience Strategy.
- Ensure our residents and businesses have high quality interactions with the Council whatever channel they use.
- Ensure our Council website is clear, easy to use and accessible for all.
- Use behavioural science insights and approaches to redesign our customer communication and processes as appropriate.
- Ensure we have access to translation and interpretation services for those who need them.
- Ensure we work with staff to put customers and residents first in how we work.
- Continue to implement our customer access transformation activities to improve how residents can contact us and get support.
- Deploy technology, tools and models to improve customer channels and processes.

A skilled and engaged workforce

Walsall Council has gone through significant challenges in recent years. Our staff too have felt these challenges and have delivered tirelessly to ensure service continuity in a time of need. Our journey towards excellence is not possible without our staff, an outstanding workforce that is motivated, understands our vision and how to realise that for the benefit of Walsall. We need to ensure that we have the right staff with the right skills, talent, and passion to make a difference. We must attract, recruit, and retain excellent staff that yield results and deliver value for money. We aim to be an employer of choice, a place where staff feel valued, can be empowered and nurtured to develop, and where we cultivate a culture of innovation, co-operation and creativity. We want to ensure that all levels of the Council reflect the diversity and makeup of the Borough- that we know and understand our communities. Our workforce Strategy 2023-2026 outlines our aims to develop our staff and create the right culture and space so they can thrive and deliver excellent services tailored for Walsall's needs.

In 2023, our regular staff survey showed improvement in levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. We want to build on these successes. We will focus on ensuring equity for all staff and develop clear opportunities for their voices to be heard through creating channels for staff to raise issues, produce suggestions for change, and challenge conventions. Our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy outlines how we will ensure equity in everything we do – championing equalities with and through our staff. Our new Council values and behaviours have been developed with and by staff and we will embed these across everything we do – designing values-based recruitment, values led leadership and values inspired service delivery.

We will:

- Continue to rollout and support staff networks to give all staff a voice.
- Embed our 'Ensuring Equity' EDI strategy across the Council to champion equalities across everything we do.
- Continue to implement digital 'change agents' programme to ensure our staff are digitally confident with the skills to thrive.
- Ensure our staff have access to effective training and skills for the jobs now and for the future.
- Continue to implement our Workforce Strategy and Organisational Development plans to ensure we have the right staff and are representative of the communities we serve.
- Review the findings of our employee engagement programme to drive greater engagement, motivation and positive morale in our staff.
- Communicate and embed our Council values to all staff.

Efficient and effective services

Our 'Proud' transformation has yielded dividends for the Council and has proven we have the capability to deliver services in a more efficient and effective way. We need to safeguard the outcomes we achieve despite reducing budgets. To do this we must re-design the Council, exploring the services we deliver, our processes, our governance and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose, modernised, and add value. We are reviewing governance to free up capacity and streamline our decision-making. We continue to strengthen our legal, audit and scrutiny processes and we will continue to have effective internal controls to safeguard our resources, achieve value for money and deliver ethically against every pound of Council tax. Alongside this we will ensure we have appropriate levels of support functions to help our front-line services across the Council deliver what matters most.

We will be astute with resources reducing spend, investing to save where it makes business sense and increasing commercial opportunities. Our new Commercial Strategy will help us engender a more entrepreneurial and commercial culture. The council has a good record of balancing the budget and financial sustainability is at the forefront of thinking across the Council. We have delivered approximately £255m of savings from 2010/11 to 2022/23. We will continue to have a razor-sharp focus on how we spend money. We will ensure we derive procurement value by reviewing all contracts, commissioning innovative approaches for service delivery particularly in Adult Social Care and Children Services, and exploring cost effective partnerships.

We are implementing technology solutions and recent advances in AI to increase value and free up capacity to deliver. We are already at the vanguard of IT solutions within local government and will continue to rollout our technology platforms and implement plans to use data more effectively. Our Digital and Data & Insight strategies look at how we deliver digital services and how data is captured, stored and used so we can become better at understanding residents' needs.

We will:

- Implement our Data and Insights Strategy to review the data we have; map the data we need and share intelligence to help us understand the needs of our communities.
- Invest in the infrastructure and technology we need to effectively manage our data and information and create a single view of customer.
- Explore use of technology and AI to transform how we work and generate efficiency and value.
- Finalise and implement our new commercial strategy including development of a clear multi-year pipeline for commercial activities.
- Continue to rollout the Walsall transformation programme focussed on adult services, children services and back-office support.
- Continue to balance our budgets – making circa £40M savings over the period 2025/26-2027/28.
- Review all our contracts and spend to ensure efficiency and value for money.
- Review Council officer governance to generate efficiency and agility of decision making and align with our Local Code of Governance.
- Continue to maintain effective audit, scrutiny and legal processes to ensure compliance and excellence.

Measuring Our Success

Setting out our ambitions is only meaningful if we also evaluate and measure our progress. We have designed a dashboard and report that will go to Cabinet quarterly for discussion and highlight our progress against this plan. In addition, there will be an annual review of achievements that sets out the progress we have made.

The new approach will be insight-led. It will seek to include a wide range of information, (such as ward-specific data) on a variety of different measures, trend analyses, and benchmarking against our neighbouring Councils. It will draw out which outcomes are on target and allow for a robust “deep dive” into outcomes where there are challenges. We will seek to understand how other places, including those with similar characteristics to Walsall, are performing and where we can learn from best practice happening elsewhere.

Council Plan: Markers of Success Q4 23/24

Portfolio: Leader, Councillor Garry Perry

Related portfolios: All

Service: Policy & Strategy Unit

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on Quarter 4 of the 2023/24 Council Plan Markers of Success – highlighting achievements for that period and to note any areas for consideration.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The Council Plan was published in May 2022 and continues to present Walsall's intention to focus on the five (5) EPICC¹ priorities, which were first introduced in the 2018-21 publication.
- 2.2. These priorities are underpinned by 10 outcomes (two outcomes per priority) and each outcome has two Markers of Success, which are the tools to measure performance against the Council Plan.
- 2.3. This Paper is the report on the Markers of Success covering the period January - March 2024 (i.e. Quarter 4).
- 2.4. There has been no RAG status change across any of the markers in the last quarter. There has been slight positive change across the report in its entirety, with 2 metrics that contribute to Marker 7b having been upgraded from Red to Amber. These metrics relate to health assessments for children in care and the % of care leavers aged 19-21 who are in employment, education or training (EET). The marker however remains Amber due to the RAG status of the other metrics within the marker. The consistency of RAG status should be viewed as a success, given it maintains the progression achieved since the start of the reporting year.

¹ Economic growth, People, Internal focus, Children, Communities

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet note the performance and key achievements in Q4 relating to the period January-March 2024.
- 3.2 That Cabinet note that this is the final performance outturn against the current Council Plan 2022-2025. A new Council Plan is in development and will have a new performance framework to begin reporting following Council ratification in January.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1. A three-year Council Plan for 2022-25 was approved by Council and published in May 2022.
- 4.2. The Council Plan sets out 5 areas of focus (EPICC), 10 outcomes and 20 markers of success to assess performance and progress in delivery of the plan.
- 4.3. The quarterly reports present the Council directorates' performance in relation to the agreed areas of focus (see priorities and outcomes below)

Council Plan priorities

- 4.4 The five Council Plan priorities and ten outcomes are:

Priorities:	Outcomes:
Economic: enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest, and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy
People: encourage our residents to lead active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home
	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life
Internal focus: Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use
	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are

	recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring
Children: have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well	7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere
Communities: empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities

- 4.5. The Council is currently developing a new council plan that is aligned to our We are Walsall 2040 ambitions and articulates our continuing improvement journey. The Council Plan will go out for summer consultation and will be approved at November Cabinet and January Council. A new performance framework will be developed to identify useful KPIs/metrics against the high-level objectives. These will be designed to ensure we can benchmark against regional neighbours and 'most similar' authorities (demographically similar to Walsall). Whilst the new framework and measures are being developed and implemented, we will continue to track progress against the existing measures.
- 4.6. The table below shows overall progress against targets across all quarters of the year. Below this table there is a breakdown of performance, based on RAG allocations, for each Key Area of Focus throughout the year.

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	Q4 Data correct as of 21/06/24*
Green	9	9	11	11	Met/exceeded expectations
Amber	11	11	9	9	MoS Close/On Track to achieving expectations
Red	-	-	-	-	Did not achieve expectations
Grey	-	-	-	-	Data not yet available/provided (as of 21/06/24)

- 4.7. There have been slight variations in RAG status across the report throughout the year, with performance showing marginal improvement towards the latter stages of the financial year.
- 4.8. The allocation of RAG status across the 5 Key Areas of Focus throughout the year is stated below.

4.9. **Economic**

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4
Green	3	3	2	2
Amber	1	1	2	2
Red	0	0	0	0

There has been a slight negative direction of travel in relation to this key area of focus. Marker 2a, focusing on apprenticeships and training, has downgraded from Green in the first half of the year to Amber in the second half of the year. This is due to a decrease in the uptake rates of apprenticeships across the borough. Marker 2b has remained Amber as unemployment in Walsall has been consistently above the national and regional average throughout the period. Both Marker 1a and Marker 1b have maintained Green status throughout the financial year.

4.10 **People**

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4
Green	4	4	4	4
Amber	0	0	0	0
Red	0	0	0	0

There has been consistency across this Key Area of Focus throughout the entire year with every Marker of Success achieving a Green RAG rating across all quarters.

4.11 **Internal**

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4
Green	4	1	1	1
Amber	0	3	3	3
Red	0	0	0	0

The upgrade of Marker 5a from Amber to Green, which focuses on customer satisfaction, has been the only change throughout the period. In the last year there have been significant upgrades across customer service operations, including the rollout of automated surveys.

4.12 **Children**

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4
Green	2	1	1	1
Amber	2	3	3	3
Red	0	0	0	0

This area has demonstrated a slight decrease from the start of the year, with Marker 8b downgraded from Green to Amber between Q1 and Q2. This was

due to an increase in the number of children entering care. The marker with the greatest progression throughout the year in this area is 7b, which focuses on support for children with additional needs. This marker had several individual metrics that were identified as Red at earlier points during the year but later showed improvement – these metrics were around health assessments for children in care and the % of care leavers aged 19-21 who are in employment, education or training (EET). In quarter 4 there are no metrics marked as Red.

4.13 **Communities**

Performance	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4
Green	0	0	3	3
Amber	4	4	1	1
Red	0	0	0	0

The expanding influence of Team Walsall and the work of VCS Locality Leads has led to Marker 9a being upgraded from Amber to Green in the second half of the year. Marker 9b, relating to trust across communities, improved from Amber to Green in the second half of the year. The % of household waste by disposal method has maintained stability throughout the year, but with recycling rates still below the national and regional average, and as such the Marker has remained Amber. Finally, having been rated Amber at the start of the year, Marker 10b – the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour – has ended the year rated as Green. A key activity in recent quarters has been the increasing use of fixed penalty notices to target litter and fly tipping offences, with numbers consistently high across the last few quarters.

Risk management

- 4.14. There are no direct risks related to this report.

Financial implications

- 4.18. One of the key metrics used in MoS 6A relates to the value for money provided by council services. The commentary on this MoS includes a summary of the budget position and spend for that quarter.

Legal implications

- 4.19. The Best Value Duty stipulates that, as a council, we must always “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement”. The scrutiny of our performance on a quarterly basis helps ensure we adhere to this statutory guidance.

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. Achieving the Outcomes published will contribute significantly to having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and staff.

Reducing Inequalities

4.23. The implications for, and ability to, reducing inequalities were considered when agreeing the Measures of Success for the Council Plan.

4.24. Every successful Outcome will contribute to reducing inequalities in the Borough and supporting residents and staff to maximise their potential.

Staffing implications

4.25. There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

Climate Impact

4.26. There are no direct implications to climate impact from this report.

5 Decide

This is the final quarterly report against the Markers of Success that are set out in the current 2022-25 Council Plan. The development of a revised quarterly performance reporting process, aligned to the new 2025-28 Council Plan, is currently in development alongside the work on the Council Plan itself. A baseline performance report against this updated framework of corporate priorities will be prepared and brought to the Cabinet meeting following Council's approval of the 2025-28 Council Plan. Quarterly reports will subsequently be brought to Cabinet.

6 Respond

Progress on Markers of Success is currently monitored through the Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis prior to submission to Cabinet. This process will remain the same for the new 2025-28 Council Plan, once approved.

7 Review

This is the final update relating to the 2022-25 Council Plan. Updates against the priorities in the new Council Plan will continue to be collated and presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis once approved.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Q4 Markers of Success Dashboard

Appendix 2 Q4 Key Achievements

Appendix 3 Q4 Identified Interdependencies

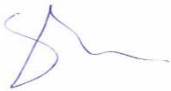
Background papers

None

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Signed

Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director
Resources and Transformation

9th July 2024



Signed

Councillor Perry
Leader of the Council

9th July 2024

Council Plan Performance Reporting: Q4 23/24

	Outcome	Marker of Success	Lead Director(s)	Performance / Data owner contacts	Baseline measures - updated for 23/24	Qtr1: Apr - Jun 2023	Qtr2: Jul - Sep 2023	Qtr3: Oct- Dec 2023	Qtr4: Jan- Mar 2024	Q4 Comment / Progress achieved to date
ECONOMY	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	1a. Better connectivity, improved reliability and well maintained transport networks creating an environment where businesses are supported to thrive and grow	Philippa Venables	Richard Pohribnyj	Highways condition: free from defects (Source: Safety Inspections Monitor, Tarmac Contract KPI, UTC Dashboard)	G	G	G	G	Highway Safety Inspections completed on time = 100% Highway emergency defects attended to within 1 hour = 100%
				Simon Tranter (Dan Turner)	Business Engagements (Source: Evolutive CRM & Walsall Works Records)	G	G	G	G	For Q4 23/24 Walsall Council's Business Growth Team recorded 110 business engagements, or, as per UKSPF definitions, number of enterprises receiving non-financial support or number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready. This led to an overall figure of 228 non-financial business assists for 23/24 – excluding the figures for the Walsall Start-Up Programme, delivered by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.
		1b. Regenerating the borough to support places where people are proud to live and work, delivering affordable homes and attracting inward investment	Philippa Venables	Simon Tranter (Joel Maybury)	Progress on the delivery of a range of development projects that will provide new housing and employment floorspace and enhance the town and district centres with a total package of investment of circa £500m	G	G	G	G	SPARK: Remediation of the site is progressing and is on programme to complete in August 2024. Now being jointly marketed to potential occupiers. Willenhall Framework: The development partner procurement process has resulted in the selection of Keepmoat Homes Ltd while the Outline Planning Application has received delegated approval and the council's Cabinet has approved a CPO to support land assembly Walsall Gateway: Strategic Delivery Plan has been completed for this residential opportunity area located to the north of the town centre which can provide circa 500 new homes while work is also progressing on a plan for the Station Quarter area. Connected Gateway: the council is delivering the project supported by £11.4m from the government's FHSP with detailed design work now underway. Town Deal: Projects are progressing as part of both Walsall and Bloxwich Town Deals with £23.5m awarded to each area respectively - including transformation of The Guildhall in Walsall town centre into a Creative Industries Centre and the conversion of the former Bloxwich Post Office into a digital access centre ('Launchpad'). Levelling Up Partnership: Work is ongoing with government to establish a Levelling Up Partnership which could be allocated up to £20m in funding. Engagement with DLUHC took place during Q4. Darlaston has been awarded £20million over 10 years as part of the government's Long Term Plan for Towns programme – details are being confirmed.
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	2a. Provide access to education, apprenticeships and training to improve productivity and skills	Philippa Venables	Simon Tranter (Jane Kaur Gill)	Walsall Apprentices on programme (BC Data Cube, April 2021)	G	G	A	A	Apprenticeship rates diminished post pandemic and with more recent funded activities such as Kickstart diverting people into other support measures. Data is always lagged by approximately 6 months and we have no further new year data since the full academic data for 2022/23 was released. WMCA have committed to re-enthuse a Black Country focus on apprenticeships and T levels, and Walsall Works has been promoting the new Pathway 2 Apprenticeship (P2A) scheme to currently active and all known eligible clients on our CRM. Walsall Employment and Skills Board agreed key actions – the majority are now completed: •Obtain a fuller breakdown of data across business sectors to identify changes in key sectors and job roles. •Deliver marketing campaigns that could influence and encourage under-represented groups to participate more in apprenticeships ie BAMEs, Older People. •Obtain any further breakdown on Apprenticeship numbers ie BAME across ethnicity type, levels and sectors •Use data to target key groups to support marketing of Apprenticeship ie faith groups, com groups •Targeted communications plan for unrepresented groups esp during Apprenticeship week •Deliver an Apprenticeship event in February 2024 •Engage with the multi cultural apprenticeship awards to improve profile of BAME Apps •Utilise the business growth team to promote business grants to achieve job creation via apprenticeships •Promotion of path 2 apprenticeships promotion when launched in 2024 •Construction into work campaign (SWAP) which could lead learners to apprenticeship roles •Relationships building with health care providers to offer bespoke recruitment sessions, notwithstanding the use and promotion of apprenticeships

			Philippa Venables	Simon Tranter (Jane Kaur Gill)	Walsall Universal Credit Claimant Data (ONS, March 2021)	A	A	A	A	<p>Q4 focus on working with other support organisations to help participants to reduce their barriers to work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Childcare Choices from the Council's Families Information Service •DWP re changes in benefits to claimants caring for children •Afghan Refugee Centre •DORCAS, A Non-Profit Organisation supporting girls and women at risk of female genital mutilation •Early Help Steering Group – to drive up referrals from the Family Hubs •'Time to Talk' session at Manor Farm CA •Connected Communities <p>Assessing Bloxwich and Walsall Towns Deal Community Capital Grants and Bloxwich Launchpad – from an employment and skills perspective.</p>
PEOPLE	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	3a. People are supported to build on their strengths and those in their communities to sustain their independence.	Jennie Pugh	Anne Doyle / Tina James/Paul Calder/Donna Gyde/Jan Milligan	Our success will be measured by the percentage of people approaching the Council for support who are successfully redirected to universally accessible community-based support to meet their needs	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •988 people signposted to universally accessible community support services such as pendant alarm services, physiotherapy services, GPs and housing providers. This is a 12% decrease on the 1,118 people who were signposted during Q4 2022/23, set against a 4.9% decrease in the number of contacts received during the period, compared to the equivalent point in 2022/23. •183 of 258 (70.9%) of people not previously in receipt of long-term support who exited reablement services made no further request for ongoing support. The percentage of people not requiring support post-reablement has shown an upward trend during the first three quarters of the year: 61.6% at the end of Q1 2023/24, 67.3% at the end of Q2 2023/24 and 78.4% at the end of Q3 2023/24. However, this positive trend did not persist in the final quarter of the year with a decrease compared to Q4 of 2022/23 which stood at 78% •120 carers received support in the form of advice and guidance or replacement care. The number of carers in receipt of support has seen a 3.5% increase from 116 during Q4 2022/23
		3b. People feel safe in their home and community	Jennie Pugh	Anne Doyle /Tina James/Paul Calder/Donna Gyde/Jan Milligan	Our success will be measured by the percentage of people who report as part of their annual review, that assessed need delivered through community based services is contributing to feeling safe	G	G	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Of the 148 safeguarding enquiries concluded during the period where a risk was identified, the risk was removed or reduced in 123 (83.1%) cases. A decrease on 86.2% in Q3 of 2023/24 •2651 people were supported to live independently at home during the quarter via the provision of a long-term community-based service, a 0.5% increase on the 2638 people supported during quarter 3. and a 6% increase on the 2499 people supported during Q4 of 2022/23. <p>The components of services being received during Q4 2023/24 (please note a single person may receive more than one component)</p> <p>1602 received directly commissioned domiciliary care, (compared to 1570 during Q3)</p> <p>727 were supported via a direct payment, (compared to 722 during Q3)</p> <p>305 were residing in a directly commissioned supported living placement, (compared to 295 during Q3)</p> <p>127 in extra care housing (compared to 122 in Q3)</p> <p>68 in a shared lives placement (compared to 66 during Q3)</p>
	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life	4a. People know how to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing and get timely support for this, where required.	Nadia Inglis	Claire Heath	Our success will be measured by outputs from the Healthy Lifestyle single wellbeing service, and aligned to development of the wider Wellbeing Outcomes Framework	G	G	G	G	<p>In Q4, activity within the POP wellbeing service included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •935 visits to the POP website •324 visits to the hubs from new and existing service users •193 service users accessing the hubs (new and existing) •54 new service users accessing the hubs •47 of the new service users reside in deciles of deprivation 1-3
		4b. People can access timely social care support and reablement to prevent a hospital admission or facilitate a timely discharge	Jennie Pugh	Kerrie Thorne/Matt White/Jan Milligan	Success will be measured by a reduction in emergency admissions and delayed transfers of care attributable to ASC - linked to ICS and reablement figures	G	G	G	G	<p>During Q4 – 229 people were referred as hospital avoidance cases</p> <p>The Outcomes for people referred for hospital avoidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •58 people were Pathway 0 - signposted to other services and did not require care or reablement (44 people during Q3) •163 people were admitted to Pathway 1 for reablement (145 people during Q3) •5 people were admitted to Pathway 2 into a bed-based rehab facility (6 people during Q3) •3 people were admitted to Pathway 3 for ongoing health and social care assessments in a bed-based facility (5 people during Q3) <p>During Q4 – 972 people were referred as hospital discharge cases onto Pathway 1 (Reablement in the community) (886 people during Q3)</p> <p>Total = 1201 people discharged via community reablement, or admission avoided in Q4 of 23/24 (compared to 1087 in Q3)</p>

INTERNAL	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	5a. Services will be accessible and easy to use with improved customer satisfaction	Elise Hopkins	Michelle Dudson/Michael Taylor	Infrastructure and tools to monitor on-going customer satisfaction are still under development. These are anticipated to be available when the right resources are in the Hub, and when we have introduced the additional functionality available in the Genesis Cloud system (and later on CRM). A quarterly progress update will be provided. Proxy	A	G	G	G	This quarter we went live with the automated option of sending customer surveys, this means customers are automatically asked to opt in or out of a survey. Prior to the April 2024 go live of survey automation we relied on agents manually sending surveys which meant we were not getting a balanced view of customer satisfaction. As expected both our customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Score (NPS) have dropped since automation of surveys went live
		5b. Customers and partners report that they would recommend working with us in the future	Elise Hopkins		Annual proxy measures to be used - - sustaining/improving on performance from 21/22 - % of adult social care users reporting that the services they receive make them feel safer (85.8%) - % of people raising safeguarding alerts reporting that they achieved their desired outcome (88.8%)	A	A	A	A	"This measure has been reported against in previous quarters based on an annual survey response, which captured the views of only a small subset of service users in adult social care. Policy & Strategy Unit are currently focussing on the effectiveness of the measures within the Internal Focus priority as part of their work to overhaul the Corporate Performance Reporting process and ensure it supports performance-driven conversations. This will include understanding the Key Performance Indicators used elsewhere (for example to monitor our Proud Promises and our Enabling and Support Services workstream). Replacement measures will be explored as a priority and introduced in future quarters. "
	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	6a. Services will provide value for money measured through delivery of outcomes within agreed resources	Shaun Darcy	Vicky Buckley/Jacky Matthews/nic Rickhauss	Delivering on our 3 Proud Promise measures: • Improved outcomes and customer experience • Improved employee satisfaction and engagement • Improved service efficiency and performance (deliver within approved budget and deliver Proud savings)	A	A	A	A	Outturn 2023/24 - the council ended the 2023/24 financial year with an £856k underspend after mitigating actions were taken during the year and some one-off income and a negotiation with the ICB on the debt to be paid was agreed. The qtr1 position for 2024/25 is still being put together and an initial view of the in-year pressures and risks to savings delivery will be presented to CMT at the end of Jun
		6b. Services are trusted and customer focused measured through staff satisfaction/ engagement scores.	Michele Leith	Michele Leith	Enabling Communication and Culture (ECC) work stream has been re-scoped, the themes in the new plan to be delivered include: - Updating the action plan developed after the staff survey - A pay and reward review - Workforce Strategy - Organisation Development Strategy - Culture Stocktake: where are we now?	A	A	A	A	Presented ECC with a clear structure and work programme for the workstream which has been agreed. - Training of cohort 1 of the new change champions is complete and recruitment for cohort 2 is underway. - 1st cohort of Accelerating Diverse Talent Programme has been completed to great acclaim. - A development programme for Equality Champions is being developed. - Organisation Development Strategy and Workforce Strategy have been agreed
	CHILDREN	7a. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive	Colleen Male	Dave Trask/Viki Elliot-King	% of children who attend good and outstanding schools	G	A	A	A	86.6% of children attended good and outstanding schools as at 15/03/2024 - 0.1 pts decrease compared to last quarter.
					% of 16, 17 and 18 year olds who are not in Education, Employment and Training	G	A	G	G	As at March 2024 – 2.3% of young people are NEET, and 2.2% of young people are 'unknown', giving a total official figure of 4.5% - <i>direction of travel – improved since September 2023.</i>
					% of children excluded from school (fixed term and permanent)	A	A	A	A	Figures from 1st Jan to 31st Mar 2024. Primary Suspensions – 0.32% (86) minor change from 0.30% (85) when compared to Jan - Mar 2023-24 academic year - <i>direction of travel - no change.</i> Permanent – 0.00% (1) a decrease when compared to Jan - Mar 2023-24 academic year 0.01% (3) - <i>direction of travel - decreasing.</i> Secondary Suspensions – 8.60% (1628) an increase from 3.87% (733) when compared to Jan - Mar 2023-24 academic year - <i>direction of travel – increasing.</i> Permanent – 0.07% (14) minor change from 0.08% (16) when compared to Jan - Mar 2023-24 academic year - <i>direction of travel – no change.</i> Please note: More schools are sharing their suspension data with Walsall now, so comparisons to last year's data should be treated with caution as suspensions were most likely higher than what was shared with the LA.
					% of Care Leavers who are in Education, Employment and Training	A	A	R	A	53.9% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in EET at the end of Mar 24 – <i>direction of travel – increasing from Q3 (53.3%)</i>
		7b. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.	Colleen Male	Dave Trask/Viki Elliot-King	% of EHC assessments completed within 20 weeks	R	G	G	G	Between 1st January 2022 and 31st December 2022 - 8.5% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks. However, significant work has been undertaken in this area to improve and streamline the processes for undertaking EHC plans and the timeliness of decisions to assess and decisions to issue have improved significantly, as has the timeliness of advices received from health and other professionals during the assessment. The backlog has been cleared and timeliness of new assessments entering the system is improving. As a result of this 58.8% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks in the calendar year 2023 - <i>direction of travel is improving.</i> For the 2024 calendar year (Jan - Mar) 69% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks.

COMMUNITIES					% of children in care with up to date health assessment	A	R	R	A	As at the end of Mar 2024, 85.4% of children who have been in care for a continuous 12 months have had an up to date health assessment – <i>direction of travel – increasing on Q3 (82.1%)</i> .
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	8a. Services and support is responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.	Colleen Male	Dave Trask/Viki Elliot-King	% of social care contacts which lead to a referral	A	A	A	A	24.2% of requests for social care contacts led to a referral between 01/04/2023 and 31/03/2024 - <i>direction of travel - decreasing from Q3 (24.4%)</i> , however performance is in line with other Local Authorities.
					% of social care assessments completed within 45 days	G	G	G	G	87.9% of social care assessments were completed within 45 days from 1/4/23 to 31/3/24 <i>this is a slight increase on the Q323/24) figure out-turn of 87.7% but remains stable and was significantly higher than statistical neighbours (78.7%), regional comparators (81.2%) and national out-turn (82.5%) 2022-23 outturns.</i>
		8b. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.	Colleen Male	Dave Trask/Viki Elliot-King	% of children and young people who contribute to their CP conferences	G	G	G	G	94.4% of children and young people who contribute to their CP conferences between 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024 – <i>direction of travel – decreasing from Q3 but within parameters of good performance</i>
					% of children and young people who contribute to their LAC review	G	G	G	G	96.0% of children and young people in care contributed to their review between 01/04/23 – 31/03/24 – <i>direction of travel – increasing on Q3</i>
					Number / Rate per 10,000 of children entering care	G	A	A	A	201 or 29.4 per 10,000 age 0-17 of children entered care between 01/04/23 – 31/03/24 - <i>direction of travel – decreasing slightly from Q3 23/24 (205)</i>
					Number of first time entrants into the criminal justice system	A	A	A	A	57 young people were first time entrants into the criminal justice system between 01/04/23 and 31/03/2024 – <i>direction of travel – decreased from 59 last quarter</i>
	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	9a. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities	Paul Gordon	Paul Gordon (Irena Hergottova)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of volunteering opportunities (One Walsall) - Development of improved and joint volunteering infrastructure (PG designing through new tender) - Number of new groups involved in voluntary sector (One Walsall) - Qualitative feedback 	A	A	G	G	Team Walsall is growing their membership having recently recruited Rycroft Community Hub to represent the energy/carbon footprint area. The 3rd meeting is planned for June 2024 where the group will focus on the Healthy Levelling Up Fund. Resilient Communities VCS Locality Leads holding Monthly drop-in sessions within the localities including within library buildings to enable easier access for groups to gain support. The South Locality which encompasses most diverse communities of Walsall, holds two weekly drop-ins in the Central Library, in addition to their permanent locations within Palfrey and Caldmore. Training was provided to VCS sector on 'Volunteers and the Law'. This was well received and will be repeated. Increase in new grass root VCS organisation being set up in Walsall and supported to become legally registered. The VCS Locality Leads have completed mapping of youth provision within their locality which will be used in collaboration with the Children and Young People Alliance.
		9b. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough	Paul Gordon	Paul Gordon (Irena Hergottova)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of CVS (excluding One Walsall) in anchor organisation committees - Qualitative feedback 	A	A	G	G	During Q4 Nash Dom continued to help 138 Europeans who qualify for full status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to upgrade from pre settled status. Plasma of Hope CIC received support to provide their services weekly from Central Library. Between 1 February – 30 March 2024, 58 individual and families that are living with sickle cell disease and are facing other socio-economic issues received support from the group. Simple Steps Training CIC also continue to receive support from Spaces for All running successful Skills for Life (formerly known as ESOL) sessions (stats reported annually). Skills for Life sessions running in Nash Dom have established a successful provision for Ukrainian families affected by war. During Q4 Walsall for All and the Community, Equality and Cohesion team worked closely with VCS and gathered feedback around Integration Consultation. Approximately 750 residents participated in the consultation and shared their views/experiences of living in Walsall. Main consultation methods included: one-to-one interviews with key individuals and service users; Questions/surveys posted through Walsall Facebook groups; targeted focus groups with community members and service users including faith, majority and minority groups of Walsall; event attendance – focused interviews. Findings will support a strategic plan for Walsall For All and feed into the Council's EDI Strategy and Council Plan.

CON	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities	10a. The Borough's streets are clean, green and welcoming, with more waste recycled and less going to landfill	Kathryn Moreton	Joanne Cockbill	% of household waste by disposal method (reuse/recycle/composting; energy recovery; landfilled)	A	A	A	A	<p>In 2023/24, 32.3% of household waste was sent for recycling, re-use, or composting, below the target of 55% by 2025. Generally, recycling performance has declined since 2019/20. In 2023/24, 8.5% of municipal waste collected was sent to landfill. This meets the 2035 target of <10% but the trend since 2019/20 shows an increase in the percentage of waste landfilled.</p> <p>Most of the non-recyclable waste collected is sent for incineration with energy recovery at the Staffordshire W2R facility, which Walsall own in partnership with other local authorities. There is a maximum amount of waste each partner authority can send to the facility. Currently Walsall collects more than can be sent to W2R and the additional waste must be landfilled. As our waste arisings increase, and the percentage recycled decreases, the amount sent to landfill will increase.</p> <p>Key achievements in 2023/24 include completing the designs for the new Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre in Middlemore Lane and awarding the contract to build the facility to Morgan Sindall. Construction started in April 2024. The new facilities will enable more materials to be segregated for recycling</p>
		10b. People feel safe in their local area and anti-social behaviour and crime – particularly environmental crime is reduced	Kathryn Moreton	Joanne Cockbill / Dave Elrington	<p>-How safe or unsafe do you feel when out and about in your local area during the day (77%) and after dark (26%) - baseline from WAW 2040 Residents' Survey.</p> <p>- Number/size/ type of Flytipping incidents dealt with by Clean and Green (Flycapture)</p>	A	A	G	G	<p>Number of complaints are relatively stable for community protection type issues for example 600 Fly tipping complaints in 2023 compared to 618 in the same period 2022. 4617 Community Protection complaints Q1 to Q3 in 2022, 4775 Community Protection complaints- Q1-Q3 in 2023.</p> <p>FPN rates are high with 359 litter FPNs being issued in the first three quarters with approximately 60% payment rate and 15 fly tipping FPNs being issued with 100% payment rate.</p> <p>Continued joint working with Police has led to weekly visits to and raids on shops selling illicit tobacco and vapes . TEMPORARY</p>

	Outcomes:	Markers of Success:	Key Achievements:
E	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	1a. Better connectivity, improved reliability and well maintained transport networks creating an environment where businesses are supported to thrive and grow	<p>Key achievements are certainly hitting the target number of business assists as outlined in our UKSPF delivery contract.</p> <p>The team also has a strong pipeline of business working through their EOI forms for our SME Productivity Grant, as well as an uptick in referrals to the local SME Energy Audit service, part of the regional Decarbonisation & Net Zero Programme, delivered by Pro Enviro as part of the Black Country Industrial Cluster.</p> <p>Other key achievements include the successful launch and delivery of the Start Up Walsall programme, delivered by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, which saw 21 pre and start-up businesses take advantage of the fully funded, classroom and 1-1 based programme.</p> <p>Q4 23/24 also saw the successful relaunch of the Walsall Borough Economic Forum (WBEF) with attendance from Jhoots Pharmacy, Walsall FC, ASSA ABLOY, WHG, Black Country Chamber, Enoch Evans LLP and RAC.</p> <p>Progress was also made on the legal aspects of the soon to be commissioned Walsall High Growth Business Programme, aimed at supporting SMEs with high growth potential across the borough.</p>
		1b. Regenerating the borough to support places where people are proud to live and work, delivering affordable homes and attracting inward investment	<p>The Employment and Skills Team continue to deliver support predominantly to unemployed residents through a number of employability programmes, namely our own Walsall Works, Multiply and Restart programmes, and this is in an aim to reduce the volume of unemployed who are universal benefit claimants (both actively seeking work and those who are employed in low income). In the current year these programmes are resourced through the CWG and SPF grant funded programmes which have specific outcomes and outputs. These include the measure of outcomes for specific demographic groups, claimants on certain benefit types, specialist support offered, progression to work, support to training, signposting to health services, job starts and sustainable employment.</p> <p>The steady flow of job listings means that there is opportunity for all and particularly benefit claimants, although it is noted there may be some mis-matches between jobs available, entry qualification requirements and the skills levels and aspiration of jobseekers. The ratio of jobs to those actively seeking is currently 1:2 as we currently have 4,772 unique job listings the month of February vs 9600 benefit claimants. This suggests there is competition for work if all those seeking had the required qualifications and skills. However, the reality is that those people seeking work maybe competing with more qualified and experienced applicants from both within and outside the borough.</p> <p>During the quarter period, the main focus was to utilise the vacancies secured through employer engagement and those advertised through jobsites. Whilst job outcomes were achieved, its difficult to understand why the claimant count is still rising and especially for those who are young claimants so we can only assume the ongoing migration of existing claimants on other benefit types to the Universal Credit intensive work regime is continuous. We are very pro-active in aiming to match our participants to relevant and local opportunities. We actively promote our weekly Job Clubs than run every Tuesday and Thursday. Sectors that we have targeted include job growth opportunities locally: Manufacturing, Construction, Health and Social Care, Warehousing, Logistics, Retail, Hospitality. Regular group information sessions are held to promote and on average at least 10 attendees will participate ever week. This quarter we conducted some specific collaborative recruitment and group information sessions with employer and partners for the job roles set out below.</p> <p>Collaborative working with Employers and Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Staffs Water / Echo Managed Services - Customer Service Advisor vacancies • Opus People Solutions – Various Walsall Council vacancies • Grantrow Recruitment – Various vacancies • Starting Point Recruitment – Various vacancies

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps 2 Work EE Team / Sharing of vacancies • Serco EE Team (Restart) - One Stop vacancies – Warehouse / Retail • Sharing of opportunities with DWP <p>Events & Group Information Sessions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing Job Clubs running every Tuesday and Thursday at Lichfield Street Hub Library. a) School hour friendly opportunities b) Single parents d) Seasonal fallouts / rapid response 2. Supported with X 4 South Staffs Water / Echo Managed Services Customer Service Assessment Days – 11/01/24, 08/02/24, 21/03/24 & 04/04/24. 3. Willenhall Chart Jobs Fair - 24/01/24 4. Waste Operative, Grounds Maintenance & Environmental Driver information Session with Opus People Solutions - 06/02/24 5. Apprenticeships Event - 08/02/24 6. Walsall Works Expo - 14/03/24 7. WHG / NHS Recruitment and Awareness Event 26/03/24
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	2a. Provide access to education, apprenticeships and training to improve productivity and skills	<p>The E&S Team supported various activities during apprenticeship week in February 2024 and held their own event on 14 February. Over 200 Walsall customers interested in finding out and applying for Apprenticeships attended this bespoke event and exhibitors presented on the day included Fairlawns Hotel, Amey, McGinley, Walsall College, HS2, DWP, West Midlands Police, Lauren Broxton Design and WM Jobs. There was a real buzz to the event where more than 150 applications/expressions of interest were made as well as on-line application details shared.</p> <p>The Councils commitment to apprenticeships is long standing and aligns to the pledge made when Walsall Works was launched in 2012 to tackle youth unemployed by creating new apprenticeships through a subsidised grant. The Council also understands the challenge we have in growing the skills levels of the working age population in the borough, and how a well designed apprenticeship can help to improve skills for the young person and also how this could improve workforce development and skills.</p> <p>During this year, local authorities lobbied with the WMCA to any residual SPF funding to be spent on targeting support to young people. During this year a new pre-apprenticeship programme was designed in consultation with young people and partner organisations in order to support young people who may not have the entry requirements of a full apprenticeship. The new Paths 2 Apprenticeship programme is being piloted and delivered by three commissioned training providers in the borough who will identify employer who are willing to employ new apprentices. The Path 2 Apprenticeship programme will offer 4-16 weeks of pre-apprenticeship support to prepare young people aged 19-29 year olds into a full apprenticeship paying national minimum rates of pay.</p> <p>The rationale for supporting and lobbying for this intervention was that Walsall still presents with a high volume of working age adults not possessing any qualifications, and shows there are nearly 17,000 (9%) adults having no qualifications. At a higher level, only 27% of adults hold a higher Level 4 qualification. The biggest skills deficit is still around digital skills with 56% of working adults not having the right skills fit for work. This coupled with sector shortages in construction, retail, health care, logistics and professional services, creates the ideal opportunity to actively promote the creation of apprenticeships for adults to employers to help people without the relevant professional skills to enter the workforce and develop the skills whilst working.</p>

			Walsall Council continues to lead by example through its internal apprenticeship programme, Endless Possibilities, and the authority won the prestigious 'Large Employer of the Year' in a number of recent awards
		2b. Reducing unemployment through collaborative working with employers and partners	<p>We have further strengthened our relationship with statutory and partner organisations in an endeavour to engage our disengaged unemployed residents and to provide a more co-ordinated employment offer to residents. We are seeing a healthy number of referrals from the DWP, The Link, Family Hubs, Community Organisations and direct referrals from our marketing on social media and website.</p> <p>However, despite our collaboration there is no progress on reduction of the unemployment figures over the last quarter and over the year we note the increase of 220 young claimants, whilst the number of older claimants has decreased ie 50+ age group.</p> <p>Pre-pandemic rates in January 2020, show the number of claimants was only 7,970 people so whilst all our collaboration locally and government funding / investment in various new interventions post EU funding ceasing, we have not yet recovered back to these lower rates of unemployment. However this is typical to the rest of the country who are also not fully recovered and external factors have played a significant contribution to poor economic growth and high unemployment ie Ukraine war, energy and fuel prices, inflation, rising interest rates.</p> <p>Full migration of claimants from legacy benefits to Universal Credit will complete in Walsall by March 2025, so its likely the Universal Credit claimants actively seeking employment will continue to slightly increase, rather than decrease. From March 2025, we will be able to assess the true difference our joint collaboration is having.</p> <p>When comparing our rates to the UK average currently at 3.9%, Walsall has 5.6% of its working age unemployed which is slightly above the regional average of 5.1%. The heat map of the Walsall borough below shows the highest concentration of jobseekers residing in St Mathews, Birchills Leamore, and Pleck areas.</p>
P	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	3a. People are supported to build on their strengths and those in their communities to maintain and/or maximise their independence.	<p>The mental health team has successfully supported people to step down from long stay hospitals and rehab settings, enabling them to live more independently and access opportunities for employment and education. The team has received positive feedback from clients and their families, who have reported improved quality of life, well-being, and recovery. The team has demonstrated effective partnership working with the Black Country Foundation Trust and other agencies, ensuring coordinated and holistic care for clients with complex needs. The team is seeking to expand its staff and skill mix, to meet the growing and varied needs of its client group. The team is exploring new ways of working with partners, such as co-location, joint training, and shared protocols, to enhance communication and coordination. The four locality teams achieved 100% of their annual reviews by the end of Q4, ensuring that care needs are effectively met in the least restrictive way and involving the person in the decision making process.</p> <p>Quarter 4 saw the implementation of the Bridgit Care free winter trial to support unpaid carers via the provision of support and self-help resources. To date, 2,358 Walsall carers have accessed the app with 393 carer interactions, with the majority accessing information and guidance around benefits guidance, carers allowance information, carers assessment information, the provision of care, being a carer for a family member and dementia care.</p> <p>Quarter 4 has seen a number of positive achievements and areas of growth that has built on the ongoing work that has been undertaken throughout the year within Provider Services, with 114 referrals coming into the service during Q4.</p>

			<p>Employment: - this service has seen an increase in the number of people being supported, which has resulted in a further 22 during quarter 4 achieving their goals in terms of securing employment, returning to education, or gaining further skills through training. Many of these positive outcomes have been as a result of some excellent partnership working involving colleges, employers and colleagues across the service and wider directorates.</p> <p>Outreach: - continues to support young people from 16 years old upwards with the wraparound support available from across Provider Services. Quarter 4 has seen an increase in the number of referrals received into the service from Childrens and Adults services, with real progress being made on outcome focussed support. The service continues to expand with the majority of staff now having completed an accredited independent travel training qualification. This enables the team to support those individuals preparing for adulthood and older, to travel independently.</p> <p>Embedding of Brain in Hand's digital support is continuing across the directorate to support people to become more independent with decision making, anxiety, memory difficulties and managing unexpected situations. The team can receive referrals from any practitioner within the council where the person is 14 and over and may benefit from the use of this assistive technology.</p> <p>The just checking monitoring system has seen a significant rise during the year with demand doubling compared to the previous year. The shared lives scheme also continues to develop with the acquisition of a new carer joining the scheme in quarter 4.</p> <p>The commissioning process has begun engaging with providers on fees and market sustainability as part of a three-year plan. So far, approximately 70% of in-borough providers have been involved, and the engagement is ongoing. The goal is to agree on a fee structure that eliminates the need for fee variations while supporting the development of a diverse, sustainable, and high-quality sector.</p>
		3b. People feel safe in their home and community	<p>DoLS waiting list continues to reduce, despite increasing demand, with the backlog by the end of quarter 4 standing at 216. This is 36% decrease on the 336 outstanding at the end of 2022/23.</p> <p>The four locality teams achieved 100% of their annual reviews by the end of Q4, ensuring that care needs are effectively met in the least restrictive way and involving the person in the decision making process.</p> <p>The learning disability team have moved to a named worker model of support to promote an individualised person centred approach that emphasises continuity and familiarity.</p> <p>The introduction of a bimonthly audit cycle is seeing a good return of cases.</p> <p>Relationships and jointly worked updates to funding policies and procedures are being strengthened with ICB partners. Use of new tool "Access Adam" will facilitate less time being taken up in disputes and help to prevent escalation.</p>
		4a. People know how to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing and get timely support for this, where required.	N/a

Cabinet Report - Corporate Plan: Markers of Success Q4 23/24

Appendix 2

Q4 Key Achievements:



	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life	4b. People can access timely social care support and reablement to prevent a hospital admission or facilitate a timely discharge	<p>The 95% target for people remaining in the community following an admission intervention was achieved due to the low number of bedded placements (Pathway 2 & 3) made. Significant increase (from 1,201 to 1,087) in the discharge to the community number.</p> <p>It should be noted that 5 of the people were placed into rehabilitation (Pathway 2) beds with the potential to be discharged home following this intervention. We need to implement a reporting mechanism around whether people who are placed into Pathway 2 beds are subsequently discharged home. It is likely that the Pathway 3 (1.75%) placements will result in long term care home placements.</p>
I	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	5a. Services will be accessible and easy to use with improved customer satisfaction	Customer Satisfaction January to March 2024 91.74% and NPS 76. Both our NPS and CSAT is consistently above industry standards.
		5b. Customers and partners report that they would recommend working with us in the future	This measure is being re-evaluated and therefore has no feedback
	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	6a. Services will provide value for money measured through delivery of outcomes within agreed resources	Identification of mitigating actions has been a key success.
		6b. Services are trusted and customer focused measured through staff satisfaction/ engagement scores.	N/a
C	7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	7a. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive	<p>Walsall is now broadly inline with the national average for the % of schools which have been judged to be good or better. We aim to be better than national when our RI/inadequate schools are inspected in line with Ofsted's inspection schedule.</p> <p>Establishment of Walsall Learning Alliance 'exclusions' sub group with a focus on 'belonging' to give strategic oversight for suspensions, exclusions and wider inclusion to support pupils remaining in schools and settings.</p>
		7b. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.	<p>There is now a dedicated NEET worker within the virtual school that is focussing on a specific young people that have been identified for being able to find work, education or training.</p> <p>The NAG group oversees and tracks all of the young people that are NEET and so we know which young people that we need to target.</p> <p>Walsall works and the virtual school do drop ins from the hub and are based within the service twice a week.</p> <p>DWP are also joining this group and will be offering additional support at the hub one day a week.</p> <p>There are monthly meetings in place with Group Managers and the CIC health nurse to ensure that there is monitoring of the health assessments and that all children in care have an up-to-date health assessment.</p> <p>Decision Making Processes for EHC Assessments are more robust and effective leading to more timely decisions at 6 and 16 weeks.</p>
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere		
		8a. Services and support is responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these	he Right Help, Right Time threshold guidance has been revised and launched in February 2024. The revised guidance focuses on having the right conversations and identifying and

		needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.	<p>responding to need at the earliest opportunity. The RHRT guidance aligns with the supporting families programme priorities and has a stronger emphasis on earliest help and single agency support where this is appropriate, meaning more children, young people and their families should receive the right help at the earliest time.</p> <p>The percentage of social work Child and Family Assessments remains consistent and above regional and national comparators. As a service, we have retained a level of stability and been able to support and develop staff to provide the foundations for practice in this area.</p>
		8b. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.	<p>The Family Safeguarding Model has now been established for over 3.5 years, and provides a high level of support to families where children are on statutory Child in Need and Child Protection Plans to avoid children coming into care. This continues to have a positive impact in respect of the proportion of children entering into care being from families open due to safeguarding concerns within the family - there will always be a need for this for some children, but we seek to ensure the most support possible has been provided to avoid this.</p> <p>Walsall's implementation of the Family Safeguarding Model has been the subject of a peer review from the Centre for Family Safeguarding, and received significant positive feedback. We have seen an decrease in the duration of care over the past two quarters, indicating that pre proceedings have been effective and meaning that permanency is secured for children who cannot remain with their families promptly.</p> <p>Walsall's Participation Strategy is focused on making sure children's and young people's voices are heard, and this is reflected in the data on Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care Reviews.</p> <p>There has been an increase in children participation in child protection conference and child in care reviews.</p>
C	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	9a. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities	Walsall Community Network (WCN) were successful in their bid to manage the Wider Determinants of Health Funds from the Black Country Healthcare NHS during 23/24 and 24/25. Following a successful away day, WCN members discussed their future priorities and will be looking at the marketing and promotion of the sector. Walsall Libraries are currently developing a proposal for increasing partnership with diverse VCS/communities in running Walsall libraries and book exchanges. A number of best practice visits are taking place with Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Suffolk, who are the national leaders in transforming the libraries. A conference is planned for 7 October, focused on innovation and 'Reimagining Library spaces'.
		9b. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough	The key priorities were identified through the consultation which will be included in an action plan and Cohesion strategy codesigned with Walsall for All and published alongside the Council's EDI Strategy. Race Equality Task Force (WMCA) awarded a Walsall based organisation, AAINA, a substantial grant to support women who are furthest from job market into work. Walsall has received positive feedback from WMCA for their involvement in a number of initiatives, such as Race Equality Skills Week in Feb 24 and promoting leadership roles (magistrates, governors, trustees) in ethnically diverse communities) with University of

			Birmingham Exchange. All Race Equality Task force work is monitored via Walsall for All. Other important achievements include setting up of the Walsall Community Resilience Network (for Contest) and increasing diversity of the International Women's Day celebrations with many inter-cultural events across the borough.
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities	10a. The Borough's streets are clean, green and welcoming, with more waste recycled and less going to landfill	Key achievements in 2023/24 include completing the designs for the new Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre in Middlemore Lane and awarding the contract to build the facility to Morgan Sindall. Construction started in April 2024. The new facilities will enable more materials to be segregated for recycling.
		10b. People feel safe in their local area and anti-social behaviour and crime – particularly environmental crime is reduced	N/a

	Outcomes:	Markers of Success:	Interdependencies:
ECONOMIC - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses	1. Supporting a dynamic, resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place	1a. Better connectivity, improved reliability and well maintained transport networks creating an environment where businesses are supported to thrive and grow	<p>Regional collaboration is key for the team to achieve targets, but we have also been working closely with the private sector, reaching contractual agreements with Black Country Chamber, Oxford Innovation and Best of Walsall, to provide seamless referral mechanisms into our programmes of support.</p>
		1b. Regenerating the borough to support places where people are proud to live and work, delivering affordable homes and attracting inward investment	<p>Whilst we have some mainstream Council funding currently, the majority of the team is currently resourced through income generated through payment by results or grant funding, so we rely on the ability to continue to perform against agreed targets to enable our grant givers and funders to continue to invest in our services. During Q4, the team will plan for delivery beyond March 2025, when our main grant funded programmes come to an end. The team will present plans for a re-designed Employment and Skills Service which is resourced wholly through mainstream funding, therefore less reliant on grant and payment by results income.</p> <p>On grant funded programmes, we rely heavily on our relationship with sub-contracted partners such as those outlined above in our Multiply programme. On other grant funded programmes, such as Commonwealth Games Legacy, we rely on maintaining the robust relationships that we have built up with our co-locations hosts who have offered us space, rooms and facilities on a 'pro-bono' basis as they feel that our services provide their service users with the support needed to create a more cohesive community.</p> <p>Over many years we have built good relationships with other key government agencies and funded partners (Chamber, FE Colleges, DWP, Housing, Health, Local Authority) all whom are represented on the Walsall Employment and Skills Board. As a partnership, we commit to continued collaboration and working together to share opportunities which will help to motivate and engage our residents to improve their economic and health wellbeing.</p> <p>We require continuous business and developer interest in the regeneration of the borough to support the place to be attractive for new investment and for business re-locations or expansions. This will create an environment where people are proud to live and work in the borough. We rely on our colleagues managing physical regeneration schemes to create opportunities to engage in direct dialogue with developers and agents to introduce the principles and benefits of social value commitment with clear interventions being agreed to create opportunity for businesses and people ie Planning, Towns Deals, Regeneration Schemes and new Commercial Contracts.</p> <p>We are already in regular contact with some major contractors and partners to support the achievement of social value commitments, and we have regular conversations with HBD on opportunities being created on the new SPARK (Phoenix 10 site). Future meetings will focus on their ability to bring forward work experience programmes, work placements through Works+, new apprenticeship roles and groundworker roles, both in the current remediation phase and moving forward in development of the bespoke commercial units on this prestigious site.</p> <p>We will rely on building relationships with other major developers and contractors, to maximise on the potential to draw out goodwill on social economic and environmental schemes. We will contact Keepmoat on the Willenhall housing development and Kier on the Darlaston and Willenhall train station redevelopment schemes. We are also keen to engage with the commercial contractors for the new recycling centres in Bloxwich and Aldridge.</p>

			<p>We have good links with procurement colleagues to ensure that each new tender is assessed on social value with a weighting of 5% minimum to 15% maximum and assessment will ensure that contractors include tangible KPIs and employment related outcomes.</p>
	2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy	2a. Provide access to education, apprenticeships and training to improve productivity and skills	<p>We rely on our continued working relationships with apprenticeship providers, such as Walsall College, are largely responsible for sourcing, marketing and filling apprenticeship vacancies. We receive their weekly vacancy lists which are promoted to our participants, but we do find that some providers are largely recruiting young people via school led careers fairs or through progression of their existing apprenticeship pool. There are still very few new apprenticeship starts which attract older adults, but we note that apprenticeship levy paying employers are attracting their existing older workforce to take up higher apprenticeship, especially in key disciplines ie social work, programme management, leadership and management at a diploma and degree level programmes.</p> <p>We have also noted that the Council is actively utilising the levy funding, to create apprenticeships in social work, finance and programme management which will help progress the existing workforce into professional and technical roles. Therefore, participation and pathway for older adults is generally via existing workforce, and in particular with large employers through their apprenticeship levy programme as this is a key government driver.</p> <p>The introduction by Government on a number of new pre-employment training programmes such as Sector Work Academy Programmes, Bootcamps, Skills for Work, L3 entitlements and flexibility to access a great variety to Level 3 skills courses, may have contributed to the reduction and the appetite to create apprenticeships from employers as they can still secure funding to upskill their workforce from other more flexible programmes</p>
		2b. Reducing unemployment through collaborative working with employers and partners	<p>There are high levels of interdependencies with the migration of legacy benefit claimants to the new Universal Credit system and this is ongoing until March 2025. This may correlate to the ongoing fluctuation and increases in UC benefit numbers, which may not necessarily show that the numbers have increased due to new benefit claims.</p> <p>Collaboration is key to success, as Statutory government funded organisations are largely responsible for improvements required to achieve this marker of success ie DWP, JC+ Offices, FE Colleges and Training Providers. We continue to work closely with them to ensure that their resources and funding are directed appropriately to address the needs of our participants and will work with them to improve the quality of local offer ie provision for our unemployed and low skilled residents.</p> <p>The E&S Service have presented a transformation business case for sustainable Council revenue funding to prevent an over reliance on external grants to sustain the service. This revenue funding will reduce the risk associated with short term grant funding which results in staff losses and uncertainty of our services to our target group. It is vital that we continue to resource employability services and continuously improve employment and training opportunities for our residents especially those who are young people across Walsall and those who are over 50's as these target groups have larger than average levels of benefit claimants. There is need for more opportunities for continued collaboration with the voluntary sector to play their part in employability support and we have recently gone out to tender for delivery of our Year 3 Multiply programme, targeted employed people on low income improve how they manage their personal finance and</p>

Cabinet Report - Corporate Plan: Markers of Success Q4

Appendix 3

Q3 Identified Interdependencies:

			<p>improve their financial literacy. We will update progress on these new activities in the next report.</p> <p>Through our Walsall Works community based delivery we are now embedded within Family Hubs and Community Centres to ensure the community sector has a part to play with improving economic outcomes for residents, especially those who are economically inactive. Our intention of the year is to further grow our presence in our most deprived ward areas and we have already scoped where we intend introducing pop up Job Clubs.</p> <p>Our work with the private sector is outlined above and we will work with employers, developers, contractors, investors, agents and housing providers to create and bring forward employment opportunities for local people.</p> <p>We require support from our internal services ie Customer Contact Centre and our Connected Services to identify residents who require support and who should be directed to our employability services.</p>
PEOPLE - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing	3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home	3a. People are supported to build on their strengths and those in their communities to maintain and/or maximise their independence.	Continuous Improvement programme workstreams/3Ps
		3b. People feel safe in their home and community	Continuous Improvement programme workstreams/ 3Ps (people process and practice) involving Adult Social Care, Commissioning, ICBs, Safeguarding Partnerships. CXC having robust processes and a capable workforce to ensure that people at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect are referred to Access promptly.
	4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life	4a. People know how to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing and get timely support for this, where required.	No
		4b. People can access timely social care support and reablement to prevent a hospital admission or facilitate a timely discharge	Interdependency with Walsall Healthcare Trust (Frail Elderly Service, Care Navigation, Virtual Wards and Rapid Response) and Intermediate Care service
INTERNAL FOCUS - Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable	5. We get things right, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use	5a. Services will be accessible and easy to use with improved customer satisfaction	None
		5b. Customers and partners report that they would recommend working with us in the future	n/a
	6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring	6a. Services will provide value for money measured through delivery of outcomes within agreed resources	n/a
		6b. Services are trusted and customer focused measured through staff satisfaction/ engagement scores.	N/a
CHILDREN Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy,	7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they	7a. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive/a	Schools working in collaborations have better outcomes than those schools working in isolation.

Cabinet Report - Corporate Plan: Markers of Success Q4

Appendix 3

Q3 Identified Interdependencies:

healthy and learning well	are achieving their potential	7b. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.	<p>There is a need for a collaborative approach with training providers, employment advice, colleges and the virtual school. There is a wider corporate parenting agenda in respect of working with business in the local area to widen the apprenticeships offered to care experienced young people.</p> <p>There is an interdependency with health input in regards to health assessments.</p> <p>Timeliness is dependent on Health, Social Care and Education colleagues providing advice in a timely manner.</p>
	8. Children grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	8a. Services and support is responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.	<p>Partnership understanding and application of threshold to ensure the right help and support is offered to children, young people and families at the right time.</p> <p>Partnership working relationships to engage with partners and gather information.</p>
		8b. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.	There is interdependency across children services, the partnership and the wider community and voluntary sector.
COMMUNITIES - Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community.	9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	9a. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities	Support from the Policy and Strategy Team, Children and Young People Alliance.
		9b. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough	<p>There are inter-dependencies with Safer Borough Partnership (hate crime, black communities policing, resilience forum/contest)</p> <p>There are also inter-dependencies with Walsall Together and Community Advisors.</p>
	10. People are proud of their vibrant town, districts and communities	10a. The Borough's streets are clean, green and welcoming, with more waste recycled and less going to landfill	Reliant on improving residents understanding of what can be recycled and putting the correct items in the correct bins.
		10b. People feel safe in their local area and anti-social behaviour and crime – particularly environmental crime is reduced	Partnership working is key to any success both internally and externally with police, social landlords and others to ensure actions are successful short and longer term. Support by elected members and an understanding of priorities and areas of focus which may need to be set aside is also crucial.

Cabinet – July 2024

Productivity Plan

Portfolio: Councillor Perry, Leader

Related portfolios: ☐ All

Service: ☐ Council Wide

Wards: ☐ All

Key decision: ☐ No

Forward plan: ☐ Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The report presents the draft Council Productivity Plan for consideration and approval. The Plan consists of a high-level narrative report that highlights the progress made by the Council in terms of transformation, change, effective use of resources and value for money and outlines some key actions we will undertake as we continue our improvement journey.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Government is reviewing productivity across all sectors and as part of this the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities have asked each Local Authority to produce a short productivity plan to outline what work has already been undertaken and what is planned to ensure increased efficiency, effectiveness and productivity demonstrating value for residents.
- 2.2 DLUHC have provided a list of considerations for Councils in crafting the productivity plan which broadly fall along the key themes of transformation, data, service design and delivery, strategic focus, partnership working and financial sustainability. Walsall Council draft Productivity Plan takes the form of an LGA style 'lite' assessment document with an accompanying action plan to help inform DLUHC of our progress to date and plans as a continuously improving Council.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet note and celebrate the successes highlighted by the Productivity Plan.
- 3.2. That Cabinet approve the Council's Productivity Plan and note the plans and work already underway to continue the Council's improvement journey and continue to deliver value for money in the delivery of effective services.

4. Report detail - know

- 4.1 In February 2024 during the announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement 24/25 the Government announced a new requirement for Local Authorities to produce Productivity plans as part of its efforts to return the local government sector to sustainability.
- 4.2 The announcement outlined that plans must be produced/published by July 2024 and must be agreed by Council Leaders and members and published on local authority websites, together with updates on progress.
- 4.3 Plans are asked to cover four primary areas:
- Transformation of services to make better use of resources.
 - Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.
 - Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and staff Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion programmes – this does not include programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter- extremism; and
 - Barriers preventing activity that government can help to reduce or remove.
- 4.4 Alongside this ask, the Government is establishing a new productivity review panel, made up of sector experts including the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association. It is expected this panel will review plans from each Local Authority and make recommendations.
- 4.5 During mid-April the Council received further correspondence from DLUHC clarifying the ask of the Councils and specifying for plans to be approved by Members and submitted to DLUHC by 19 July 2024. In the letter Councils were provided several prompts and considerations to help guide the crafting of the response/productivity plan.
- 4.6 The considerations for Councils broadly fall within the following themes:
- Transformation journey to date, current and plans
 - Data and technology usage to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Service design and delivery plans to increase efficiency effectiveness and value for money.
 - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
 - Strategic plans and partnership working.
- 4.7 DLUHC have not specified a template or specific approach for these productivity plans and are allowing each Council to create its own flexible approach to outlining its narrative and plans.
- 4.8 Discussion with other municipal Local Authorities has supported the approach that this Council is taking- crafting a short and sharp 'lite' narrative of our productivity and improvement journey alongside a supporting action plan. Within the narrative document live weblinks will be supplied to publicly available strategies, reports, and documentation to provide a clear supporting evidence base to validate our improvement journey.

- 4.9 The Walsall Council narrative outlines many of the key achievements noted in our recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Self-Assessment document. It contains a succinct summary of progress against our Proud Transformation journey, our focus on customer, move towards being a digital Council and our insight led and resident focussed approach through our 2040 ambitions. The supporting action plan is an articulation of work we have already underway or planned to continue this improvement journey.
- 4.10 The Government have outlined their expectation that we publish a regular update against our Productivity Plan. As such it is anticipated that a six-monthly update will be produced for Cabinet and published on the Council's website.

Risk management

- 4.11 There are no significant risks associated with the Productivity Plan. The Government anticipates that these may be used as a reference to gauge Council Performance and to inform future funding settlements. As such it is imperative that the Council outlines the huge strides we have made and ongoing trajectory of improvement.

Financial implications

- 4.12 There are no direct financial implications related to the report.

Legal implications

- 4.13 There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

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

Property implications

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

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.16 There are no direct implications in this report.

Staffing implications

- 4.17 There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.18 Our EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) activities highlighted in the Productivity Plan align to Our Council Plan and We are Walsall 2040 borough plan which both have reducing inequalities and addressing social justice at their heart.

Climate Change

- 4.19 There are no direct implications.

Consultation

- 4.20 The report highlights the fantastic engagement and consultation work carried out by the Council in recent years, most notably in the development of We are Walsall 2040.
- 4.21 There is no public consultation required in the production of the Council Productivity Plan. It articulates previous, current, and already planned work to continue the Council's improvement journey.

5. Decide

The report presents a draft Productivity Plan for consideration and approval by Cabinet prior to submission to DLUHC for review.

6. Respond

The Council is already undertaking programmes and activities that support productivity, improvement, and value for money. This existing and planned work will continue under current Governance arrangements. It is anticipated that following a review of all plans OFLOG may engage with Councils specifying further focus for improvement.

7. Review

It is currently anticipated that the Productivity Plan actions will be reviewed six monthly and an update published in line with Government expectations.

Background papers – Annexes:

Appendix 1 Productivity Plan Narrative
Appendix 2 Productivity Plan

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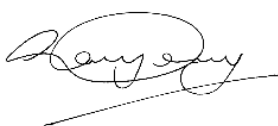
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Signed

Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director
Resources and Transformation
9th July 2024



Councillor Perry
Leader of the Council

9th July 2024

Walsall Council Productivity Plan

June 2023



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

Productivity Plan Walsall Council Narrative

Introduction

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council is on an improvement journey. In recent years we have modernised our workforce, skills, and ways of working, bringing in talented leadership, ensuring innovation and change and have seen great progress in partnership working across the Borough. This note sets out the strategic context that the Council is currently operating within, highlighting Walsall's continued focus on place and improvement. Like other local authorities, we are seeing increased demand for services at a time of greater financial challenge. Despite this, we continue to deliver outcomes, and have the right leadership, structures, skills, and tools in place to generate innovative solutions at pace. This journey has been recognised through a successful LGA Corporate peer review in 2023¹ but also through winning the LGC award for 2024 Most improved Council and recognition for our Senior Leadership team from this years' MJ awards.

Transformation journey

Back in 2018, an LGA peer review described us as a well-respected council with leadership that was highly regarded regionally but noted the need for clear strategic and financial direction. With £78m of savings to find over the next five years, 10% of our entire budget, we needed to fundamentally change to develop more responsive, digitally driven services while engaging communities and staff in the process. Our solution was the Proud Programme. In October 2018, Walsall's Cabinet approved the establishment of the Proud Programme – a whole Council programme to achieve better outcomes and customer experience, increase staff satisfaction and engagement and improve service efficiency and performance. The transformation focused on changing our ways of thinking, behaviours, and how we get things done. The Council engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as a strategic partner to provide transformation expertise, resource capacity and skills transfer to support delivery. This programme ran from 2019 to 2022 and through it the Council has delivered significant transformation, and has matured its internal capability and capacity to deliver ongoing effective organisational change². Proud delivered significant improvements in customer and employee satisfaction, financial efficiency, and organisational capability.

Customer outcomes

- Customer satisfaction rose from 67% to 73% and 97% of telephone calls are now answered within 49 seconds at the Customer experience centre.
- Introduction of Customer Relationship Management system for residents in March 22 providing online access to request, book and pay for a range of 'Clean and Green' services.
- A new telephony system and web site introduced to make access to information and services easier and clearer for residents.
- 50% channel shift in customer behaviour to digital self-service with over 25k My Walsall accounts setup and over 50K online transactions to date.
- Introduction of 'Walsall Connected' a partnership of 29 local (21 run by local community partners) 'Walsall Connected' centres that bring together staff and volunteers from different agencies. These centres offer residents' access to advice and support in a convenient local location and help them to self-serve digitally giving them transferrable digital skills³. Over 14K customers have been supported in the first 18 months and 86.3% enquiries solved at first contact².

Staff satisfaction

- Our recent staff survey showed improvement in levels of employee engagement (from 57% in 2017 to 64% in 2021), staff participation (from 44% in 2021 to 53% in 2023) and organisational satisfaction. The percentage of staff who feel the council is going in the right direction is up by 20 points, the % staff who think they have a positive future at the council – up by 17 points, the % staff who say their manager encourages ideas – up by 16 points.

¹ [Independent review highlights good progress | Walsall Council](#)

² [March 2024 Cabinet report Proud Transformation](#)

³ [Walsall Connected - get help to get online | Walsall Council](#)

⁴ [Walsall connected year one annual report](#)

- Introduction of Council wide values and behaviours and a values driven recruitment process.
- Our workforce strategy (2022) ensuring we will have the right staff with the skills to deliver⁵.
- Our award winning (Public Services People Managers Association awards, Best Organisational Development Programme 2024) Connected working model provides managers the tools, training and coaching to improve performance, culture, and staff development. ^(O&J)
- Our new Operating Model for IT service provision providing more strategic delivery of digital developments and technologies to support staff and service delivery.

Service efficiency and performance.

- A total of £53.76m of savings has been delivered as at the end of 2023/24. Taking into account a carry-forward of £5.13m of yet to be realised savings from 2023/24 along with £20.10m of new savings in 2024/25, this equates to a total of £78.99m savings since inception.
- Introduction of One Source system to automate and improve processes around financial, procurement and people management.
- Migration of IT systems to cloud based system, paperless record keeping, migration to Microsoft 365 to enable flexible and more efficient ways of working.
- Council 'Hub' services of Business Insights, Policy & Strategy and Communications created and introduced to encourage insight driven decision making and effective engagement and communication with residents.
- Development of commercialisation and income generation workstream on track to generate circa £10 M end of this year.
- Children's services are now 'good' having been rated 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in 2017. Inspectors said our investment has facilitated 'exceptional practice.'
- Walsall Right 4 Children shows our ambition to make sure that the right children and young people receive the right help at the right time. The programme has developed a model of locality working across children's services. Our WR4C strategy sets out our how we will aim to meet the needs of every child.
- Business Design Board established, new principles and ways of working established to limit layers and spans and ensure alignment of organisational design across the Council.

Our next phase of transformation

Proud officially ended in 2022 but it is embedded a culture of continuous improvement and a mature mechanism for delivering change. The Council is currently defining the next stages of Walsall's transformation journey which will be aligned to a refreshed Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Outlook and Directorate and Service area delivery plans. Walsall is developing a data driven approach to service redesign to address consistent and effective customer engagement (i.e. the Front Door into the Council) and maintain appropriate service delivery. To effectively carry out full end-to-end design, we are moving into the back-office area and designing automated digital processes that require little or no intervention. This provides the opportunity to make the biggest impact on service design and efficiencies. Small scale service improvement work continues through existing leadership arrangements whilst large scale transformation will be focussed on addressing areas of demand/cost pressures within services e.g. Adults & Childrens Social Care and ensuring that the Council is well equipped to handle regeneration of the borough at pace. The Council has been working with IMPOWER⁶ to support our review of priorities for transformation within Adults and Childrens and we will be pressing ahead with plans to ensure we continue to deliver the outcomes needed to support the most vulnerable in Walsall.

Our established PMO is maturing well and is well placed to transition into a Corporate PMO centre of excellence to support a revised set of transformation programmes. Work is underway to review the capacity of change and project resources across the Council as well as looking at lessons learned and a review of Council officer Governance to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity as we continue our transformation plans.

Our 2040 vision and new Council Plan

During 2022 organisations across Walsall came together with the Council to carry out a shared engagement programme with over 10,000 residents, staff, and businesses across the borough to understand aspirations, concerns, and priorities for the next 20 years. Engagement feedback was used

⁵ [Walsall Council - Workforce Strategy](#)

⁶ [IMPOWER | Better outcomes cost less](#)

to craft a strategy 'We are Walsall 2040' for all partners creating a shared vision and signal of intent, highlighting our aim to be the most improved borough in the region – a vibrant place where people are proud to live and residents in all neighbourhoods have the same life chances^{7 8}.

The Council is now developing a new Council Plan linked to the vision and ambitions of We are Walsall 2040. It will articulate to the public what the Council will do over the next 3-5 years to ensure delivery against the place ambitions and how we will continue our improvement journey. We are reviewing and updating our approach to Corporate Performance- developing a dashboard approach that is more user friendly, accessible, and efficient for services, Members, and the public to understand. We are reviewing the metrics and KPIs to ensure we can benchmark locally and nationally as appropriate and that we include internal assurance measures as well as place-based measures that matter to our residents.

Strategic partnerships

Linked to the We are Walsall 2040 outcomes and shared deliverables we have carried out a review of our strategic and thematic partnerships across the Borough. We are amending focus of the strategic partnership (CEX level) to ensure shared accountability, focus on delivery and joined up effective working at pace. We have introduced a new Economic partnership working with anchor businesses and SMEs across the borough to support implementation of our Economic Strategy⁹ and are developing a Net Zero Climate Change forum to support continued sustainable growth and our local/regional Net Zero 2041 aspirations.

Improving wellbeing and preventative approaches underpin our borough vision, through creating healthy, safe and prosperous places for our communities (via healthy regeneration, work to preserve and increase use of our green spaces, and community safety work), alongside providing support at the earliest opportunity. We are continuing to recover our health, care and education services following the COVID-19 pandemic, with increasing numbers of families being seen by our health visiting services, improved OFSTED ratings for our schools, reductions in teenage conceptions (290 in 2001, compared with 101 in 2021) and smoking prevalence (22% in 2011, compared to 14% in 2022) and an increasing numbers of adults being seen in our alcohol and drug treatment services. We have a vibrant community and voluntary sector, who provide a range of preventative activities across the lifecourse. Our local place-based health and care partnership Walsall Together continues to be nationally recognised¹⁰ having been shortlisted for this year's 2024 LGC awards¹¹. The partnership has shifted to outcomes focussed commissioning and contracting through population health budgets. Walsall Together has kept more people out of hospital, improved discharge pathways, enhanced care homes support, boosted workforce recruitment and retention, and bolstered community resilience. It has helped to narrow a health and care funding gap that had been predicted to reach £172m by 2022-23.

Walsall Council has been an active constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority since its inception. We are currently engaged in supporting the next phase of deeper devolution supporting development of a place-based strategy for Walsall to align regional funding and strategic drivers to our local 2040 ambitions and priorities. Our Leader and Members play an active role within the WMCA (West Midlands Combined Authority), and officers have an effective working relationship across the other 6 LAs. Walsall officers have provided feedback to shape the governance review workstream at the WMCA and believe there are efficiencies of process and ways of working to be made to ensure more effective regional delivery.

We work closely across the region and nationally with key partners to leverage in public and private sector investment to the borough. With our partners we have built a £1.5B regeneration programme that is well underway to transform the borough-£500M has been delivered (4,000 jobs and 2,000 homes) and £500M expected in next phase providing a further 2,000 jobs and 1,000 homes. Our Walsall Town Centre Masterplan aims to improve Walsall as a destination, respond to economic challenges and shape our economy for the future. We want to see a significant increase in residents living in the town, with Walsall's excellent public transport links making it easy to access work and leisure in the borough and beyond. Through the Connected Gateway project, £36.1m is being invested to transform

⁷ December 2022 Cabinet [Report](#) We are Walsall Engagement [findings](#)

⁸ June 2023 [Cabinet Report, strategy](#) and consultation findings

⁹ [Walsall's plan for a better future for everyone | Walsall Council](#)

¹⁰ [Walsall Together wins HSJ the Place Based Partnership and Integrated Care: Walsall Together](#)

¹¹ [Walsall Together shortlisted for national award - Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust](#)

the rail station and links to the two bus interchanges with enhanced public realm, supported by £11.4m from the Future High Streets Fund and council match funding of £24.63m. The Connected Gateway project should complete by 2026 and will transform the public realm in Park Street, at the heart of Walsall Town Centre. Bloxwich Town Centre is also seeing major investment, with its £21.3m Town Deal investment helping to establish an Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre, Green Bloxwich enhancing parks and open spaces and a programme of housing delivery, aimed at removing derelict sites and providing much needed training in construction for residents.

EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)

Walsall is a diverse borough with 29% of residents from non-White backgrounds¹². This diversity means the borough encompasses a broad tapestry of heritages, ethnicities, faiths, and communities. The Council is committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) to ensure we can adequately provide to the communities we serve. The Council has a clear governance structure and processes in place to ensure EDI is embedded at the heart of our service design, delivery, workforce, and strategic decision-making. Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) is the key governance group of senior officers and oversees the Council requirements against the Equality Act, Public Sector Equality Duty, and Human Rights Act. We recently reviewed the Terms of Reference to strengthen roles and responsibilities and ensure customer and service representation and voice from across the Council. CEG has a clear remit in taking key decisions around EDI and ensuring it is embedded even further in service design, commissioning, and delivery. Underneath CEG the Workforce Equalities Board oversees workforce and HR related EDI issues. Supporting this our staff networks cover a range of equality characteristics and enable staff to have a voice, discuss workforce issues, concerns and promote opportunities, learning and diversity. Our 52 EDI Champions play a crucial role within/across services to advocate for EDI issues, share knowledge and learning and act as ambassadors for the agenda. The Council also provides mandatory annual EDI training for managers and staff to ensure everyone working at Walsall Council understands the importance of an inclusive and diverse workforce and services to meet our community's needs.

Walsall for All¹³ is our community cohesion and integration partnership within Walsall. In March 2018, the government published the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, which recognised that tailored local integration plans are needed to tackle issues that are specific to each area. Walsall was chosen as one of five areas to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at that time. The partnership has delivered fantastic initiatives around integration and cohesion to ensure all communities are supported, get along well, and can live good lives in Walsall. Recently the partnership has carried out extensive engagement to determine its new focus and strategy to continue to build and ensure effective integration across the borough.

Data

Walsall Council use data to inform local reporting and decision-making, along with the completion of statutory data returns. Data is made available to residents through facilities including the Walsall Insight website¹⁴. The Council is developing a Data and insights strategy and designing an approach to master data management, which will focus on key service areas where data is captured. This strategy aims to ensure data is accurate and clean and can be reliably used and aggregated to deliver accurate reporting. We will exploit learning and experience in areas where data is being cleansed and use the existing technology infrastructure to develop a data warehouse with the aim of developing a single view of our customer. Furthermore, we are undertaking work to pursue opportunities to automate and integrate and have a strong working partnership with Microsoft. Our data needs to be standardised and linked across systems to allow us to get the best output from predictive analytics and AI (Artificial Intelligence). The introduction of AI within the Microsoft technology stack will allow workflow and processing efficiencies. More specific uses of AI (e.g. Power Bi and Co-pilot) could significantly increase capacity and reduce development/implementation timescales. The Council has taken the decision to invest to save by funding 300 AI Microsoft licences and investing staff time and effort into 'Change Agents' training so that we utilise the investment in MS products, tools, and staff effectively and embrace AI. The organisation is also assessing the feasibility of more wide-ranging uses of AI, such as monitoring the needs of social care service users to predict demand and target resources effectively.

¹² [Diversity - Walsall Insight \(walsallintelligence.org.uk\)](https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk)

¹³ [Integration | Walsall for All | England](#)

Alongside this we are working with TVI (Triple Value Impact) to identify and scope further digital/technology opportunities for service redesign or intervention. These include using AI to automate SARs and FOIs, using data to target marketing at suitable foster families, using data science to identify children at risk of going into care and using data to pre-empt those likely to need care and intervention enabling preventative support.

We frequently share data with local partners, regional partners and nationally as part of statutory or other organised returns. This provides the opportunity to benchmark our data with similar sized local authorities so that we can reflect and learn. Data and engagement information forms the basis behind many of our thematic and operational partnership discussions leading to prioritisation of resource and service design and delivery e.g. development of joint needs assessments (JSNA¹⁴, Domestic abuse NA¹⁵), evaluations and performance process reviews.

Budget and assurance

The council is proud of its robust financial planning and management and has a good record of accomplishment of delivering services in challenging times whilst delivering a balanced budget. Our medium-term financial framework and four-year plan ensures that financial health and sustainability are at the forefront of thinking in budget setting. The council has delivered c.£255m of savings from 2010/11 to 2022/23. Our strategy involves funding activity that supports the Council Plan/2040 aspirations and/or with a clear business case 'invest to save' model. We currently have savings of £25m built into our 2024/25 budget position and this has been the broad trend of savings to be achieved in previous years and the trend moving forward. These savings have been identified from our transformation programme, capitalising on income generating activities, leveraging our assets with an increasingly commercial approach to cost recovery and managing, monitoring, and reducing third party spend.

In October 2023, the Council changed external agency staff providers, following a comprehensive review of agency provision/service, spend and value for money. Opus People Solutions were appointed as the Council's new agency provider, via the West Midlands Employer framework. Opus' charge rates are lower than those of our previous provider, providing us with an immediate and accumulative reduction in agency fees. Additionally, Opus can resource into all roles (including exec/senior roles) across the Council, thereby reducing our immediate and future reliance on use of alternative agencies, who charge a higher margin.

Our new Commercial strategy (in development) will outline our approach to generating income and engendering a more entrepreneurial and commercial culture in the organisation. We are focussing on commercial culture, commercial process, and commercial programmes. To date over recent years, we have delivered circa £15M in commercial income and are developing a clear pipeline of opportunities for the future. We are continually working toward becoming an efficient council and are at the start of embedding outcomes-based budgeting in how we work, fostering a greater look at performance and insight to drive budget decision making aligned with our aims from our Council Plan. As part of this process, we have undertaken comprehensive budget consultation and been cited as an area of particularly good practice by our External Auditors in relation to actively seeking the views of the local community and other stakeholders.

This year we have started our budget setting process even earlier to identify cross cutting and collaborative opportunities that deliver outcomes. Although Adults and Children's services have the largest budgets, they also have the largest demand and inflationary pressures and will be a crucial focus for ongoing transformation. We are reviewing our contracts and our Third party spend Board challenges each contract that comes forward to achieve the best value for money. We have also strengthened our financial and commercial training for budget holders to ensure they understand their accountabilities and are further expanding the use of behavioural science to undertake psychologically informed approaches to service design, processes, and communication to yield better services at reduced cost.

¹⁴ [JSNA - Walsall Insight \(walsallintelligence.org.uk\)](https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk)

¹⁵ <https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2024/01/Walsall-Domestic-Abuse-SNA-December-2023.pdf>

Our approach to financial planning and management has allowed us to invest significantly in the future of the Council and borough- capital investment has been targeted at infrastructure and we have skilfully used our own resources as leverage for wider public funds. We have invested heavily in our IT infrastructure to transform how we work digitally across the council and with our customers and have also invested in properties to convert to council run children's homes due to the escalating costs of care and are exploring opportunities to convert our green waste to energy.

From a governance perspective we have a Council/Cabinet model at Walsall supported by audit and scrutiny committees. To ensure that there is challenge to decisions made by Cabinet, the council established five Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Four relate to specific service functions whilst the fifth, the Scrutiny Overview Committee (SOC), includes the chairs of four other scrutiny committees in its membership and has a strategic oversight of the council's strategic plans and services. In 2021, the council conducted a major review of the councillor Code of Conduct to ensure that the Code was compliant with the LGA Model Code of Conduct following recommendations made by the Committee for Standards in Public Life. We are currently undertaking a review of officer governance to ensure effective adherence to the Council's code of governance.

Opportunities and challenges

As a Council we face significant pressure on our budgets with increased demand across all services most acutely in Children services and Adult Social care with ever more complex needs of our customers and residents. Our Walsall challenges for services include:

- National Fair Cost of Care exercise - uplift additional £5m this year, c£7m next year
- Impact of complex inequalities and social deprivation - Increasing complexity of packages and provider requests
- Impact NHS pressures post pandemic
- Increased demand for housing and temporary accommodation and uncertainty on the future of government grants (RSI and Housing First, Energy Improvements).
- Inequitable distribution of asylum seekers and refugees- pressure on local services
- Foster carer recruitment a challenge nationally
- Childrens Services challenges in SEND referrals, safeguarding and placement sufficiency.
- Freedom to operate and innovate at pace- Local Government has delivered in covid-19 and needs to be supported.
- Staff recruitment and retention across all social care due to market competition.

Our challenges and ask for local government finances:

- **Business rates reset:** Resetting business rates to stabilise council finances in the short term.
- **Additional funding:** Providing additional funding targeted at children's services and homelessness and temporary accommodation, the two most under pressure areas.
- **Full formula grant:** Moving away from business rates to full formula grant. If business rates are to be reformed, they must be detached from local government funding.
- **Dedicated Schools Grant:** Clarity on extension of statutory override past March 2026 to minimise funding uncertainty and impact on LA finances.
- **Independent distribution:** Formula grant being distributed independently is the only way to fairly stabilize the system with the money that is in the system.
- **Sustainable funding:** Delivering sustainable funding for local government by increasing grant funding in real terms, i.e., more money in the system and providing certainty for the system by ensuring that all future local government finance settlements are multi-year and published in suitable time to allow for effective financial planning.
- **Alternative incomes:** Exploring alternative incomes for local government with a basis of equalization.
- **Council tax reform:** Reviewing and reforming council tax and the council tax benefit system.
- **Prevention focus:** As funding has fallen, there has been a reduction in spend on preventative services and a greater focus on reactive, demand-led provision. We would welcome dedicated prevention streams to free up resource and capacity to support prevention initiatives.

1. Budget, service transformation and efficiency

Planned actions

Continue to develop internal corporate expertise in large scale transformation programme management:

- Review lessons learned from Proud transformation programme.
- Review capacity of change and project management resources across the Council to centralise and align.
- Develop capacity management framework to ensure resources are available for transformation initiatives.

Define the next stages and deliverables for Walsall Transformation programme:

- Scope and develop projects to transform children's services.
- Continue to deliver the Adults Continuous improvement programme to transform Adult services.
- Continue to design, consult and implement new Commissioning model for the Council.
- Redesign scope, focus and approach of Customer transformation programme to continue to transform how services are accessed by our residents.
- Continue to implement projects around back-office support transformation.

Finalise and implement our new commercial strategy including development of a clear multi-year pipeline for commercial activities.

Continue to balance our budgets – making circa £19.7 M savings in 2025/26 and a total of £40M over the period 2025/26-2027/28.

- Review contracts through Third Party Spend Board.
- Work with services to identify savings and efficiencies.
- Explore opportunities for shared working and new models.

Use behavioural science insights and approaches to redesign our customer communication and end to end processes to increase customer payments in council tax and adult social care.

Review Council officer governance to generate efficiency and agility of decision making and align with Council Code of Governance

2. Place leadership:

Planned actions

Develop new Walsall Council Plan in 2024 aligned to Borough wide 2040 strategy to articulate what the Council will do against shared ambitions.

- Draft to Cabinet July 2024, public consultation July- September and then approval November 2024 Cabinet and Council

Refresh partnership key deliverables for 2040 Borough strategy and share with residents to ensure effective accountability.

Finalise and implement Children's 2040 strategy and work programme.

- August 2024 Young people conference to launch strategy.

Implement findings of thematic partnership review:

- Support development of new Economic partnership
- Support development of new Climate Change Walsall partnership
- Support Walsall Culture Compact partnership in development of Walsall Culture Strategy
- Review and streamline partnership governance arrangements.

Work in collaboration with West Midlands Combined Authority:

- Support effective WMCA governance review to ensure streamlined and efficient meetings and work programmes.
- Develop Walsall Place Based Strategy to outline Walsall priority for WMCA funding and work programmes.

Deliver large scale regeneration programme for Walsall Town centre, Bloxwich and Darlaston.

3. Data and technology

Planned actions

Finalise our new data and insight strategy and formulate our approach to master data management.

Develop a data warehouse to generate a single view of customer across the Council.

Evaluate Microsoft AI pilot and rollout use of Microsoft Copilot AI technology across the Council.

Work with TVI (Triple Value Impact) to scope and develop projects using data and technology to generate service efficiency and value:

- Using AI to automate Subject Access Requests and FOIs
- Using data to identify foster families.
- Using data science to identify and review children at risk of going into care.
- Using data to identify adults likely to need care.

Continue to implement digital 'change agents' programme to ensure our staff are digitally confident.

4. Workforce and EDI

Planned actions

Continue to implement our new internal governance for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Refresh membership of Corporate Equality Group governance to ensure service and community perspective.

Develop, consult and finalise a Council EDI strategy outlining what our equalities approach is to policy, workforce and community.

Develop a clear work programme for EDI aligned to the Local Government Association framework 'EFLG' and move towards accreditation.

- Map current level of activity against 'developing' and 'achieving' standard and map gaps to ensure we attain overall level of achieving within 2 years.

Continue to support development of internal staff networks to enable staff voice across equality characteristics and for all staff.

Continue to rollout Equality Champions programme to ensure each service area has an Equality lead and support.

Continue to implement our workforce strategy and HR OD plans to ensure we have the right staff and are representative of the communities we serve.

Review the findings of our staff survey to shape ongoing HR work programmes.

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Pre-Audit Outturn 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader - Finance (Lead Portfolio)

Related Portfolio: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the pre-audit revenue and capital outturn position for 2023/24, and financial health indicators for 2023/24.

2. Summary

2.1 *Pre-audit outturn 2023/24*

This report details the overall net revenue pre-audit outturn for 2023/24 which included significant demand and cost pressures, particularly within Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The pre-audit outturn for 2023/24 is £143.30m against a budget of £144.16m resulting in an underspend variance of £856k (0.06% of gross expenditure). This is after applying £4.13m of service mitigating actions and central mitigating actions of £19.95m. This is a positive movement of £794k since last reported to Cabinet on 7 February 2024. The pre-audit capital outturn is a net break-even position, net of carry forwards of £53.54m.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note the pre-audit revenue outturn underspend of £856k, equivalent to 0.06% of gross revenue expenditure after service mitigating actions of £4.13m and central mitigating action of £19.95m. Without mitigating actions being identified the outturn would have been an overspend of £23.22m.
- 3.2 Note the service's position (table 1 and Appendix 1), delivery of savings approved for 2023/24 including the amendments as detailed in section 4.8 to 4.10 and the carry forward of undelivered 2023/24 savings (Appendix 4) to 2024/25 and that 2024/25 savings delivery will be kept under review and progress reported to Cabinet in July.

- 3.3 Note the transfers from and to earmarked reserves as set out in table 2 and Appendix 2.
- 3.4 Note that the opening general reserves balance will be £19.56m as at 1 April 2024.
- 3.5 Note the pre-audit capital outturn is a net break-even position, net of carry forwards of £53.54m (Table 5 and Appendix 5 and 6).
- 3.6 Note and agree the final amendments to the 2023/24 capital programme (since the last update to Cabinet in February 2024), as set out in table 4 in section 4.11 and approve the capital re-profiling from 2023/24 to 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 5 and 6.
- 3.7 Note the financial health indicators for 2023/24 as summarised in Appendix 9.
- 3.8 Note the prudential indicators as set out in section 4.22 to 4.24 and Appendix 10.
- 3.9 Note the performance and demand data at Appendix 7 and 8 in relation to Adult and Children's Social Care Services.

4. Know - Context

- 4.1 Cabinet received regular financial reports to allow it to monitor the financial position of the council and consider plans for corrective action during 2023/24. Maintaining financial stability is a key requirement of the Medium-Term Financial Framework (MTFF). This report contains the pre-audit revenue and capital outturns for 2023/24.

Pre-Audit Revenue Outturn 2023/24

- 4.2 Managers are required to deliver their service targets and improvements within budget. Small variations are normal and not material on a gross revenue budget of £721.68m. The council wide pre-audit net revenue outturn is an underspend of £856k, equivalent to 0.06% of gross revenue expenditure, which is summarised by directorate in table 1 below. Further detail at service level is shown in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Forecast revenue analysis 2023/24 by Directorate – March 2024

Directorate	Net Budget	Year-end forecast prior to transfer to / (from) earmarked reserves	Year-end variance to budget prior to transfer / (From) earmarked reserves	Use of earmarked reserves	Transfer to earmarked reserves	Year-end forecast prior to mitigating actions	Mitigating Actions	Year-end forecast including all mitigating actions	Movement since reported to Cabinet 07.02.2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	76.86	97.37	20.51	(7.86)	2.83	15.48	(2.08)	13.40	0.62
Children's Services									
- Children's and Education	81.70	98.34	16.63	(11.39)	0.93	6.18	(0.42)	5.76	1.16
- Customer Engagement	12.15	13.62	1.47	(1.83)	0.91	0.55	0.00	0.55	(0.64)
Economy, Environment & Communities	45.61	50.55	4.93	(4.94)	0.70	0.69	(1.63)	(0.94)	(1.15)
Resources & Transformation	50.93	52.57	1.65	(5.75)	3.67	(0.44)	0.00	(0.44)	(0.33)
Capital Financing	(15.21)	(23.99)	(8.79)	(0.80)	7.51	(2.08)	0.00	(2.08)	0.00
	252.05	288.45	36.41	-32.58	16.55	20.37	(4.13)	16.24	(0.35)
Central budgets	(107.89)	(100.27)	7.61	(16.67)	11.91	2.85	(19.95)	(17.10)	(0.45)
Total council tax requirement	144.16	188.18	44.02	(49.25)	28.45	23.22	(24.08)	(0.86)	(0.80)

4.3 The previous revenue position reported to Cabinet on 8 February 2024 forecast a small underspend of £62k (as at the December 2023 reporting position). The final position is therefore an improvement on this figure overall. The main service pressures have been widely reported throughout the year with the main variations since December 2023 position reported to Cabinet in February 2024 being:

- Adult Social Care increase of £620k – £340k net increase in existing service user costs, £480k reduced service user contributions, £200k increase in staff/agency costs part offset from a reduction in inflow/attrition (£160k), release of Omicron funding (£130k) and (£100k) decrease in contract costs.
- Childrens' Services increase of £1.16m – reduction in children in care demand (£430k), use of grants to fund staffing costs (£400k), increased demand and increase costs within home to school transport £1.53m, increase in legal fees £100k, increase in recruitment and retention unachieved benefit £140k and changes to the use of dedicated schools grant following a national review resulting in a pressure of £330k.
- Economy, Environment and Communities – net reduction of £1.15m, mainly from additional income from the waste to recycling contract (£995k), planning services (£149k) and active living centres (£256k) part offset by additional under recovery of cremation income £380k.
- Resources and Transformation (£329k) – net reduction in staffing / agency across the directorate (£528k), additional rental income (£163k) and additional funding within finance (£135k) partly offset by additional maintenance costs £249k, reduction in grant income £178k and inflationary increases in food costs for school meals.
- Central (non-service specific) budgets – increase in underspend of £450k mainly due to a business rates retention levy refund from DHLUC.

Earmarked Reserves

4.4 The year-end forecast includes the use of earmarked reserves of £42.43m and transfers to earmarked reserves of £28.45m. These are shown at Appendix 2. There is also a movement to useable reserves relating to Dedicated schools grant (DSG) of (£6.87m).

Earmarked reserves are created for specific purposes. These are all planned to be used, although the period over which they are to be used and the profiling of that use may vary within the MTFO period. This results in projected closing earmarked reserves of £174.77m as shown in Table 2.

Of the £42.43m use of reserves £15.53m were used as mitigating actions in year to manage demand and cost of living pressures and delays to savings, £7.15m were grants received in advance, £4.16m for Proud projects and £2.54m to cover children's demand pressures. The full breakdown is shown in Table 2 below and by reserve in Appendix 2.

Of the £28.45m of transfers to reserves £3.10m relates to anticipated cost pressures (cost of living and social care demand), £6.56m for council liabilities (mediation and business rates retention) and £4.87m are grants received in advance. The full breakdown is shown in Table 2 below and by reserve in Appendix 2.

There has also been transfers between earmarked reserves to re-prioritise where funding is expected to be needed such as in relation to cost of living and risk.

The opening balance for useable reserves for 2024/25 is £174.77m (excluding DSG) of which the budget for 2024/25 included the use of £13.49m.

Grant / contributions received in advance are held in reserve as spend spans more than 1 financial year. These are planned to be used over 2024/25 but will also be replenished with new grant allocations in March 2025 for use in 2025/26.

Table 2: Earmarked Reserves					
	Opening Balance 01/04/23	Transfers from Reserves	Transfer to Reserves	Movement between Reserves	Closing Balance 31/03/24
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Treasury Reserves	23.63	(0.79)	7.46	4.14	34.44
Grant / Contributions received in advance	22.16	(7.21)	4.87	(2.54)	17.27
Improvement projects	33.52	(7.44)	3.89	(5.40)	24.57
Cost Pressures	21.66	(11.11)	3.10	6.45	20.11
Council Liabilities	51.18	(6.15)	6.76	(6.56)	45.24
Covid-19 grants	0.83	(0.14)	0.00	0.00	0.68
Public Finance Initiatives	18.01	(1.99)	0.00	0.00	16.02
Risk	10.65	(6.89)	2.33	3.91	10.00
Other	7.11	(0.72)	0.05	0.00	6.43
Sub Total	188.75	(42.43)	28.45	0.00	174.77
DSG deficit*	(0.53)	0.00	(6.87)	0.00	(7.40)
Total	188.22	(42.43)	21.58	0.00	167.37

*Transferred to unusable reserves in line with accounting legislation

Reserves are categorised for the purposes of reporting as follows:

- **Treasury reserves.** These reserves are to minimise the impact of interest rate changes and finance early redemption of loans to reduce the council's future interest exposure;
- **Grants / contributions received in advance.** This is where the council has received money in advance of the next accounting period or covers more than one accounting period. These amounts will be spent in line with the grant conditions;
- **Improvement projects.** These reserves are to finance service modernisation; specific projects such as pilot street cleansing initiatives, Cloud services, Oracle development, economic growth programme; and costs in relation to the council's transformation programme;
- **Cost pressures.** To include review of working practices including blended working, fluctuations in service demand such as in adult social care, crisis support and children in care;
- **Council liabilities.** These reserves cover expenditure where the council has a legal obligation to pay costs, such as equal pay claims and redundancies. In addition to these there are reserves for business rate appeals, pensions and insurance claims;
- **Covid-19 grants.** The carry forward of specific government grants to cover Covid pressures, including expanded retail relief for businesses;
- **Public Finance Initiatives.** Liabilities for our PFI's with Street Lighting and St Thomas More;

- **Risk.** To cover unforeseen risks in 2023/24 at the time the budget was set;
- **Other.** These reserves are to support a wide range of future costs such as partnership working with other external bodies.

General Reserves

- 4.5 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2023/24 were £18.70m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £16.12m for 2023/24. The MTFF also sets a minimum level of reserves beyond which any use must be reported to Council. This is currently set at £7.20m. The closing balance of general reserves for 2023/24 is £19.56m. This is £1.17m above that required as the opening balance for 2024/25 of £18.39m as detailed in the budget report approved by Council in February 2024. This £1.17m will be earmarked in 2024/25 to fund any one-off emerging pressures.

Collection Fund

- 4.6 *Business Rates Retention Scheme* - 2023/24 was the seventh and final year the council participated in the 100% Business Rates Retention pilot with the six other West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities, with each billing authority retaining 99% of Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) received with the remaining 1% for the West Midlands Fire Service.

Trailblazer 100% Business Rates Retention agreement - going forward, in replacement for the Business Rates Retention scheme, Walsall Council will be part of the West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer deeper devolution deal. Upon the arrangement coming into effect on 1 April 2024, the council will continue to retain 99% of non-domestic rating income. This agreement comes into effect from 1 April 2024 and will be in place for the financial years 2024/25 to 2033/34 inclusive.

An increase in income due to the introduction of the 2023 rateable value list, a reduction in successful appeals, exemptions and discounts resulted in an in-year surplus which has reduced the deficit carried forward on the collection fund. The council bears 99% of the overall deficit, which will reduce the councils local share income for 2024/25.

The outturn position for 2023/24 on the collection fund is an in-year surplus of £3.41m. The final outturn includes a brought forward deficit of £6.03m (of which £5.86m was attributable to Walsall Council) from 2022/23, resulting in a net deficit being carried forward into 2024/25 of £2.62m (£2.51m attributable to Walsall).

- 4.7 *Council Tax* – The collection fund showed a total deficit in 2023/24 of £345k for council tax including preceptor's (Fire and Police) amounts. After taking into account a brought forward surplus totalling £543k and transfers out to the general fund and preceptors during 2023/24 totalling £1.38m, there is a closing deficit for 2023/24 of £1.18m (of which £1.04m is attributable to Walsall).

Walsall Proud Savings

- 4.8 The 2023/24 budget was predicated on delivery of £15.71m of benefits realisation (savings) using Proud ways of working across the council, significantly enhancing our enabling technology capabilities, and improving our service efficiency and

performance. A robust risk assessment of the 2023/24 budget was undertaken prior to the budget being set in February 2023. Action was taken corporately in-year to address ongoing demand and cost pressures within services, mainly within Children's Services and Adult Social Care. There was a further £7.55m of benefits approved to be carried forward for delivery from 2022/23, giving a total benefit figure of £23.26m which was due to be achieved in 2023/24.

As shown in table 3, of the £23.26m benefits identified for delivery, £13.32m were fully delivered in year and £9.94m were delayed/undelivered. Of this, £3.05m was mitigated in year through alternate actions or service underspends with the remaining £6.89m funded from corporate risk reserve.

Table 3: Delivery of Savings by Directorate 2023/24			
Directorate	Delivered £m	Undelivered £m	Total £m
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	4.27	2.83	7.10
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement			
- Children's and Education	3.31	1.11	4.42
- Customer Engagement	0.73	1.54	2.27
Economy, Environment & Communities	2.11	1.51	3.62
Resources & Transformation	2.00	0.02	2.02
Central	0.90	2.93	3.83
Total	13.32	9.94	23.26

- 4.9 Resources & Transformation directorate have reviewed their savings and propose to achieve two undelivered HR savings (as detailed below) in an alternative way. A redesign of employment services has created an additional budget saving not previously accounted for. The amendment would mean £43k is fully achieved on an on-going basis, as included in the delivery position in Table 3 above. This is an operational change and does not require any consultation or further equality impact assessment. Cabinet are asked to note this change.

Children's Services propose to achieve an element of the sibling groups saving of £124k by amalgamating it with the existing placement disruption saving which has overachieved. The remaining £76k undelivered saving will be carried forward for delivery in 2024/25, where the service propose to amalgamate it with a new 2024/25 saving as detailed below. This is an operational change and does not require any consultation or further equality impact assessment. Cabinet are asked to note this change.

Table 3a: 2023/24 Revised Savings					
Directorate	Saving Reference	Saving Description	Current Saving Value	Amendment	Revised Saving Value
R&T	OP34	Platinum Secure Storage	£13,000	(£13,000)	-
R&T	OP36	Promotion of One Source system to Schools for sickness absence data entry	£30,000	(£30,000)	-
R&T	NEW	Redesign of employment services	-	£43,000	£43,000
Children's	OP47	Sibling Groups of 4+	£200,000	(£123,898)	£76,102

Directorate	Saving Reference	Saving Description	Current Saving Value	Amendment	Revised Saving Value
Children's	NEW	Reduce placement disruption and identify opportunities to step down placements	£1,204,754	£123,898	£1,328,652
	TOTAL		£1,447,754	-	£1,447,754
2024/25					
	Saving Reference	Saving Description	Current Saving Value	Amendment	Revised Saving Value
Children's	OP47	Sibling Groups of 4+	£76,102	(£76,102)	-
Children's	OP64	Continued focus on placement step downs	£514,984	£76,102	£591,086
	TOTAL		£591,086	-	£591,086

- 4.10 Of the £9.94m undelivered savings, £5.41m were deemed as undeliverable and removed as part of the budget report approved by Council in February 2024. The remaining £4.53m will be carried forward for delivery in 2024/25. One saving in Adult Social Care has been partly delivered following a one-off agreement (£639k), the full value of this saving will therefore be carried forward. Further details are provided in Appendix 4. Along with the 2024/25 approved gross budget savings of £20.10m, this gives a total value of savings to be monitored in 2024/25 of £25.27m.

Pre-Audit Capital Outturn 2023/24

- 4.11 A revised capital programme for 2023/24 was approved by Cabinet on 7 February 2024 of £136.76m. Table 4 summaries further amendments to the end of March 2024, resulting in a final programme of £144.29m, which Cabinet are asked to formally agree.

Table 4: Amendments to Capital Programme 2023/24	
Project	£m
Capital programme 2023/24 per Cabinet 7 February 2024	136.76
Council Funded	
Library book fund – contingency	0.15
Bosty lane underspend – contingency	(0.16)
Clearance of tipped material from Gasholders site – contingency	0.05
Darlaston pool – contingency	0.01
Library improvement funds – contingency	0.01
Release of contingency funding	(0.06)
Homelessness temporary accommodation – pipeline	0.75
Release of pipeline funding	(0.75)
Flexible use of capital receipts	(4.00)
Headstone safety in cemeteries – revenue contribution	0.01
Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.04
Council House general heating – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.60
Car park resurfacing Church road – revenue contribution	0.06
Aids and adaptations – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.10
Externally Funded	
Active travel tranche 4 – new allocation	0.29

Project	£m
Coronation living heritage fund – new allocation	0.06
Childcare expansion – new allocation	0.43
Department for transport network north – new allocation	0.38
Trees for climate change – new allocation	0.05
UK shared prosperity fund – new allocation	0.53
Social housing decency fund – new allocation	0.13
Local authority housing fund 2 – new allocation	0.66
Willenhall levelling up fund– funding b/f from 2024/25	0.63
Wednesbury Road footbridge - adjustment	(0.01)
Urban tree challenge – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.02
Yorks bridge local transport plan – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.20
Home upgrade grant 2 - adjustment	0.10
Capital maintenance – funding b/f from 2024/25	1.28
Local authority delivery grant - adjustment	(0.93)
Black country blue network-European regional development fund -- adj	0.02
Civic/council house decarbonisation – funding b/f from 2024/25	1.95
Purchase of dispersed temporary accommodation – funding b/f from 24/25	0.40
Health through warmth - adjustment	0.01
Family hub – adjustment	(0.02)
Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership – funding b/f from 2024/25	2.46
Disabled facilities grant – funding b/f from 2024/25	0.13
RCCO for Childrens – revenue contribution	1.97
Revised Capital Programme 2023/24	144.29

- 4.12 The draft pre-audit capital outturn is a net break-even position, net of carry forwards of £53.54m. This is shown by scheme at Appendix 5 (council funded) and Appendix 6 (external funded), and summarised in table 5:

Table 5 : Pre-audit Capital Outturn 2023/24					
Funding	Budget £m	Outturn £m	Variance £m	Re-Profiling / Carry Forward to 2024/25 £m	Underspend £m
Council Funded	60.25	26.40	(33.85)	33.85	0.00
Externally Funded	84.04	64.35	(19.69)	19.69	0.00
Total	144.29	90.75	(53.54)	53.54	0.00

- 4.13 In year re-profiling, leading to carry forwards into the following year, is a routine and normal practice. Capital carry forward is defined as a means to carry capital resources from one year to another to cover identifiable commitments that have moved from one year to another, or for where a project spans more than one year. In any large organisation dealing with construction projects, procurement regulations, etc, a level of carry forward is expected and built into resourcing assumptions. It is recognised that capital projects can cross over years, and it is often difficult to be accurate in the estimation of which year the expenditure will be incurred. Cabinet are asked to approve the carry forwards of £53.54m of unspent capital schemes as shown in Appendix 5 and 6.

Flexible use of Capital Receipts 2023/24

- 4.14 The Council's flexible use of capital receipts (FUOCR) strategy was approved as part of the budget plan to Council on 28 February 2024. The estimated 2023/24 qualifying expenditure was forecast at £2.86m, with the equivalent final outturn expenditure totalling £3.19m. This variance was a result of increased qualifying redundancy and pension strain expenditure of £400k being finalised in the final quarter of 2023/24 and a delay in expenditure relating to Adult Social Care transformation of (£70k).

This change has not altered the overall FUOCR strategy but has led to a reprofiling of use between 2023/24 and 2024/25 as detailed below in table 7.

Table 6: Flexible Use of Capital Receipts – Forecast February 2024				
Proposed Area	Project Area / Work Stream	Forecast Expenditure 2023/24 £m	Forecast Qualifying Expenditure 2024/25 £m	Total Expenditure £m
Walsall Proud Transformation and Change and Project Management Support	All Proud Workstreams	0.18	0.04	0.22
One-Off Proud Workstream Investment to Deliver Proud Savings	Adult Social Care and Leisure Services	1.48	0.29	1.77
Service restructuring and rationalisation (interim support to create additional capacity, redundancy, pension strain, etc) costs associated with organisation redesigns to deliver the changes in Proud ways of work	All Proud workstream projects	1.20	0.81	2.01
Total		2.86	1.14	4.00

Table 7: Flexible Use of Capital Receipts – Pre-audit Outturn Updated Position				
Proposed Area	Project Area / Work Stream	Outturn Expenditure 2023/24 £m	Forecast Qualifying Expenditure 2024/25 £m	Total Expenditure £m
Walsall Proud Transformation and Change and Project Management Support	All Proud Workstreams	0.19	0.03	0.22
One-Off Proud Workstream Investment to Deliver Proud Savings	Adult Social Care and Leisure Services	1.40	0.37	1.77
Service restructuring and rationalisation (interim support to create additional capacity, redundancy, pension strain, etc) costs associated with organisation redesigns to deliver the changes in Proud ways of work	All Proud workstream projects	1.60	0.41	2.01
Total		3.19	0.81	4.00

Financial Health Indicators

- 4.15 Appendix 9 contains financial health indicator performance as at 31 March 2024. The primary purpose of these is to advise Cabinet of the current financial health of the authority in order to provide assurance to them in their role. The indicators cover a number of areas as follows:

Treasury Management

- 4.16 The indicators show the actual borrowing and investment rates for 2022/23 and the forecast for 2023/24 against set targets. Proactive and robust management of the council's debt and investment portfolios is forecast to result in positive variances against most of the financial health indicator targets for 2023/24.

Balance Sheet

- 4.17 These detail ratios for the last 5 financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 (draft) which show the liquidity of the authority.

Revenue performance

- 4.18 This section shows collection rates for council tax and business rates, the average number of days to collect sundry debt and the number of days to process creditor payments for 2023/24 and the performance against profile for 2023/24. Sundry debt collection is below target by 1 days with performance in relation to the processing of creditor payments better by 3 days. Council tax was on target with NNDR collection rates marginally below target.

Management of Resources

- 4.19 This section details the outturn position for 2022/23 and 2023/24 as at 31 March 2024 after use of and transfer to reserves and mitigating actions of £24.08m.
- 4.20 The capital outturn as at 31 March 2024 is a break even position after the roll forward of £53.54m.

Prudential Indicators

- 4.21 Appendix 10 contains the prudential indicators as at 31 March 2024. The primary purpose of these is to provide assurance to Cabinet that the authority is borrowing and investing in a sound and prudent manner. Indicators are approved by Council on an annual basis.

National Indicators

- 4.22 These indicators are nationally set and provide an indication of the council's exposure to interest rate risks, the proportion of the council's budget used to finance capital expenditure and the borrowing limits for the current year.

All of these indicators were met in 2023/24 apart from Prl 12- Maturity structure of borrowing within 5-10 years. This indicator is 0%. Historical borrowing in this category has now moved into a shorter term category.

The targets that these prudential indicators are monitored against have been taken from the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2023/24 onwards.

Local Indicators

4.23 These indicators have been set in consultation with the Treasury Management Panel, which is chaired by the S151 Officer, to provide further assurances to the authority that borrowing and investment is being undertaken in a sound and prudent manner.

- L2 - Average length of debt – The target acceptable limit is within 15-25 years. The authority's current position is 17.74 years, which is within the target range.
- L3a - Net borrowing costs as % of net council tax requirement. The target figure of 20.00% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of the net council tax requirement for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 2.31%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L3b - Net borrowing costs as % of Tax Revenue. The target figure of 12.50% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 1.55%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L9a-9d – Bank of England have increased the base rate over the 2023/24 period, currently showing a base rate of 5.25%. This has had a corresponding affect in relation to investment yields. At-call, short term and long term investments are outperforming their individually set 2023/24 target rates.

All the indicators were met in 2023/24 except the following:

- L8. Average interest received on STI vs at call rate 1.02%. The short term interest rate of 4.97% is 0.05% basis points higher than the at-call rate which is 4.92%. However, the target rate for STI vs call rate shows at 35.00%. At the time these targets were set short term interest rates were significantly higher than at call rates. Also, as the call rate is increasing there are still active short-term investments placed over the past 12 months which are providing a lower yield in comparison to current short-term yields. Once these investments have matured (and potentially re-invested), we should see an increase in short term interest rate.

The annual review of financial health indicators is shown at Appendix 9. This summarises the following:

- Strong treasury management performance for 2023/24.
- Strong balance sheet financial performance.
- Council tax and business rate collection rates as expected.
- Strong sundry debtor collection rates, showing an overall average number of 25 days.
- Strong creditor performance, showing an overall average number of 5 days.
- Revenue and capital position for 2023/24 – as outlined in the sections above.

- 4.24 The pre-audit prudential and local indicators as at 31 March 2024 are shown in the Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24, which is a separate report on this agenda for Cabinet.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.25 The councils financial strategy and annual budget process is designed to ensure that resources follow council priorities as set out in the Council Plan. Delivery of services within budget is fundamental to ensuring and maintaining financial stability.

Risk management

- 4.26 The 2023/24 budget and level of operating reserves were set following a robust financial risk assessment. The level of reserves can only be set based on realistically foreseeable or predicted parameters. Due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the economic condition, others to potential regulatory or national issues, which may have a local impact. Best professional judgement and estimates were applied in terms of the ongoing impact of the global pandemic and rising cost of living pressures.
- 4.27 Managers are required to deliver service and improvement targets on time, to standard and within budget. The resource allocation process is governed by the overarching Medium Term Financial Framework. Risk management is an integral part of this activity and is embedded in budget preparation, monitoring and forecasting to enable potential variances and risks to be identified early and addressed.
- 4.28 There were a number of identified risks in 2023/24 which became a reality and had an impact on the financial position. Actions have been taken to address the financial impact and reduced the overspend caused by these pressures. Where ongoing, these have been taken into account within the 2024/25 budget.
- 4.29 Delays in the delivery of some 2023/24 savings (Appendix 4) has resulted in an increased level of savings to be delivered in 2024/25, leading to additional risk in relation to capacity etc to deliver these. All savings are required to have delivery plans in place and progress in relation to delivery will be tracked on a monthly basis and will be reported to management and Cabinet throughout 2024/25, along with any actions to address any delays.
- 4.30 As well as financial risk, the council maintains a register that highlights key themes of organisational risk which is reported to Audit Committee as part of their annual work programme. The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) has been reported to CMT and oversight in relation to this rests with Audit Committee, which have received a number of reports during 2023/24.

Financial implications

- 4.31 The outturn position will affect the overall financial standing of the council. The aim is to ensure the councils balances are at a level consistent with the requirements of the MTFF. The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget and to ensure it has an adequate level of reserves. The council takes a medium term policy led approach to all decisions on resource allocation. This report sets out that the

council has delivered on its financial strategy and outturned with reserves intact for 2024/25.

- 4.32 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2023/24 were £18.70m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £16.12m for 2023/24. Actions have been taken to address the overspends resulting in general reserves at 31 March 2024 of £19.56m.

Legal implications

- 4.33 The council is required to set and operate within a balanced budget. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer (CFO / S151 Officer), in consultation with the council's monitoring officer, to make a report under this section if it appears to him or her that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. In practice, this is most likely to be required in a situation in which reserves have become depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. This mechanism, however, is impractical and should be avoided, as issuing a S114 notice requires all non-statutory spend to cease immediately, a situation which would just exacerbate the current situation.
- 4.34 CIPFA's guidance to CFO's has been modified to allow councils under budgetary pressure due to Covid-19 the time and space to explore alternatives to freezing spending via a S114 notice. The two specific modifications are:
- At the earliest possible stage, a CFO should make informal confidential contact with DLUHC to advise of financial concerns and a possible forthcoming S114 requirement.
 - The CFO should communicate the potential unbalanced budget position due to Covid-19 to DLUHC at the same time as providing a potential S114 scenario report to the council executive (cabinet) and the external auditor.
- 4.35 The council will continue to have due regard to its statutory responsibilities in proposing any changes to service provision, to reporting on and managing the in year financial position, and its statutory responsibilities in relation to setting a balanced budget.

Procurement implications / social value

- 4.36 All procurement activity is being reviewed, with a focus on identifying opportunities that will enable us to financially support our current and future services, especially those developed by Walsall Proud. It will do this by reviewing and reducing third party spend and improving the 'Procure to Pay' process and systems. The Third Party Spend Board supports and challenges services through the gateways of the commissioning and procurement process, with the aim of achieving best value for money.

Property implications

- 4.37 Cabinet on 20 April 2022 approved the council's Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27: the key document which sets out the council's vision and approach for the management of its property portfolio under the Corporate Landlord model.

The Corporate Landlord model approach takes a more strategic approach to property and asset management across the council, bringing together property, facilities management and commissioning responsibilities into a key enabling service under the council's new functional model. This will ultimately enable the development and implementation of an estate that supports Proud and the wider corporate objectives of the council.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.38 This report is prepared with consideration of any impacts that any decisions would have on health and wellbeing. Any implications arising from the budget and reporting of performance against the budget will be reported to members along with any actions which are required to be addressed prior to implementation of proposals.

Staffing implications

- 4.39 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Reducing inequalities

- 4.40 The 2010 Equality Act lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming, and reputation-damaging legal challenges. The budget is equality impact assessed and consulted on as appropriate, with feedback and actions arising from these reported to Members during budget setting.

Climate change

- 4.41 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and the council will need to consider the six key areas of the Plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation (as appropriate) in delivery of services.

Consultation

- 4.42 The report is prepared in consultation with the S151 Officer, relevant managers and CMT.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet are asked to note the outturn position and to consider and support the recommendations contained within this report in relation to capital carry forwards.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Approved capital carry forwards, as outlined in this report, will be allocated as a variation to the 2024/25 capital programme, and managed during 2024/25.

7. Review

- 7.1 Capital carry forwards, reserves, provisions and contingencies will be managed alongside the approved 2024/25 revenue budget and capital programme.
- 7.2 Regular monitoring reports will be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny to inform them and enable them to monitor and where appropriate, challenge service delivery against budget.

Background papers: Various financial working papers.

Appendices:-

- 1 Pre-audit Revenue Outturn position by service for 2023/24;
- 2 Details of (use of) / transfer to reserves;
- 3 Mitigating actions contained within outturn 2023/24;
- 4 Proud - Benefits 2023/24 with delayed delivery;
- 5 Pre-audit Capital Outturn by scheme for 2023/24 – council funded schemes;
- 6 Pre-audit Capital Outturn by scheme for 2023/24 – externally funded schemes;
- 7 Performance data relating to demand within Children's Services;
- 8 Performance data relating to demand within Adults Social Care;
- 9 Financial Health Indicators 2023/24;
- 10 Prudential Indicators 2023/24.

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Shaun Darcy
S151 Officer, and Director of Finance,
Corporate Landlord and Assurance
08.07.2024



Councillor M. Statham
Deputy Leader - Finance

08.07.2024

Appendix 1 – Pre-audit revenue outturn position 2023/24

SERVICE	ANNUAL BUDGET	DRAFT OUTTURN AFTER USE OF AND TRANSFER TO EARMARKED RESERVES	VARIANCE TO BUDGET (UNDER) / OVER
	£	£	£
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub			
Access, Assessment & Care Management	6,726,766	6,390,174	(336,592)
ASC Partnerships	1,244,909	812,822	(432,087)
Complex Needs	268,014	296,103	28,089
Demand Management	57,894,728	70,373,187	12,478,459
Health & Social Care	578,695	2,294,783	1,716,088
Intelligence & Delivery	1,090,685	1,175,145	84,460
Management Support & Other	(9,729,535)	(9,662,436)	67,099
Mental Health Services	1,521,702	1,543,442	21,740
Older People	10,146,495	10,199,668	53,173
Resources	1,551,335	1,494,091	(57,244)
Safeguarding SCI	925,546	850,472	(75,074)
Strategy, Commissioning & Delivery Support	1,066,040	1,187,284	121,244
Public Health	(27,523)	(27,524)	(1)
HUBS	3,606,619	3,338,986	(267,633)
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub	76,864,476	90,266,197	13,401,721
Children, Education and Customer Engagement			
Access & Achievement	13,957,878	16,618,384	2,660,506
Childrens Social Care	62,433,421	66,078,211	3,644,790
Childrens Wide	752,872	335,891	(416,981)
Early Help	4,560,651	4,429,648	(131,003)
Customer Engagement	12,147,505	12,693,031	545,526
Total Children, Education and Customer Engagement	93,852,327	100,155,165	6,302,838
Economy, Environment & Communities			
Clean and Green Services	20,376,946	20,575,205	198,259
Regeneration & Economy	896,819	696,821	(199,998)
Highways & Transportation	18,401,999	17,617,311	(784,688)
Emergency Planning	249,737	174,949	(74,788)
Leisure & Bereavement Services	(233,532)	(103,440)	130,092
Planning & Building Control	1,039,643	890,736	(148,907)
EE & C management	534,350	659,130	124,780
Cultural Services	(1,679,779)	(1,676,582)	3,197
Resilient Communities	6,026,892	5,834,024	(192,868)
Total Economy, Environment & Communities	45,613,075	44,668,154	-944,921
Resources and Transformation			
Black Country LEP (inc EZ, towns fund etc)	2,780,555	2,796,906	16,351
Programme Management (inc Patrol Admin)	373,336	357,874	(15,462)

SERVICE	ANNUAL BUDGET	DRAFT OUTTURN AFTER USE OF AND TRANSFER TO EARMARKED RESERVES	VARIANCE TO BUDGET (UNDER) / OVER
	£	£	£
Governance	5,119,461	5,007,389	(112,072)
Finance (inc CMT/Internal Audit)	6,844,565	6,537,447	(307,118)
Payroll & Pension	335,913	336,013	100
Corporate Assurance	579,598	534,274	(45,324)
Procurement	839,495	1,326,112	486,617
Human Resources	7,609,199	7,048,745	(560,454)
Asset Management	4,731,853	4,622,189	(109,664)
Integrated Facilities Management (Hard)	7,437,926	8,023,246	585,320
Integrated Facilities Management (Soft)	446,578	770,704	324,126
DaTS	12,607,377	12,033,773	(573,604)
Proud	1,219,539	1,094,578	(124,961)
Total Resources and Transformation	50,925,395	50,489,250	(436,145)
Sub Total Services	267,255,273	285,578,763	18,323,490
Capital Financing	(15,206,662)	(17,286,659)	(2,079,997)
Central Budgets / Levies	(107,885,569)	(110,036,285)	(17,099,691)
TOTAL	144,163,042	158,255,819	(856,198)

Appendix 2 – Details of (use of) / transfer to reserves

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub			
Covid-19 – Omicron	(136,780)	0	Costs associated with the plan to strengthen the Carers strategy across the borough following Covid-19
Adult Social Care External Partner Contributions	0	261,105	External grant / contributions which are ring fenced to fund the Economic Intelligence Team
Housing 21	(476,910)	0	Mitigating action to fund the increase in unitary charge above that included in the budget due to higher RPI being applied than expected.
National Development Team for Inclusion Project	(143,481)		Use of grant funding carried forward from 2022/23.
Better Care Fund (BCF) / Improved Better Care Fund 2 (iBCF2)	(40,000)	0	Costs associated with social care activity/intermediate Care.
Mediation reserve	(3,870,509)	1,000,000	To cover the 2023/24 proportion of income due from Walsall ICB which is currently in dispute.
Public Health	(1,055,442)	957,051	Relates to grant funding for Public Health projects – Better Mental Health, Adult Weight Management and Universal Drug / Crime
IFRS	(275,230)	614,309	Funding of various one-off projects i.e., Homelessness, Housing First and Mental Health. Transfer to reserve is mainly due to under spend on staffing and contracts.
Social Care Grant – Doctor's assessments	(39,006)	0	To support back log of Best Interest Assessors / Deprivation of Liberty safeguard assessments.
Social care demand / contingency	(558,000)	0	To fund increase in demand / costs
Proud - Adult Social Care	(1,241,522)	0	To fund investment and resources to deliver Proud workstream activity.
Pay and Pensions	(22,018)	0	To fund agency pay award back pay for 2023/24
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	(7,858,898)	2,832,465	
Children's Services			
IFRS	(1,087,934)	591,051	Relates to grant funding for School Improvements, Safeguarding Families, Protecting Children, Regional Recovery, Rough sleepers, Personal Advisors.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Children in care complex cases	(256,251)	0	To fund pressures, including social workers and placement costs, of complex cases relating to young people in care.
Children's external partner contributions	(200,231)	160,639	Use of Safeguarding Partnership and Regional Adoption Agency contributions.
Social care demand / contingency	(2,535,459)	0	To fund the additional costs of Childrens placement moves previously identified as risk which has now materialised.
Truancy fine income	(120,291)	180,090	Used to fund an attendance officer post.
Redundancy / Pension	(107,133)	0	To fund redundancy / pension costs.
Children's USAC migration fund	(29,683)	0	Grant funding to support USAC
St Thomas Moore PFI	(89,659)	0	To be utilised over the life of the PFI contract.
Pay and Pensions	(86,676)	0	To fund agency pay award back pay for 2023/24
Total Children's Services	(4,513,317)	931,780	
Children's - Customer Engagement			
Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licences	(48,825)	0	To fund staff support costs relating to HMO licences .
IFRS	(924,475)	910,124	Grant funding for Housing First scheme, homelessness, citizens advice bureau, refugee costs and other smaller projects.
Crisis support	(589,360)	0	To fund costs related to the Crisis Support Scheme.
Housing Domestic Retrofit Programme	(106,000)	0	To fund costs of the programme.
Housing IT System Implementation	(112,170)	0	Surplus income in year expected to be c/f to fund costs in 2023/24.
Redundancy / Pension	(52,837)		To fund redundancy / pension costs.
Total Children's - Customer Engagement	(1,833,667)	910,124	
Economy, Environment & Communities			
Covid-19 – Community Champions	(6,494)	0	Costs of supporting residents who are most at risk of Covid-19.
Building control fees	(45,133)	0	Statutory account. Required to breakeven over a 3 year period which is reviewed annually.
Shannon's Mill (commuted sum)	(3,000)	0	To cover the ongoing maintenance with a set proportion released each year.
Street Lighting PFI	(1,896,143)	0	Grant funding to be utilised over the life of the project. This is being utilised to fund the increase in energy costs for 2023/24.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Bus lane enforcement ring fenced income	(358,081)	87,347	Funding key projects in line with the legislation. - District signage - Rolling programme to refresh street name plates; - Road lines; - Introduction of Moving Traffic Enforcement legislation.
King's Coronation	(20,000)	0	To fund community activities and involvement for Coronation celebrations across Walsall.
On Street Car Parking income (ringfenced)	(455,353)	0	To fund key projects in line with the legislation.
Economic growth programme (EGP)	(21,326)	0	To support costs within service to continue functions as per Cabinet report October 2020. Extended to 2023.
IFRS	(1,078,145)	608,576	Primarily relates to grants / contributions carried forward where spend was delayed due to Covid-19 or spend spans more than 1 year.
Phoenix 10	(4,132)	0	To fund professional fees.
Willenhall Master Plan	(23,793)	0	Costs associated with the Willenhall Master Plan redevelopment
Feasibility / Options appraisals	(11,421)	0	To cover costs which cannot be coded to capital and abortive costs of schemes.
Redundancy / Pension	(96,258)		To fund redundancy / pension costs.
Planning	(471,875)	0	To fund one off costs of agency to clear back log of applications.
Pledges	(226,465)		To fund the administration's priorities
Mediation reserve	(50,000)	0	To fund cost for unauthorised encampments activity.
Pay and Pensions	(176,386)	0	To fund agency pay award back pay for 2023/24
Total Economy, Environment & Communities	(4,944,005)	695,923	
Resources & Transformation			
Audit and inspection	(66,764)	0	Contingency set aside to cover additional internal audit contract costs.
Corporate Landlord	(794,817)		Cover costs which cannot be coded to capital, abortive costs of schemes, demolitions and redundant buildings
Economic growth programme	(427,680)	0	To support costs within service to continue functions as per Cabinet report October 2020. Extended to 2023.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Delivery of Connected Gateway (FHSF)	(596,996)	0	To fund closure costs of investment properties
Enterprise Zones	(1,104,041)	3,036,547	Generated from surplus business rates from across the Black Country to fund the costs of future capital schemes.
External partner contributions	(33,287)	48,337	ERDF technical assistance contributions & Crowdfund Walsall
Growing Places Fund	(121,764)	27,314	Funding received to support the Growing Places LEP programme management costs.
Growth Deal Programme	(23,625)	108,272	Funding received to support the Growing Places LEP programme management costs.
IFRS	(59,901)	448,369	Primarily relates to grants / contributions carried forward where spend was delayed due to Covid-19 or spend spans more than 1 year.
Improvement projects	(52,411)	0	To fund costs associated with One Source and Cloud/Azure licencing costs.
Proud Resource Plan	(1,865,918)	0	To fund investment and resources to deliver Proud workstream activity.
Pay and Pensions	(411,430)	0	To fund agency pay award back pay for 2023/24
Redundancy	(177,806)	0	To fund redundancy costs.
Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) Overheads	(17,925)	0	To fund project costs.
Total Resources and Transformation	(5,754,365)	3,668,839	
Capital Financing			
Borrowing re-scheduling	0	5,205,443	To fund borrowing re-scheduling costs dependent on market conditions and to manage risk / pressures for changes in interest rates and on-going impact of airport dividend shortfalls due to impact of changes in the business plan / Covid-19.
Buy not lease	0	48,204	To be used to purchase vehicles / equipment when the costs are calculated to be cheaper than leasing. Also cover expected pressures on leasing programme due to cost of replacement vehicles.
CCLA reserve	0	2,000,000	£30m investment - Statutory override till end March 2025 - once this runs out we will have to put any gains and losses on the investment in year into the accounts and this will smooth these changes.
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	(790,225)	253,282	To smooth minimum MRP costs as per approved MRP policy.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Pensions – upfront payment borrowing costs	(9,000)	0	To fund borrowing costs of funding pension payments upfront for 3 years to release savings.
Total Capital Financing	(799,225)	7,506,929	
Centrally Held			
Proud	(1,049,790)	0	Funding of one-off investment in relation to Proud programme.
Audit and inspection	(156,898)		To cover the additional external audit contract costs for 2023/24.
Pay and Pensions	(221,058)	0	Fund additional costs to pension scheme
Enterprise Zones – part of section 31 grant	0	18,338	Transfer of business rates income relating to the Enterprise Zone.
Environmental Levy	(550,400)	0	Planned use of reserve no longer required to support one off expenditure included in the 2023/24 budget.
Business rates retention scheme	(46,181)	5,264,000	Planned transfer to fund volatility of business rates income due to the pandemic and any appeals. Also, to smooth future changes to the scheme.
Risk	(6,886,540)	2,325,000	Mitigating action to cover RED savings not forecast to be achieved in year with not alternative actions. Replenishment to cover further pressures not yet realised.
Social care demand / contingency	(3,710,000)	2,500,000	Mitigating action – to cover unforeseen increased costs within Adult Social care and Childrens Services. Replenishment to cover any further pressures not yet realised,
Cost of Living	(3,827,276)	600,000	Mitigating action – Housing 21 inflation increases. Energy budget transferred to replenish reserve.
Corporate Landlord	0	700,000	Replenish to cover costs which cannot be coded to capital, abortive costs of schemes, demolitions and redundant buildings
Mediation reserve	(223,648)	500,000	Mitigating action - to cover additional legal fees within Childrens Services and to replenishment for future costs.
Total Centrally Held	(16,671,791)	11,907,338	
TOTAL RESERVES UTILISED / TRANSFERRED IN YEAR	(42,375,268)	28,453,398	

Appendix 3: Mitigation actions included within the report

Directorate	Detail of mitigating actions	£m
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hubs	Over achievement and full year impact of the 2022/23 savings predominantly relating to review of existing client placements.	0.90
	Release of one-off grant relating to the streamline of Adult Social Care assessments.	0.14
	Release of Omicron one-off funding	0.13
	Use of remaining Housing 21 reserve to partially mitigate the contractual inflation pressure.	0.48
	One off use of reserves to cover Public Health savings relating to the review of existing transformation fund.	0.26
	Red STP's covered by service underspends.	0.17
Total Mitigation included for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hubs		2.08
Children's Services - Children's and Education	One off reallocation of funding and reserves to support Children's pressures.	0.42
Total Mitigation included for Children's Services and Education		0.42
Economy, Environment & Communities	Use of legacy section 106 income held in reserve.	0.22
	Holding of vacant head of service post.	0.07
	Economic Growth Programme funding held in reserves.	0.46
	Use of corporate reserve to support planning.	0.25
	Use of parking reserve.	0.03
	Use of legacy commuted sums.	0.03
	Capitalisation of Velocity Patcher.	0.20
	Capitalisation of book fund.	0.15
Total Mitigation included for Economy, Environment & Communities		1.63
Central	Use of Risk Reserve.	6.89
	Use of Cost of Living Reserve.	3.83
	Use of Mediation Reserve.	0.10
	Use of Social Care Demand / contingency reserve.	3.71
	Release of central budgets	5.42
Total Mitigation included for Central		19.95
Total Mitigation included in forecast outturn		24.08

Mitigating actions included in report	£m
Service mitigating actions	4.13
Corporate mitigating actions	19.95
Total	24.08

Appendix 4 –Proud – Benefits 2023/24 with delayed delivery

Directorate / Area	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit undelivered in year £	Value Carried Forward to 2024/25 £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub						
Adult Social Care	OP13 – Learning Disability Joint Funding Tool	954,000	73,488	455,000	Awaiting detailed delivery plans - ICB discussions on JF tool.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Adult Social Care	2022/23 - Review for learning disabilities joint funding tool	1,757,270	1,500,000	1,757,270	Awaiting detailed delivery plans – ongoing ICB discussions on JF tool.	Partly mitigated from overachievement of 2022/23 savings (£129k). Remainder mitigated by use of risk reserve for 2023/24 (£1.37m).
Adult Social Care	OP15 - Section 75 Grant – Income Generation Review of Grants	59,780	59,780	59,780	Further discussions to be held with ICB to understand how saving can be delivered.	Fully mitigated by underspends within service in 2023/24.
Adult Social Care	OP11 - (Shared Lives) – foster care provision	116,277	116,277	116,277	Delay in transferring clients from current care setting to shared lives.	Partly mitigated by sprint projects – BAU and OT reviews (£84k), remainder mitigated by use of risk reserve (£32k).
Adult Social Care	2022/23 - Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of Improved charging policies	770,905	770,905	770,905	Delay in delivery due to future proofing and integration with other systems.	Fully mitigated from over-achievement of 2022/23 savings.
Adult Social Care	2022/23 - Staffing impact following the implementation of Bettercare Finance System	94,079	23,815	23,815	Delay in delivery due to future proofing and integration with other systems.	Fully mitigated from use of risk reserve for 2023/24.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit undelivered in year £	Value Carried Forward to 2024/25 £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Adult Social Care	2022/23 - Increased income from Print & Design service to external bodies	30,000	30,000	30,000	Delayed delivery due to lead time in attracting new business.	Fully mitigated through staffing vacancies and underspends in supplies and services.
Public Health	2022/23 - Review of the usage of the public health transformation fund	300,000	255,000	50,000	Review of current transformation funding in process of being finalised.	Fully mitigated – Corporately funded one-off for 2023/24.
Total Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub		4,082,311	2,829,265	3,263,047		
Economy, Environment & Communities						
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP4 - Regeneration and Economy team review	260,193	260,193	260,193	Restructure plans delayed due to sickness absence.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP1 - Income Generation review of fees and charges – increase planning development charges by 5%	1,385	1,385	1,385	Fee increase has resulted in under-recovery.	Fully mitigated by additional income in other areas of Environment, Leisure and Commercial.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP23a - Income Generation review of fees and charges – increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	187,292	146,289	146,289	Charges increased but saving not achieved due to reduced demand.	Fully mitigated by additional income in other areas of Environment, Leisure and Commercial.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP21 - Increase rental income from Park Lodges	5,000	4,034	4,034	Charges increase has not led to increased income as expected.	Fully mitigated by other venue hire income.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit undelivered in year £	Value Carried Forward to 2024/25 £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	P12 - Parking dispensation charging of £15 per vehicle per day	19,500	14,625	14,625	Delay on technology to allow payments to be taken.	Fully mitigated by use of parking reserve.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3a - Outsource Outdoor Pursuits Service to a community group	12,878	12,878	12,878	Implementation delayed.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P4 - Increase in bulky waste charges	136,000	136,000	136,000	Delay in new price on the web page due to Core Technology Platform work.	Fully mitigated by underspends within Clean and Green.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P6 - Rewilding of all urban grassed areas	352,348	352,348	50,000	Plans being reviewed and alternative saving proposals considered.	Fully mitigated by underspends within Clean and Green.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P13 - Reintroduce staff parking charges	18,000	18,000	-	Delayed due to equality impact.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP16 - Enhancement of Darlaston Pool	15,000	15,000	15,000	Delay due to the release of capital funds.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP17 - Development of Oak Park office space	50,000	37,500	37,500	Delay due to the release of capital funds.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP18 - Improvement to DD collection processes	10,000	10,000	10,000	Completion of project has been delayed.	Fully mitigated by underspends in service.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP54 - Charge developers for travel plans	30,000	30,000	30,000	Recruitment – no suitably skilled staff available to implement.	Fully mitigated by commuted sums reserve.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP56 - Increase recycling rates and reduce contamination	382,523	382,523	-	Service currently has no plan on how to achieve this saving.	Partly mitigated (£172k) by general underspends within Clean and Green. Remainder (£211k) mitigated by use of risk reserve for 2023/24.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit	Value of benefit undelivered in year	Value Carried Forward to 2024/25	Reason	Mitigating Actions
		£	£	£		
Economy, Environment & Communities	2022/23 - Review of Libraries management	60,679	60,679	60,679	Head of Community Building role will move this forward when in post.	Underspends from salaries in service used to fully mitigate red position.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2022/23 - Offer residential gardening service	30,000	30,000	-	Business case has highlighted this benefit cannot be achieved.	Fully mitigated by underspends within Clean and Green.
Total Economy, Environment & Communities		1,570,798	1,511,454	778,583		
Central						
Central	Part OP26 - Council wide efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management	2,930,000	2,930,000	-	Delayed as a result of core technology platform and need for detailed CAM delivery plan.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Total Central		2,930,000	2,930,000	0		
Resources & Transformation						
Resources & Transformation	2022/23 - Solar panels on our buildings	23,000	16,000	16,000	Work will not be completed within scheduled timescales.	Fully mitigated by overall Directorate underspend.
Total Resources & Transformation		23,000	16,000	16,000		
Children's, Education & Customer Engagement						
Children's Services	OP2 - Home to School Transport – review of contracts and route optimisation	300,000	300,000	300,000	Increase in expected demand for 2023/24.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Children's Services	OP6 - Review of current establishment and reduction in the use of agency staff	634,406	315,450	315,450	Delays in recruiting social workers has led to increased agency costs.	Partly mitigated (£155k) from risk reserve for 2023/24. Remainder (£161k) mitigated within service.
Children's Services	OP45/51 - Further Recruitment and Retention of internal Foster Carers	630,000	210,648	210,648	National recruitment pressures of foster carers.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit	Value of benefit undelivered in year	Value Carried Forward to 2024/25	Reason	Mitigating Actions
		£	£	£		
Children's Services	OP46/52 - Specialist Foster Placements	392,000	213,250	213,250	Recruitment delays and delays in YP placement moves.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Children's Services	OP47 - Sibling Groups of 4+	200,000	76,102	76,102	Increased inflow of young people.	Fully mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Customer Engagement	Part OP26 - Council wide efficiencies relating to Customer Access Management	1,540,000	1,540,000	-	Delay in implementation of Customer Experience Centre changes.	Partly mitigated (£250k) from service underspends. Remainder (£1.29m) mitigated from risk reserve for 2023/24.
Total Children's, Education & Customer Engagement		3,696,406	2,655,450	1,115,450		
Total		12,302,515	9,942,169	5,173,080		

Appendix 5 – Pre-audit Capital Outturn by Scheme 2023/24 – council funded schemes

COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HUB					
Mosaic Portal implementation	40,000.00	31,480.31	(8,519.69)	(8,519.69)	0.00
ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HUB COUNCIL FUNDED TOTAL	30,000.00	30,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CHILDREN'S, EDUCATION AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT					
School temporary classrooms	155,135.00	152,592.95	(2,542.05)	(2,542.05)	0.00
School estate condition survey	199,000.00	198,439.40	(560.60)	(560.60)	0.00
Children in care out of borough placements	317,296.00	161,352.29	(155,943.71)	(155,943.71)	0.00
Childrens services locality project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Redesign of children's homes	149,255.00	144,740.90	(4,514.10)	(4,514.10)	0.00
Aids and adaptations (statutory element)	700,396.00	700,395.46	(0.54)	(0.54)	0.00
Health through warmth and related retro fit schemes	176,706.00	165,469.23	(11,236.77)	(11,236.77)	0.00
Social housing decarbonisation	283,600.00	223,729.96	(59,870.04)	(59,870.04)	0.00
CCTV in temporary accommodation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
School capital using Dedicated School Grants	1,973,566.00	1,973,565.28	(0.72)	(0.72)	0.00
Homelessness temporary accommodation	748,000.00	97,382.26	(650,617.74)	(650,617.74)	0.00
CHILDREN'S, EDUCATION AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT COUNCIL FUNDED TOTAL	4,702,954.00	3,817,667.73	(885,286.27)	(885,286.27)	0.00
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES					
New homes bonus	76,999.00	0.00	(76,999.00)	(76,999.00)	0.00
Regenerating Walsall	223,206.00	0.00	(223,206.00)	(223,206.00)	0.00
Enterprise Zones	5,535,388.00	110,438.40	(5,424,949.60)	(5,424,949.60)	0.00
Willenhall masterplan	2,596,122.00	2,927.71	(2,593,194.29)	(2,593,194.29)	0.00
St Peters church repairs to surrounding wall	32,784.00	3,215.00	(29,569.00)	(29,569.00)	0.00
Willenhall Memorial park	2,851.00	0.00	(2,851.00)	(2,851.00)	0.00
Regional materials recycling centre	1,810,883.00	1,810,882.71	(0.29)	(0.29)	0.00

COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Middlemore lane household waste recycling centre	6,721,000.00	976,510.65	(5,744,489.35)	(5,744,489.35)	0.00
Allotment boundary improvement works	134,651.00	91,749.86	(42,901.14)	(42,901.14)	0.00
Walsall Arboretum extension	148,114.00	148,114.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Barr Beacon security and infrastructure works	40,395.00	0.00	(40,395.00)	(40,395.00)	0.00
Paly areas and outdoor gym improvements	524,886.00	89,873.00	(435,013.00)	(435,013.00)	0.00
Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock	148,073.00	148,073.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Headstone safety In cemeteries (revenue contribution to capital outlay)	31,152.00	31,151.33	(0.67)	(0.67)	0.00
Replacement cemeteries administration system	43,500.00	35,125.36	(8,374.64)	(8,374.64)	0.00
Streetly cemetery extension	2,937.00	1,197.71	(1,739.29)	(1,739.29)	0.00
North Walsall cemetery flooding	8,700.00	8,699.50	(0.50)	(0.50)	0.00
Hatherton Road car park	211,456.00	0.00	(211,456.00)	(211,456.00)	0.00
Promotion of community health and safety	235,857.00	77,318.16	(158,538.84)	(158,538.84)	0.00
Replacement of obsolete traffic signal control equipment	187,469.00	139,522.58	(47,946.42)	(47,946.42)	0.00
Hatherton Road multi storey car park structural maintenance	188,099.00	67,970.65	(120,128.35)	(120,128.35)	0.00
Darlaston strategic development area	9,801.00	0.00	(9,801.00)	(9,801.00)	0.00
Walsall town centre public realm improvements	217,800.00	2,408.95	(215,391.05)	(215,391.05)	0.00
Transit site	0.00	(2,224.62)	(2,224.62)	(2,224.62)	0.00
Lighting invest to save	5,934,272.00	5,331,608.63	(602,663.37)	(602,663.37)	0.00
Single library management system	6,317.00	0.00	(6,317.00)	(6,317.00)	0.00
Darlaston library integration	67,147.00	6,560.05	(60,586.95)	(60,586.95)	0.00
Replacement PC'S	34,000.00	0.00	(34,000.00)	(34,000.00)	0.00
Radio frequency identification self-issue	93,000.00	87,200.00	(5,800.00)	(5,800.00)	0.00
Limestone surveys	106,501.00	80,411.85	(26,089.15)	(26,089.15)	0.00
Cremator No 1 repairs (reline)	54,000.00	50,221.00	(3,779.00)	(3,779.00)	0.00
CCTV-resilient communities	28,615.00	27,760.98	(854.02)	(854.02)	0.00
Resurfacing of Church Road car park (revenue contribution to capital outlay)	56,055.00	56,054.55	(0.45)	(0.45)	0.00

COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Expansion of park hall	580,000.00	168,616.35	(411,383.65)	(411,383.65)	0.00
Leisure centre CCTV	86,909.00	86,909.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oak Park active living centre	350,000.00	348,789.90	(1,210.10)	(1,210.10)	0.00
Permanent planted christmas trees	32,080.00	32,079.17	(0.83)	(0.83)	0.00
Street Bins replacement programme	88,000.00	84,141.18	(3,858.82)	(3,858.82)	0.00
Development team capitalisation of posts	327,649.00	0.00	(327,649.00)	(327,649.00)	0.00
Walsall gateway	40,000.00	0.00	(40,000.00)	(40,000.00)	0.00
Brown Jug compulsory purchase order	27,000.00	0.00	(27,000.00)	(27,000.00)	0.00
Bereavement services maintenance	170,000.00	96,380.07	(73,619.93)	(73,619.93)	0.00
Library book fund	145,021.00	112,119.80	(32,901.20)	(32,901.20)	0.00
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITIES COUNCIL FUNDED TOTAL	31,334,468.00	13,878,883.69	(17,455,584.31)	(17,455,584.31)	0.00
RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION					
Procurement system	126,522.00	126,465.50	(56.50)	(56.50)	0.00
Oracle E Business suite archive	34,875.00	34,875.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Asbestos removal	89,463.00	89,462.57	(0.43)	(0.43)	0.00
Planned property maintenance	169,486.00	169,485.34	(0.66)	(0.66)	0.00
Safe water supplies	72,231.00	72,230.11	(0.89)	(0.89)	0.00
Statutory testing	520,279.00	520,278.25	(0.75)	(0.75)	0.00
Council house smoke and heat detection fire alarm	326,920.00	13,000.00	(313,920.00)	(313,920.00)	0.00
Council house general heating	600,000.00	550,454.64	(49,545.36)	(49,545.36)	0.00
Operation repair and maintenance of council buildings	155,009.00	155,008.83	(0.17)	(0.17)	0.00
Fire risk assessment	660,624.00	660,623.89	(0.11)	(0.11)	0.00
Schools project	15,011.00	15,011.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Walsall council house-modern secure reception	25,308.00	0.00	(25,308.00)	(25,308.00)	0.00
Council house internal decoration	30,218.00	0.00	(30,218.00)	(30,218.00)	0.00
Security arrangements for corporate buildings	52,468.00	52,468.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Civic centre plumbing	66,600.00	0.00	(66,600.00)	(66,600.00)	0.00
Council house windows	1,290,759.00	30,000.00	(1,260,759.00)	(1,260,759.00)	0.00
Council house roof repairs	1,492,000.00	0.00	(1,492,000.00)	(1,492,000.00)	0.00
Computer aided facilities management system	350,000.00	0.00	(350,000.00)	(350,000.00)	0.00
Rushall Olympic football club	5,833.00	0.00	(5,833.00)	(5,833.00)	0.00
Saddlers centre shopping centre	458,941.00	143,857.01	(315,083.99)	(315,083.99)	0.00
Council chamber refurbishment	20,710.00	13,832.50	(6,877.50)	(6,877.50)	0.00
My CMIS (content management interoperability services)	15,796.00	0.00	(15,796.00)	(15,796.00)	0.00
Webcasting and hybrid council meetings	20,000.00	10,728.00	(9,272.00)	(9,272.00)	0.00
Safe and secure environment	2,608,395.00	1,188,602.30	(1,419,792.70)	(1,419,792.70)	0.00
Resource & consultancy to upgrade win2008 server	336.00	336.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Proud programme	102,992.00	64,039.19	(38,952.81)	(38,952.81)	0.00
Enabling technology	7,588,510.00	2,912,756.98	(4,675,753.02)	(4,675,753.02)	0.00
Maintaining a safe and secure environment	329,223.00	41,170.48	(288,052.52)	(288,052.52)	0.00
Telephony cloud based system	484,271.00	0.00	(484,271.00)	(484,271.00)	0.00
Proud card payments digital website	1,025,431.00	172,705.14	(852,725.86)	(852,725.86)	0.00
Smartphones	279,309.00	11,544.77	(267,764.23)	(267,764.23)	0.00
Ways of working	652,806.00	314,141.19	(338,664.81)	(338,664.81)	0.00
Beyond system	1,101,223.00	728,005.33	(373,217.67)	(373,217.67)	0.00
Bosty lane farm	136,833.00	136,832.40	(0.60)	(0.60)	0.00
Konica multi-functional device re-tender	50,000.00	0.00	(50,000.00)	(50,000.00)	0.00
Archiving systems moving to customer access	100,000.00	36,248.05	(63,751.95)	(63,751.95)	0.00
Information governance service improvements	25,000.00	8,855.00	(16,145.00)	(16,145.00)	0.00
Digital & technology service staffing capitalisation	668,875.00	142,415.98	(526,459.02)	(526,459.02)	0.00
Public toilets	250,000.00	61,359.54	(188,640.46)	(188,640.46)	0.00

COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Clearance of tipped material from gasholders site	45,000.00	34,100.00	(10,900.00)	(10,900.00)	0.00
RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION COUNCIL FUNDED	22,047,257.00	8,510,892.99	(13,536,364.01)	(13,536,364.01)	0.00
CENTRALLY HELD					
Health and safety	1,021.00	0.00	(1,021.00)	(1,021.00)	0.00
Capital contingency	1,173,096.00	0.00	(1,173,096.00)	(1,173,096.00)	0.00
Equity investment	693,326.00	0.00	(693,326.00)	(693,326.00)	0.00
Capital staffing costs	261,000.00	168,398.16	(92,601.84)	(92,601.84)	0.00
CENTRALLY HELD COUNCIL FUNDED	2,128,443.00	168,398.16	(1,960,044.84)	(1,960,044.84)	0.00
TOTAL COUNCIL FUNDED SCHEMES	60,253,122.00	26,407,322.88	(33,845,799.12)	(33,845,799.12)	0.00

Appendix 6 – Pre-audit Capital Outturn by Scheme 2023/24 – externally funded schemes

EXTERNAL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HUB					
Integrated community equipment	888,000.00	888,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HUB EXTERNALLY FUNDED TOTAL	888,000.00	888,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CHILDREN'S, EDUCATION AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT					
Academies	346,130.00	130,322.90	(215,807.10)	(215,807.10)	0.00
Basic need	1,612,040.00	412,422.82	(1,199,617.18)	(1,199,617.18)	0.00
Capital maintenance	5,300,000.00	5,145,478.37	(154,521.63)	(154,521.63)	0.00
Devolved formula capital	2,486,678.00	1,535,136.93	(951,541.07)	(951,541.07)	0.00
High needs provision capital allocation	3,700,000.00	3,457,889.73	(242,110.27)	(242,110.27)	0.00
Purchase of dispersed temporary accommodation	1,270,922.00	584,460.57	(686,461.43)	(686,461.43)	0.00
Disabled facilities grant	3,812,942.00	3,812,941.66	(0.34)	(0.34)	0.00
Off gas scheme	95,291.00	95,291.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contributions for health through warmth	10,495.00	10,495.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Department of Business, Energy and Industrial strategy - local authority delivery scheme and home upgrade grant	3,507,082.00	3,491,969.23	(15,112.77)	(15,112.77)	0.00
Midland energy hub - local authority delivery scheme and home upgrade grant	1,304,888.00	1,304,888.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Social housing decarbonisation – Walsall Alliance of Tenant Management Organisations	2,360,427.00	2,360,426.69	(0.31)	(0.31)	0.00
Family hub life programme	57,580.00	57,580.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Local authority housing fund 1	628,238.00	453,499.44	(174,738.56)	(174,738.56)	0.00
Local authority housing fund 2	948,000.00	874,572.65	(73,427.35)	(73,427.35)	0.00
Home upgrade grant 2 Department of Business, Energy and Industrial strategy	1,396,200.00	57,606.90	(1,338,593.10)	(1,338,593.10)	0.00
Home upgrade grant 2 Midland energy hub	99,300.00	11,160.00	(88,140.00)	(88,140.00)	0.00
Childcare expansion capital grant	430,887.00	0.00	(430,887.00)	(430,887.00)	0.00
Social housing decency fund Willenhall traveller's site	130,759.00	6,460.00	(124,299.00)	(124,299.00)	0.00
CHILDREN'S, EDUCATION AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT EXTERNALLY FUNDED TOTAL	29,497,859.00	23,802,601.89	(5,695,257.11)	(5,695,257.11)	0.00

EXTERNAL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES					
Walsall town deal	3,361,451.00	2,127,613.89	(1,233,837.11)	(1,233,837.11)	0.00
Future High Street Fund	1,766,529.00	639,793.99	(1,126,735.01)	(1,126,735.01)	0.00
Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve	828.00	0.00	(828.00)	(828.00)	0.00
Black Country Blue Network – European Regional Development Fund	54,503.00	54,503.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Black Country Blue Network – Section 106	18,318.00	13,284.30	(5,033.70)	(5,033.70)	0.00
Barr Beacon Security and Infrastructure Works	61,000.00	0.00	(61,000.00)	(61,000.00)	0.00
Nature Recovery in Partnership with Canal and River Trust	72,489.00	42,195.75	(30,293.25)	(30,293.25)	0.00
Nature Recovery in Partnership with Canal and River Trust – Section 106	14,200.00	0.00	(14,200.00)	(14,200.00)	0.00
Additional Highway Maintenance Pothole Funding	2,134,241.00	2,126,885.12	(7,355.88)	(7,355.88)	0.00
Local Transport Plan - Bridge Strengthening	224,005.00	209,717.03	(14,287.97)	(14,287.97)	0.00
Local Transport Plan – Yorks Bridge	433,080.00	406,484.32	(26,595.68)	(26,595.68)	0.00
Capital Block Department for Transport Fund	1,732,026.00	1,710,613.03	(21,412.97)	(21,412.97)	0.00
M6 Junction 10 Highway Improvements	828,064.00	698,081.43	(129,982.57)	(129,982.57)	0.00
Zebra Crossing	4,774.00	0.00	(4,774.00)	(4,774.00)	0.00
West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan (STP) 'Movement For Growth'	2,533,865.00	2,013,762.90	(520,102.10)	(520,102.10)	0.00
Flood Alleviation Bloxwich Road Community Walls/Gates	53,051.00	29,116.06	(23,934.94)	(23,934.94)	0.00
Better Streets	8,884.00	0.00	(8,884.00)	(8,884.00)	0.00
Wolverhampton Street Section 106	73,875.00	11,008.50	(62,866.50)	(62,866.50)	0.00
Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installation	254,040.00	0.00	(254,040.00)	(254,040.00)	0.00
National Cycle Network Route - Canal and River Trust	5,267.00	0.00	(5,267.00)	(5,267.00)	0.00
Urban Tree Challenge	48,348.00	48,010.00	(338.00)	(338.00)	0.00
Wednesbury road footbridge	8,075.00	0.00	(8,075.00)	(8,075.00)	0.00
Construction of wall and footpath Hollyhedge Close	2,052.00	0.00	(2,052.00)	(2,052.00)	0.00
Highways CCTV upgrade	90,143.00	46,465.94	(43,677.06)	(43,677.06)	0.00
A41 Moxley transforming cities fund	230,000.00	120,048.24	(109,951.76)	(109,951.76)	0.00

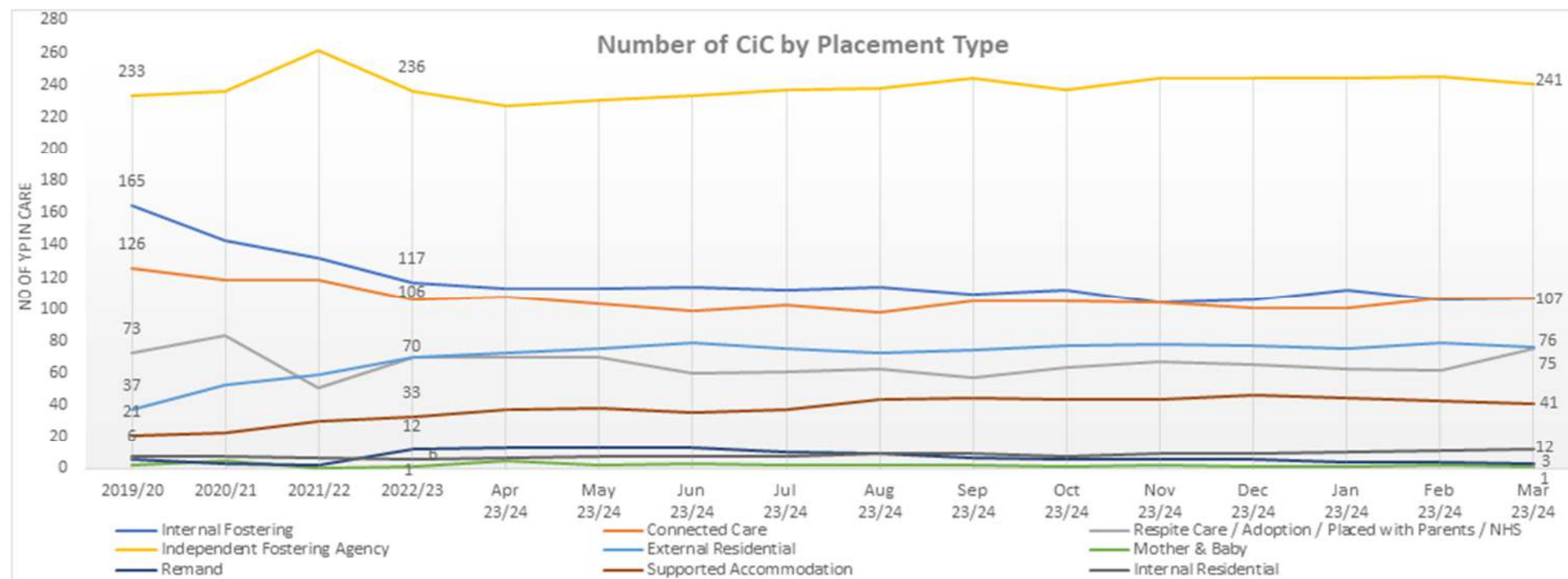
EXTERNAL FUNDED SCHEMES	2023/24 Budget £	2023/24 Outturn £	Variance £	Carry forward to 2024/25 £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Willenhall Masterplan transport levelling up fund	2,600,000.00	2,533,033.03	(66,966.97)	(66,966.97)	0.00
Library improvements fund	202,349.00	202,349.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Willenhall Masterplan	300,000.00	253,123.40	(46,876.60)	(46,876.60)	0.00
Reedswood park refurbishment levelling up funding	66,500.00	55,899.99	(10,600.01)	(10,600.01)	0.00
One Palfrey big local park improvement project	157,500.00	5,000.00	(152,500.00)	(152,500.00)	0.00
Renovation of park tennis courts	333,756.00	328,417.19	(5,338.81)	(5,338.81)	0.00
Larksmill (Pelsall Wood) flood alleviation	42,000.00	9,308.35	(32,691.65)	(32,691.65)	0.00
Coronation living heritage fund	63,202.00	878.60	(62,323.40)	(62,323.40)	0.00
Active travel fund (tranche 4)	285,179.00	148,435.49	(136,743.51)	(136,743.51)	0.00
Trees for climate fund	45,000.00	27,571.44	(17,428.56)	(17,428.56)	0.00
Department for transport network north	383,245.00	376,056.00	(7,189.00)	(7,189.00)	0.00
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITIES EXTERNALLY FUNDED TOTAL	18,491,839.00	14,237,655.99	(4,254,183.01)	(4,254,183.01)	0.00
RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION					
Bloxwich Town Deal	4,000,000.00	2,877,888.36	(1,122,111.64)	(1,122,111.64)	0.00
Land and Property Investment Fund	22,059,000.00	15,885,787.13	(6,173,212.87)	(6,173,212.87)	0.00
Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Reinvestment Digital Fund	3,205,974.00	1,853,261.24	(1,352,712.76)	(1,352,712.76)	0.00
Growing Places Fund	2,790,771.00	2,066,966.69	(723,804.31)	(723,804.31)	0.00
Changing Places (Toilets)	241,412.00	236,861.90	(4,550.10)	(4,550.10)	0.00
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	526,099.00	160,938.21	(365,160.79)	(365,160.79)	0.00
Civic/council house decarbonisation	2,339,062.00	2,339,062.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION EXTERNALLY FUNDED TOTAL	35,162,318.00	25,420,765.53	(9,741,552.47)	(9,741,552.47)	0.00
TOTAL EXTERNALLY FUNDED SCHEMES	84,040,016.00	64,349,023.41	(19,690,992.59)	(19,690,992.59)	0.00

Appendix 7 – Performance data relating to demand within Children’s Services

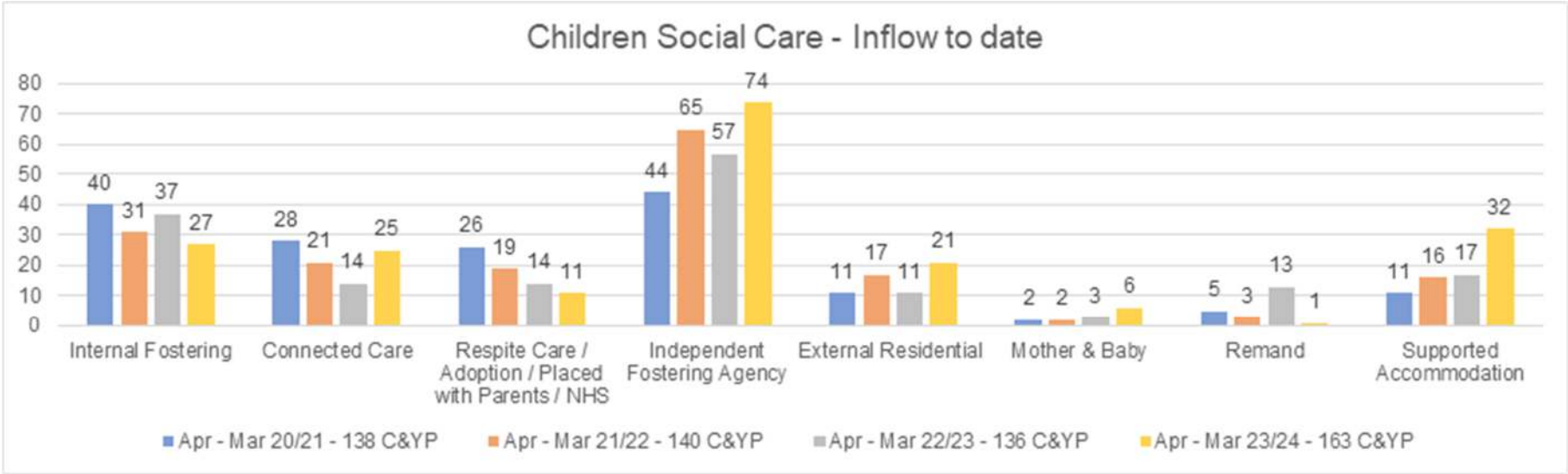
Number of Children in Care (CiC) by Placement Type

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Apr 23/24	May 23/24	Jun 23/24	Jul 23/24	Aug 23/24	Sep 23/24	Oct 23/24	Nov 23/24	Dec 23/24	Jan 23/24	Feb 23/24	Mar 23/24
Total CiC	671	673	661	651	653	653	645	644	650	653	654	658	655	655	659	663

As at the end of March 2024, there was 663 children in care in Walsall, an increase of 12 C&YP since Mar 23. In addition to this increase, there are continuing placement sufficiency pressures which has resulted in a change in the mix of placement types. The introduction of new legislation for non-Ofsted registered placements; a rising number of large sibling groups; an increasing number of complex children; together with a higher proportion of children in care over the age of 15 are all factors which have contributed to the increased demand within the market.



The graph above shows how the reliance on higher cost placements has increased over the 12 month and 4-year period, with the number of IFA placements increasing from 236 in 2022/23 to 241 in March 24, and the number of External Residential placements increasing from 70 to 76 over the same period. In comparison reliance on lower cost placements has reduced, with the number of Internal Fostering placements decreasing from 117 to 107. This increased reliance on these placement types is also seen within the inflow figures for this financial year. The table below illustrates the CiC inflow to date for 2023/24 and the prior three-year inflow trends:



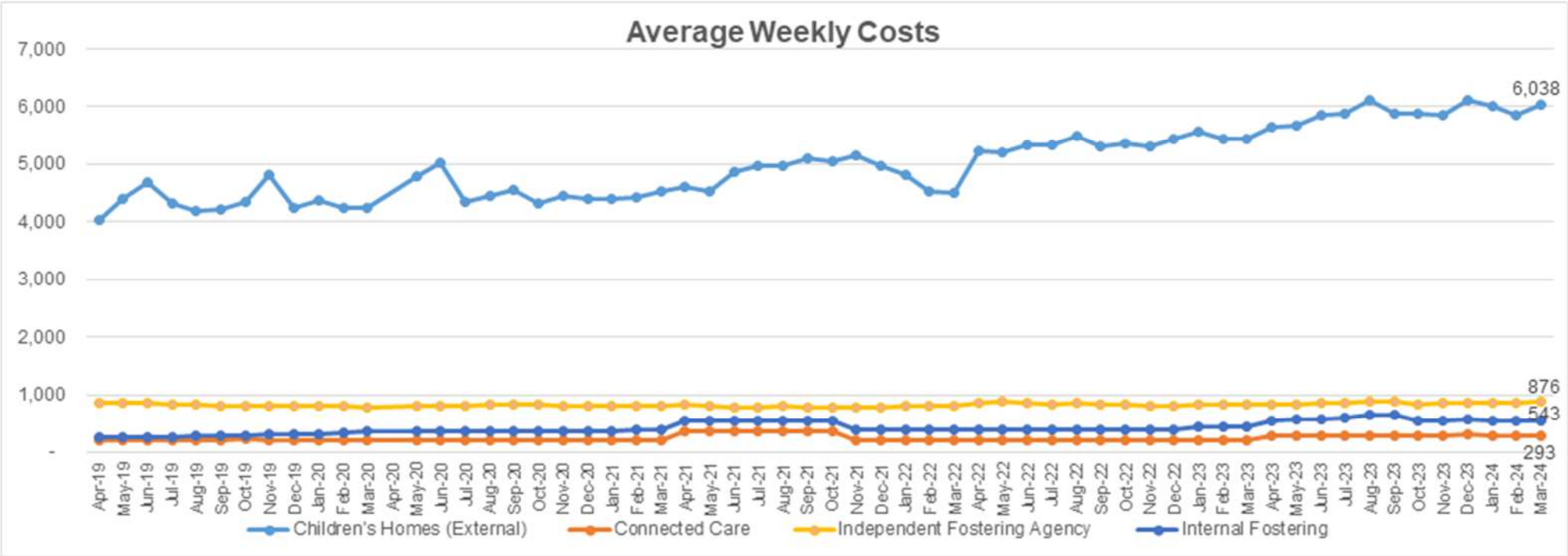
As the chart demonstrates above, the number of children and young people (C&YP) entering care up to this point in the year, is higher than prior 3 years at 163, in comparison to 136 in 2022/23, 140 in 2021/22 and 138 in 2020/21. It also demonstrates how there is an increased reliance for independent fostering agency (IFA) and external children’s homes placements this financial year in comparison to previous years. To note, the growth in supported accommodation placements primarily relates to the increased intake of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (USAC) (16 C&YP), however this pressure has been offset by additional UASC income.

This has been further impacted by a reduced number of children leaving care compared to the prior three financial years. As at the end of March, there has been 94 C&YP leave care, in comparison to 103 in 2022/23, 95 in 2021/22 and 96 in 2020/21. To note, this excludes those that have turned 18 as the financial impact of these have been considered within the forecast and budget.

This increased net inflow/ outflow and change in reliance of placement types is over and above the trends that have been seen in prior years, and the allocated inflow/ outflow budget, and has therefore created a pressure to date of £2.44m. This pressure has been partially offset by corporate reserves of £750k.

Children's services have undertaken remedial action to understand and analyse the increases seen and to embed new ways or working across early help and children's social care seeking to strengthen support provided at an earlier opportunity. There will be continued focus on understanding and pre-empting the needs of children requiring support, so these children can be targeted and needs can be met at the earliest opportunity. The increased inflow pressure has also been impacted through continued increases to the average weekly cost.

The chart below shows the average weekly cost of the four most utilised placement types for Walsall's CiC. The average weekly cost for an external residential placement has significantly increased from £4k to £6k (49%) over the last 4 financial years, and from £5.6k 12 months ago. This is significantly higher than the average weekly cost of an Internal Fostering placement of £543 p/w and Connected Care placement of £293 p/w.

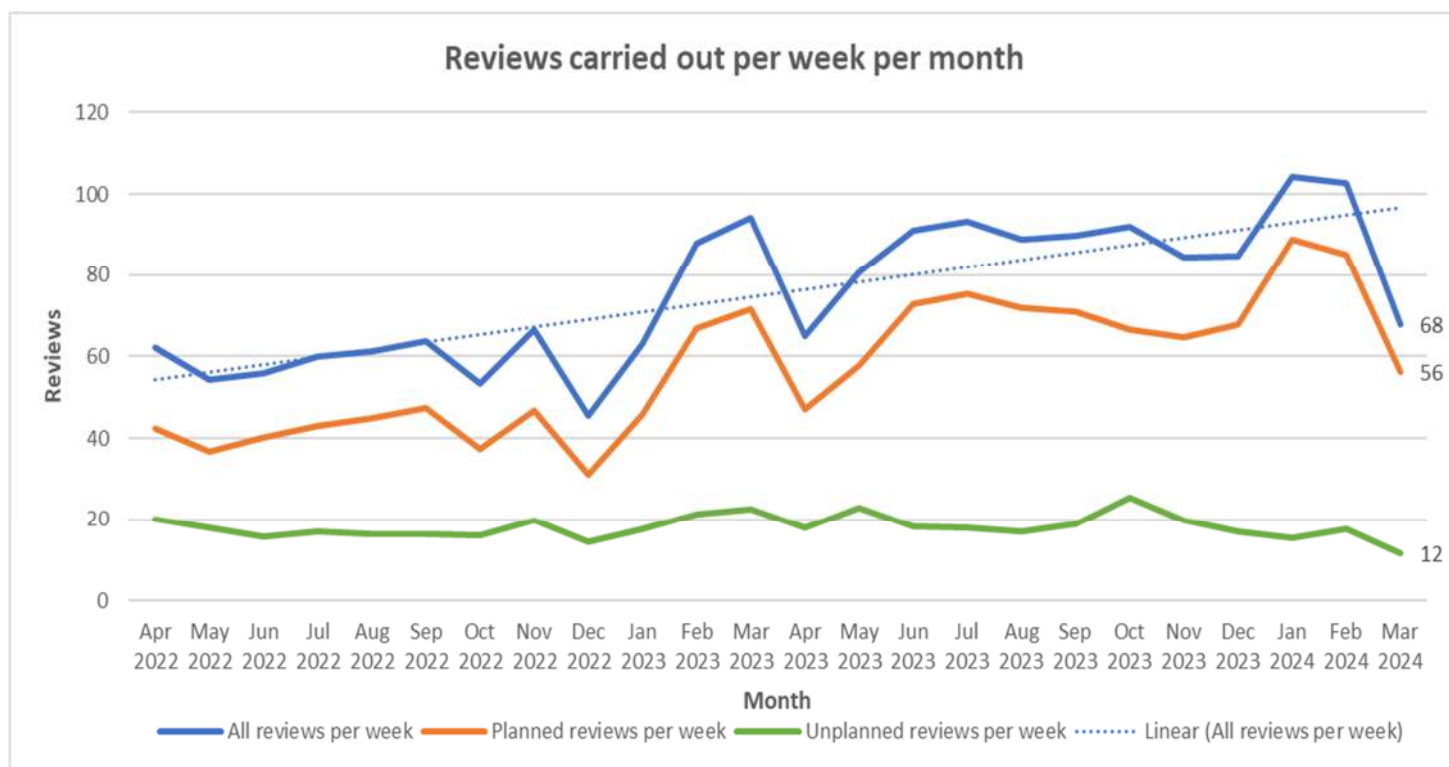


In recognition of the financial impacts above, the service has focussed on stepping C&YP down to lower cost placements where possible. To date there has been 134 placement step downs with further step downs planned for the remainder of the financial year. These cost reductions have reduced the impact of the placement breakdowns and step ups seen to date, which have been financially heightened due to the placement sufficiency issues described above.

Appendix 8 – Performance data relating to demand within Adult Social Care

Reviews

Service users should receive a minimum of one planned review in a 12-month period, additionally unplanned reviews take place for several reasons. The rate of average weekly reviews in February 2024 was 103, compared to 88 in February 2023. The rate dipped in March 2024 to 68, compared to 94 in March 2023, but it has been consistently higher since February 2023 as shown in the graph below.



For further information, in February - March 2023 75.9% of reviews were planned and in February - March 2024 82.9% were planned.

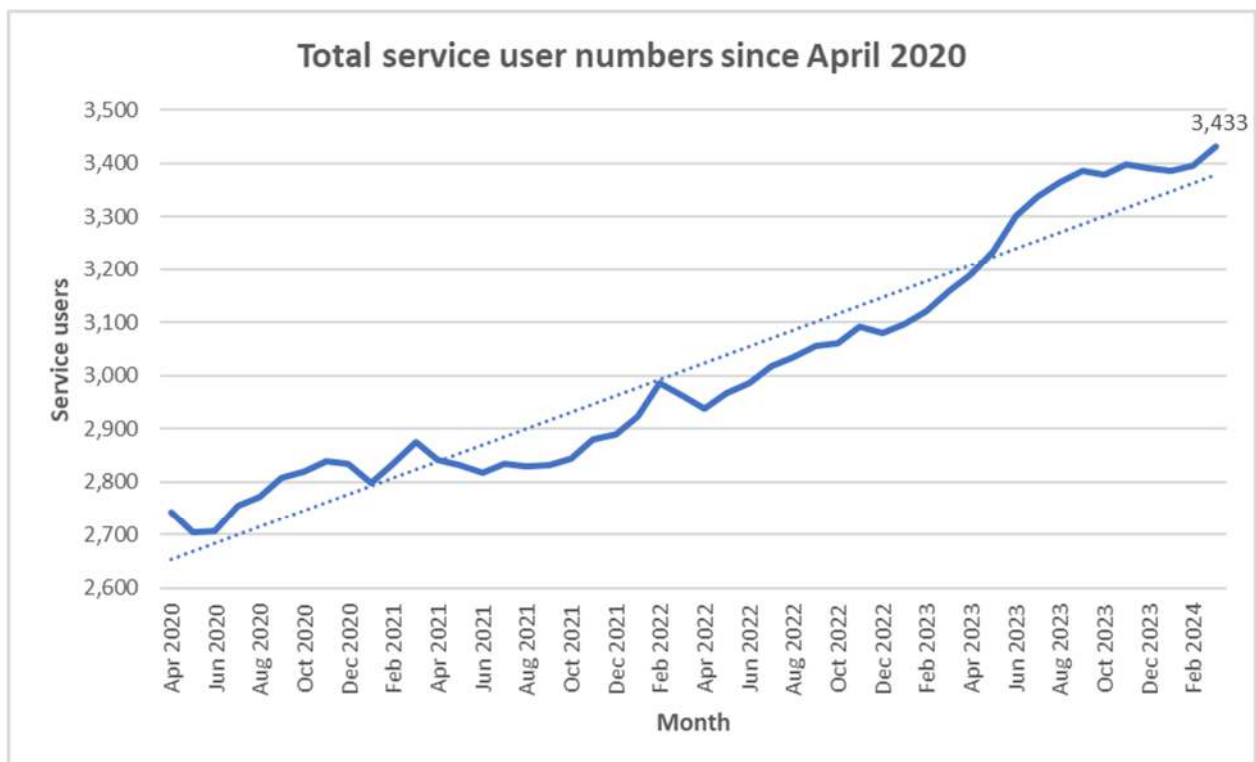
A piece of work is currently underway to assess the impact of reviews in the current year. Previously reported figures were based on data held within a performance dashboard but there is some doubt about the validity of that information. This dashboard has now been revised and is under review. In the meantime, finance are working to evaluate the impact through a manual data analysis exercise.

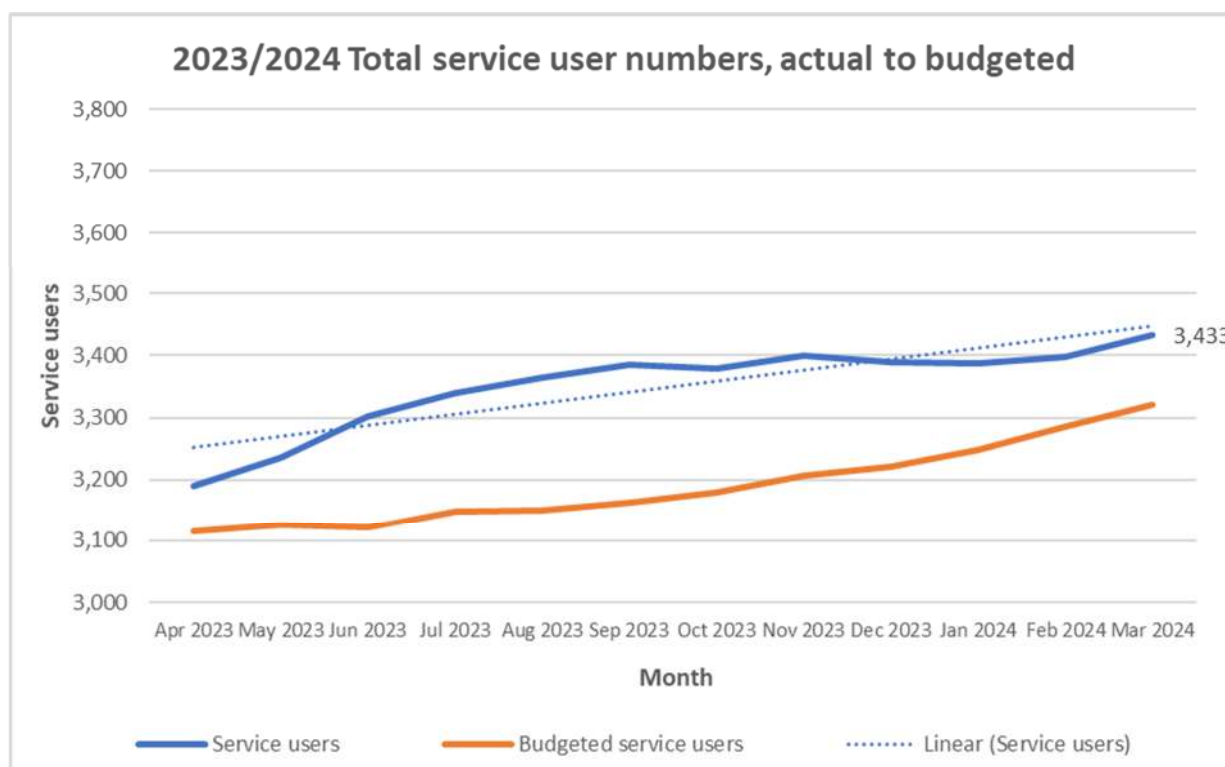
Service User Numbers

	Budgeted (Apr to Mar)			Actual (Apr to Mar)			Variance (Apr to Mar)		
	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average
New service users	1,589	21,407,831	13,473	1,749	27,119,656	15,506	160	5,711,825	
Deceased service users	(769)	(9,604,933)	12,490	(605)	(9,025,787)	14,919	164	579,146	
Ended service users	(639)	(10,148,985)	15,883	(837)	(9,423,345)	11,258	(198)	725,640	
TOTALS	181	1,653,913		307	8,670,524		126	7,016,611	

The table shows that the number of new service users on 31st March 2024 is 160 higher than had been budgeted, based on historical trends. There are 164 less client deaths than budgeted, though there are 198 more ended users than budgeted. Overall, there are 126 more service users in receipt of care than budgeted. Average new user costs have been higher than budgeted, whilst average ended user savings have been lower than budgeted.

Some work has been carried out to identify the factors behind these lower numbers and part of the reasons include fewer deaths occurring in Walsall for the same period this year when compared to last year, fewer service users transferring to 100% health funding (S117) and fewer service users becoming self-funding.





The above graph shows that the difference between budgeted number of clients and actual clients peaked in September 2023.

Average costs

The last graph shows the average, full year costs for each care setting for the most recent 12-month period. The averages for 2022/23 have been increased by the 2023/24 uplift percentages to allow for a true comparison between the two years.

The two lower cost settings are domiciliary care and direct payments, and these are the two reporting the most stable average costs with a 2.11% and 2.45% increase, respectively.

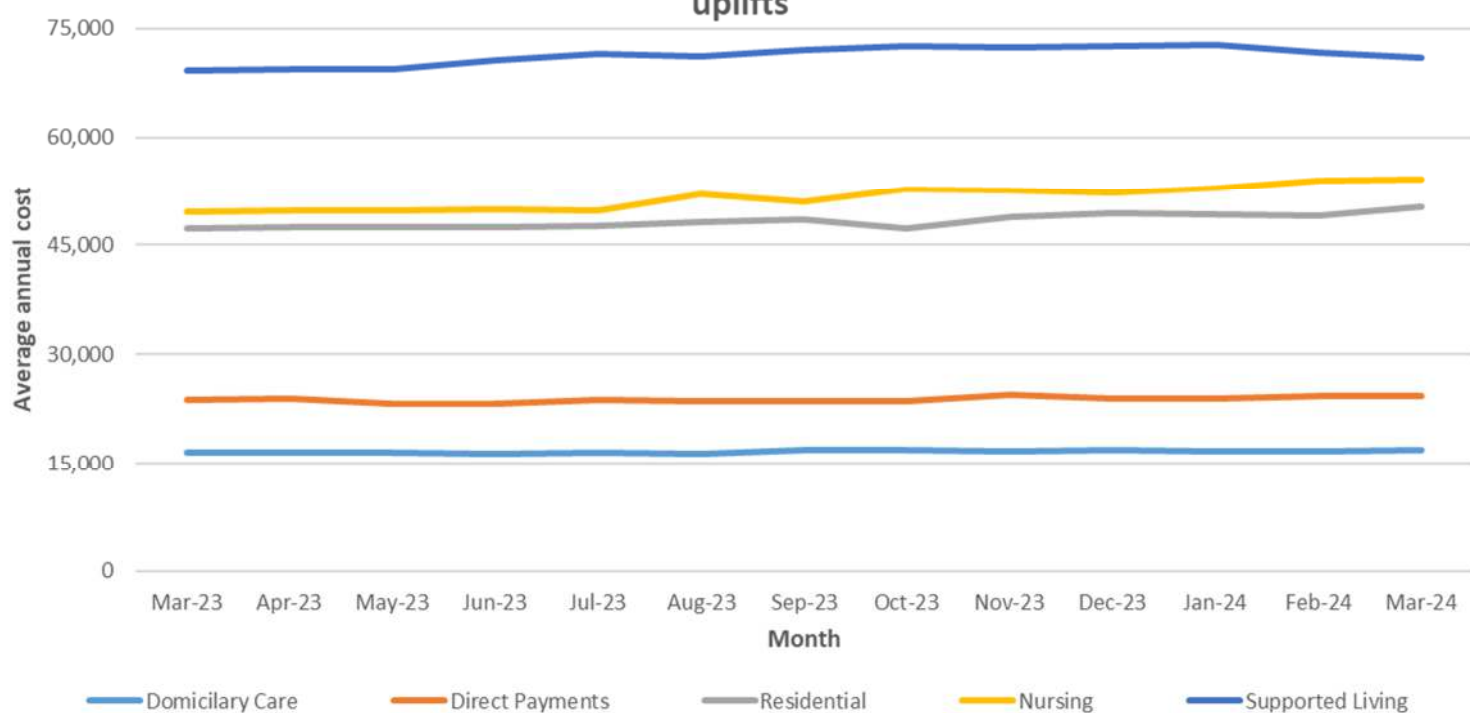
Conversely, the higher cost settings are residential and nursing care (shown as separate lines) and supported living. Residential and nursing care show the largest increase in average costs at 6.55% and 9.45%, respectively. However, the overall year-on-year increase for supported living is only 2.37%.

The largest increase has been seen in nursing care; additional work is required to understand the cohort that is contributing to this increase.

These increases are likely to be due to several factors.

- The effect of increases following review
- Prices pressures from new residential and nursing placements
- Possible increase due to fewer service users leaving care, these are generally the higher cost packages and placements due to increased length of care, complexity, and cost, with fewer of these there is the likelihood that they are part of the reason for increasing average costs.

Average annual costs by care setting - 2022/2023 restated with 2023/2024 uplifts



Care Setting	Mar 2023	Mar 2024	Change £	Change %
Domiciliary Care	16,437	16,784	347	2.11%
Direct Payments	23,689	24,269	580	2.45%
Residential	47,275	50,371	3,096	6.55%
Nursing	49,517	54,198	4,681	9.45%
Supported Living	69,271	70,914	1,643	2.37%

Appendix 9 Financial Health Indicators at 31 March 2024

Treasury Management	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)			
- Excluding other local authorities	3.82%	4.21%	4.13%
- Including other local authorities	3.87%	4.33%	4.16%
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	3.81%	5.00%	4.20%
Net Borrowing Costs / Council Tax Requirement and NNDR contribution	7.21%	12.50%	1.55%
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	390.19	433.114	399.719
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	474.38	465.410	465.410
Investment Rate Average (excl Property fund)	1.81%	3.48%	4.94%

Balance Sheet Ratios	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (draft)
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	2.39	2.01	1.96	1.74	1.86
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	0.73	1.02	1.07	0.77	0.85
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue (Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue)	1.43	1.83	1.49	1.19	1.15
Long Term Assets: Long Term Borrowing	1.86	1.83	2.14	2.73	2.72
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.07

Revenues Performance % collected for financial year	2021/22 Actual Collected in total as at 31.03.24	2022/23 Actual Collected in total as at 31.03.24	2023/24	
			Profiled 2023/24	Actual 2023/24
Council tax %	96.0%	95.2%	92.3%	92.3%
Total Council Tax collected	£147,031,065	£151,343,647	£153,200,000	£153,193,801
National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) %	98.0%	97.8%	97.5%	96.9%
Total NNDR collected	£59,542,885	£69,979,035	£68,700,000	£68,261,324

Debtors and Creditors Performance	2022/23 Actual	2023/24	
		Target	Actual
Sundry Debtors Collection – Average number of days to collect debt	25 days	24 days	25 days
Average number of days to process creditor payments*	6.5 days	8 days	5 days

Management of Resources	2023/24		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	76,864,476	90,266,195	13,401,719
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	81,704,822	87,462,134	5,757,312
- Customer Engagement	12,147,505	12,693,031	545,526
Economy and Environment	45,613,075	44,668,154	(944,921)
Resources and Transformation	50,925,395	50,489,250	(436,145)
Council Wide	(5,546,678)	(9,777,391)	(19,179,688)
NNDR/Top Up	(117,545,553)	(117,545,553)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	144,163,042	158,255,820	(856,198)
General Reserves	N/A	19,558,671	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	60,253,122	26,407,323	(33,845,799)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	84,040,016	64,349,023	(19,690,993)
Total Capital Expenditure	144,293,138	90,756,346	(53,536,792)
Capital Receipts	2,925,000	2,253,067	(671,933)

Management of Resources	2022/23		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	68,746,416	73,746,671	5,000,255
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	81,911,515	91,219,606	9,308,091
- Customer Engagement	18,295,852	17,176,773	(1,119,079)
Economy and Environment	59,961,295	56,599,832	(3,361,463)
Resources and Transformation	31,681,780	30,302,297	(1,379,483)
Capital Financing	(14,636,398)	(20,935,898)	(6,299,500)
Central budgets	(107,535,211)	(110,036,285)	(2,501,074)
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	138,425,249	138,072,997	(352,253)
General Reserves	N/A	18,702,473	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	95,655,174	33,746,210	(61,908,964)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	138,982,534	61,696,354	(77,286,180)
Total Capital Expenditure	234,637,708	95,442,564	(139,195,144)
Capital Receipts	2,500,000	2,174,164	(325,836)

What this tells us

Treasury Management	
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)	The average interest rate we are paying on the money we have borrowed compared to our target.
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	Shows how a 1% increase in interest rates would affect the total interest cost to the council.
Net Borrowing Costs / Tax Requirement	Borrowing not financed by a grant from government, as a proportion of our Net Revenue Expenditure
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	How much money we currently borrow to finance our capital programme.
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	The maximum amount of debt we should have at any one time
Investment Rate Average	The average interest rate we are receiving on the money we have invested.

Balance Sheet Ratios	
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	Our ability to meet our liabilities
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	If our reserves are adequate to meet potential future variations.
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue Using only council tax for tax revenue Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue	The effect of long term borrowing on our budget.
Long Term Borrowing: Long Term Assets	This allows us to understand the relationship between the money we borrow and the assets we have as they both change over time.
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	If school's reserves are at an appropriate level.

Revenues Performance	
% Collected for Financial Year	As a percentage the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that its related to, but this won't be included in this figure
Council Tax (%)	
National Non Domestic Rate (%)	As a percentage the amount of Business rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it related to.
Total Council Tax Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Total NNDR Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of Business Rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Sundry Debtors Collection Average number of days to collect debt	How long on average it takes us to collect money owed to us.
Average number of days to process creditors payments	How long on average it takes to pay our bills.

Management of Resources	
Service Analysis	
Children's Services Economy and Environment Adult Social Care Resources and Transformation Council Wide	Shows our forecast for how much we will spend on these services compared to what we planned and compared to how much we spent in the previous year.
General Reserves	Our forecast year end position on reserves against our opening balance.
Contingency	How much we have set aside and for unplanned expenditure, and how much we have left to spend.
Capital Expenditure	Forecast of our spend on capital programmes against our target
Capital Receipts	Forecast of how much money we expect to receive from selling some of our assets, against our target.

Appendix 10 - Prudential Indicators as at 31st March 2024

Prudential Indicator		Actual	Target	Actual Position at 31-March-24	Variance to target	
		2022/23	2023/24			
		£m	£m	£m	Numerical Variance	% Variance
Prl 1	Capital Expenditure	96.314	144.290	90.760	-53.53	-37%
This indicator is required to inform the council of capital spending plans, it is the duty of a local authority to determine and keep under review the amount that it can afford to allocate to capital expenditure. Capital expenditure may be funded by grant, capital receipts and borrowing.						
Prl 2	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	4.05%	8.86%	4.88 %	-3.98	-45%
Financing costs - Divided by (Interest charged on loans Less Interest earned on investments)		Budget requirement (Revenue Support Grant + NNDR +Council Tax)		The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream (General Fund) as a %		
Prl 3	Estimates of the incremental impact of new capital investment decisions on Council Tax	£43.02	£89.66	£89.66	0.00	0%
This is a notional amount indicating the amount of council tax band D that is affected by the capital programme in the budget report compared to existing approved commitments and current plans.						
Prl 4	Capital Financing Requirement	390.185	433.114	433.114	0.00	0%
This represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic and future capital expenditure. It is updated at end of the financial year.						
Prl 5	Authorised Limit for external debt	474.380	465.410	465.410	0.00	0%
The council may not breach the limit it sets, so it is important to allow prudent room for uncertain cash flow movements and borrowing in advance of future need.						
Prl 6	Operational Limit for external debt	431.250	423.100	423.100	0.00	0%
This has been set at the level of the capital financing requirement less the CFR items relating PFI and finance leases.						
Prl 7	Gross Borrowing exceeds capital financing requirement	No	No	No		
The CFR represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic capital expenditure. Actual net borrowing should be lower than this because of strong positive cash flow and balances. It would be a cause for concern if net borrowing exceeded CFR.						
Prl 8	Authority has adopted CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management	Yes	Yes	Yes		
To ensure that treasury management activity is carried out within best professional practice.						

Prl 9	Total principle sums invested for longer than 364 days must not exceed	5.0	25.0	0.0	
The council is at risk when lending temporarily surplus cash. The risk is limited by investing surplus cash in specified investments and by applying lending limits and high credit worthiness. These are kept under constant review.					
Prudential Indicator continued		Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual 2022/23	Actual Position at 31-March-2024
Prl 10	Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	95.00%	40.00%	98.14%	88.03%
Prl 11	Variable Interest Rate Exposure	45.00%	0.00%	1.86%	11.97%
Prl 12	Maturity Structure of Borrowing				
	Under 12 months	25.00%	0.00%	12.84%	12.85%
	12 months and within 24 months	25.00%	0.00%	12.24%	3.95%
	24 months and within 5 years	40.00%	0.00%	20.25%	24.69%
	5 years and within 10 years	50.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	10 years and above	85.00%	30.00%	54.67%	58.51%

Local Indicators as at 31st March 2024

Local Indicators		Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Actual Position as at 31-March- 2024	Variance to target		Met
					Numerical Variance	% Variance	
L1	Full compliance with prudential code	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Y
L2	Average length of debt	17.13	Lower Limit 15 years, Upper limit 25 years	17.74	-	-	Y
This is a maturity measure and ideally should relate to the average lifespan of assets.							
L3a	Financing costs as a % of council tax requirement	10.64%	20.00%	2.31%	-17.69	-88.43%	Y
L3b	Financing costs as a % of tax revenues	7.21%	12.50%	1.55%	-10.95	-87.63%	Y
These are a variation to Prl 3 excluding investment income and including MRP (amount set aside to repay debt costs). The target figure of 12.5% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favorable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.							
L4	Net actual debt vs. operational debt	61.42%	85.00%	58.61%	-26.39	-31.04%	Y
This assists the monitoring of the authority's debt position.							
L5	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding excluding OLA	3.82%	4.21%	4.13%	0.08	2.02%	Y
L6	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding including OLA	3.87%	4.33%	4.16%	0.17	3.82%	Y
The measure should be as low as possible. Other Local Authority debt (OLA) is managed on our behalf by Dudley council.							

L7	Gearing effect of 1% increase in interest rate	3.81%	5.00%	4.20%	0.04%	This would increase the average interest rate payable from 4.16% shown in L6 to 4.20%	Y
This relates risk management principles to the monitoring of the TM strategy. It measures the effect of a change in interest rates and the effect it may have on the capital financing costs.							
L8	Average interest rate received on STI vs. At Call rate	-11.22%	35.00%	1.02%	-33.98	-97.10%	N
L9a	AT call investments	2.05%	2.50%	4.92%	2.42	96.80%	Y
L9b	Short Term Investments	1.82%	3.75%	4.97%	1.22	32.53%	Y
L9c	Long Term Investments	0.83%	4.00%	5.00%	1.00	25.00%	Y
L9d	Property Fund Investments	3.89%	3.56%	4.47%	0.91	25.56%	Y
L10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and AT call)	1.89%	3.39%	4.94%	1.55	45.86%	Y
L11a	Average rate on all investments (ex. Property fund)	1.81%	3.48%	4.94%	1.46	42.04%	Y
L11b	Average rate on all investments (inc. property fund)	2.11%	4.54%	4.83%	0.29	6.47%	Y
L12	% daily bank balances within target range	99%	99%	99%	0.00	0.00%	Y
This measures how good our daily cash flow prediction is. A figure of 98% and above indicates a high level of accuracy.							

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 and approach to Budget Setting for 2025/26

Portfolio: Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader - Finance (Lead Portfolio)

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on the forecast corporate financial position for 2024/25, based on emerging pressures as at June 2024, and actions being taken to address this to ensure the council outturns on budget.
- 1.2 To set out our approach and timeline for the 2025/26 budget process.
- 1.3 To seek approval for changes to the Medium-Term Financial Framework (MTFF).

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a summary position on the draft forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25 including cost pressures, particularly within Adult Social Care and Children's Services resulting in a potential spend above budget of £14.47m prior to existing mitigation actions identified to date of £5.42m, reducing this figure to £9.05m. Work is in hand to identify further actions to bring the position in line with budget and ensure a balanced outturn is delivered by 31 March 2025.
- 2.2 In relation to the capital programme, the report includes a number of proposed amendments for approval as set out in section 4.21 of the report, including known reprofiling of spend across the programme. The forecast, after these amendments is predicted to be on budget.
- 2.3 This report also sets out:
 - Performance against an agreed set of financial health indicators, which are forecast to be achieved;
 - Performance against statutory and local prudential indicators, which are forecast to be achieved;
 - The process and timeline for the 2025/26 budget process;
 - Work underway to update the medium term financial outlook (MTFO);

- An updated Medium Term Financial Framework, the framework within which the council's financial planning and management is undertaken, and minor changes to the Tax strategy. It is good practice to regularly review and update key strategic documents and obtain formal Cabinet approval.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note potential forecast revenue spend above budget of £9.05m, noting that further actions are being taken to address this potential position. A detailed plan will be reported to Cabinet in October, outlining actions to be taken.
- 3.2 Note that there are additionally high risks of £11.24m to the revenue forecast identified within services as set out in Table 2. These risks are actively being monitored and action is being taken to reduce / eliminate them where possible.
- 3.3 Note the progress on savings approved for 2024/25 as detailed in section 4.13 and 4.14.
- 3.4 Note the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) action plan position as detailed in sections 4.15 to 4.19.
- 3.5 Approve amendments to the capital programme as set out in section 4.21, including the rephrasing of capital programme to 2025/26 at Appendix 6.
- 3.6 Note that the forecast for the capital programme is predicted on budget.
- 3.7 Approve the release of £875k from the development pool for the highways maintenance capital programme and detailed in sections 4.25 to 4.26.
- 3.8 Approve the release of £1.73m from the development pool to support the construction of a new road bridge over the Wyrley and Essington canal as detailed in sections 4.27 to 4.30.
- 3.9 Approve the release of £860k from the development pool to fund additional costs of enabling support services / one source programme as detailed in sections 4.31 to 4.32.
- 3.10 Note financial health indicator performance as set out in sections 4.33 to 4.38 and Appendix 8.
- 3.11 Note the prudential indicators as set out in section 4.39 to 4.41 and Appendix 9.
- 3.12 Approve the write off of debt as detailed in section 4.42.
- 3.13 Note the work underway to update to the medium term financial outlook and approve the approach for setting the 2025/26 budget, as set out in sections 4.43 to 4.52, aligned to the Council Plan, Budget Framework and Proud Promises.
- 3.14 Approve the updated Medium Term Financial Framework as set out in section 4.53.

4. Know – Context

- 4.1 The council is legally required to operate within a balanced budget, to operate within financial controls and to deliver approved budget savings. The cost-of-living impact is also causing pressures, particularly in relation to the council's costs in relation to energy and supplies and contract uplifts especially within adult social care and children's services.

Revenue Forecast 2024/25 - Service Pressures

- 4.2 Walsall Council has a track record of managing financial pressures and action has been taken to mitigate current and future cost pressures. The council is experiencing ongoing pressures in relation to the cost of living impact, on contracts/third party spend in particular, and where known and quantifiable, the financial impact of this is included within the forecast position. As a result of the pressures, mitigating actions are being instigated, including services taking action to address them, use of appropriate earmarked reserves, etc. All action will therefore be reported alongside impact to ensure a balanced budget at outturn.
- 4.3 The current council wide forecast shows a number of pressures which, if not managed, could lead to a potential overspend of c£9.05m against budget, as summarised by directorate in Table 1. This includes mitigating actions identified to date of £5.42m. Further work is on-going to identify further actions to ensure a balanced budget for 2024/25.
- 4.4 The year-end forecast includes the use of earmarked reserves of £37.97m and transfers to earmarked reserves of £9.15m, as detailed at Appendix 2. Transfer from/use of earmarked reserves are created for specified purposes. These are all planned to be used, although the period over which they are to be used and the profiling of that use may vary. This results in projected closing earmarked reserves of £146.00m as shown in Table 3.
- 4.5 This reported position follows a full detailed monitoring review of forecast expenditure and income, alongside review of delivery of budgeted efficiencies and additional risks not currently included in the financial position. The key highlights are as follows:
- Demand in Adult Care above the budgeted level and increases in existing placement costs have created a pressure of £2.79m.
 - Home to School Transport budget pressures as a result of increased demand and costs from providers total £2.51m.
 - Forecast delayed delivery of budget savings and efficiencies have created a pressure of £5.90m. In addition to this, c£10m of savings are classified as amber and therefore at risk of non-delivery in 2024/25.
 - There are additional high risks around user flow and user costs in Adult Social Care and children in care (as per Table 2). Close monitoring of this will continue and be reported accordingly.

Table 1: Forecast revenue analysis 2024/25 by Directorate – June 2024

Directorate	Net Budget	Year-end forecast prior to transfer to / (from) earmarked reserves	Year-end variance to budget prior to transfer / (From) earmarked reserves	Use of earmarked reserves	Transfer to earmarked reserves	Year-end forecast prior to mitigating actions	Mitigating Actions	Year-end forecast including all mitigating actions
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	91.67	102.03	10.36	(3.73)	0.19	6.82	(0.81)	6.01
Children's Services & Education	89.30	95.33	6.03	(1.93)	0.24	4.33	(0.80)	3.53
Economy, Environment & Communities	41.34	46.86	5.51	(2.82)	0.28	2.97	(0.33)	2.64
Resources & Transformation	44.34	54.69	10.36	(13.93)	3.08	(0.49)	0.00	(0.49)
Capital Financing	27.91	22.78	(5.12)	(0.21)	5.33	0.00	(2.64)	(2.64)
Services Position	294.56	321.69	27.13	(22.62)	9.13	13.63	(4.58)	9.05
Central budgets	(142.52)	(126.35)	16.17	(15.35)	0.02	0.84	(0.84)	0.00
Total council tax requirement	152.03	195.33	43.30	(37.97)	9.15	14.47	(5.42)	9.05

Table 2: Summary of High Risks	
Details of Risk	Potential Cost of Risk £m
Adult Social Care & Public Health	
Increased demand for care services if client in/ outflow trends seen in 2024/25 are different to budgeted assumptions	2.76
Increased changes to existing service user costs if trends seen in 2024/2025 to date continue for the remainder of the year	1.86
Community reablement – awaiting confirmation of benefit realisation post implementation. The assumption remains that the service will commence in November 2024.	0.42
Impact of backdating information within Mosaic. Risk of active/placements with financial commitments not yet recorded on the database and therefore omitted from the current forecast position	0.20
Total Adult Social Care & Public Health	5.24
Children's & Education	
Increased inflow/ outflow pressures – The financial impact of children entering and leaving care in 2023/24 was significantly higher than that of previous years, if these rates were to continue there could be an additional pressure in year.	1.23
Home to School transport increase in demand - In 2023/24, demand on the service increased by 28% compared to expected growth of 14%. This is linked to the increase in EHCPs seen in this year. The current forecast expects demand for EHCP growth to reduce compared to last year given the implementation of the DSG management plan however, if growth did replicate levels seen in 2023/24 costs could increase.	0.58
Placement moves – The financial impact of placement moves in 2023/24 was significantly higher than that of previous years, if these rates were to continue there could be 1.54a further pressure in year.	0.97
Increase in placement costs / level of support – During 23/24, there was a continuing number of cases whose level in support increased creating a pressure in year. If this were to materialise again in 24/25, there could be a further pressure	1.54
Home to School transport increase in average cost - The current forecast assumes inflation increases for 24/25 of circa 5% based on average inflation rates and evidence of the market stabilising going forward	0.42
Increased legal fees in line with prior years. It is expected that the DFJ pilot and FFC pathfinder legal fees can be reduced.	0.10
Total Children's & Education	4.84
Economy, Environment and Communities	
Additional property maintenance costs	1.00
Total Economy, Environment and Communities	1.00
Resources and Transformation	
Increased demand in Bed and Breakfast services	0.16
Total Resources and Transformation	0.16
TOTAL HIGH RISKS	11.24

Table 3: Earmarked Reserves				
	Opening Balance 01/04/24	Transfers from Reserves	Transfers to Reserves	Closing Balance 31/03/25
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Treasury Reserves	34.44	(1.97)	5.33	37.81
Grant / Contributions received in advance	17.33	(6.40)	0.34	11.28
Improvement projects	24.57	(11.08)	3.35	16.84
Cost Pressures	20.11	(9.56)	0.00	10.55
Council Liabilities	45.24	(7.25)	0.00	37.98
Covid-19 grants	0.68	(0.22)	0.00	0.46
Public Finance Initiatives	16.02	(0.51)	0.00	15.51
Risk	10.00	(0.28)	0.00	9.72
Other	6.43	(0.69)	0.12	5.86
Total	174.83	(37.97)	9.15	146.00

Reserves are categorised for the purposes of reporting as follows:

- **Treasury reserves.** These reserves are to minimise the impact of interest rate changes and finance early redemption of loans to reduce the council's future interest exposure;
- **Grants / contributions received in advance.** This is where the council has received money in advance of the next accounting period or covers more than one accounting period. These amounts will be spent in line with the grant conditions;
- **Improvement projects.** These reserves are to finance service modernisation; specific projects such as pilot street cleansing initiatives, Cloud services, Oracle development, economic growth programme; and costs in relation to the council's transformation programme;
- **Cost pressures.** To include review of working practices including blended working, fluctuations in service demand such as in adult social care, crisis support and children in care;
- **Council liabilities.** These reserves cover expenditure where the council has a legal obligation to pay costs, such as equal pay claims and redundancies. In addition to these there are reserves for business rate appeals, pensions and insurance claims;
- **Covid-19 grants.** The carry forward of specific government grants to cover Covid pressures, including expanded retail relief for businesses;
- **Public Finance Initiatives.** Liabilities for our PFI's with Street Lighting and St Thomas More;
- **Risk.** To cover unforeseen risks in 2024/25 at the time the budget was set;
- **Other.** These reserves are to support a wide range of future costs such as partnership working with other external bodies.

The following sections provide more detail on directorate pressures and actions being taken to address these.

4.6 Adults Social Care - £6.82m after use of reserves (prior to mitigating actions).

The main reasons for the increase in overspend are:

- £4.23m relating to possible non delivery of approved savings as detailed at Appendix 3.
- £1.62m – Inflow/attrition/backdating - Increase due to net inflow of new, deceased and ended clients. This increase is a combined impact of new clients above budgeted levels combined with being placed at a higher average cost than originally budgeted and the number of expected deaths being significantly lower than the budgeted trends.
- £1.17m – Changes in existing placement costs - Net increase due to the impact of changes to existing client packages undertaken during from April to May 2024.
- (£0.47m) - Reduction in s117 expenditure forecast and an increase in health income.
- £0.16m - Shortfall in income associated with learning disabilities joint funding arrangements when compared to Section 75 arrangement with Walsall Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- £0.11m – Due to increasing demand for equipment within the integrated equipment store service.

Risks

There are also high risks of £5.24m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, detailed in Table 2 above.

Performance data on adult social care demand is attached at Appendix 5.

4.7 Public Health

The service is forecast to be on budget after the net use of transfer to reserves.

4.8 Children's Services and Education £4.33m after use of and transfers to reserves (prior to mitigating actions)

The main reason the overspend is:

- £0.62m - Children's social care demand, further splits as follows:
 - £0.14m – increase in support / placement costs for two young people.
 - £0.28m – in year impact of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) retender for those placements below the proposed price cap and entering the next age bracket during 24/25.
 - (£0.30m) – net reduction in inflow/ outflow for May compared to budget (£654k) following the realisation of savings.
 - £0.18m – net impact of placement moves during May – primarily linked to three step ups to external residential from placed with parents / internal residential.
 - £0.31m – increase in the future placement moves forecast following an increase in month and rise in average costs.

- £0.40m – Children’s social care core, further split as follows:
 - £0.11m - section 17 costs linked to reliance on Kinver Care & Prospero. This is assumed until September 2024 when the implementation of the Pathfinder Programme should mitigate the need to continue to use these providers for this function and alternative provision identified.
 - £0.14m – Staffing pressures across the directorate including the use of agency staff to backfill temporary management arrangements and increased staffing costs linked to the increased sibling groups and demand on the services.
 - £0.07m - costs linked to occupational therapy equipment.
 - £0.09m – Regional adoption agency contract increase for 2024/25 and increased costs on the translations fees service.
- £2.51m (Access and Inclusion) - due to the impact of increased demand for home to school transport in 2023/24 over and above budget (28% increase vs 14% budgeted) and increase in average costs linked to market pressures.
- £0.41m (Early Help) - short breaks costs of which £284k relates to children in care demand cost avoidance and the remaining £124k is increased demand and complexity of children using the placements. The service are continuing to work to ensure service provided is appropriate and health contributions are agreed and received where possible.

Risks

There are also high risks totalling £4.84m which are detailed in Table 2 above, which could impact the forecast position should they materialise.

Performance data on children in care is attached at Appendix 4.

4.9 *Economy, Environment and Communities - £2.97m overspend after use of and transfers to reserves (prior to mitigating actions)*

The forecast position is a potential overspend of £2.97m after planned transfers to and from reserves. Mitigating actions have been identified of £330k reducing the overspend to £2.64m.

The main reasons for overspend are:

- £0.82m - due to under recovery of cremation income due to competitor and reduction in demand
- £0.18m - overspend on water bills for council buildings
- £0.79m - overspend on co-mingled waste costs
- £0.70m - overspend on internal cleaning and caretaking services
- £1.23m - relating to possible non delivery of approved savings as detailed at Appendix 3
- £0.15m – due to under recovery of market income
- (£0.15m) – over recovery of commercial shops and premises income
- (£0.83m) – over recovery on W2R energy from waste income and trade waste income

Also included in the forecast position is £1.71m income shortfall linked to the saddlers centre (£1.11m is linked to the connected gateway programme and £0.60m linked to loss of income due to vacant shops). This has been funded from corporate reserves.

Risks

There are also high risks of £1.00m which are detailed in Table 2 above.

4.10 *Resources and Transformation - (£459k) underspend after use of and transfers to reserves.*

The main reasons for the underspend are:

- (£0.15m) - Digital & technology services – underspend on salaries due to vacant posts
- (£0.09m) – Finance salary underspend partially offset with agency costs, training fees and recruitment expenses
- (£0.22m) – Salary underspends across the directorate including democratic services, electoral services, hubs, ABS, Human resources, corporate management team and the proud team.

Risks

There are also high risks of £0.16m which are detailed in Table 2 above.

4.11 *Capital Financing on budget after use of and transfer to reserves (prior to mitigating actions)*

Prior to any transfer to reserves the position is an underspend of £7.97m. The underspend is due to a reduction in borrowing costs and higher investment returns than expected. Of the total underspend £3.70m is to be transferred to the capital financing smoothing reserve to smooth known increases in borrowing costs from 2025/26 onwards and a further £1.64m transferred to the MRP equalisation reserve.

The remaining underspend of £2.64m is being used as mitigating action to support council wide pressures as set out in Appendix 2.

There is also use of the leasing reserve of £212k to cover forecast additional costs of the leasing programme.

4.12 *Central £840k overspend after use of and transfer to reserves (prior to mitigating actions).*

The overspend relates to forecast energy costs above budget which includes £200k saving which will not be achieved in year. This is fully mitigated from the use of the cost of living reserve.

Approved savings in 2024/25

- 4.13 The 2024/25 budget approved by Council on 22 February 2024 includes £20.1m of benefits realisation (savings) against Proud activity plus a further £5.17m of 2023/24 benefits approved to be carried forward for delivery in 2024/25, giving a total benefit figure of £25.27m to be achieved. Directors are required to ensure that service delivery plans are robustly implemented to fully deliver these in year.

- 4.14 There are currently £5.90m (23%) of benefits assessed as Red for delivery (at high risk of non-delivery), as shown in Appendix 3 along with the reason and identified mitigating actions to date totalling £1.12m of which £482k is ongoing. Savings assessed as Red are currently included within the forecast overspend for 2024/25, therefore successful actions to deliver these Red savings will reduce the pressure on this year's budget.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Action Plan

- 4.15 Nationally, a significant number of authorities are experiencing difficulties managing the increasing demand for high needs support against the funding that is available within the High Needs block of DSG. Whilst Walsall has also seen an increase in demand for these services, it has, up until recently, been able to effectively manage those increases within the totality of High Needs funding that has been available. As at the end of 2022/23, Walsall's DSG reported deficit provision was £0.53m increasing to a deficit of £7.40m in 2023/24. Therefore, there is now a requirement for Walsall to identify and embed an effective DSG Management plan.
- 4.16 The DSG Management plan covers a rolling 5 year period (current financial year plus the next 4 financial years) and sets out the estimated High Needs funding that the authority will receive over that period, the likely demand for high needs support and estimated cost of provision.
- 4.17 Guidelines require the preparation of both an unmitigated (given the assumptions set out above what would the financial position each year be without any further action) and a mitigated (which identifies a number of potential areas of action and summarises the revised financial position if those actions are implemented) DSG management plan.
- 4.18 As shown in tables 4 and 5, the unmitigated DSG management plan shows a DSG deficit of £61.70m by 2027/28 reducing to a deficit of £29.56m in the mitigated plan. To note this includes the forecast deficit carried forward from 2023/24 of circa £7.40m.
- 4.19 There is currently a statutory override in place set by Central Government allowing local authorities to exclude DSG deficits from the council's wider financial position. This was due to end from 2023/24 financial year but was then extended for a further three years until 31 March 2026 with the intention that Local Authorities should be in a position to manage high needs costs within budget by the end of the three-year period.

Table 4: DSG Management Plan Unmitigated Position				
	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Unmitigated Costs	83.75	96.06	105.71	116.74
Other Costs	7.81	7.86	7.99	8.05
Income	(58.06)	(59.57)	(61.15)	(63.09)
Deficit	33.50	44.35	52.55	61.70

Table 5: DSG Management Plan Mitigated Position				
	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Mitigated Costs	75.79	82.64	86.87	90.55
Other Costs	7.81	7.86	7.98	8.05
Other mitigating actions	(0.96)	(4.07)	(4.61)	(5.95)
Income	(58.06)	(59.57)	(61.15)	(63.09)
Deficit	24.58	26.86	29.09	29.56

General Reserves

- 4.20 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2024/25 are £19.56m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £18.39m for 2024/25. The MTFF also sets a minimum level of reserves beyond which any use must be reported to Council. This is currently set at £7.77m. The potential variance against budget of £9.05m within this report would reduce available reserves to £10.51m requiring replenishment in year. However, action is being taken to ensure this does not occur and officers are confident that the council will outturn close to budget.

Capital Programme 2024/25

- 4.21 The capital programme for 2024/25, as approved by Council on 22 February 2024 was £166.57m. Table 6 summarises amendments made to date, resulting in a revised programme of £198.65m.

Table 6: Amendments to Capital Programme 2024/25	
Project	£m
Capital Programme 2024/25 per Council 22 February 2024	166.57
Removal of estimated carried forwards (as 2024/25 budget was set prior to 2023/24 position being final)	(31.78)
Capital Programme prior to carry forwards from 2023/24	134.79
Council Funded Resources	
Carry forwards from 2023/24 – subject to Cabinet approval 17.07.2024	33.85
Reduction to budgets b/f into 2023/24	
Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock	(0.04)
Council house general heating	(0.60)
Aids & adaptations	(0.10)
Standard addressing implementation	0.16
Oak park photovoltaics installation (match funding)	0.04
Highways maintenance (subject to Cabinet approval)	0.88
New computers in libraries	0.25
Mobile bus hub	0.03
Health contribution Mosaic fusion build	0.01
Pipeline funding	(1.37)
Externally Funded	
Carry forwards from 2023/24 – subject to Cabinet approval 17.07.2024	19.69
Budget realignments	
Willenhall masterplan transport levelling up fund	(1.08)
Urban tree challenge	(0.02)

Project	£m
Local transport plan – Yorks bridge	(0.20)
Capital maintenance	0.65
Civic/council house decarbonisation	(1.94)
Purchase of dispersed temporary accommodation	(0.41)
Disabled facilities grant	(0.13)
Walsall town deal budget alignment	3.69
M6 Junction 10	0.95
High needs provisional fund	3.89
S106 monies for temporary accommodation	0.01
New grant funding	
Food waste collection capital grant	1.84
Oak park photovoltaics solar installation	0.50
Dft traffic signal obsolescence grant	0.50
A41/A4038 Moxley-Walsall town centre - walk, cycle, bus corridor	0.45
UK shared prosperity fund	1.36
Walsall urban tree challenge	0.05
Library improvement fund	0.18
Network north	0.38
Disabled facilities grant	0.38
Revised capital programme 2024/25	198.66

- 4.22 A full review of forecast capital carry forwards into 2025/26 has been undertaken resulting in rephasing of the capital programme provision of £62.05m being recommended, summarised by scheme at Appendix 6. Rephasing occurs for a number of reasons such as late confirmation of grant approvals, timing of projects that may fall over more than one financial year, contract delays out of our control due to waiting for funding confirmation or Government approval.
- 4.23 Table 7 summaries the 2024/25 capital programme which is forecast to be on budget after the re-phasing of £62.05m into 2025/26 (detailed at Appendix 6).

Table 7: Forecast capital analysis 2024/25					
Funding Source	Budget	Predicted year end forecast	Variance before Carry forward	Carry Forward	Variance Over / (Under)
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council funded	102.59	74.48	(28.11)	28.11	0.00
Externally funded	96.07	62.13	(33.94)	33.94	0.00
Total	198.66	136.61	(62.05)	62.05	0.00

Development Investment

- 4.24 Since 2021/22 £109.10m has been set aside for council development investment opportunities, including emerging regeneration schemes and major capital projects. This funding is to support those schemes in development stages including schemes where funding or match funding is required (subject to external funding bidding processes) and major capital projects. The current proposed use (and as yet unallocated amount) is set out in Appendix 7.

Highways Maintenance

- 4.25 As Highway Authority, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain its highway network in a safe condition for road users. At a meeting of the council's Strategic Investment Board on 15th May 2024, a decision was taken, subject to approval from Cabinet, to increase capital investment for the maintenance of Walsall's highway network by £875,000.
- 4.26 For 2024/25 Walsall Council has allocated £2.8m of capital funding to maintain its highway network of 525 miles. The £2.8m annual budget has remained unchanged since 2017, whereas in contrast, the construction indices for inflation over this period have increased by 28.5%. This correlates closely with the published Bank of England inflation figure of 29.1% for the same period. On that basis the Council would need to increase spend on highway maintenance by £875k to £3.67m during 2024/25 to resurface the same amount of its highway network that it was treating in 2017. Cabinet are asked to approve the release of £875k from the development pool.

Yorks Bridge project

- 4.27 The Yorks Bridge project involves the construction of a new road bridge over the Wyrley and Essington Canal next to the existing York's Bridge (owned by the Canal and River Trust) along with the realignment of Norton Road, it also includes a new parking area for Pelsall North Common and wetland area (adjacent to public footpath Ald149). The proposed scheme results from a requirement to improve safety at the existing York's Bridge, Norton Road, Pelsall.
- 4.28 The existing bridge was built in the mid-19th century and as such was never designed with modern traffic in mind. The bridge was assessed for structural integrity in 1995 and it reconfirmed that the bridge was only capable of carrying vehicles below 10-tonne weight, with the deteriorated of the bridge the current weight limit was further reduced to 7.5-tonne. York's Bridge is owned by the Canal and River Trust (formerly British Waterways Board) and spans the Wyrley and Essington Canal along Norton Road, adjacent to the Fingerpost Public House.
- 4.29 The proposed bridge is to be 40m long and will carry two-way traffic on a 7.3m wide carriageway with a 2m wide footway on the west side. There will be 2m minimum headroom between the bridge and towpath and 3.1m minimum height between the bridge and canal. The length of the new section of highway road and bridge to be introduced is 540m, with a total site area of approximately 2.29Ha, including the proposed embankments, areas for landscaping, drainage proposals and construction working areas.
- 4.30 As confirmed in the Cabinet report of 9th December 2020, there was £1.9m funding allocated to this scheme from Local Transport Plan and Maintenance Block funding allocations for bridge maintenance and a further £1.5m allocated from the Council's budget, which was thought sufficient to deliver the scheme. However, due to increases to construction indices for inflation, these budgets were no longer sufficient to complete the scheme and at a meeting of the council's Strategic Finance Board on 15th January 2024, approval for £1.73m of additional funding to existing budgets was granted subject to approval from Cabinet, to complete the scheme and to maintain the existing structure with limited access and to construct a new bridge with 7.3m two-way carriageway and 2.0m footpath, compliant to allow 44 tonne vehicles to use safely.

Cabinet are asked to approve the release of £1.73m from the development pool which will be required in 2025/26.

Enabling Support Services / One Source Programme

- 4.31 Following an Oracle health check review in February 2023 this programme was created and approved to focus on the delivery of a number of critical enhancements including the replacement of Taleo with Oracle Recruitment Cloud, the replacement of customised absence solution with standard functionality to support a more stable and controlled live environment and to make the appropriate changes needed to comply with the new Monthly Collection report needed for the Teachers Pension Scheme and the up and coming 24C patch release from Oracle and a budget of £1.22m allocated.
- 4.32 Since this review there have been legislative and further system changes identified that need to be implemented to continue to keep the council compliant and in line with standardised cloud solution. A business case for the additional works costing £860,411 was approved at Proud board 29 November 2023. Cabinet are now asked to approve the release of £860,411 from the development pool to fund the additional works.

Financial Health Indicators

- 4.33 Appendix 8 contains financial health indicator performance as at 30 June 2024 for revenue and capital forecast as referred to in this report. The primary purpose of these is to advise Cabinet of the current financial health of the authority in order to provide assurance to them in their role. The indicators cover a number of areas as follows:

Treasury Management

- 4.34 The indicators show the actual borrowing and investment rates for 2023/24 and the forecast for 2024/25 against set targets. Proactive and robust management of the council's debt and investment portfolios is forecast to result in positive variances against most of the financial health indicator targets for 2024/25.

Balance Sheet

- 4.35 These details ratios for the last 4 financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and pre-audit figures for 2023/24 which show the liquidity of the authority.

Revenue performance

- 4.36 This section shows collection rates for council tax and business rates, the average number of days to collect sundry debt and the number of days to process creditor payments for 2023/24 and the performance against profile for 2024/25. Sundry debt collection is on target with performance in relation to the processing of creditor payments better by 3 days. Both Council tax and NNDR collection rates are currently slightly below target when compared to the profiled targets.

Management of Resources

- 4.37 This section details the outturn position for 2023/24 (pre audit) and 2024/25 year-end forecast for revenue and capital, which is based on the financial position as at 30 June 2024. The revenue forecast for 2024/25 shown is a potential overspend of £9.05m after

use of and transfer to reserves and mitigating actions of £5.42m, before any further action is taken.

- 4.38 The capital forecast as at the end of June is a forecast to be on budget after the rephasing of £62.05m carry forward into 2025/26. Capital receipts are currently forecast to be on budget pending a review of available asset disposals which is fully dependent on timing and market conditions.

Prudential Indicators

- 4.39 Appendix 9 contains the prudential indicators as at 30th June 2024. The primary purpose of these is to provide assurance to Cabinet that the authority is borrowing and investing in a sound and prudent manner. Indicators are approved by Council on an annual basis.

National Indicators

- 4.40 These indicators are nationally set and provide an indication of the council's exposure to interest rate risks, the proportion of the council's budget used to finance capital expenditure and the borrowing limits for the current year.

All of these indicators were met in 2023/24 and are forecast to be met in 2024/25.

The targets that these prudential indicators are monitored against have been taken from the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 onwards.

Local Indicators

- 4.41 These indicators have been set in consultation with the Treasury Management Panel, which is chaired by the s151 Officer, to provide further assurances to the authority that borrowing and investment is being undertaken in a sound and prudent manner.
- L2 - Average length of debt – The target acceptable limit is within 15-25 years. The authority's current position is 18.34 years, which is within the target range.
 - L3a - Net borrowing costs as % of net council tax requirement. The target figure of 20.00% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of the net council tax requirement for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 5.23%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
 - L3b - Net borrowing costs as % of Tax Revenue. The target figure of 12.50% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 3.50%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
 - L9a – Bank of England have continually increased the base rate over the 22/23 period, currently showing a base rate of 4.50%. This has shown corresponding affect relation to Investment Yields. All investments are outperforming the 2022/23 target rate.

All the above indicators were met in 2023/24 and are forecast to be met in 2024/25 except the following:

- L8. Our investment rates for Short Term interest and At-Call rates are very similar this year as we are placing Short Term investments on average for around a month at a time, so there is therefore little difference between these two types of returns for the council. The budget was based on an at call rate of 2.50% and Short Term rate of 3.39%, but with continual rate rises now in this financial year the At-Call rate is responding very quickly and becoming more in line with our Short Term investments which may have been placed a month or two earlier.
- L11b. Average Interest Received on STI vs At Call rate. Short Term Interest showing at 4.20% is 0.10% higher than the at-call rate which shows as 4.10%. However, the target rate for STI vs Call Rate shows at 35.00%. At the time of these targets were set short term interest rates was significantly higher than call rate. Also as the call rate is increasing there are still active short-term investments placed over the past 12 months which are providing a much lower yield in comparison to current Short Term yields. Once these investments have matured (and potentially re-invested), we should see a significant increase in short term interest rate.

Write off of debt

- 4.42 The following write off (as it is over £10,000) requires the approval of Cabinet;
- £10,582.92 relating to residential care charges for the period 2018 to 2020. The debt is recommended for write off as the client has a terminal disease and has no funds or assets to pay.
 - £11,580.22 relating to community based and residential care charges for the period 2018 to 2020. The debt is recommended for write off as the client has passed away and has no funds or assets to pay.

The Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO)

- 4.43 Council on 22 February 2024 approved the 2024/25 budget, which included the draft plan for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28. Savings of £44.30m were published, including £20.10m for 2024/25 and £9.37m for 2025/26. Whilst a balanced budget was presented for 2024/25, there remain savings of £43.46m to be identified to ensure a balanced budget is presented over the period to 2027/28.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	Total £m
Savings required per Council February 2024	20.10	32.56	22.08	13.02	87.76
Savings published *	(20.10)	(9.37)	(8.11)	(6.72)	(44.30)
Savings to be identified	0.00	(23.19)	(13.97)	(6.30)	(43.46)

* Excludes carry forwards from 2023/24.

Following receipt of the final settlement, a supplementary note was forwarded to Cabinet to confirm that the impact on use of reserves had reduced the saving level to be identified for 2025/26 to £19.77m, subsequent years were unaffected.

- 4.44 Further work is in hand to refresh the MTFO, including adding a rolling year to include 2028/29. The updated MTFO will be reported back to Cabinet in October 2024 along with options to address any gaps, including:
- A review of investment currently assumed each year, in particular demand growth in Adult and Children's Social Care;
 - Review of pay and pension assumptions;
 - Review of cost-of-living assumptions including inflation and energy;
 - Review of contractual inflation assumptions;
 - Fees and charges review;
 - Business rates and council tax collection rates, council tax reduction scheme claimants, and provision for bad and doubtful debts;
 - Review of core funding assumptions in light of the delayed Spending Review, review of Relative Needs and Resources (formerly the Fair Funding Review) and Business Rates reforms;
 - Changes to the risk profile of the council.

Budget Approach

- 4.45 Resources are allocated, and budgets set within a framework of protocols and guidelines, in particular the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Framework (MTFF). Decisions will need to be made about how to achieve a balanced budget, in the context of the needs of the Borough and to ensure that we continue to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. Whilst it is recognised that Full Council will only set the council tax bands for 2025/26 in February 2025, the budget will continue to take a four year view (current year plus three), allowing for a more strategic focus to service re-design and savings aligning the finances more directly to the objectives, outcomes, and markers of success of the council and maintaining/improving performance against these where prioritised.
- 4.46 The council is committed to adopting a holistic and collaborative approach, and there is strong consensus that this approach will produce better results than taking a traditional perspective on the financial challenges facing the council. Using the knowledge and understanding of our communities and evidence about the impact of service delivery, proposals will be developed that will be designed to make best use of all of our resources and to make the optimum impact that we can for the residents and businesses of Walsall through the achievement of the council's objectives and outcomes.
- 4.47 The Budget approach is intended to:
- Provide a framework to ensure successful delivery of the council's corporate vision and priorities and ensure value for money in the delivery of outcomes;
 - Maintain a financially sustainable position over the 4-year planning period and set a legally balanced 2025/26 budget;
 - Allocate limited and reducing resources to those activities that contribute most to improved customer and staff outcomes;
 - Continue the focus on the need to deliver ongoing efficiency savings.
- 4.48 In considering resource allocation, funding for the development of services will need to be met from the redirection of existing resources and the identification of new or revised income sources. The process needs to consider:

- The council's priorities and outcomes (strategy lead) – why are we incurring spend and what are we achieving from this, could we do this differently / more efficiently and could we reprioritise to achieve overall better outcomes for the council by working smarter within the funding envelope, linking to the direction of travel of how the council is performing against the key priorities and outcomes;
- The methods of service delivery that will deliver value for money (commissioning led e.g., in-house, partnerships, outsourcing);
- The organisational structure and capacity that is needed to support the above.
- The level of council tax increases (subject to Government direction and referendum levels) and what this means for the council's overall budget;
- Income that can be generated (through the charging policy, increased charges, new charges, new grants, etc) and applying a more commercial approach across the council;
- The levels of reserves and contingencies required for financial prudence and to proactively manage the council's risks (set out by the S151 Officer);
- The use of un-ringfenced grant – it is assumed that all un-ringfenced grant will be pooled to support the corporate good, unless Cabinet approves otherwise during the budget process;
- Stakeholder consultation and lobbying.

4.49 Our approach to resource allocation will:

- I. Be first and foremost focussed on aim, objectives, and outcomes – delivery of the Council Plan 2022-25 (and subsequent updated version when available) and Proud Promises. This will drive how services are delivered linking to the direction of travel of the council against its ambitions, and evidencing how resource allocation will impact the council's performance against the outcomes and how overall optimum delivery can be achieved.
- II. Follow a minimum four-year (current year plus three) approach.
- III. Fit the financial envelope available and allow for a strategic focus to cross organisational as well as service redesigns, reviewing how the council will change the way it delivers its services in the future as part of an integrated approach to planning. This will involve redirection of existing resources through the implementation and rollout of organisational and service transformations; identification of third party spend reductions and efficiencies; and the identification of new or revised income sources.
- IV. Provide a clear value for money focus, with a clear understanding of our costs, where we spend our money, what on and **WHY**, and how we optimise this to ensure we are making best use of our money, and wider resources, to fulfil our Council Plan aim and outcomes.
- V. Include early and effective engagement, consultation and impact assessment, with our staff, partners, and stakeholders, where required.
- VI. Seek to use knowledge and understanding of our communities and evidence about the impact of service delivery and revisions to that delivery.
- VII. Make best use of all of our resources (including partner resources) and to make the optimum impact that we can for the residents and businesses of Walsall.
- VIII. Be aware of and take account of external drivers and be flexible enough to adapt to changes in these.
- IX. Identify further opportunities as part of the Walsall Proud Ways of Working and ensure this is adequately resourced and supported by the council's workforce strategy and appropriate performance systems.

4.50 The budget process continues to build on the blended working principles established in 2021 that capitalises on the progress made using technology and digital working, it enables the continuation of opportunities introduced over previous years, and aligns to the tangible delivery of the 3 Proud Promises, which aim to:

➤ **Improve outcomes and customer experience**

- To minimise the need for physical interactions with citizens through the use of digital / virtual technologies leading to more inclusive and flexible service access (i.e. 24 hour self-service).
- To consider the closure of services that don't contribute well to delivering outcomes or reducing inequality.
- Use of technology and digitalisation to streamline processes and reduce costs.

➤ **Improve employee satisfaction and engagement**

- To maintain the health and wellbeing of employees.
- To enable employees to work in the most flexible ways e.g., use new technologies, acknowledge presenteeism as an old way of working, review policies and procedures where needed.
- Support equalities and diversity and the employee survey action plan.

➤ **Improve service efficiency and performance**

- To enable new ways of working to minimise our estate footprint.
- To focus on achieving financial sustainability for the organisation through cost reduction and income generation.
- To promote an outcome focussed culture.

4.51 Our approach to budget setting for 2025/26, has been built on the experience gained over recent years. It has focused on ensuring the process is an iterative one, driven by delivery of Council Plan outcomes, where ownership is the responsibility of all officers and members. This aims to provide real choice and options, to support the desire to transform services and to be driven by strategy, data, and intelligence.

The process started in March 2024, earlier than in previous years, and Directors were tasked to develop Directorate Plans focussing on three key financials scenarios:

1. Model delivering services within current as is resources (including delivery of existing 2024/25 savings);
2. Model with 20% efficiency savings;
3. Model with investment to transform and save.

This initial idea generating step has now progressed to the identification and development of detailed savings opportunities and investment requirements, including opportunities to transform services through invest to save options. These will form the basis of options for Cabinet to consider as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26 and future years.

4.52 The process and key dates to come include:

- ELT development of options during July 2024;
- Cabinet/ ELT discussion on budget setting position, 24 July 2024;
- Further development of delivery options during August 2024;
- Review of the draft capital programme;

- Medium Term Financial Outlook update to Cabinet/ CMT 11, 18 and 25 September 2024;
- Draft Budget proposals to Cabinet by 16 October 2024;
- Scrutiny of the draft budget proposals, by Overview and Scrutiny Committees in October / November 2024, and feedback to Cabinet on 11 December 2024;
- Budget briefings for political groups, independent members, trades unions, key stakeholders through the year;
- Consultation with the public on proposals for future service delivery, and formal employee and trade union consultation;
- Receipt of the draft 2025/26 settlement estimated to be in December 2024, and the final in late January / early February 2025;
- Recommendation of the revenue budget and council tax bands, capital programme and Treasury Management Strategy by Cabinet on 12 February 2025 for consideration by Council on 27 February 2025.

Medium Term Financial Framework, and Tax Strategy and governance arrangements

- 4.53 It is best practice to regularly review and update financial strategies to take into account the changing environment in which we work.

The Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF) has been updated to reflect the following:

- Reference to updated key documents e.g. Council Plan, Governance Statement and Risk Management Strategy;
- Updates to the national policy, financial context and process, and the medium term financial outlook, following approval of the 2024/25 budget by Council on 22 February 2024.

The revised MTFF is included on the Council's Committee Management Information System webpage (underneath the electronic link to this report) should members of the public and elected members wish to refer to the full document.

Only minor changes have been made to the Tax Strategy and governance arrangements to reflect internal position changes within the Council. The detail of the strategy remains unchanged.

Council Plan Priorities

- 4.54 The council's financial strategy and annual budget process is designed to ensure that resources follow council priorities and deliver outcomes as set out in the Council Plan 2022-25 and will align to future iterations of the Council Plan.

Risk Management

- 4.55 The 2024/25 budget and level of operating reserves were set following a robust financial risk assessment. The level of reserves can only be set based on a set of realistically foreseeable or predicted parameters. Due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the current economic condition, others to potential regulatory or national issues, which may have a local impact. Best professional judgement and estimates were applied in terms of the ongoing impact of the global pandemic and rising cost of living pressures.

- 4.56 Managers are required to deliver service and improvement targets on time, to standard and within budget. The resource allocation process is governed by the overarching Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF). Risk management is an integral part of this activity and is embedded in budget preparation, monitoring and forecasting to enable potential variances and risks to be identified early and addressed.
- 4.57 There are also a number of increased risks in 2024/25 as set out within this report. Financial forecasts have been included where known or are estimated. Actions have been taken to address these risks and reduce the forecasted overspend caused by these pressures. Mitigating actions are set out within this report.
- 4.58 As well as financial risk, the council maintains a register that highlights key themes of organisational risk which is reported to Audit Committee as part of their annual work programme. The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is regularly reviewed and amended where appropriate. The SRR is reported to Corporate Management Team and oversight in relation to this rests with Audit Committee, which will receive a number of reports during 2024/25.

Financial Implications

- 4.59 The financial implications are as set out in the main body of this report. The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget and to ensure it has an adequate level of reserves. The council takes a medium-term policy led approach to all decisions on resource allocation. The potential forecast revenue variance, prior to mitigating actions being implemented, is significant and requires strong and robust management to ensure the council outturns within budget by year end. Actions are being taken to address this and progress will continue to be reported throughout 2024/25 to Cabinet.
- 4.60 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2024/25 were £19.56m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £18.39m for 2024/25. The potential overspend of £9.05m within this report would reduce available reserves and action is being taken to address this to ensure we outturn with an appropriate level of reserves.

Legal implications

- 4.61 The council is required to set and operate within a balanced budget. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer (CFO), in consultation with the council's monitoring officer, to make a report under this section if it appears to him or her that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. In practice, this is most likely to be required in a situation in which reserves have become depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. This mechanism, however, is impractical and should be avoided, as issuing a S114 notice requires all non-statutory spend to cease immediately, a situation which would just exacerbate the current situation.
- 4.62 The council will have due regard to its statutory responsibilities in proposing any changes to service provision and its statutory responsibilities in relation to setting a balanced budget.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.63 All procurement activity is being reviewed, with a focus on identifying opportunities that will enable us to financially support our current and future services, especially those developed by Walsall Proud. It will do this by reviewing and reducing third party spend and improving the 'Procure to Pay' process and systems. The Third Party Spend Board has been created to support and challenge services through the gateways of the commissioning and procurement process, with the aim of achieving best value for money.

Property Implications

- 4.64 The impact of Covid-19 has meant that many council premises were required to close or remain open with restricted access to essential workers during the early stages of 2021/22. Following the easing of restrictions, the council has reviewed its ways of working approach, emphasised on 'it's the work that we do, not where we do it'.

Cabinet on 20 April 2022 approved the council's Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27. The Strategic Asset Plan is the key document which sets out the council's vision and approach for the management of its property portfolio under the Corporate Landlord model.

The Corporate Landlord model approach takes a more strategic approach to property and asset management across the council, bringing together property, facilities management and commissioning responsibilities into a key enabling service under the council's new functional model. This will ultimately enable the development and implementation of an estate that supports Proud and the wider corporate objectives of the council.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 4.65 This report is prepared with consideration of any impacts that any decisions would have on health and wellbeing. Any implications arising from the budget will be reported to members during budget setting along with any actions which are required to be addressed prior to implementation of budget proposals.

Staffing Implications

- 4.66 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.67 The 2010 Equality Act lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming, and reputation-damaging legal challenges. The budget is equality impact assessed and consulted on as appropriate, with feedback and actions arising from these reported to Members during budget setting.

Climate Change

- 4.68 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and the budget will need to consider the six key areas of the Plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation (as appropriate).

Consultation

- 4.69 The report is prepared in consultation with the s151 Officer, Corporate Management Team, relevant managers and directors.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to consider additional actions to address the matters set out in this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Following Cabinet's consideration and approval, the S151 Officer will ensure implementation of the recommendations.

7. Review

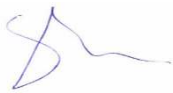
- 7.1 Regular monitoring reports will continue to be presented to Cabinet on the forecast for 2024/25, including an update on risks and impact on the budget for 2025/26 and beyond.
- 7.2 Budget proposals will be presented to Cabinet and implemented following approval of the budget by Full Council in February 2025.

Background papers: Various financial working papers.

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Judith Greenhalgh
Director – Resources and
Transformation
June 2024



Shaun Darcy
S151 Officer, and Director of Finance,
Corporate Landlord and Assurance
09 July 2024



Councillor M. Statham
Deputy Leader Finance
09 July 2024

Appendix 1 – Details of (use of) / transfer to reserves

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Adult Social Care & Public Health			
Covid-19 – Omicron	(218,676)	0	Costs associated with the plan to strengthen the Carers strategy across the borough following Covid-19
National Development Team for Inclusion Project	(115,333)	0	Use of grant funding carried forward from 2023/24.
Public Health	(1,659,155)	70,812	Relates to grant funding for Public Health projects – Better Mental Health, Adult Weight Management and Universal Drug / Crime
Housing 21 – Affordability Model	0	122,109	To fund the Housing 21 affordability model
IFRS	(674,513)	0	Grant funding for social work apprenticeships and accelerating reforms fund.
Proud - Adult Social Care	(421,744)	0	To fund investment and resources to deliver Proud workstream activity.
Total Adult Social Care & Public Health	(3,089,421)	192,921	
Children's & Education			
IFRS	(697,460)	40,407	Relates to grant funding for Safeguarding Families and Protecting Children.
Children's external partner contributions	(184,996)	14,607	External partner contributions including Youth Justice Board and Safeguarding board
St Thomas Moore PFI	(66,148)	0	PFI – expected to be utilised in future years of the contract
Truancy fine income	(180,089)	180,089	Ringfenced income generated from attendance fines.
Total Children's & Education	(1,128,693)	235,103	
Economy, Environment & Communities			
IFRS	(272,880)	36,036	Primarily relates to grants spanning more than financial year and section 106 income,
Economic Growth Programme	0	296,794	Funding Economic Growth Projects as funded by cabinet.
Phoenix 10	(110,051)	0	To fund professional fees.
Bus Lane Enforcement	(89,281)	0	Ringfenced income – to support with running costs of bus lane and other parking services
Willenhall Master Plan	(91,000)	0	Costs associated with the Willenhall Master Plan redevelopment
Planning Services	(130,000)	0	To cover one-off costs to reduce back log of applications

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
On street parking Income	(136,898)	0	Ringfenced income as per traffic management act 2004 to offset parking income shortfalls or maintenance costs
Total Economy, Environment & Communities	(830,110)	332,830	
Resources & Transformation			
Enterprise Zones	(8,583,471)	3,050,840	Generated from surplus business rates from across the Black Country to fund the costs of future capital schemes.
External partner contributions	(57,813)	0	ERDF technical assistance contributions & Crowdfund Walsall
Growing Places Fund	(600)	0	Funding received to support the Growing Places LEP programme management costs.
IFRS	(1,829,547)	0	Primarily relates to grants spanning more than financial year and section 106 income.
Business rates retention scheme	(3,045,892)	0	Ringfenced business rates income recovered through the enterprise zone shortfall for Walsall when project dissolves end of 2024/25. Repaid back over the following 3 years.
Total Resources and Transformation	(13,517,323)	3,050,840	
Capital Financing			
Capital Financing Smoothing	0	3,693,368	To fund borrowing re-scheduling costs dependent on market conditions and to manage risk / pressures for changes in interest rates and on-going impact of airport dividend shortfalls due to impact of changes in the business plan.
Buy not lease	(212,000)	0	To be used to purchase vehicles / equipment when the costs are calculated to be cheaper than leasing. Also cover expected pressures on leasing programme due to cost of replacement vehicles.
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	0	1,640,000	To smooth minimum MRP costs as per approved MRP policy.
Total Capital Financing	(212,000)	5,333,368	
Centrally Held			
Proud	(1,775,389)	0	Funding of one-off investment in relation to Proud programme including costs of Impower and centre of excellence.
Audit and inspection	(481,592)	0	To fund one off costs in relation to the adult social care CQC inspection planned to be funded from reserves in 2024/25 & 2025/26.

Reserve	Use of Reserve £	Transfer to Reserve £	Details of use of reserve
Capital Financing Smoothing	(1,970,650)	0	To cover service investment planned to be funded one-off from reserves for 2024/25.
Children in care complex cases	(181,000)	0	To fund pressures, including social workers and placement costs, of complex cases relating to young people in care planned to be funded from reserves in 2024/25.
Business rates retention scheme	(2,392,575)	0	A revaluation of the new Art Gallery has caused a deficit on collection fund for 2024/25 which was planned to be funded by reserves one-off in 2024/25.
Street Lighting PFI	(450,000)	0	Surplus reserves planned to be used to support the budget for 2024/25 to 2026/27.
Social care demand / contingency	(6,786,537)	0	To cover costs within children's services and adult social care planned to be funded from reserves for 2024/25.
Risk	(280,000)	0	To support council wide pressures including STPs
Delivery of Connected Gateway	(1,710,000)	0	To covers costs related to the saddlers centre linked to the delivery of the connected gateway
Cost of Living	(2,200,000)	0	To cover rising costs of energy of which £1.36m planned to be funded from reserves one-off as part for 2024/25.
Council Tax Support Grant	(500,000)	0	To fund cost of crisis support as budgeted for in the 2024/25 budget.
Mediation Reserve	(104,082)	0	Relating to legal costs and legal claims
Project Reserve	(100,000)	0	To fund one off costs of the HR Odyssey training programme planned to be funded from reserves for 2024/25.
Public Health Investment	(258,719)	0	To fund Public Health pressures above grant allocations planned to be funded from reserves for 2024/25.
Total Centrally Held	(19,190,454)	0	
TOTAL RESERVES	(37,968,091)	9,145,062	

There are a number of use of reserves which are in part being used as part of the mitigating actions as detailed in **Appendix 2.*

Appendix 2: Mitigation actions included within the report

Directorate	Detail of mitigating actions	£m
Adult Social Care & Public Health	Use of unallocated Better Care Fund inflation	0.21
	Decreases through post ICS discharges reviews reported in April (mitigating action for market management of learning disability and mental health provider saving)	0.07
	Use of corporate reserve to fund demand led services pressures	0.50
	One-off staffing underspend to offset delay in achieving Section 75 Income	0.03
Total Mitigation included for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hubs		0.81
Children's Services	Use of corporate reserve to fund demand led services pressures	0.80
Total Mitigation included for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hubs		0.80
Economy, Environment & Communities	Economic Growth Programme funding held in reserves.	0.26
	Overachievement of fuel STP c/f from 2023/24	0.07
Total Mitigation included for Economy, Environment & Communities		0.33
Central	Use of cost of living reserve.	0.84
Total Mitigation included for Central		0.84
Capital Financing	Reduction in borrowing costs and higher investment returns	2.64
Total Mitigation included for Capital Financing		2.64
Total Mitigation included in forecast outturn		5.42

Appendix 3: Benefits 2024/25 currently identified as 'Red' due to risk of delayed delivery.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Adult Social Care	OP16 – Community Reablement Service	1,147,248	720,000	0	Awaiting revised business – expecting to go live November 2024.	No mitigation currently identified.
Adult Social Care	OP17 - Market management of Learning Disability/Mental Health provider	574,282	574,282	66,560	Awaiting revised business case so financial modelling can be updated to inform delivery.	Decreased post Integrated Care System discharges reviews reported in April.
Adult Social Care	OP15 - Shared Lives – Foster Care Provision	142,812	142,812	0	Clients and suitable placements yet to be identified.	No mitigation currently identified.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Shared Lives – Foster Care Provision	116,277	24,411	0	Clients and suitable placements yet to be identified.	No mitigation currently identified.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Review for Learning Disabilities joint funding tool	2,212,270	2,212,270	0	Due diligence on tools in progress which will inform 2024/25 discussions with ICB.	No mitigation currently identified.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 – Section 75 Grant Income	59,780	59,780	30,124	Discussions outstanding with ICB.	Partially offset by one off staffing underspend within service.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of improved charging policies	794,720	494,456	0	Delayed delivery of the income generation project.	No mitigation currently identified.
Total Adult Social Care & Public Health		5,047,389	4,228,011	103,344		
Children's Services	OP56 - Reduction in Home to School transport investment	145,000	145,000	0	Increased costs and demand over and above expected levels in 2023/24 have added pressure to 2024/25 budget, meaning savings are not achievable within current budget envelope.	No mitigation currently identified.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated in Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Children's Services	2023/24 - Home to School Transport review of contracts and route optimisation	300,000	300,000	0	Increased costs and demand over and above expected levels in 2023/24 have added pressure to 2024/25 budget, meaning prior year savings are not achievable within current budget envelope.	No mitigation currently identified.
Total Children's & Education		445,000	445,000	0		
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP49 - One public estate – income from partners	250,000	225,000	151,000	Rental of space in Civic Centre is dependent on HVAC works being completed before commencement of leases.	Partially offset by additional commercial and shop income for 2024/25.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP51 - Council House / Town Hall events	40,000	40,000	0	Unachievable based on 2023/24 achievement against existing budget and current projection of future events.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP53 - Energy reductions	200,000	200,000	200,000	Estimated energy forecast predict an overspend of at least £2m therefore this saving will not be delivered.	Mitigated one off through use of corporate reserve and reported centrally not within EE&C.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP28 - Bereavement services, new memorial garden at North Walsall Cemetery	55,000	55,000	55,000	Capital approval expected June 2024 – estimated completion date 6 months from then (December 2024)	Mitigated by additional income in other areas of Environment, Leisure & Commercial.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P5 - Seek sponsorship for festive lights	40,000	40,000	0	Plan to seek sponsorship funding, but currently no agreement.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	P2 - Registrars – Change of name deeds	3,000	1,000	1,000	Delay in implementing.	Expected to be achieved by other registrar income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 – Outsource Outdoor Pursuits service to a community service	12,878	6,439	6,439	Expected to be delivered from September 24 – 6 month delay.	One-off staffing underspends within service.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery	Value to be mitigated in year	Reason	Mitigating Actions
		£	£	£		
Economy, Environment & Communities	P6 - Closure of Fryers Road and Merchants Way Household Waste Recycling Centres for 1 day (7 to 6) – saving on contract spend	150,000	150,000	150,000	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	Mitigated by trade waste surplus income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP4 - Increase on-street parking charges	20,000	5,000	0	Requires traffic regulation order, not expected till end of June.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 – Increase rental income from Park Lodges	4,034	4,034	4,034	Due to partial increase in rent.	Offset by rent of clock tower.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP5 - Increase off-street parking charges	55,000	13,750	0	Requires traffic regulation order, not expected till end of June.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP29 – Leisure, personal training	8,400	4,800	4,800	Inability to charge same rate across all leisure facilities has reduced forecast of achievable income.	Mitigated by overachievement of income across leisure services.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Increase in bulky waste charges from £10 to £30 for up to 3 items, £50 for 4-6 items & £70 for 7-9 items	136,000	34,000	34,000	Reduction in demand when introduced in February 2024.	Mitigated by trade waste surplus income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 – Rewilding of all urban grassed areas	50,000	50,000	50,000	No rewilding currently planned to take place.	Mitigated by removal of vacant post (ongoing).
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Parking dispensation charging of £15 per vehicle per day	14,625	3,656	0	Expected 3 to 4 month delay.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Regeneration and Economy Team review	260,193	260,193	260,193	Restructure plans still under review.	Currently mitigated by EGP reserve.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be Mitigated In Year £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Improvement to DD collection processes	10,000	10,000	10,000	Delay in installing the new system.	Mitigated by overachievement of income across leisure services.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Income generation review of fees and charges – increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	93,646	93,646	93,646	Charges increased but savings not achieved due to reduced demand due to competitor from September 2023.	Fee structure changes and offers.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Review of Libraries Management	60,679	30,340	0	Delay in implementing structure change – expected September 24.	No mitigation currently identified.
Total Economy, Environment & Communities		1,463,455	1,226,858	1,020,112		
Total		6,955,844	5,899,869	1,123,456		

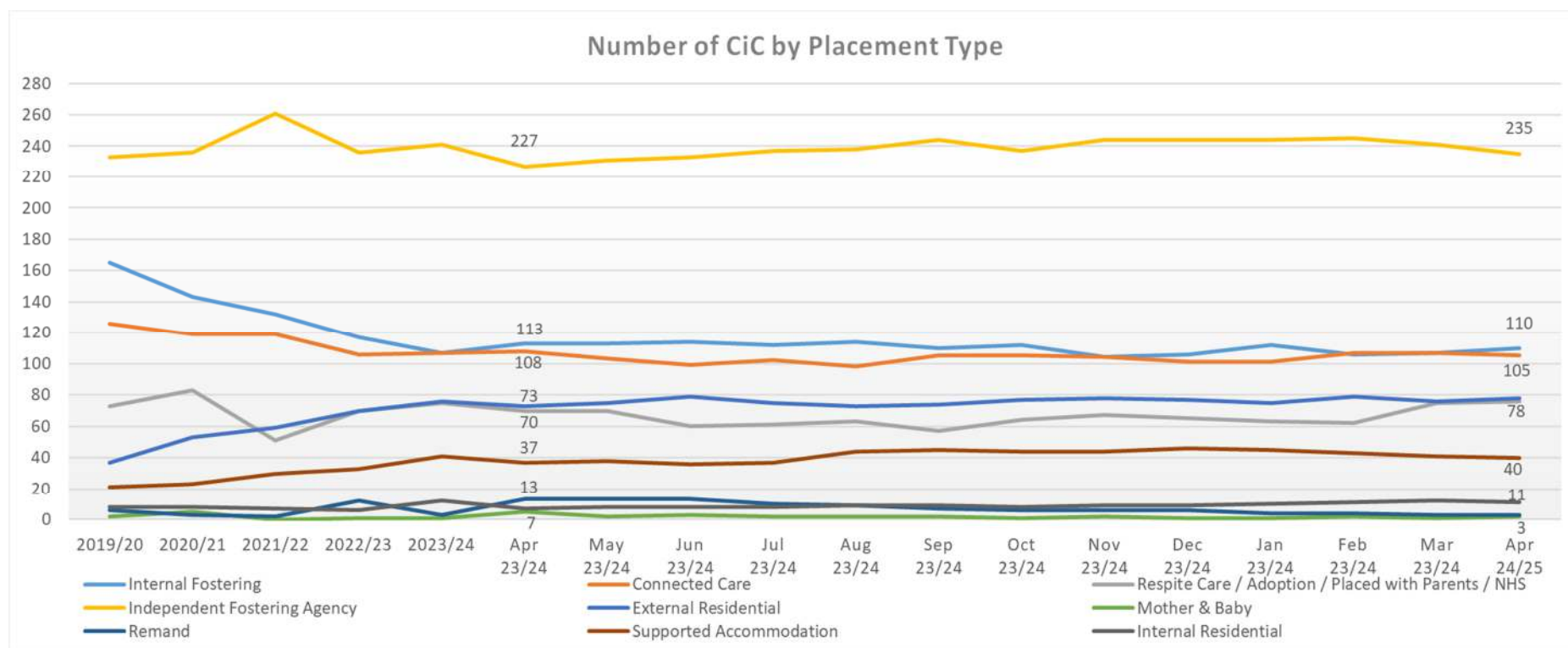
Appendix 4 – Performance data relating to demand within Children’s Services

Number of Children in Care by Placement Type

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/23	Apr 23/24	May 23/24	Jun 23/24	Jul 23/24	Aug 23/24	Sep 23/24	Oct 23/24	Nov 23/24	Dec 23/24	Jan 23/24	Feb 23/24	Mar 23/24	Apr 24/25
Total CiC	671	673	661	651	653	653	645	644	650	653	654	658	655	655	659	663	660

As at April 2024 there was 660 children in care in Walsall, an increase of 7 children and young people (C&YP) since April 2023.

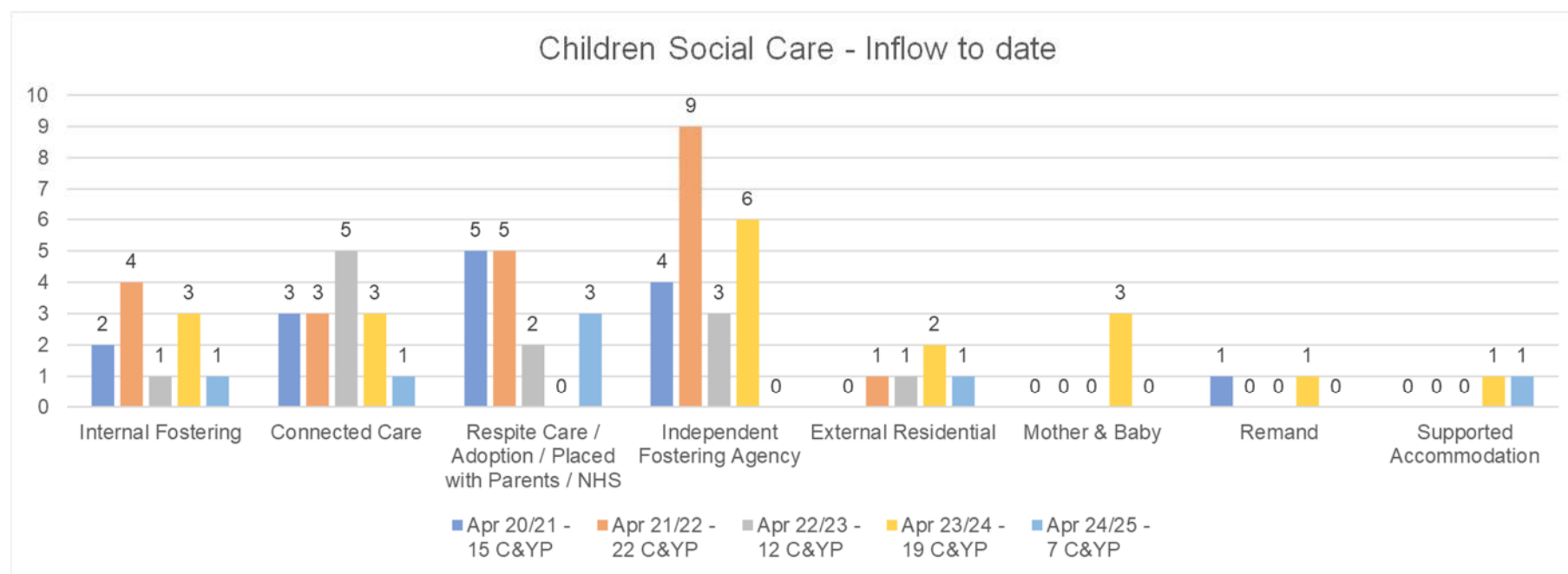
The graph below shows these C&YP by placement type and demonstrates the continuing placement sufficiency pressures, which has resulted in a change in the mix of placement types.



The graph shows how the reliance on higher cost placements has increased over the 12 month and 5-year period, with the number of IFA placements increasing from 227 in April 23 to 235 in April 24, and the number of External Residential placements increasing from 73 to 78 over the same period. In contrast, the number of children in lower cost placements such as Connected Care and Internal Fostering has reduced over the same period.

Number of children entering and leaving care

The graph below illustrates the number of children entering care to date for 2024/25 and the prior four-year inflow trends by placement type:



As the chart demonstrates, the number of C&YP entering care during April in 2024/25 is lower than that of the prior four years with a total of 7 C&YP (as at 29/04/24).

During 2023/24, 200 C&YP entered care, an increase of 20% on the prior year. In addition to the increased numbers, there was an additional reliance on independent fostering agencies (IFA's) and external residential placements. This extraordinary growth and increased reliance on higher cost placements has created a pressure in 2024/25 over and above the budgeted investment.

Children's services have undertaken remedial action to understand and analyse the increases seen and to embed new ways of working across early help and children's social care seeking to strengthen support provided at an earlier opportunity. There will be continued focus on understanding and pre-empting the needs of children requiring support, so these children can be targeted and needs can be met at the earliest opportunity.

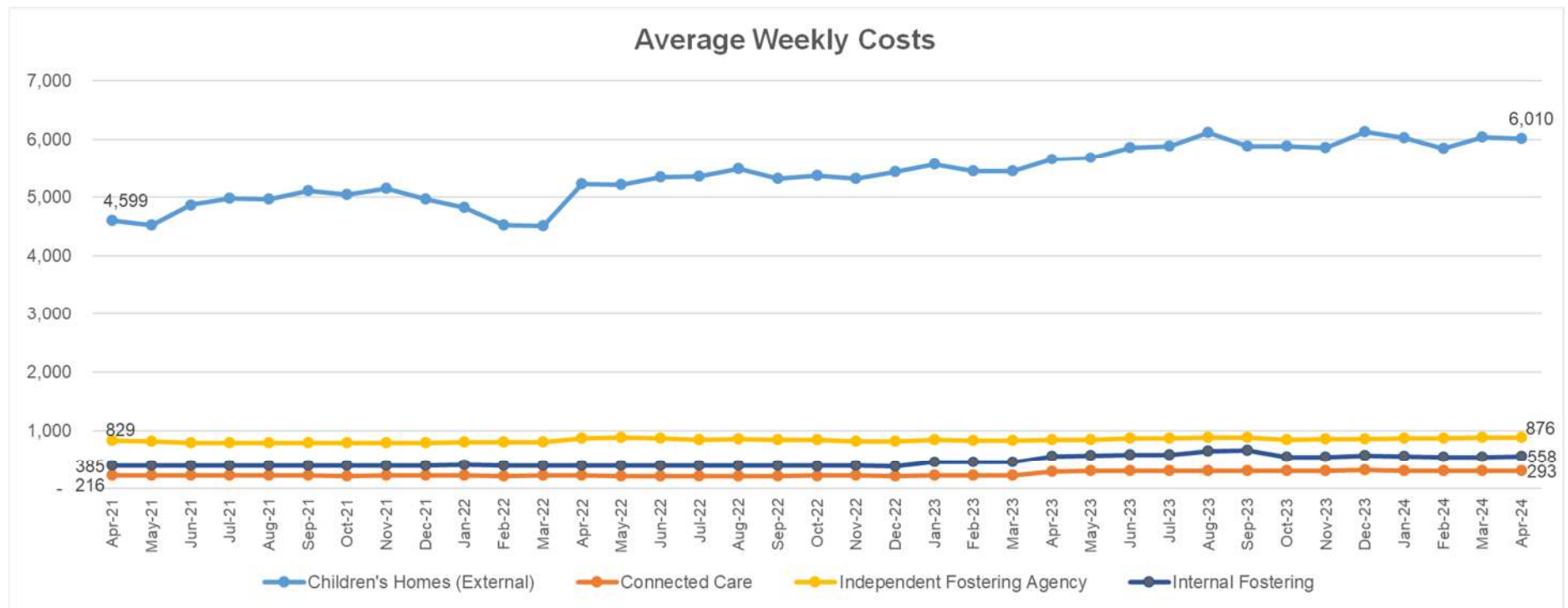
The table below shows the number of C&YP leaving care to date for 2024/25 and the prior four-year outflow trends. To note, this excludes those that have turned 18 as the financial impact of these have been considered within the forecast and budget.

	Apr 2020/21	Apr 2021/22	Apr 2022/23	Apr 2023/24	Apr 2024/25
Number of C&YP leaving care	-11	-8	-10	-8	-6

During April 2024, there was 6 C&YP who left care. This is lower than the prior four financial years, however due to a reduction in the number of C&YP entering care this has not impacted May's position.

Average weekly costs of placements

The next chart shows the average weekly cost of the four most utilised placement types for Walsall's children in care. The average weekly cost for an external residential placement has significantly increased from £4.6k to £6k (31%) over the last 3 financial years, and from £5.6k 12 months ago. This is significantly higher than the average weekly cost of an internal fostering placement of £558 p/w and connected care placement of £293 p/w.



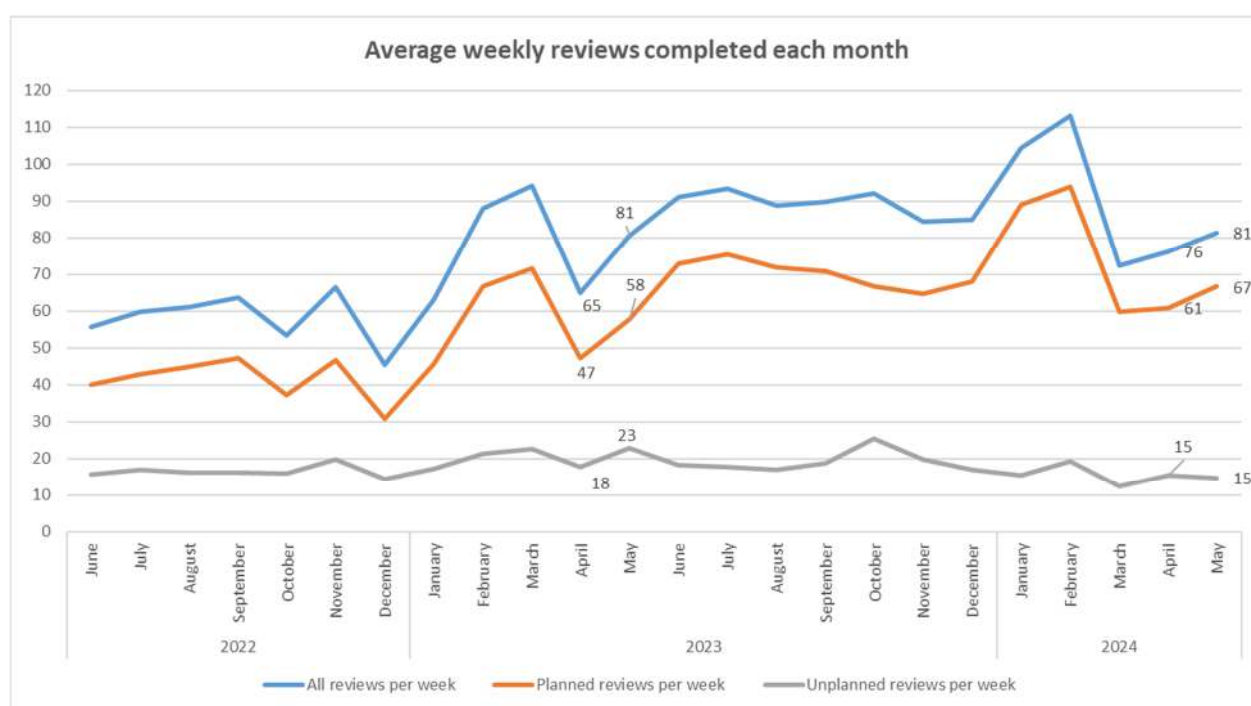
In recognition of the financial impacts above, the service will continue to focus on stepping C&YP down to lower cost placements where possible during 2024/25.

Appendix 5 – Performance data relating to demand within Adult Social Care (P3 June 2024, utilising data to 31st May 2024)

Please note that P3 reports on two months' movements since the previous P11 report, as this update includes data for both February and March 2024.

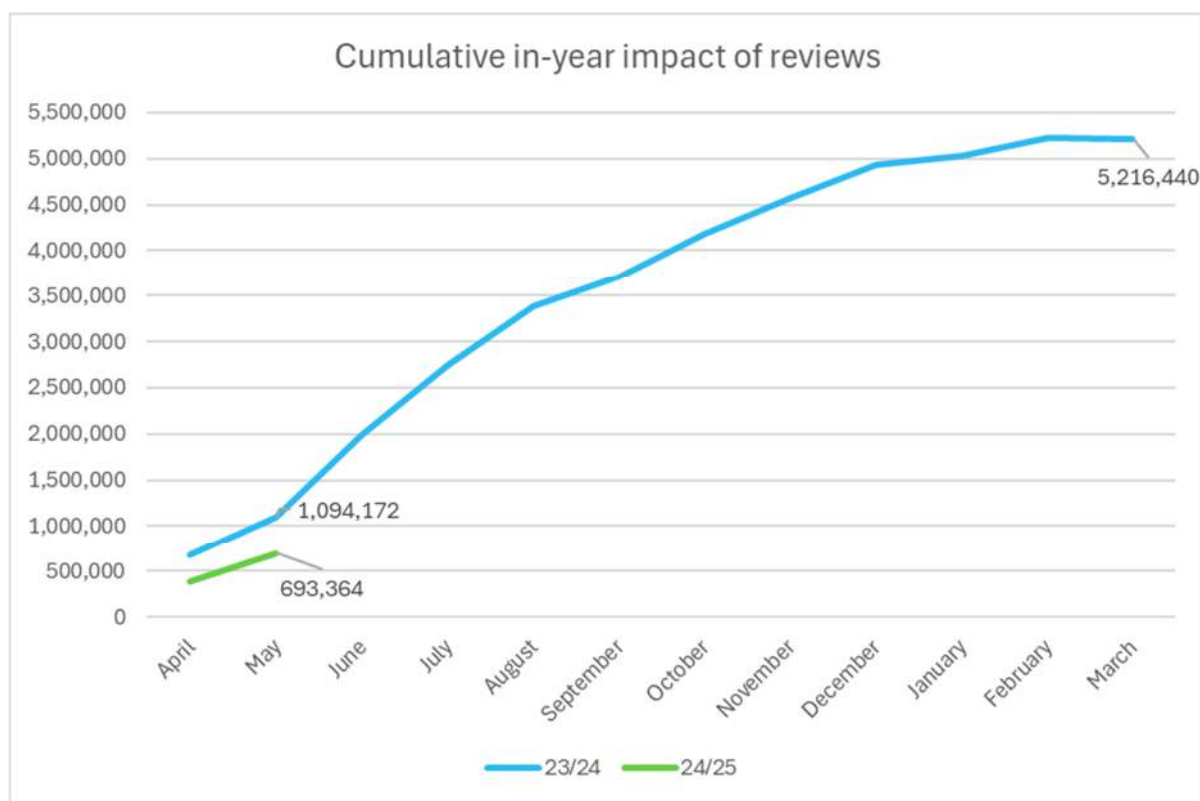
Reviews

Service users should receive a minimum of one planned review in a 12-month period, additionally unplanned reviews take place for several reasons. The rate of average weekly reviews in April 2024 was 76, which is 11 higher than in April 2023. The rate of average weekly reviews in May 2024 was 81, equal to the rate in May 2023, but with fewer unplanned reviews.



For further information, in April-May 2023 71.9% of reviews were planned and in April-May 2024 81.5%% were planned. Not all reviews result in a new service plan.

The graph below, using data from the Spend Overview Dashboard, shows that the total in-year impact of reviews resulting in a new service plan for 2023/24 was £5.2m. So far this year, the financial impact of reviews is lower than the previous year, especially for April.



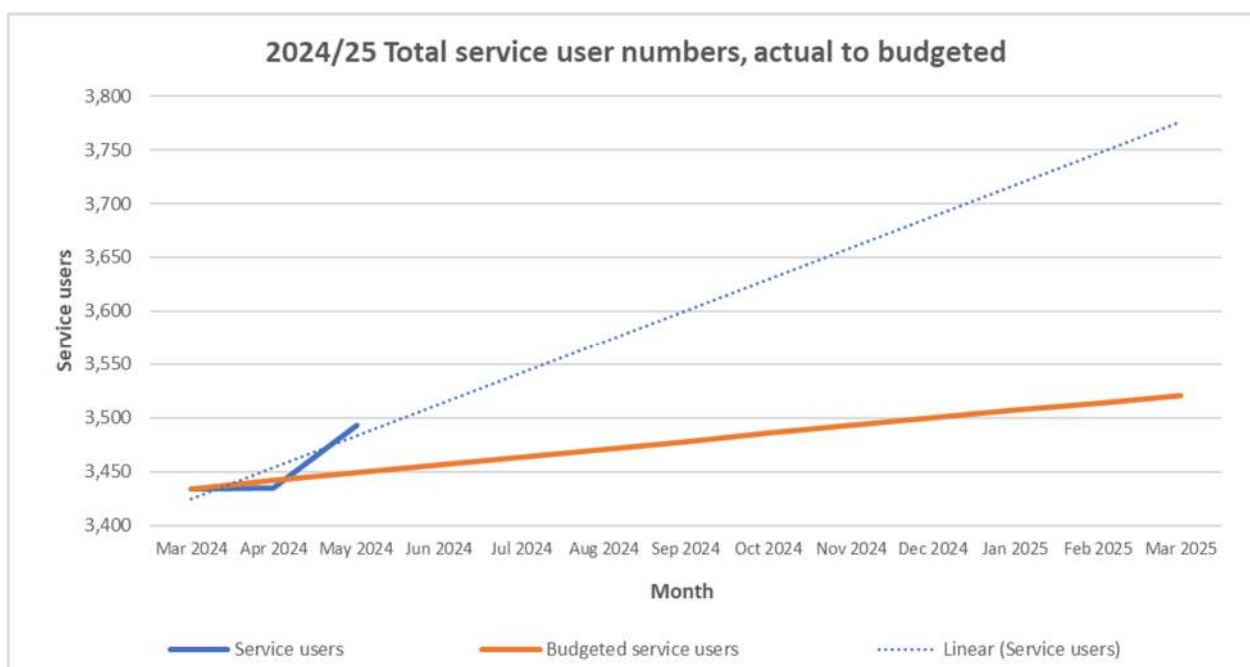
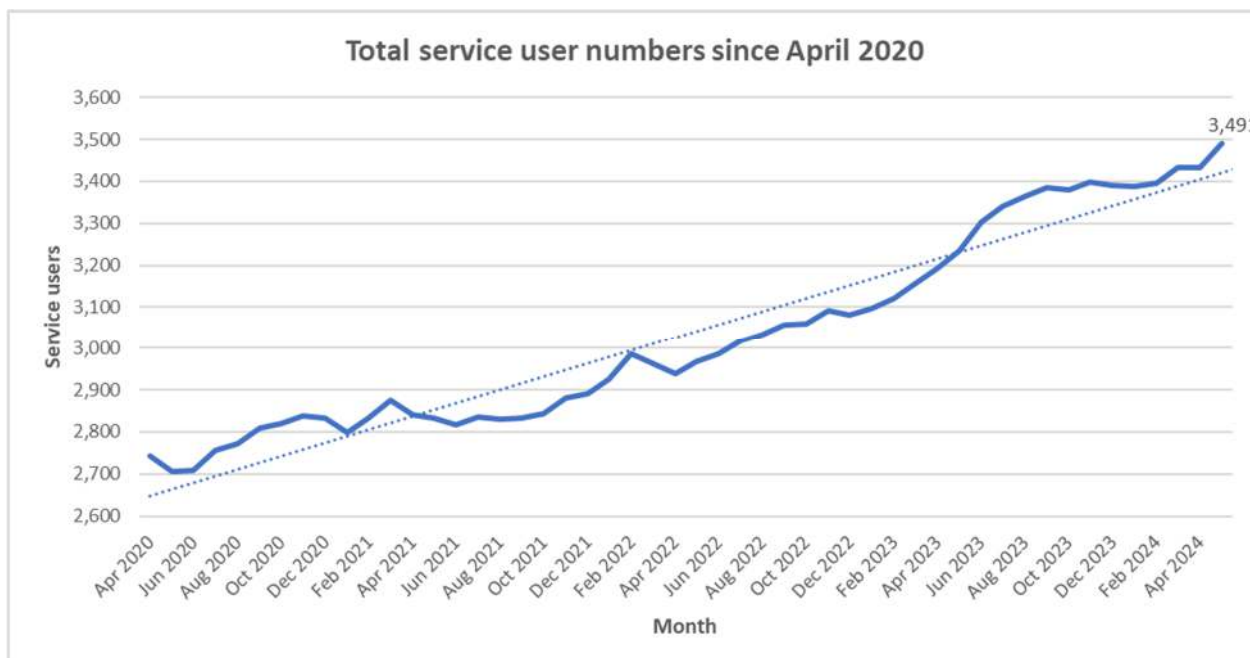
Service User Numbers

Attrition rate (current year effect)

	Budgeted (Apr to May)			Actual (Apr to May)			Variance (Apr to May)		
	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average
New service users	331	7,181,114	21,695	329	8,637,311	26,253	(2)	1,456,197	
Deceased service users	(113)	(2,444,715)	23,511	(125)	(3,928,852)	31,431	(12)	(1,484,136)	
Ended service users	(203)	(4,758,607)	25,266	(145)	(2,718,110)	18,746	58	2,040,496	
TOTALS	15	(22,208)		59	1,990,350		44	2,012,558	

The table above shows that the number of new service users on 31st May 2024 is 2 less than had been budgeted. There were also 12 more client deaths than budgeted, though there were 58 less ended care packages than budgeted. Overall, there are 44 more service users in receipt of care than budgeted. Average new user costs have been higher than budgeted, whilst average ended user savings have been lower than budgeted.

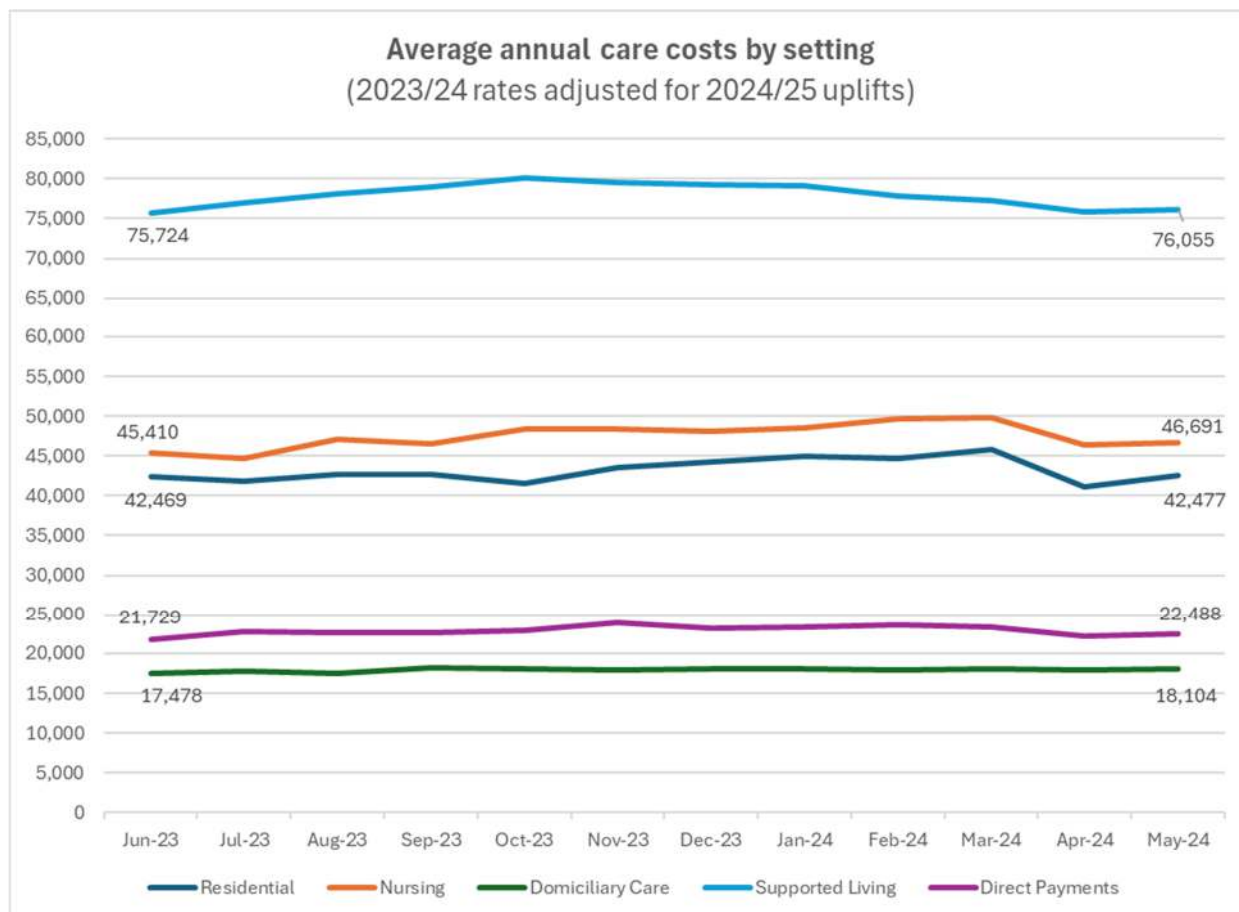
The graph below shows that user numbers have continued to increase since summer 2020, reaching 3,493 service users at the end of May 2024.



The above graph shows that April 2024 service user numbers were slightly below budget, but went 51 users above budget in May 2024.

Average costs

The last graph shows the average, full year costs for each care setting for the most recent 12-month period. The averages for 2023/24 have been increased by the 2024/25 uplift percentages to allow for a true comparison between the two years. Please note that while the graph shows reduced averages for April and May 2024, not all 2024/25 uplifts have been processed yet, so we are likely to see higher average rates in future months.



Care Setting	May-23	May-24	Change £	Change %
Residential	41,876	42,477	600	1.43%
Nursing	44,351	46,691	2,341	5.28%
Domiciliary Care	17,777	18,104	328	1.84%
Supported Living	74,397	76,055	1,658	2.23%
Direct Payments	21,954	22,488	534	2.43%

Appendix 6 – Predicted re-phasing of capital funded schemes 2024/25 to 2025/26

Project	£m
Council Funded	
Capital contingency	1.09
Equity investment	9.36
Children in care out of borough placements	0.16
Civic centre heating	0.70
Council house smoke & heat detection fire alarm	0.24
Council house general heating	1.17
Council house windows	0.95
New homes bonus	0.08
Regenerating Walsall	0.22
Future high street fund	5.16
Willenhall Masterplan	2.54
Hatherton Road car park	0.21
Replacement PC'S	0.03
Safe & secure environment	0.50
Enabling technology	3.35
Proud card payments digital website	0.40
Smartphones	0.40
Archiving systems moving to customer access	0.10
Digital & technology service - staffing capitalisation	0.32
Development team – staffing capitalisation	0.50
Homelessness temporary accommodation	0.52
Standard addressing implementation	0.11
External Funded	
Basic need	7.40
High needs provision capital allocation	0.50
Bloxwich town deal	5.14
Walsall town deal	0.77
Land & property investment fund	2.99
Growing places fund	0.59
Willenhall Masterplan transport levelling up fund	2.20
Willenhall Masterplan	14.06
Department for transport traffic signal obsolescence grant	0.29
Total	62.05

Appendix 7 – Capital Pipeline Investment 2022/23 to 2027/28 – planned allocations

Scheme	Approval	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Balance c/f		26.05	15.01	0.69	13.88	29.73	30.55
Additional budget allocation		0.00	6.05	33.59	27.81	13.17	0.49
Completed projects or funding fully transferred to schemes	Completed and approved	(10.89)	(11.13)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Future High Street Fund – match funding	Cabinet 21.04.2021	0.00	0.00	0.00	(4.04)	(1.07)	0.00
Children in care / foster care refurbishment programme	Cabinet 09.02.2022	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	0.00	0.00	0.00
HWRC station - Middlemore Lane	Cabinet 18.10 2022	0.00	(7.60)	(9.77)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Active public spaces	Cabinet 18.10.2022	0.00	0.00	(1.00)	(0.74)	0.00	0.00
Highways maintenance increased provision	SIB 14.06.2023 Cabinet 18.10 2023 SIB 15.05.2024 additional £850k Cabinet to approve 17.07.2024	0.00	(0.70)	(0.88)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Temporary accommodation	SIB 11.10.2023 Approved by Council Feb 24 as part of capital programme	0.00	(0.75)	(1.87)	(1.87)	(1.93)	0.00
New internal residential home	SIB 14.11.2023 Approved by Council Feb 24 as part of capital programme	0.00	0.00	(0.85)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Middlemore Lane HWRC	SIB 14.02.2024. Cabinet 07.02.2024	0.00	0.00	(4.54)	0.00	0.00	0.00
York bridge	SIB 15.01.2024 Cabinet to approve 17.07.2024	0.00	0.00	0.00	(1.73)	0.00	0.00
Replacement of PC's in libraries	SIB 13.03.2024	0.00	0.00	(0.25)	0.00	0.00	0.00
One source additional requirement	Approval at Proud programme. Cabinet to approve 17.07.2024	0.00	0.00	(0.86)	0.00	0.00	0.00
PSDS Phase 3c project: match funding	S151 on 24.04.2024	0.00	0.00	(0.08)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Addressing system ICT	SIB 17.07.2023	0.00	0.00	(0.16)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sneyd pre-disposal works	S151 24.04.2024	0.00	(0.04)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fryer road	SIB 11.06.2024 Cabinet to approve 17.07.2024	0.00	0.00	0.00	(3.57)	(9.35)	0.00
Total Allocated / Forecast to be allocated		(11.04)	(20.37)	(20.40)	(11.95)	(12.35)	0.00
Unallocated Balance c/f		15.01	0.69	13.88	29.73	30.55	31.04

**The budget report to Council in February 2023 also includes an allocation of £500k per*

Appendix 8: Financial Health Indicators – June 2024

Treasury Management	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)			
- Excluding other local authorities	4.13%	5.46%	4.13%
- Including other local authorities	4.16%	5.51%	4.16%
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	4.20%	5.00%	4.20%
Net Borrowing Costs / Council Tax Requirement and NNDR contribution	1.55%	12.50%	2.42%
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	433.11	444.08	444.08
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	465.41	481.10	481.10
Investment Rate Average (excl Property fund)	4.94%	4.00%	4.98%

Balance Sheet Ratios	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (draft)
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	2.39	2.01	1.96	1.74	1.86
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	0.73	1.02	1.07	0.77	0.85
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue (Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue)	1.43	1.83	1.49	1.19	1.15
Long Term Assets: Long Term Borrowing	1.86	1.83	2.14	2.73	2.72
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.07

Revenues Performance % collected for financial year	2022/23 Actual Collected in total as at 31.03.24	2023/24 Actual Collected in total as at 31.03.24	2024/25	
			Profiled 2024/25	Actual 2024/25
Council tax %	95.5%	93.7%	25.4%	25.2%
Total Council Tax collected	£151,698,280	£155,370,377	£45,000,000	£44,689,815
National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) %	98.6%	97.0%	25.4%	25.4%
Total NNDR collected	£70,162,283	£67,966,696	£20,125,000	£20,112,503

Debtors and Creditors Performance	2023/24 Actual	2024/25	
		Target	Actual
Sundry Debtors Collection – Average number of days to collect debt	25 days	24 days	24 days
Average number of days to process creditor payments*	5 days	8 days	5 days

Management of Resources	2024/25		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care and Public Health	91,669,871	97,682,426	6,012,555
Children's and Education Services	89,295,058	92,832,073	3,537,015
Economy, Environment and Communities	41,344,370	43,988,700	2,644,330
Resources and Transformation	44,338,216	43,846,747	(491,469)
Council Wide	11,371,302	8,728,302	(2,643,000)
NNDR/Top Up	(125,986,393)	(125,986,393)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	152,032,424	161,091,855	9,059,431
General Reserves	Minimum £7.8m Maximum £19.4m	N/A	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	102,588,346	74,479,115	(28,109,231)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	96,067,291	62,132,491	(33,934,800)
Total Capital Expenditure	198,655,637	136,611,606	(62,044,031)
Capital Receipts	3,000,000	3,000,000	0

Management of Resources	2023/24		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	76,864,476	90,266,195	13,401,719
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	81,704,822	87,462,134	5,757,312
- Customer Engagement	12,147,505	12,693,031	545,526
Economy, Environment and Communities	45,613,075	44,668,154	(944,921)
Resources and Transformation	50,925,395	50,489,250	(436,145)
Capital Financing	(5,546,678)	(9,777,391)	(19,179,688)
Central budgets	(117,545,553)	(117,545,553)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	144,163,042	158,255,820	(856,198)
General Reserves	N/A	19,558,671	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	60,253,122	26,407,323	(33,845,799)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	84,040,016	64,349,023	(19,690,993)
Total Capital Expenditure	144,293,138	90,756,346	(53,536,792)
Capital Receipts	2,925,000	2,253,067	(671,933)

What this tells us

Treasury Management	
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)	The average interest rate we are paying on the money we have borrowed compared to our target.
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	Shows how a 1% increase in interest rates would affect the total interest cost to the council.
Net Borrowing Costs / Tax Requirement	Borrowing not financed by a grant from government, as a proportion of our Net Revenue Expenditure
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	How much money we currently borrow to finance our capital programme.
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	The maximum amount of debt we should have at any one time
Investment Rate Average	The average interest rate we are receiving on the money we have invested.

Balance Sheet Ratios	
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	Our ability to meet our liabilities
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	If our reserves are adequate to meet potential future variations.
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue Using only council tax for tax revenue Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue	The effect of long term borrowing on our budget.
Long Term Borrowing: Long Term Assets	This allows us to understand the relationship between the money we borrow and the assets we have as they both change over time.
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	If school's reserves are at an appropriate level.

Revenues Performance	
% Collected for Financial Year	As a percentage the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that its related to, but this won't be included in this figure
Council Tax (%)	
National Non Domestic Rate (%)	As a percentage the amount of Business rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it related to.
Total Council Tax Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Total NNDR Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of Business Rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Sundry Debtors Collection Average number of days to collect debt	How long on average it takes us to collect money owed to us.
Average number of days to process creditors payments	How long on average it takes to pay our bills.

Management of Resources	
Service Analysis	
Children's Services Economy and Environment Adult Social Care Resources and Transformation Council Wide	Shows our forecast for how much we will spend on these services compared to what we planned and compared to how much we spent in the previous year.
General Reserves	Our forecast year end position on reserves against our opening balance.
Contingency	How much we have set aside and for unplanned expenditure, and how much we have left to spend.
Capital Expenditure	Forecast of our spend on capital programmes against our target
Capital Receipts	Forecast of how much money we expect to receive from selling some of our assets, against our target.

Appendix 9: Prudential indicators – as at 30 June 2024

Local Indicators		Actual 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Actual Position as at 31-March- 2025	Variance to target		Met
					Numerical Variance	% Variance	
L1	Full compliance with prudential code	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Y
L2	Average length of debt	17.74	Lower Limit 15 years, Upper limit 25 years	17.57	-	-	Y
This is a maturity measure and ideally should relate to the average lifespan of assets.							
L3a	Financing costs as a % of council tax requirement	2.31%	20.00%	3.43%	-16.57	-82.83%	Y
L3b	Financing costs as a % of tax revenues	1.55%	12.50%	2.42%	-10.08	-80.64%	Y
<p>These are a variation to Prl 3 excluding investment income and including MRP (amount set aside to repay debt costs). The target figure of 12.5% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favorable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.</p>							
L4	Net actual debt vs. operational debt	58.61%	85.00%	56.70%	-28.30	-33.29%	Y
This assists the monitoring of the authority's debt position.							
L5	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding excluding OLA	4.13%	5.46%	4.13%	-1.33	-24.43%	Y
L6	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding including OLA	4.16%	5.51%	4.16%	-1.35	-24.45%	Y
<p>The measure should be as low as possible. Other Local Authority debt (OLA) is managed on our behalf by Dudley council.</p>							

L7	Gearing effect of 1% increase in interest rate	4.20%	5.00%	4.20%	0.04%	This would increase the average interest rate payable from 4.16% shown in L6 to 4.20%	Y
This relates risk management principles to the monitoring of the TM strategy. It measures the effect of a change in interest rates and the effect it may have on the capital financing costs.							
L8	Average interest rate received on STI vs. At Call rate	1.02%	20.00%	1.54%	-18.46	-92.28%	N
L9a	AT call investments	4.92%	3.98%	5.18%	1.21	30.31%	Y
L9b	Short Term Investments	4.97%	4.00%	5.26%	1.26	31.50%	Y
L9c	Long Term Investments	5.00%	4.20%	5.01%	0.81	19.29%	Y
L9d	Property Fund Investments	4.47%	4.10%	4.40%	0.30	7.32%	Y
L10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and AT call)	4.94%	3.99%	5.19%	1.20	30.00%	Y
L11a	Average rate on all investments (ex. Property fund)	4.94%	4.00%	5.18%	1.18	29.35%	Y
L11b	Average rate on all investments (inc. property fund)	4.83%	4.03%	4.98%	0.95	23.58%	Y
L12	% daily bank balances within target range	99%	99%	99%	0.00	0.00%	Y
This measures how good our daily cash flow prediction is. A figure of 98% and above indicates a high level of accuracy.							

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor Statham, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Related portfolios: N/A

Service: Finance

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The council is required through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce a year end position statement reviewing treasury management activities and prudential and treasury indicator performance. The Annual Treasury Management Report at Appendix A provides Cabinet with these details, and meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 1.2 The council is required to note the Annual Treasury Management Report is presented to provide assurance that Treasury Management performance is in line with budgeted expectations and within the above regulations and Codes that the authority is required to comply with.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the council's 2023/24 year end position for treasury management activities (Appendix A).
- 2.2 The council achieved an average interest rate across all investments of 4.83% compared to a budget of 4.54% during 2023/24 which in monetary terms this equates to an overachievement against budget of £1.685m. At the point of budget setting the Bank of England base rate was 3.00% following a period of successive interest rate increases (7 increases in 11 months). Interest rate forecasts were suggesting further gradual rises in short, medium and longer term interest rates to a peak of 4.50% in June 2023. However, by May 2023 it had become clear that inflation was sticking and further rate hikes were necessary. From December 2022 to November 2023 the Bank of England increased base rate 8 times, from 3.00% to a peak of 5.25%. The increase in rate had a direct impact on investment returns

as we were able to place funds in short-term deposits at very good rates compared to budget, ensuring a significant underspend on investment income.

- 2.3 In such a high interest rate environment the borrowing strategy during 2023/24 has been to delay approved long-term borrowing until needed to minimise interest costs, £15.000m from a budgeted borrowing amount of £40.843m has been borrowed during the year to support capital programme expenditure, this has been managed through careful cashflow forecasting and planning.
- 2.4 Capital expenditure for 2023/24 was £91.230m of which £22.722m will be funded from approved borrowing (Table 2, Appendix A).
- 2.5 The actual debt position for the Council as at 31 March 2024 is £248.899m, which is within both the operational and authorised limits for external debt approved by Council on 23/02/23. Borrowing overall decreased by £16.692m since 2022/23, new borrowing of £15.000m was undertaken and there have been long term Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) maturities of £30.000m, the balance of £1.692m relates to historical other local authority debt movements. The Council is showing an under borrowed position of £148.740m compared to the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), this represents additional external borrowing the council could choose to take if required. This is currently financed by internal borrowing (utilising cash reserves rather than taking external borrowing).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2021)), the Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24 including prudential and local indicators (Appendix A).

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The Annual Treasury Management Report at Appendix A provides Cabinet with a summary of the year end position for 2023/24 and prudential and treasury indicator performance, and meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

The following key points of interest have been extracted from the report:

- The annual report meets the requirement of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.
- Capital expenditure was £91.230m of which £22.722m will be funded from approved borrowing (Table 2, Appendix A).

- The Bank of England base rate increased from 3.00% to 5.25% between December 2022 and August 2023, which enabled the Council to benefit from improved investment returns.
- The authority has continued to identify appropriate new areas of investment opportunity, reviewed counterparties and limits to reduce exposure to counterparty risk. Together these actions have led to an overachievement of investment income of £1.685m compared to budget for the 2023/24 financial year.
- To note within the local indicators (Table 11) that the net borrowing cost as a percentage of net council tax requirement of 2.31% (3a) and the net borrowing cost as percentage of tax revenue of 1.55% (3b) are both within their target upper limits of 20% and 12.50% respectively.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.2 Sound financial management of the council's cash balances supports the delivery of council priorities within council's available resources.

Risk management

- 4.3 Treasury management activity takes place within a robust risk management environment, which enables the council to effectively maximise investment income and minimise interest payments without undue or inappropriate exposure to financial risk. It is recognised that the management of risk is as important as maximisation of performance and it is essential that the council has the right balance of risk and reward when making investment decisions. This is supported by treasury management policies which seek to manage the risk of adverse fluctuations in interest rates and safeguard the financial interests of the council.

Financial implications

- 4.5 Treasury management activity forms part of the council's financial framework and supports delivery of the medium term financial strategy. The review of treasury management performance and activity is reviewed through both the annual treasury management report and the mid-year performance review report.

Legal implications

- 4.6 The council is required to have regard to the Prudential Code under the duties outlined by the Local Government Act 2003. One requirement of the Prudential Code is that the council should comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management. The council adopted the original treasury management code in 1992 and further revisions to the Code in 2002, 2010, 2017 and 2021.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.7 None directly relating to this report.

Property implications

4.8 None directly relating to this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.9 None directly relating to this report.

Staffing implications

4.10 None directly relating to this report.

Reducing Inequalities

4.11 None directly relating to this report.

Climate Change

4.12 None directly relating to this report.

Consultation

4.13 The report has been approved by the finance treasury management panel, an internal governance arrangement comprising the Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and Head of Finance (Deputy S151).

5. Decide

5.1 In line with the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2021) there are a number of reports that are required to be produced and reported publicly each year. The Annual Treasury Management Report forms one of these requirements and as such is being reported to Cabinet for noting and forwarding onto Council for consideration.

6. Respond

6.1 This report is not seeking approval of a decision, in line with the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2021) it is required to be reported for noting and forwarding to Council for consideration.

7. Review

7.1 In line with Treasury Management Code of Practice (2021) this is a backward looking document looking at performance over the previous.

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

Corporate budget plan and treasury management and investment strategy 2023/24 – Council 23/02/23.

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Appendix A

Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24

Walsall Council

June 2024

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Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24

Purpose

This council is required through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury report reviewing treasury management activities and prudential and treasury indicator performance. This document therefore reports this position for the 2023/24 financial year. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

During 2023/24 the following reports were produced:

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Council 23 February 2023)
- a mid-year (minimum) treasury update report (Cabinet 13 December 2023)
- an annual review of treasury management policies in advance of the year (Council 23 February 2023)
- an annual report following the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report to Cabinet)

In addition, this council's treasury management panel has received regular treasury management update reports throughout 2023/24.

The regulatory environment places an onus on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the council's policies previously approved by members.

This council also confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by Cabinet before they were reported to the full Council. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken during the year on 5 December 2023 in order to support members' scrutiny role.

Summary

During 2023/24, the council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparators, are as follows:

Table 1 Actual prudential and treasury indicators	2022/23 Actual £m	2023/24 Original £m	2023/24 Revised £m	2023/24 Actual £m
Capital expenditure	96.314	115.270	144.290	91.230
Capital Financing Requirement:				
Including PFI and finance leases	390.185			399.974
Excluding PFI and finance leases	387.252			397.639
External Borrowing	265.592			248.899
Investments	140.771			86.446
Net borrowing	124.821			162.453

Other prudential and treasury indicators are to be found in the main body of this report. The Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer) confirms that borrowing was only undertaken for capital purposes or to support required in year cash-flow requirements and the statutory borrowing limit was not breached.

Following a period of high and rising inflation the Bank of England engaged in monetary policy tightening at every Monetary Policy Committee meeting during 2022, and into 2023, either by increasing Bank Rate by 0.25% or 0.50% each time. From December 2021 to August 2023 Bank Rate has increased from 0.25% to 5.25%, and this has had a direct impact on investment returns. Counterparty risk has been continually reviewed throughout the financial year to ensure credit ratings exceed the minimum requirements set in Treasury Management policies, and cash was invested primarily in at-call and short-term accounts to ensure the council was taking account of a rising interest rate environment.

The original capital expenditure target of £115.270m for 2023/24 is based on the figure for the 2023/24 capital programme reported in the budget report presented to full Council on the 23 February 2023, and was revised within the financial year to a £144.290m. The actual spend for 2023/24 is lower than the target due to slippage, and amendments to the original capital programme agreed during the year, of which spend will now be incurred in 2024/25.

1. Introduction and background

To set the context of the treasury management environment it is first necessary to provide a review of the economy and interest rates.

Interest rate forecasts initially suggested further gradual rises in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2023/24. Bank Rate had initially been forecast to peak at 4.5% but it is now expected to have peaked at 5.25%.

By January it had become clear that inflation was moving down significantly from its 40-year double-digit highs, and the Bank of England signalled in March 2024 that the next move in Bank Rate would be down, so long as upcoming inflation and employment data underpinned that view. As at 5th April 2024 the CPI measure of inflation stands at 3.4% but is expected to fall materially below 2% over the summer months and to stay there in 2025 and 2026. Nonetheless, there remains significant risks to that central forecast, mainly in the form of a very tight labour market putting upward pressure on wages, and continuing geo-political inflationary risks emanating from the prevailing Middle East crisis and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2. The Council's Capital Expenditure and Financing 2023/24

The council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc., which has no resultant impact on the council's borrowing need); or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed. The amount to be funded from borrowing for 2023/24 will be £22.722m. It shows a variance to budget due to slippage on some capital projects.

Table 2	2022/23 Actual £m	2023/24 Original £m	2023/24 Actual £m
Total capital expenditure	96.314	115.270	91.230
Resourced by:			
• Capital receipts	3.314	1.500	1.936
• Capital grants	61.697	48.410	64.334
• Capital Reserves and Revenue	2.779	0.020	2.238
• Approved Borrowing	28.521	65.340	22.722
	96.314	115.270	91.230

3. The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

The council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the council's debt position. The CFR results from the capital activity of the council and which resources have been used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2023/24 capital expenditure funded by borrowing (see table 2), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.

Part of the council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the council's cash position to ensure sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources within the council.

Reducing the CFR – the council's underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the minimum revenue provision (MRP) to reduce the CFR. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.

The total CFR can be reduced by:

- the application of additional capital financing resources (such as unapplied capital receipts); or
- charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a voluntary revenue provision (VRP).

The Council's 2023/24 MRP Policy, (as required by DLUHC Guidance), was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2023/24 on 23 February 2023.

The council's CFR for the year 2023/24 is shown below in Table 3, and represents a key prudential indicator (PrI4). It includes Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and leasing schemes from the balance sheet which increase the council's borrowing need – although no borrowing is normally required against these schemes as a borrowing facility is included in the contract (if applicable). It shows that in 2023/24 the council's CFR has increased by £9.791m from £390.185m to £399.976m.

Table 3 CFR (£m)	31 March 2023 Actual £m	31 March 2024 Actual £m
Opening balance	374.499	390.185
Add capital expenditure funded from approved borrowing (as above)	28.475	22.722
Less MRP	(12.789)	(12.931)
Closing balance	390.185	399.976

The borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for net borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term the council's external borrowing, net of investments, must only be for a capital purpose, or to fund expected in year cash-flow requirements. This essentially means that the council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. Net borrowing should not therefore, except in the short term, have exceeded the CFR. Table 4 below highlights the council's net borrowing position of £162.453m against the CFR excluding PFIs and Finance leases (excluded because the debt liability for these are not in the net borrowing position of the council) of £397.639m. The council has complied with this prudential indicator.

Table 4 Gross borrowing and the CFR (£m)	31 March 2023 Actual £m	31 March 2024 Actual £m
Gross Borrowing	268.273	250.771
Net borrowing position	124.821	162.453
CFR – excluding PFIs and Finance Leases	387.252	397.639
Long term Assets	657.389	679.072
Net Borrowing % of Long term Assets	18.99%	23.92%

Another measure of prudence is the proportion of net borrowing to long term assets. Table 4 shows that the net borrowing position of the council as at 31 March 2024 is £162.453m which represents 23.92% of the value of the council's long term assets which are valued on the council's balance sheet at that date.

Other key Prudential Indicators are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5 Prudential and Borrowing Limits	31 March 2023 Actual £m	31 March 2024 Actual £m
1. Authorised limit	474.376	465.410
2. Maximum gross borrowing in year	328.971	268.273
3. Operational boundary	431.251	423.100
4. Average gross borrowing	300.331	259.522
5. Financing costs as proportion of net revenue stream	4.05%	4.88%

- 1. The authorised limit** - the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” set by the council as required by section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The council does not have the power to borrow above this level without the prior approval of full Council. Table 5 demonstrates that during 2023/24 the council’s maximum gross borrowing was within its authorised limit.
- 2. Maximum Gross borrowing** – is the peak level of borrowing in year.
- 3. The operational boundary** – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary is acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached. In 2023/24 the council’s average borrowing position was less than the operational boundary.
- 4. Average Gross Borrowing** – is an estimate of the borrowing level in the year (see Table 7 for analysis of Borrowing).
- 5. Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream** - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream. Net revenue stream is defined as Net Council Tax Requirement plus Standard Spending Assessment (previously Formula Grant).

4. Prudential Indicators

The following tables show performance against statutorily required prudential and local indicators.

Table 6 – Prudential Indicators		Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Position 31-Mar- 24	Variance to target	
		£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Prl 1	Capital Expenditure	96.314	144.290	90.760	(53.530)	(37%)
Prl 2	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	4.05%	8.86%	4.88%	(3.98%)	(45%)
Prl 3	Estimates of the incremental impact of new capital investment decisions on Council Tax	£43.02	£89.66	£89.66	0.00	0%
Prl 4	Capital Financing Requirement	390.185	433.114	399.976	33.138	7.6%
Prl 5	Authorised Limit for external debt	474.380	465.410	465.410	0.000	0%
Prl 6	Operational Limit for external debt	431.250	423.100	423.100	0.000	0%
Ref	Prudential Indicator	Actual 2022-23 £m		Target 2023/24 £m	Position 31- Mar-24 £m	
Prl 7	Gross Borrowing exceeds capital financing requirement	No		No	No	
Prl 8	Authority has adopted CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Prl 9	Total principle sums invested for longer than 365 days must not exceed	5.0		25.0	0.0	
Ref	Prudential Indicator	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual 2022/23	Position 31-Mar-24	
Prl 10	Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	95%	40%	98.14%	88.03%	
Prl 11	Variable Interest Rate Exposure	45%	0%	1.86%	11.97%	
Prl 12	Maturity Structure of Borrowing:					
	Under 12 months	25%	0%	12.84%	12.85%	
	12 months and within 24 months	25%	0%	12.24%	3.95%	
	24 months and within 5 years	40%	0%	20.25%	24.69%	
	5 years and within 10 years	50%	5%	0%	0%	
	10 years and above	85%	30%	54.67%	58.51%	

PRL 5 (authorised limit for external debt) and **PRL 6** (operational limit for external debt) were approved by Council on the 23 February 2023 and the CIPFA Code of Practice only allows these limits to be changed by Council and therefore the actual limit and the target remain the same. The gross debt position for the Council as at 31 March 2024 is £250.771m.

Key variances are because of the following reasons:-

PRL 1 Total capital expenditure - variation of £139.196m

The original £115.270m target for 2023/24 is based on the figure for the 2023/24 capital programme reported in the budget report presented to full Council on the 23 February 2023. This was revised within the financial year to a £144.290m target. The actual spend for 2023/24 is lower than the target due to slippage from 2023/24, and amendments to the original capital programme agreed during the year, of which spend will now be incurred in 2024/25.

PRL 4 Capital Financing Requirement – variation of £33.138m

The Capital Financing Requirement is in line with capital expenditure, with the variation linked to capital slippage as above.

PRL 12 Maturity Structure of Borrowing

For the purpose of the maturity profile indicator the next call date on a LOBO loan is assumed as it is the right of the lender to require repayment. This Prudential Indicator currently shows 0% of borrowing maturities within periods 5-10years when compared to the lower limit of this indicator of 5.00%. This is due to there being no loan repayments due between 2029-2044 as the council utilised internal borrowing for periods of time where cash flow allowed meaning the maturity profile of debt is not evenly spread. This provided a favourable return at that time between external borrowing rates payable and return on investments that would be deliverable. Whilst there are no scheduled maturities the council will continue to use this period to review options to repay any existing borrowing early.

5. Treasury Position at 31 March 2024

The council's debt and investment position is organised by the treasury management team in order to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through Member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity detailed in the council's treasury management practices. At the beginning and the end of 2023/24 the council's treasury position was as shown below in **Table 7**:

Table 7 Loans and Investments	Opening Balance £m	Average Rate At 31/03/23 %	Movement in Year £m	Closing Balance £m	Average Rate At 31/03/24 %
PWLB loans	174.365	3.55%	(19.950)	154.415	3.81%
Market Loans	75.000	4.75%	-	75.000	4.75%
Temporary Loans (LT)	-	-	15.000	15.000	4.40%
Total Borrowing over 12 months excluding WMCC debt	249.365	3.91%	(4.950)	244.415	4.13%
Temporary Loans	10.459	1.63%	(10.000)	0.459	2.75%
Total borrowing excluding WMCC debt	259.365	3.82%	(14.950)	244.874	4.13%
WMCC Debt	8.449	5.35%	(2.553)	5.897	5.14%
Gross Borrowing	268.273	3.3.87%	(17.503)	250.771	4.16%
Waste Disposal	(2.682)	5.35%	0.810	(1.872)	5.14%
Borrowing	265.592	3.85%	(16.692)	248.899	4.15%
CFR less PFI finance & leases	387.252		10.387	397.639	
Under/(Over) Borrowing	121.660		27.079	148.740	
Debt as % of CFR	69%			63%	
Call Accounts	47.771	2.05%	(0.674)	48.446	4.92%
Short Term Investments	58.000	1.82%	(50.000)	8.000	4.97%
Long Term Investments	35.000	2.36%	(5.000)	30.000	4.73%
Total Investments	140.771	2.11%	(54.325)	86.446	4.83%
Net Borrowing Position	124.821		37.633	162.453	

The under borrowing position represents additional external borrowing the council could choose to take if required, however this has currently been financed by internal borrowing (utilising the Council's accumulated cash reserves rather than taking out new external borrowing). This position will continue to be monitored and additional external borrowing may be undertaken if required for cash flow purposes.

6. The Borrowing Strategy for 2023/24 and Economic Context provided by Link Asset Services (the council's external Treasury advisor)

During 2023/24, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), was not fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure.

This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2024 and 2025 as inflation concerns are dampened. The Council has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels (>4%) and has focused on a policy of internal and temporary borrowing, supplemented by short-dated borrowing (<5 years) as appropriate.

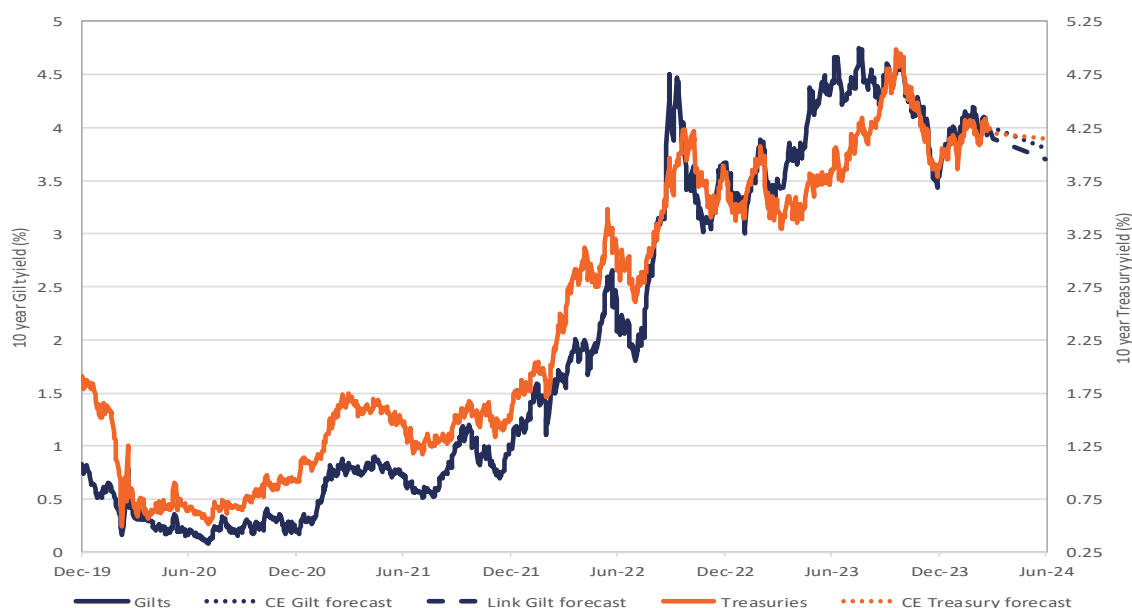
7. Borrowing Outturn commentary for 2023/24 provided by Link Asset Services (the council's external Treasury advisor)

PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields. Inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last 30 years in lowering inflation and the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers. This means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years. Indeed, in recent years many bond yields up to 10 years in the Eurozone turned negative on expectations that the EU would struggle to get growth rates and inflation up from low levels. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby 10-year yields have fallen below shorter-term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession.

However, since early 2022, yields have risen dramatically in all the major developed economies, first as economies opened post-Covid; then because of the inflationary impact of the war in Ukraine in respect of the supply side of many goods. In particular, rising cost pressures emanating from shortages of energy and some food categories have been central to inflation rising rapidly. Furthermore, at present the FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee), ECB (European Central Bank) and Bank of England are all being challenged by levels of persistent inflation that are exacerbated by very tight labour markets and high wage increases relative to what central banks believe to be sustainable.

Graph of UK gilt yields v. US treasury yields

Gilt yields have been on a continual rise since the start of 2021, peaking in the autumn of 2022. Currently, yields are broadly range bound between 3% and 4.25%.



Gilt yields have generally been on a continual rise since the start of 2021, peaking in the autumn of 2023. Currently, yields are broadly range bound between 3.5% and 4.25%. At the close of the day on 28 March 2024, all gilt yields from 1 to 50 years were between 3.81% and 4.56%, with the 1 year being the highest and 6-7 years being the lowest yield.

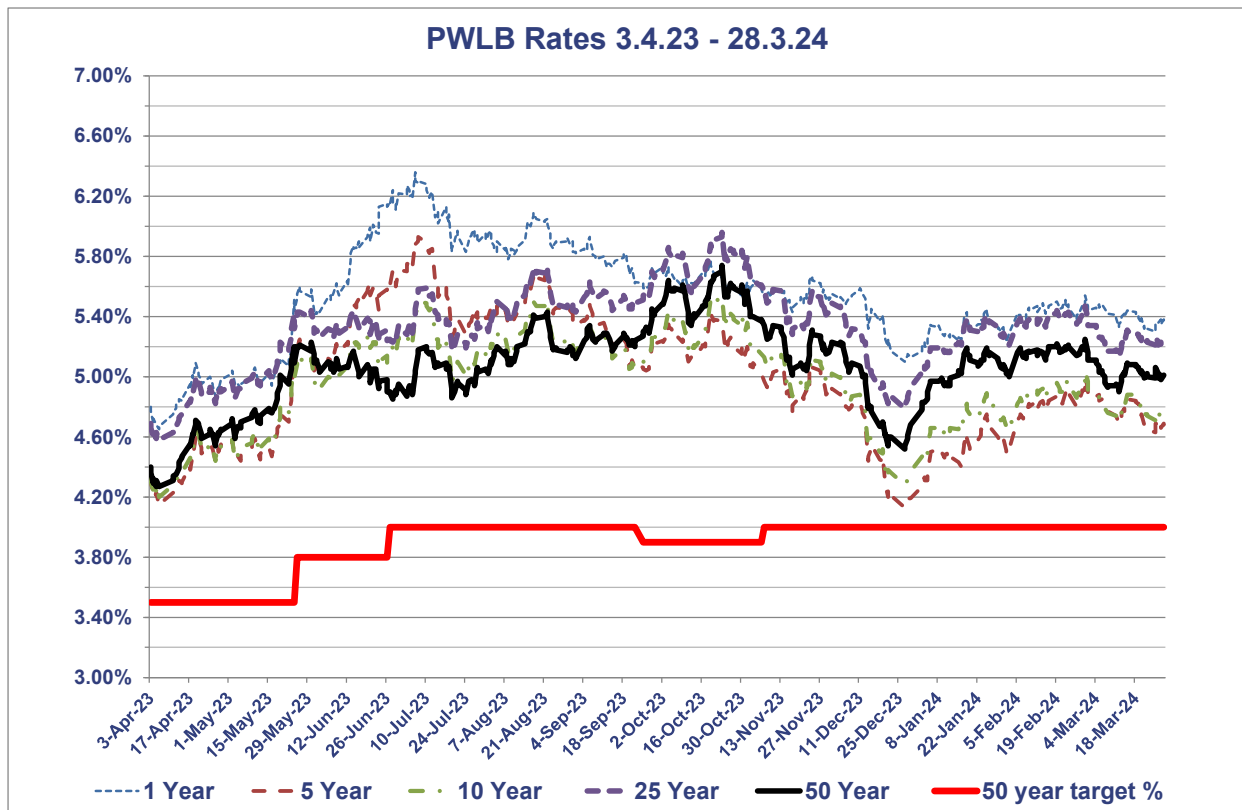
Regarding PWLB borrowing rates, the various margins attributed to their pricing are as follows: -

- PWLB Standard Rate is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100 basis points)
- PWLB Certainty Rate is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80 basis points)
- Local Infrastructure Rate is gilt plus 60 basis points (G+60 basis points)

There is likely to be a fall in gilt yields and PWLB rates across the whole curve over the next one to two years as Bank Rate falls and inflation (on the Consumer Price Index measure) moves below the Bank of England's 2% target.

As a general rule, short-dated gilt yields will reflect expected movements in Bank Rate, whilst medium to long-dated yields are driven primarily by the inflation outlook.

The Bank of England is also embarking on a process of Quantitative Tightening. The Bank's original £895bn stock of gilt and corporate bonds will gradually be sold back into the market over several years. The impact this policy will have on the market pricing of gilts, while issuance is markedly increasing, and high in historic terms, is an unknown at the time of writing.



8. Investments in 2023/24 and Economic Context commentary provided by Link Asset Services (the council's external Treasury advisor)

Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2023/24 as central banks, including the Bank of England, continued to respond to inflationary pressures that were not transitory, and realised that tighter monetary policy was called for.

Starting April at 4.25%, Bank Rate moved up in stepped increases of either 0.25% or 0.5%, reaching 5.25% by August. By the end of the financial year, no further increases were anticipated. Indeed, the market is pricing in a first cut in Bank Rate in either June or August 2024.

The upward sloping yield curve that prevailed throughout 2023/24 meant that local authorities continued to be faced with the challenge of proactive investment of surplus cash, and this emphasised the need for a detailed working knowledge of cashflow projections so that the appropriate balance between maintaining cash for liquidity purposes, and "laddering" deposits on a rolling basis to lock in the increase in investment rates as duration was extended, became an on-going feature of the investment landscape.

With bond markets selling off, UK equity market valuations struggled to make progress, as did property funds, although there have been some spirited, if temporary, market rallies from time to time – including in November and December 2023. However, the more traditional investment options, such as specified investments (simple to understand, and less than a year in duration), have continued to be at the forefront of most local authority

investment strategies, particularly given Money Market Funds have also provided decent returns in close proximity to Bank Rate for liquidity purposes. In the latter part of 2023/24, the local authority to local authority market lacked any meaningful measure of depth, forcing short-term investment rates above 7% in the last week of March.

While the Council has taken a prudent approach to investing surplus monies, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.

Investment balances have been kept to a minimum through the agreed strategy of using reserves and balances to support internal borrowing, rather than borrowing externally from the financial markets. External borrowing would have incurred an additional cost, due to the differential between borrowing and investment rates as illustrated in the charts shown above and below. Such an approach has also provided benefits in terms of reducing counterparty risk exposure, by having fewer investments placed in the financial markets.

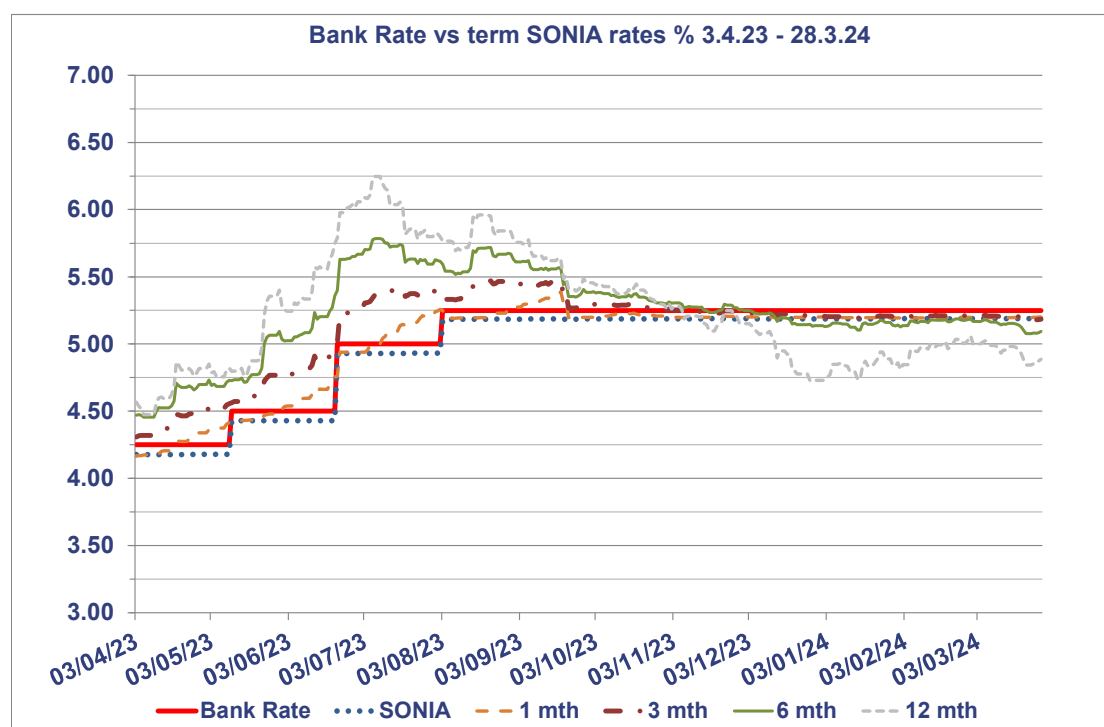


Table 8 within the report details the authority's investments by call, short and long term. The Sterling Over Night Indexed Average (SONIA) rate set out in the graph above (average of 2.24% across the year) is a fair comparator for at-call and the 12 month SONIA rate (average of 3.53% across the year) for short term investments.

Resources – the council's longer term cash balances comprise, primarily, revenue and capital resources, although these will be influenced by cash flow considerations.

Investment Policy – the council's investment policy is governed by DLUHC investment guidance, which was implemented in the Annual Investment Strategy approved by Council

on 23rd February 2023. This policy set out the approach for choosing investment counterparties, and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies supplemented by an analysis of Common Equity Tier (CET1) levels. The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved Strategy, and the council had no liquidity difficulties.

At the end of 2023/24 Walsall's investment balance was £54.325m lower than that at the start of the year.

Table 8 below shows an age profile of the investments.

Table 8: Changes in Investments during 2023/24	Opening Balance £m	Closing Balance £m	Movement in Year £m
At Call accounts	47.771	48.446	0.675
Between 31 days and 365 days	58.000	8.000	(50.000)
Over 365 days	35.000	30.000	(5.000)
Total	140.771	86.446	(54.325)

Investments held by the council - the council maintained an average balance of £130.016m of internally managed funds. The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 4.94%.

Recognising the continuation of the stresses on the world banking system, enhanced priority has continued to be given to security and liquidity. To reduce counterparty risk to the maximum possible extent the investment portfolio was spread across a range of appropriately credit rated / analysed institutions. **Table 9** shows the outturn on investment income in 2023/24.

Total investment income was £6.267m compared to a budget of £4.582m, leading to an underspend position of £1.685m. At the point of budget setting, interest rate forecasts were suggesting further gradual rises in short, medium and longer term interest rates to a peak of 4.50% in June 2023, but by May 2023 it had become clear that inflation was sticking and further rate hikes were necessary. This had a direct impact on investment returns, ensuring a significant underspend on investment income.

Table 9 Investments Interest – Gross Income	2023/24 Approved Cash Limit £m	Outturn at 31 March 2024 £m	Over /(under) achieved cash limit £m	% Target Rate	% Average Rate achieved
Call Account investments	0.625	3.056	2.431	2.50%	4.92%
Short Term Investments	2.288	1.647	(0.641)	3.75%	4.97%
Long Term Investments	0.600	0.224	(0.376)	4.00%	5.00%
Property Fund	1.069	1.340	0.271	3.56%	4.47%
Total	4.582	6.267	1.685	0.91%	4.94%

9. Performance Measurement

One of the key requirements in the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management is the formal introduction of performance measurements relating to investments, debt and capital financing activities. **Table 10** below shows that Walsall has consistently achieved a higher average return on it's investments and has reduced it's average rate it pays for its borrowing. The figures for 2011/12 to 2014/15 are derived from the the CIPFA treasury management benchmarking club. For 2015/16 onwards, as a number of authorities no longer participate in this benchmarking exercise, the figures set out are based on a review of reports issued by the authorities statistical neighbours. Comparative figures for 2023/24 are not yet available.

Table 10 Comparison of Walsall with other councils Average Interest Rates	Walsall Rate Received %	Comparator Average Rate Received %	Walsall Rate Paid %	Comparator Average Rate Paid %
2013/14	1.29	0.85	4.51	4.26
2014/15	1.09	0.77	4.61	4.14
2015/16	1.08	0.76	4.54	4.18
2016/17	0.86	0.76	3.99	4.34
2017/18	1.32	0.73	3.42	4.06
2018/19	1.37	1.10	3.83	4.15
2019/20	1.50	1.00	3.34	4.05
2020/21	0.59	0.24	3.42	3.70
2021/22	0.38	0.16	3.63	4.02
2022/23	2.11	1.95	3.87	3.95
2023/24	4.83		4.16	

Council approved the following local performance indicators, the majority of which were complied with during the year, **Table 11** provides the indicators for March 2024.

Table 11 - Local Indicators		Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Position 31-Mar-24	Variance to target	
		£m	£m	£m	value	%
L1	Full compliance with Prudential Code.	YES	YES	YES	N/A	N/A
L2	Average length of debt. (Years)	17.13	Lower Limit 15 Years, Upper Limit 25 Years	17.74	N/A	N/A
L3a	Net borrowing costs as % of net council tax requirement.	10.64%	20.00%	2.31%	(17.69%)	(88.43%)
3b	Net borrowing costs as % of Tax Revenue.	7.21%	12.50%	1.55%	(10.95%)	(87.63%)
L4	Net actual debt vs. operational debt.	61.42%	85.00%	58.61%	(26.39%)	(31.04%)

L5	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding excluding OLA.	3.82%	4.21%	4.13%	0.08%	2.02%
L6	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding including OLA.	3.87%	4.33%	4.16%	0.17%	3.82%
L7	Gearing effect of 1% increase in interest rate.	3.81%	5.00%	4.20%	(0.80%)	(16.00%)
L8	Average interest rate received on STI vs. At Call rate	(11.22%)	35.00%	1.02%	(33.98%)	(97.10%)
L9	Average interest rate received:					
L9a	At Call investments.	2.05%	2.50%	4.92%	2.42%	96.80%
L9b	Short Term Investments.	1.82%	3.75%	4.97%	1.22%	32.53%
L9c	Long Term Investments.	0.83%	4.00%	5.00%	1.00%	25.00%
L9d	Property Fund Investments	3.89%	3.56%	4.47%	0.91%	25.56%
L10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and At Call).	1.89%	3.39%	4.94%	1.55%	45.86%
L11a	Average rate on all investments (excluding property fund)	1.81%	3.48%	4.94%	1.46%	42.04%
L11b	Average Rate on all investments (including property fund)	2.11%	4.54%	4.83%	0.29%	6.47%
L12	% daily bank balances within target range.	99%	99%	99%	0.00%	0.00%

Key variances are because of the following reasons:-

L8 – Average rate achieved on Short Term Interest vs At Call Rate – The target is to achieve a 35% better rate on short term investments vs the current At Call rate (i.e. do nothing other than leave all cash in overnight At Call accounts). Improvements in At Call rates due to bank rate increases meant that the difference between At Call and Short Term rates was increased, as short term rates were locked in whereas At Call rates increased immediately.

10. The Economy and Interest Rates commentary provided by Link (the council's external Treasury advisor)

UK Economy.

Against a backdrop of stubborn inflationary pressures, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and war in the Middle East, UK interest rates have continued to be volatile right across the curve, from Bank Rate through to 50-year gilt yields, for all of 2023/24.

Markets have sought an end to central banks' on-going phase of keeping restrictive monetary policy in place on at least one occasion during 2023/24 but to date only the Swiss National Bank has cut rates and that was at the end of March 2024.

UK, EZ and US 10-year yields have all stayed stubbornly high throughout 2023/24. The table below provides a snapshot of the conundrum facing central banks. Inflation is easing, albeit gradually, but labour markets remain very tight by historical comparisons, making it an issue of fine judgment as to when rates can be cut.

	UK	Eurozone	US
Bank Rate	5.25%	4%	5.25%-5.5%
GDP	-0.3%q/q Q4 (-0.2%/y/y)	+0.0%q/q Q4 (0.1%/y/y)	2.0% Q1 Annualised
Inflation	3.4%/y/y (Feb)	2.4%/y/y (Mar)	3.2%/y/y (Feb)
Unemployment Rate	3.9% (Jan)	6.4% (Feb)	3.9% (Feb)

The Bank of England sprung no surprises in their March meeting, leaving interest rates at 5.25% for the fifth time in a row and, despite no Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) members no longer voting to raise interest rates, it retained its relatively hawkish guidance. The Bank's communications suggest the MPC is gaining confidence that inflation will fall sustainably back to the 2.0% target. However, although the MPC noted that "the restrictive stance of monetary policy is weighing on activity in the real economy, is leading to a looser labour market and is bearing down on inflationary pressures", conversely it noted that key indicators of inflation persistence remain elevated and policy will be "restrictive for sufficiently long" and "restrictive for an extended period".

Of course, the UK economy has started to perform a little better in Q1 2024 but is still recovering from a shallow recession through the second half of 2023. Indeed, Q4 2023 saw negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of -0.3% while year on year growth was also negative at -0.2%.

But it was a strange recession. Unemployment is currently sub 4%, against a backdrop of still over 900k of job vacancies, and annual wage inflation is running at above 5%. With gas and electricity price caps falling in April 2024, the CPI measure of inflation - which peaked at 11.1% in October 2022 – is now due to slide below the 2% target rate in April and to remain below that Bank of England benchmark for the next couple of years, according to Capital Economics. The Bank of England still needs some convincing on that score, but upcoming inflation and employment releases will settle that argument shortly. It is noted that core CPI was still a heady 4.5% in February and, ideally, needs to fall further.

Shoppers largely shrugged off the unusually wet weather in February, whilst rising real household incomes should support retail activity throughout 2024. Furthermore, the impact of higher interest rates on household interest payments is getting close to its peak, even though fixed rate mortgage rates on new loans have shifted up a little since falling close to 4.5% in early 2024.

From a fiscal perspective, the further cuts to national insurance tax (from April) announced in the March Budget will boost real household disposable income by 0.5 - 1.0%. After real household disposable income rose by 1.9% in 2023, Capital Economics forecast it will rise by 1.7% in 2024 and by 2.4% in 2025. These rises in

real household disposable income, combined with the earlier fading of the drag from previous rises in interest rates, means GDP growth of 0.5% is envisaged in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025. The Bank of England is less optimistic than that, seeing growth struggling to get near 1% over the next two to three years.

As for equity markets, the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 has risen to nearly 8,000 and is now only 1% below the all-time high it reached in February 2023. The modest rise in UK equities in February was driven by strong performances in the cyclical industrials and consumer discretionary sectors, whilst communications and basic materials have fared poorly.

Despite its performance, the FTSE 100 is still lagging behind the S&P 500, which has been at an all-time high for several weeks.

West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder

Portfolio: Councillor Elson – Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council

Service: Childrens Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide an overview of what the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project is, the key opportunities for the project, and the project plan.
- 1.2 To outline how effective delivery of this pathfinder project will support the Council Plan priorities, notably the Children Priority and Communities Priority.

2. Summary

- 2.1 To provide Cabinet with an overview of the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder, and the key actions and areas of work which will be undertaken to deliver this programme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the Council acting as the Accountable Body for the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to subsequently sign contracts or other related documents and to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements should this be required.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The Youth Justice Annual Statistics for 2021/22 show that children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds continue to be over-represented at most stages of the youth justice system. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has an ongoing commitment to tackling over-representation within the youth justice system.
- 4.2 Many of the levers for delivering change sit outside of direct YJB control. The YJB is committed to working with partners to address the elements that further contribute to cumulative disproportionality within the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The YJB has the opportunity to achieve this through targeted investment into pathfinder projects that deliver focussed interventions to change the 'status quo'. The YJB is proposing to do this through investment in two Addressing Ethnic Disparities Pathfinder projects.
- 4.3 Following a bidding process which ended 01/03/24, the West Midlands joint bid was chosen as one of the pathfinder projects, with the Southwest being the other. Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) will be the Lead for the West Midlands project, with other key partners being: Wolverhampton City Council, Dudley Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, Birmingham Children's Trust, Coventry City Council, and Solihull Council. A project steering group comprising of the nominated leads from each LA and key representatives, will meet monthly. As the Lead Authority, Walsall will ensure the presence of their Lead Accountant, legal and procurement officers (where necessary) ensuring comprehensive and well-informed decision making. Walsall will establish clear Terms of Reference for the steering group, outlining areas of responsibility, membership, purpose and communication lines. The group will be chaired by Walsall MBC's Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services, Philip Rutherford.
- 4.4 The purpose of the pathfinder project is to see a reduction in the number of children who are black or mixed heritage being disproportionately represented in, or on the periphery of, the youth justice system, with a specific focus on early intervention and prevention. This further embeds the national work to encourage a Child First youth justice system. This also aligns to the documentary 'Reformation 2 The System' ([New documentary highlights what it's like for black and mixed ethnicity boys to grow up in Walsall | Walsall Council](#)) which was commissioned by Walsall Youth Justice Service and partnership organisations to explore the fact that black and mixed heritage boys are over-represented in the youth justice system. This pathfinder project will enable Walsall Youth Justice Service to drive forward the system change needed as evidenced through the documentary and, as such, Walsall YJS was keen to lead this piece of work across the region.
- 4.5 There are 4 priorities for the fund:
- Priority 1: Drive system improvements that treat children as children
 - Priority 2: Promote a holistic approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system
 - Priority 3: Maximise opportunities for improvements for children

- Priority 4: Promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond.

- 4.6 There is a wealth of evidence and data around disproportionality/over representation. It is known that the intersectionality of the cumulative effect of several factors contribute to the over-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children within the youth justice system, such as, poverty, mental health, exclusion from school, care experienced children, victims of crime. These are additional societal disparities that need to also be addressed in order to impact on the flow through and contribution to the likelihood of a child coming into contact with the youth justice system. What is not fully understood is why interventions are achieving better outcomes for white children than for black and mixed heritage children and Youth Justice Services continue to identify disproportionality as area of concern in their Youth Justice Plans. The report from the HMIP thematic inspection (October 2021 [A thematic inspection of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmip-reports/a-thematic-inspection-of-the-experiences-of-black-and-mixed-heritage-boys-in-the-youth-justice-system/)) highlighted issues around the 'worrying' level of unmet need among children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds and concerns around the limited understanding about the barriers that may be blocking their access to support before they enter the youth justice system.
- 4.7 The investment into this pathfinder will include an initial proof of concept prior to the design of the intervention model, to test and learn from the existing interventions to build on what is known to work for black and mixed heritage children and avoid duplicating interventions that do not work. The proof of concept will provide a deeper understanding of how wider social, environmental, and economic factors impact black and mixed heritage children's level of engagement with interventions, supported by a comparison of model development within both rural and urban regions. This deeper understanding will be used to inform the design and development of a psychologically informed model of interventions that will provide a regional response which can be embedded as systematic practice. The funding will also develop a Centre of Excellence from which the model and resources can be disseminated across youth justice services.
- 4.8 The investment will provide one pathfinder that is area-specific where the disproportionality is highest in context with the ethnic breakdown of the population. Youth Justice data has been provided indicating the highest RRI (relative rate index) and second highest RRI amongst black and mixed heritage children across England and Wales. London, as the top RRI, already has significant investment from the YJB; therefore, the YJB Board and Executive agreed to invest in the West Midlands Police Force Area which has the second highest RRI.

Analysis of data in the YJB Ethnic Disparity Summary Tool for the period of March 2017- March 2022 evidenced that in the West Midlands Police Force Area (WMP):

- Black children are 8% overrepresented.
- Mixed children are 11% overrepresented when compared to the general population of children.

- The WMP area has some of the lowest First Time Entrants nationally, however, there are high percentages of West Midlands children in the secure estate who are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds.

4.9 The Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project represents an exciting opportunity for Walsall Council and Youth Justice Service to lead a regional team in developing sector-wide reforms, to co-design and test those reforms, and support their implementation nationally. It will compliment some of the work already being undertaken through the Walsall Right 4 Children agenda, as well as the planned development through the Wave 2 Pathfinder Programme. Walsall has significant experience in delivering large externally funded programmes and has the financial stability and appropriate governance to accept, administer and account for the grant.

Council Plan Priorities

4.10 The Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder project will provide a significant opportunity to develop services for vulnerable children of black and mixed heritage in Walsall and across the wider West Midlands region, in or on the periphery of the youth justice system. With regards to Walsall, this will positively impact upon the Walsall Council Plan Children Priority: 'that children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well'.

4.11 This project will be key in continuing to improve outcomes 7 and 8 for black and mixed heritage children.

Outcomes	Markers of Success
7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential	13. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive
	14. Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.
8. Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere	15. Services and support are responsive to needs of different communities; partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.
	16. Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.

4.12 The Walsall Council Plan Communities Priority to 'empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community' is also impacted through this project. The aim of having 'strong communities across our Borough gives a sense of belonging, enables social connection and support and can help create fulfilling lives. They can create opportunities for people to reach their potential, give back to others and reduce isolation and inequalities.'

Outcomes	Markers of Success
9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other	17. There will be a vibrant and diverse community and voluntary sector providing help and support where people need it with a range of volunteering opportunities
	18. Trust will be built within and between communities across the Borough

- 4.13 This pathfinder project also aligns to the Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) aspiration that “every Child and Family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed.”

This includes some of the main WR4C priorities:

- We will enable earliest help to reduce the effects of poverty, deprivation and impact of the pandemic
- We will work together with partners to ensure children receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive in all aspects of their lives, including supporting children in accessing good levels of education and exciting activities to learn and explore
- We will focus on preparing for all transition points by involving children, young people and families in decision making and planning
- Our practice will consistently focus on enabling our children to experience a profound sense of belonging within their family, school and community
- We will consistently nurture strong, supportive and sustainable relationships with all important people in a child's life including family, friends, teachers and community role models
- We will review our internal practices, establishing a commitment across the system to addressing inequality and overrepresentation of children in our statutory services. We will ensure the commissioning and development of localised preventative provisions for these children and their families and ensure they are culturally relevant and effective at meet need at the earliest point.
- We will connect our workforce with the community so they understand need and assets that will enable them to provide the best help
- We will continue to develop evidence-based integrated locality practice models aligned to our restorative practice.
- We will develop and embed a systemwide engagement and participation strategy to provides a wide range of opportunities to hear children's voice, co-design and co-deliver activities and services
- We will influence partnerships by championing children's voices

Risk Management

- 4.14 With regards to safeguarding arrangements for the children participating in this

project, staff will ensure there is clear consent, and information, engagement and data sharing protocols will be followed in line with local safeguarding policies. Children will be recruited from established groups. The Project Manager and Specialist Delivery Partner will be trained in local safeguarding processes and unconscious bias including annual refreshers. They will have enhanced DBS checks and will be able to demonstrate they are 'trauma aware', anti-racist and have previous experience of working in a culturally appropriate way with 'vulnerable' children before appointment.

- 4.15 As Walsall MBC is the Lead on this pathfinder project and grant recipient on behalf of the seven Local Authorities, Walsall MBC will be solely responsible for meeting all legal and statutory requirements. In order to mitigate any potential risks and ensure compliance, a Partnership Agreement between all seven partners will be produced clearly outlining the aims and objectives of the project, key milestones and outputs, areas of responsibility for each partner, lines of communication and information sharing protocol. Each partner will be expected to sign the Partnership Agreement, which will be a fundamental cornerstone of the project. The Project Manager will be line managed by the Strategic Lead for Walsall Youth Justice Service.
- 4.16 The Walsall Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board will act as the Lead Board and will oversee and scrutinise the implementation of this work with Executive Director level and multi-agency representation including LA Children's/ Community Safety / Education Officers, Police, Probation, Public Health / ICB. The Board has oversight of deliverables, spend and quality assurance. The Chair of Walsall YJS Board, Executive Director – Children's Services, reports to Walsall Council Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team having overall accountability for funding.

Financial Implications

- 4.17 The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) has awarded Walsall MBC, as the Lead for all seven Local Authorities, a grant of £750,000 for the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder grant.

The grant will be awarded as broken down below over four financial years (2 payments made per year):

- 2024/25- £195,000
- 2025/26- £262,500
- 2026/27- £262,500
- 2027/28- £30,000

Plans for how the grant will be spent are detailed in the table below:

Cost heading	Partner	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	Total
Recruitment i.e. Bluetown	Walsall	£500				£500

Staffing Costs Project Manager (G12 grade, Yr. 1 @ 10 months, Yr. 2 & 3 + 5% annual uplift)	Walsall (shared resource)	£55,990	£70,547	£74,075		£200,612
Staffing Costs - Training & Expenses e.g. equipment	Walsall	£3,000	£500	£426		£3,926
Staffing Costs - Project support from LA partners	All partners	£65,510	£75,393	£81,939		£222,842
Flexi Funding - (funding that the provider can spend directly on children's expenses related to their participation in the steering committee and travel costs)	All - estimate £100 per child		£5,600	£5,600		£11,200
Delivery Provider (co-production, delivery, training, facilitation, dissemination)	Walsall (shared resource)	£50,000	£90,000	£80,000		£220,000
Overheads	All		£7,960	£7,960		£15,920
Evaluation (max £75k requirement)	Walsall (shared resource)	£20,000	£12,500	£12,500	£30,000	£75,000
Total		£195,000	£262,500	£262,500	£30,000	£750,000

- 4.18 The project lead will work closely with finance colleagues on a regular basis to ensure spend is in line with the agreed grant conditions and restrictions as outlined in the grant letter and memorandum of understanding once developed and to ensure all grant returns are completed accurately, returned in a timely manner and authorised by the relevant person from the LA. We will also ensure controls are agreed and in place with the other Authorities to monitor and report on spend on a regular basis and to ensure transparency and accountability is upheld across the authorities. Walsall has experience in managing grants in this way as we are also the Lead LA for the Family Drugs and Alcohol programme therefore similar governance and reporting procedures can be used in this instance.
- 4.19 The funding period will start as soon as Walsall MBC signs and returns the grant agreement (in progress) and ends on 31 March 2028, unless terminated earlier in accordance with the attached Grant Funding Agreement terms and conditions.
- 4.20 Restrictions on expenditure are detailed in Section 5 of the attached terms and conditions of the grant- there is not considered to be any risk of the grant being spent on anything ineligible.
- 4.20 Within 6 months of the end of each financial year, an independent assessment of the grant return will need to be certified by an independent and appropriately qualified auditor to confirm that it has been spent in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.
- 4.21 The YJB may, at any time during and up to 2 years after the end of the funding period, conduct additional audits or ascertain additional information where it is considered to be necessary.

- 4.22 If the allocated grant for each financial year is not spent in full, it will need to be repaid to the YJB. Spend will be carefully monitored throughout the year to ensure on track.
- 4.23 Should the services be provided at a lower cost than the amount provided by the YJB, any underspend may be used for any other purposes consistent with the grant agreement.

Legal Implications

- 4.24 Walsall MBC, as the grant recipient, must adhere to all applicable statutory and legal requirements as outlined in the attached terms and conditions (Section 9 onwards). Walsall MBC Legal Services have been informed.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.25 Walsall MBC will ensure that any of its representatives involved in the Funded Activities will adopt such policies and procedures that are required in order to ensure that value for money has been obtained in the procurement of goods or services funded by the grant. Walsall MBC will comply, as necessary, with the procurement regulations when procuring goods and services in connection with the attached grant funding agreement.

Walsall MBC's procurement system 'Intend' will be utilised to allow for competitive tendering, also targeting individuals/companies with the following expertise:

- ✓ Child First values
- ✓ Extensive experience and engagement in intercultural understanding, equity, cultural safety and anti-racism in contexts such as policy, health, justice, immigration, poverty.
- ✓ Working with minoritised and racialised communities.
- ✓ Experience in evaluating children's services, wellbeing and justice sectors.
- ✓ Knowledge/tools to challenge prejudice, systematic racism and ableism to create opportunities for growth/support inclusion.

Property Implications

- 4.26 There are no new property implications as a result of this proposal.

Health and Wellbeing implications

- 4.27 There are no foreseeable health and wellbeing implications from this project.

Staffing implications

- 4.28 Walsall MBC, namely the Lead, Philip Rutherford, will be responsible for the recruitment of a G12 Project Manager (PM) who will report to him. The PM will then be responsible for the planning, oversight, monitoring and quality assurance of the project. A Specialist Delivery Partner (SDP) will be recruited to set up a Project Steering Group and Children's Steering Group. The SDP will

consult with staff across Walsall YJS and the other six YJS's in order to co-design the proof of concept and localised programme.

- 4.29 During years 2 to 3 of the project, staff in Walsall YJS, and the other six areas (approximately 200 staff) will be trained (face to face and online) in the developed programme.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.30 The aim of this project is that by the end of year 3 delivery 80% of black and mixed heritage children (approx. 1500) in the YJS's across the West Midlands region will have been supported by and benefitted from staff and services adopting a culturally sensitive, trauma informed approach in practice (the model). There will be outcomes such as improved confidence and self-esteem, improved pro-social identity, improved family ties, engagement with ETE and other services, and other short term 'soft outcomes' bespoke to the child.

- 4.31 Long term, the aims are to:

- reduce the number of statutory outcomes for children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area.
- reduce the over-representation of black and mixed heritage children from the West Midlands Police Force Area entering the youth justice system (FTE).
- reduce the number of reoffences by children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area.

Climate Impact

- 4.32 There are no direct climate change implications for this project. Local and West Midlands regional providers will be sourced and procured to facilitate any required interventions which will reduce the need for travel; thus reducing CO₂ emissions.

Consultation

- 4.32 The aim of this pathfinder is to create a culturally sensitive, trauma informed programme for use across the YJS's in line with the YJB 'Child First' vision to ensure trauma, specifically racism, prejudice and discrimination are proactively considered. This will be done through co-production with children and families from all 7x YJS's. Staff from all areas will also need to be consulted and involved in the co-production of the final model of the programme. This will be through staff focus groups and surveys. The Project Steering Group and Children's Steering Groups will oversee consultation.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the attached grant terms and conditions detail the proposed and approved plans for the delivery methodology, governance and project management, co-production, structure and systems, accountabilities

and responsibilities, and quality assurance. Whilst Walsall MBC is the named Lead of this pathfinder project, all seven Local Authorities across the West Midlands have been consulted and contributed to the joint bid, and all will be accountable to report to their own Local Implementation Group.

6. Respond

- 6.1 The project delivery plan is as outlined above in the relevant sections of the terms and conditions (attached). The ask is that Cabinet endorses the West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder, and notes the recommendations, initial overview and activity set out in this report.

7. Review

- 7.1 A quarterly update report will be submitted to the Youth Justice Board by Walsall Youth Justice Service (written and agreed by all 7 YJS's).
- 7.2 Each YJS will report to its local Youth Justice Partnership Board to provide regular updates on the project and ensure it remains locally rooted.
- 7.3 An external evaluator will be recruited (through competitive tender) to create the project's Theory of Change (ToC) to evidence the proof of concept. The evaluator will produce a mid-project evaluation report to inform learning and any adjustments needed for Year 3. The external evaluator will then produce a final evaluation report in Year 4. The evaluation plan will be approved and quality assured by Walsall MBC and the YJB.

Appendices

Attached

Background papers

None

Author

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☎ 652725

✉ rachael.phillipd@walsall.gov.uk



Signed

Colleen Male

Executive Director Childrens Services

28.06.2024



Signed

Cllr Stacie Elson

Portfolio holder Childrens Services

03.07.2024

YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

and

WALSALL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**GRANT FUNDING AGREEMENT FOR
WEST MIDLANDS ADDRESSING ETHNIC DISPARITY PATHFINDER**

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This Grant Funding Agreement is made on insert date of signature

Commented [CS(1)]: Date to be added by SOR when they sign the T&Cs after grant recipient signs the T&Cs

Between:

(1) Youth Justice Board for England and Wales whose principal address is at Clive House, 5th floor, 70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX (the "**Authority**"); and

(2) Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP (the "**Grant Recipient**").

In relation to:

Project Name: West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder

BACKGROUND

- (A) The Grant is provided by the Authority under its power in section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended: "with the approval of the Secretary of State, to make grants to local authorities and other persons for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services subject to such conditions as the Authority considers appropriate, including conditions as to repayment".
- (B) The Authority will provide the Grant to the Grant Recipient as provided for in this Grant Funding Agreement.
- (C) The Grant Recipient will use the Grant solely for the Funded Activities.

These conditions (collectively the **Conditions**) are as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Grant Funding Agreement sets out the Conditions which apply to the Grant Recipient receiving the Grant from the Authority up to the Maximum Sum.
- 1.2. The Authority and the Grant Recipient have agreed that the Authority will provide the Grant up to the Maximum Sum as long as the Grant Recipient uses the Grant in accordance with this Grant Funding Agreement.
- 1.3. The Authority makes the Grant to the Grant Recipient on the basis of the Grant Recipient's grant application a copy of which is attached at Annex 1 Part B to facilitate the gathering and dissemination of examples of practice, policies, processes, tools and techniques to support the youth justice sector.
- 1.4. The Parties confirm their intention to be legally bound by this Grant Funding Agreement

2. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

- 2.1. Where they appear in these Conditions:

Annex mean an annexe attached to these Conditions which forms part of the Grant Funding Agreement;

Asset means an asset that is purchased or developed using the Grant including equipment or any other asset which may be a Fixed Asset as appropriate in the relevant context, and **Assets** will be construed accordingly;

Asset Owning Period means the period during which the Assets are recorded as Assets in the Grant Recipient's accounts;

Authority Personal Data means any Personal Data supplied for the purposes of, or in connection with, the Grant Funding Agreement by the Authority to the Grant Recipient;

Branding Manual means the HM Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Branding Manual Funded by UK Government first published by the Cabinet Office in November 2022, and is available [Branding guidelines - GCS \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](#), including any subsequent updates from time to time;

Bribery Act means the Bribery Act 2010 and any subordinate legislation made under that Act from time to time together with any guidance or codes of practice issued by the relevant government department concerning this legislation;

Code of Conduct means the Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants published by the Cabinet Office in November 2018 which is available [here](#), including any subsequent updates from time to time;

Commencement Date means the date on which the Grant Funding Agreement comes into effect, being the **Insert commencement date**;

Commented [CS(2)]: Date as per SOR signature

Confidential Information means any information (however conveyed, recorded or preserved) disclosed by a Party or its personnel to another Party (and/or that Party's personnel) whether before or after the date of the Grant Funding Agreement, including but not limited to:

- (a) any information that ought reasonably to be considered to be confidential (whether or not it is so marked) relating to:
 - (i) the business, affairs, customers, clients, suppliers or plans of the disclosing Party; and
 - (ii) the operations, processes, product information, know-how, designs, trade secrets or software of the disclosing Party;
- (b) any information developed by the Parties in the course of delivering the Funded Activities;
- (c) the Authority Personal Data; and
- (d) any information derived from any of the above.

Confidential Information shall not include information which:

- (a) was public knowledge at the time of disclosure (otherwise than by breach of paragraph 11;
- (b) was in the possession of the receiving Party, without restriction as to its disclosure, before receiving it from the disclosing Party;
- (c) is received from a Third Party (who lawfully acquired it) without restriction as to its disclosure; or
- (d) is independently developed without access to the Confidential Information.

Contracting Authority means any contracting authority (other than the Authority) as defined in regulation 2 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;

Controller and Processor take the meaning given in the GDPR;

Change of Control means the sale of all or substantially all the assets of a Party; any merger, consolidation or acquisition of a Party with, by or into another corporation, entity or person, or any change in the ownership of more than 50% of the voting capital stock of a Party in one or more related transaction;

Crown Body means the government of the United Kingdom (including the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive Committee, the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales), including government ministers and government departments and particular bodies, persons, commissions or agencies from time to time carrying out functions on its behalf;

DPA 2018 means the Data Protection Act 2018;

Data Protection Legislation means (i) the UK GDPR; (ii) the DPA 2018 to the extent that it relates to the processing of Personal Data and privacy; (iii) (to the extent that it applies) the EU GDPR; (iv) all applicable Law relating to the processing of Personal Data and privacy;

Disposal means the disposal, sale, transfer of an Asset or any interest in any Asset and includes any contract for disposal;

Duplicate Funding means funding provided by a Third Party to the Grant Recipient, which is for the same purpose for which the Grant was made, but has not been declared to the Authority;

EIR means the Environmental Information Regulations 2004;

Eligible Expenditure means the expenditure incurred by the Grant Recipient during the Funding Period for the purposes of delivering the Funded Activities which comply in all respects with the eligibility rules set out in paragraph 5;

Employment Regulations means the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/246) or any successor legislation;

EU GDPR means Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation) as it has effect in EU law;

Event of Default means an event or circumstance set out in paragraph 26.1;

Financial Year means from 1 April to 31 March;

Fixed Asset means any Asset which consists of land, buildings, plant and equipment acquired, developed, enhanced or constructed in connection with the Funded Activities;

FOIA means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any subordinate legislation made under that Act from time to time together with any guidance or codes of practice issued by the relevant government department concerning the legislation;

Funded Activities means the activities set out in Annex 2;

Funding Period means the period for which the Grant is awarded starting on the Commencement Date and ending on 31 March 2028.

Grant means the sum or sums the Authority will pay to the Grant Recipient in accordance with paragraph 4 and subject to the provisions set out at paragraph 26.

Grant Claim means the payment request **claim form** submitted by the Grant Recipient to the Authority for payment of the Grant;

Grant Funding Agreement means these Conditions together with its annexes and schedules;

Grant Funding Letter means the letter the Authority issued to the Grant Recipient dated 22 January 2024, a copy of which is set out in Annex 1;

Grant Manager means the individual who has been nominated by the Authority to be the single point of contact for the Grant Recipient in relation to the Grant;

HMRC means HM Revenue and Customs;

HRA means the Human Rights Act 1998 and any subordinate legislation made under that Act from time to time together with any guidance or codes of practice issued by the relevant government department concerning the legislation;

Ineligible Expenditure means expenditure incurred by the Grant Recipient which is not Eligible Expenditure and as set out in paragraph 5;

Information Acts means the Data Protection Legislation, FOIA and the EIR, as amended from time to time;

Intellectual Property Rights or **IPRs** means copyright, rights related to or affording protection similar to copyright, rights in databases, patents and rights in inventions semi-conductor topography rights, trade marks, rights in internet domain names and website addresses and other rights in trade names, designs, know-how, trade secrets and any modifications, amendments, updates and new releases of the same and all similar or equivalent rights or forms of protection which subsist or will subsist now or in the future in any part of the world;

IP Completion Day has the meaning given to it in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2020;

IPR Material means all material produced by the Grant Recipient or its Representatives in relation to the Funded Activities during the Funding Period (including materials expressed in any form of report, database, design, document, technology, information, know how, system or process);

Independent Controller means a Party which is Controller of the same Personal Data as the other Party and there is no element of joint control with regards to that Personal Data;

Instalment Period means the intervals set out in Annex 3 when the Authority will release payment of the Grant to the Grant Recipient during the Funding Period;

Joint Controllers means where two or more Controllers jointly determine the purposes and means of processing;

Law means any applicable law, statute, right within the meaning of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 as amended by the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, byelaw, regulation, order, regulatory policy, mandatory guidance or code of practice, judgment of a relevant court of law, or directives or requirements of any regulatory body, delegated or subordinate legislation;

Losses means all losses, liabilities, damages, costs, expenses (including legal fees), disbursements, costs of investigation, litigation, settlement, judgment, interest and penalties whether arising in contract, tort (including negligence), breach of statutory duty, misrepresentation or otherwise and **Loss** will be interpreted accordingly;

Match Funding means any contribution to the Funded Activities from a Third Party to the Grant Recipient to meet the balance of the Eligible Expenditure not supported by the Grant;

Maximum Sum means the maximum amount of the Grant the Authority will provide to the Grant Recipient for the Funded Activities subject to paragraph 26;

Party means the Authority or Grant Recipient and **Parties** is each Party together;

Personal Data has the meaning given to it in the UK GDPR or the EU GDPR as the context requires;

Procurement Regulations means the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Concession Contracts Regulations 2016;

Prohibited Act means:

- (a) directly or indirectly offering, giving or agreeing to give to any servant of the Authority or the Crown any gift or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward for:
 - (i) doing or not doing (or for having done or not having done) any act in relation to the obtaining or performance of the Grant Funding Agreement; or
 - (ii) showing or not showing favour or disfavour to any person in relation to the Grant Funding Agreement;
- (b) committing any offence:
 - (iii) under the Bribery Act;
 - (iv) under legislation creating offences in respect of fraudulent acts; or
 - (v) at common law in respect of fraudulent acts in relation to the Grant Funding Agreement; or
- (c) defrauding or attempting to defraud or conspiring to defraud the Authority or the Crown;

Publication means any announcement, comment or publication of any publicity material by the Grant Recipient concerning the Funded Activities, the Grant Funding Agreement or the Authority;

Relevant Transfer means a transfer of employment to which the Employment Regulations apply;

Remedial Action Plan means the plan of action submitted by the Grant Recipient to the Authority following an Event of Default pursuant to the process set out in paragraph 26.4;

Replacement Funded Activities means any activities which are the same or substantially similar to any of the Funded Activities and which are provided in substitution for any of the Funded Activities after the expiry or termination or partial termination of this Grant Funding Agreement whether those services are provided by the Authority or a third party;

Replacement Grant Recipient means any third-party provided or Replacement Funded Activities (or where the Authority is providing Replacement Funded Activities for its own account, the Authority);

Representatives means any of the Parties' duly authorised directors, employees, officers, agents, professional advisors and consultants;

Special Payments means ex gratia expenditure by the Grant Recipient to a third party where no legal obligations exist for the payment and/or other extra-contractual expenditure. Special Payments may include out-of-court settlements, compensation or additional severance payments to the Grant Recipient's employees;

Third Party means any person or organisation other than the Grant Recipient or the Authority;

UK GDPR means Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation), as it forms part of the law of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland by virtue of section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, together with the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019;

Unspent Monies means any monies paid to the Grant Recipient in advance of its Eligible Expenditure, which remains unspent and uncommitted at the end of the Financial Year, the Funding Period or because of termination or breach of these Conditions;

VAT means value added tax chargeable in the UK;

Working Day means any day from Monday to Friday (inclusive) which is not specified or proclaimed as a bank holiday in England and Wales pursuant to section 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 including Christmas Day and Good Friday

2.2. In these Conditions, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 2.3.1. the singular includes the plural and vice versa;
- 2.3.2. reference to a gender includes the other gender and the neuter;
- 2.3.3. references to a person include an individual, company, body corporate, corporation, unincorporated association, firm, partnership or other legal entity or Crown Body;
- 2.3.4. a reference to any Law includes a reference to that Law as amended, extended, consolidated or re-enacted from time to time;
- 2.3.5. any reference in these Conditions which immediately before IP Completion Day (or such later date when relevant EU law ceases to have effect pursuant to Section 1A of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018) was a reference to (as it has effect from time to time):
 - (i) any EU regulation, EU decision, EU tertiary legislation or provision of the European Economic Area ("EEA") agreement ("**EU References**") which forms part of domestic law by application of section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 shall be read on and after IP Completion Day as a reference to the EU References as they form part of domestic law by virtue of section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 as modified by domestic law from time to time; and
 - (ii) any EU institution or EU authority or other such EU body shall be read on and after IP Completion Day as a reference to the UK institution, authority or body to which its functions were transferred;

- 2.3.6. the words "including", "other", "in particular", "for example" and similar words will not limit the generality of the preceding words and will be construed as if they were immediately followed by the words "without limitation";
- 2.3.7. references to "writing" include typing, printing, lithography, photography, display on a screen, electronic and facsimile transmission and other modes of representing or reproducing words in a visible form, and expressions referring to writing will be construed accordingly;
- 2.3.8. references to "representations" will be construed as references to present facts, to "warranties" as references to present and future facts and to "undertakings" as references to obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement;
- 2.3.9. references to "paragraphs" and "Annexes" are, unless otherwise provided, references to the paragraphs and annexes of these Conditions and references in any Annex to parts, paragraphs and tables are, unless otherwise provided, references to the parts, paragraphs and tables of the Annex in which these references appear; and
- 2.3.10. the headings in these Conditions are for ease of reference only and will not affect the interpretation or construction of these Conditions.

2.3. Where there is any conflict between the documents that make up this Grant Funding Agreement the conflict shall be resolved in accordance with the following order of precedence:

- 2.3.1. the Conditions set out within this Grant Funding Agreement; and
- 2.3.2. Annex 1 – The Authority's Grant Funding Letter.

CONDITIONS

3. DURATION AND PURPOSE OF THE GRANT

- 3.1. The Funding Period starts on (the **Commencement Date**) and ends on 31 March 2028 unless terminated earlier in accordance with this Grant Funding Agreement.
- 3.2. The Grant Recipient will ensure that the Funded Activities start on the Commencement Date but where this has not been possible, that they start no later than 3 months after the Commencement Date.
- 3.3. The Grant Recipient shall use the Grant solely for the delivery of the Funded Activities. The Grant Recipient may not make any changes to the Funded Activities.
- 3.4. If the Authority wants to change the Funded Activities (including for example reducing the Grant or removing some of the Funded Activities from Annex 2) it may do so on 14 days' written notice to the Grant Recipient.

4. PAYMENT OF GRANT

- 4.1. Subject to the remainder of this paragraph 4 the Authority shall pay the Grant Recipient an amount not exceeding £750,000 (seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds). The Authority shall pay the Grant in pounds sterling (GBP) and into a bank located in the UK.
- 4.2. The Grant Recipient must complete and sign the Confirmation of Bank Details and Signatories (Annex 4) as part of their acceptance of the Grant. No payment can be made in advance of receipt of a correctly completed and signed form.

- 4.3. The signatory must be the chief finance officer or someone with proper delegated authority. Any change of bank details must be notified immediately on the same form and signed by an approved signatory. Any change of signatory must be notified to the Authority for approval, as soon as known.
- 4.4. The Grant represents the Maximum Sum the Authority will pay to the Grant Recipient under the Grant Funding Agreement. The Maximum Sum will not be increased in the event of any overspend by the Grant Recipient in its delivery of the Funded Activities. The Grant Recipient agrees that the Maximum Sum is the amount agreed as the GBP value, at the Commencement Date.
- 4.5. The Authority will only pay the Grant to the Grant Recipient once the Authority is satisfied that the Grant Recipient has provided a sufficient level of assurance to demonstrate that the Grant will be used for Eligible Expenditure.
- 4.6. The Grant Recipient will provide the Authority with evidence of the costs/payments, which are classified as Eligible Expenditure in paragraph 5.2, which may include receipts and invoices or any other documentary evidence specified by the Authority.
- 4.7. The Grant Recipient shall declare to the Authority any Match Funding which been approved or received, before the Commencement Date. If the Grant Recipient intends to apply for, is offered or receives any further Match Funding during the Funding Period, the Grant Recipient shall notify the Authority before accepting or using any such Match Funding. On notifying the Authority of the Match Funding the Grant Recipient shall confirm the amount, purpose and source of the Match Funding and the Authority shall confirm whether it is agreeable to the Grant Recipient accepting the Match Funding. If the Authority does not agree to the use of Match Funding the Authority may terminate the Grant Funding Agreement in accordance with paragraph 26.1.9 and where applicable, require all or part of the Grant to be repaid.
- 4.8. Where the use of Match Funding is permitted the Grant Recipient shall set out any Match Funding it receives in the format required by Annex 3 and send that to the Authority. This is so the Authority knows the total funding the Grant Recipient has received for the Funded Activities.
- 4.9. The Grant Recipient agrees that:
- 4.9.1. it will not apply for, or obtain, Duplicate Funding in respect of any part of the Funded Activities which have been paid for in full using the Grant;
- 4.9.2. the Authority may refer the Grant Recipient to the police should it dishonestly and intentionally obtain Duplicate Funding for the Funded Activities;
- 4.9.3. the Authority will not make the first payment of the Grant and/or any subsequent payments of the Grant unless or until, the Authority is satisfied that:
- (i) the Grant will be used for Eligible Expenditure only; and
- (ii) if applicable, any previous Grant payments have been used for the Funded Activities or, where there are Unspent Monies, have been repaid to the Authority.
- 4.10. The Grant Recipient shall submit within 5 working days following the end of the relevant Instalment Period the Grant Claim together with a copy of Annex 5 (Eligible Expenditure) and any other documentation as prescribed by the Authority, from time to time.
- 4.11. Unless otherwise stated in these Conditions, payment of the Grant will be made within 30 days of the Authority approving the Grant Recipient's Grant Claim.

- 4.12. The Authority will have no liability to the Grant Recipient for any Losses caused by a delay in the payment of a Grant Claim howsoever arising.
- 4.13. The Authority reserves the right not to pay any Grant Claims, which are not submitted within the period set out in paragraph 4.10 or Grant Claims, which are incomplete, incorrect or submitted without the full supporting documentation.
- 4.14. The Grant Recipient shall promptly notify and repay immediately to the Authority any money incorrectly paid to it either as a result of an administrative error or otherwise. This includes situations where the Grant Recipient is paid in error before it has complied with its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement. Any sum, which falls due under this paragraph 4.14, shall fall due immediately. If the Grant Recipient fails to repay the due sum immediately the sum will be recoverable summarily as a civil debt.
- 4.15. The Grant will be paid into a separate bank account in the name of the Grant Recipient which must be an ordinary business bank account. All cheques from the bank account must be signed by at least two individual Representatives of the Grant Recipient.
- 4.16. Where the Grant Recipient enters into a contract with a Third Party in connection with the Funded Activities, the Grant Recipient will remain responsible for paying that Third Party. The Authority has no responsibility for paying Third Party invoices.
- 4.17. Onward payment of the Grant and the use of contractors shall not relieve the Grant Recipient of any of its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement, including any obligation to repay the Grant.
- 4.18. The Grant Recipient may not retain any Unspent Monies without the Authority's prior written permission.
- 4.19. If at the end of the relevant Financial Year there are Unspent Monies, the Grant Recipient shall repay such Unspent Monies to the Authority no later than 30 days of the Authority's request for repayment.

5. ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- 5.1. The Authority will only pay the Grant in respect of Eligible Expenditure incurred by the Grant Recipient to deliver the Funded Activities and the Grant Recipient will use the Grant solely for delivery of the Funded Activities.
- 5.2. The items listed in Annex 5 and the following costs/payments will be classified as Eligible Expenditure if incurred for the purposes of the Funded Activities:
 - 5.2.1. fees charged or to be charged to the Grant Recipient by the external auditors/accountants for reporting or certifying that the Grant paid was applied for its intended purposes.
 - 5.2.2. giving evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees;
 - 5.2.3. attending meetings with government ministers or civil servants to discuss the progress of a taxpayer funded grant scheme;
 - 5.2.4. responding to public consultations, where the topic is relevant to the objectives of the Funded Activities. Eligible Expenditure does not include the Grant Recipient spending

the Grant on lobbying other people to respond to any such consultation (unless explicitly permitted in the Grant Funding Agreement);

- 5.2.5. providing independent, evidence-based policy recommendations to local government, government departments or ministers, where that is the objective of a taxpayer funded grant scheme, for example, 'What Works Centres'; and
- 5.2.6. providing independent evidence-based advice to local or national government as part of the general policy debate, where that is in line with the objectives of the Grant.
- 5.3. The Grant Recipient may not in any circumstance claim the following non-exhaustive list as Eligible Expenditure. The list below does not override activities which are deemed eligible in these Conditions:
 - 5.3.1. paid for lobbying, which means using the Grant to fund lobbying (via an external firm or in-house staff) in order to undertake activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, government or political activity; or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action;
 - 5.3.2. using the Grant to directly enable one part of government to challenge another on topics unrelated to the agreed purpose of the Grant;
 - 5.3.3. using the Grant to petition for additional funding;
 - 5.3.4. expenses such as for entertaining, specifically aimed at exerting undue influence to change government policy;
 - 5.3.5. input VAT reclaimable by the Grant Recipient from HMRC;
 - 5.3.6. payments for activities of a political or exclusively religious nature;
- 5.4. Other examples of expenditure, which are prohibited, include the following:
 - 5.4.1. contributions in kind;
 - 5.4.2. interest payments or service charge payments for finance leases;
 - 5.4.3. gifts;
 - 5.4.4. statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties civil penalties, damages or any associated legal costs;
 - 5.4.5. payments for works or activities which the Grant Recipient, or any member of their Partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources;
 - 5.4.6. bad debts to related parties;
 - 5.4.7. payments for unfair dismissal or other compensation;
 - 5.4.8. depreciation, amortisation or impairment of assets owned by the Grant Recipient;
 - 5.4.9. the acquisition or improvement of Assets by the Grant Recipient (unless the Grant is explicitly for capital use – this will be stipulated in the Grant Funding Letter); and
 - 5.4.10. liabilities incurred before the commencement of the Grant Funding Agreement unless agreed in writing by the Authority.

6. ANNUAL GRANT REVIEW

- 6.1. The Authority will review the Grant annually. The Authority will take into account the Grant Recipient's delivery of the Funded Activities against the agreed outputs set out in Annex 6 by the Grant Recipient in accordance with paragraph 7.2.
- 6.2. Each annual review may result in the Authority deciding that:

- 6.2.1. the Funded Activities and the Grant Funding Agreement should continue in line with existing plans;
- 6.2.2. there should be an increase or decrease in the Grant for the subsequent Financial Year;
- 6.2.3. the outputs should be re-defined and agreed;
- 6.2.4. the Grant Recipient should provide the Authority with a draft Remedial Action Plan setting out the steps the Grant Recipient will take to improve delivery of the Funded Activities;
- 6.2.5. the Authority should recover any Unspent Monies;
- 6.2.6. the Grant be terminated in accordance with paragraph 26.11.
- 6.3. If the Grant Recipient is required to submit a draft Remedial Action Plan in accordance with paragraph 6.2.4 the Remedial Action Plan process set out in paragraphs 26.4 to 26.10 shall apply.
- 6.4. The Grant Recipient may make representations to the Authority regarding the Authority's decision made in accordance with paragraph 6.2. The Authority is not however obliged to take such representations into account when making its decision as any such decision will be final and at the Authority's absolute discretion.

7. MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 7.1. The Grant Recipient shall:
 - 7.1.1. closely monitor the delivery and success of the Funded Activities throughout the Funding Period to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Funded Activities are achieved;
 - 7.1.2. provide the Authority with all reasonable assistance and co-operation in relation to any ad-hoc information, explanations and documents as the Authority may require, from time to time, so the Authority may establish if the Grant Recipient has used the Grant in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement;
 - 7.1.3. provide the Authority with a quarterly report on:
 - 7.1.3.1. the progress made towards achieving the agreed outputs and the defined longer-term outcomes set out in Annex 6. Where possible, the report will quantify what has been achieved by reference to the Funded Activities' targets; and
 - 7.1.3.2. if relevant, provide details of any Assets either acquired or improved using the Grant.
 - 7.1.4. allow any person authorised by the Authority reasonable access, with or without notice, to its employees, agents, premises, facilities and records, for the purpose of discussing, monitoring and evaluating the Grant Recipient's fulfilment of its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement and will, if so required, provide appropriate oral or written explanations to such authorised persons as required during the Funding Period;
 - 7.1.5. will record in its financial reports the amount of Match Funding it receives together with details of what it has used that Match Funding for, and
 - 7.1.6. notify the Authority as soon as reasonably practicable of:

- 7.1.6.1. any actual or potential failure to comply with any of its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement, which includes those caused by any administrative, financial or managerial difficulties; and
- 7.1.6.2. actual or potential variations to the Eligible Expenditure set out in Annex 5 and/or any event which materially affects the continued accuracy of such information.
- 7.2. The Grant Recipient represents and undertakes (and shall repeat such representations and undertakings on delivery of its quarterly report:
 - 7.2.1. that the reports and information it gives pursuant to this paragraph 7 are accurate;
 - 7.2.2. that it has diligently made full and proper enquiry of the matter pertaining to the reports and information given; and
 - 7.2.3. that any data it provided pursuant to an application for the Grant may be shared within the powers conferred by legislation with other organisations for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime.

8. AUDITING AND ASSURANCE

- 8.1. Within 6 months of the end of each Financial Year the Grant Recipient will provide the Authority with independent assurance that the Grant has been used for delivery of the Funded Activities. To satisfy this requirement the Grant Recipient will provide a statement showing that the Grant has been certified by an independent and appropriately qualified auditor.
- 8.2. The Authority may, at any time during and up to 2 years after the end of the Funding Period, conduct additional audits or ascertain additional information where the Authority considers it necessary. The Grant Recipient agrees to grant the Authority or its Representatives access, as required, to all Funded Activities sites and relevant records. The Grant Recipient will ensure that necessary information and access rights are explicitly included within all arrangements with sub-contractors.
- 8.3. If the Authority requires further information, explanations and documents, in order for the Authority to establish that the Grant has been used properly in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement, the Grant Recipient will, within 5 Working Days of a request by the Authority, provide the Authority, free of charge, with the requested information.
- 8.4. The Grant Recipient shall:
 - 8.4.1. identify separately the value and purpose of the Grant in its audited accounts and its annual report; and
 - 8.4.2. maintain a record of internal financial controls and procedures and provide the Authority with a copy if requested.

Retention of documents

- 8.5. The Grant Recipient shall retain all invoices, receipts, accounting records and any other documentation (including correspondence) relating to the Eligible Expenditure; income generated by the Funded Activities during the Funding Period for 2 years from the date on which the Funding Period ends.
- 8.6. The Grant Recipient shall ensure that all its contractors retain each record, item of data and document relating to the Funded Activities for 2 years from the date on which the Funding Period ends.
- 8.7. The Grant Recipient will promptly provide revised forecasts of income and expenditure:

- 8.7.1. when these forecasts increase or decrease by more than 20% of the original expenditure forecasts; and/or
- 8.7.2. at the request of the Authority.

9. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION OF BRIBERY, CORRUPTION, FRAUD AND OTHER IRREGULARITY

- 9.1. The Grant Recipient will at all times comply with all applicable Laws, statutes and regulations relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption, including the Bribery Act.
- 9.2. The Grant Recipient must have a sound administration and audit process, including internal financial controls to safeguard against fraud, theft, money laundering, counter terrorist financing or any other impropriety, or mismanagement in connection with the administration of the Grant. The Grant Recipient shall require that the internal/external auditors report on the adequacy or otherwise of that system.
- 9.3. All cases of fraud or theft (whether proven or suspected) relating to the Funded Activities must be notified to the Authority as soon as they are identified. The Grant Recipient shall explain to the Authority what steps are being taken to investigate the irregularity and shall keep the Authority informed about the progress of any such investigation. The Authority may however request that the matter referred (which the Grant Recipient is obliged to carry out) to external auditors or other Third Party as required.
- 9.4. The Authority will have the right, at its absolute discretion, to insist that the Grant Recipient address any actual or suspected fraud, theft or other financial irregularity and/or to suspend future payment of the Grant to the Grant Recipient. Any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity includes what the Grant Recipient, acting with due care, should have suspected as well as what it actually proven.
- 9.5. The Grant Recipient agrees and accepts that it may become ineligible for Grant support and may be required to repay all or part of the Grant if it engages in tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance in the opinion of HMRC.
- 9.6. For the purposes of paragraph 9.4 "financial irregularity" includes potential fraud or other impropriety, mismanagement, and the use of the Grant for any purpose other than those stipulated in the Grant Funding Agreement. The Grant Recipient may be required to provide statements and evidence to the Authority or the appropriate organisation as part of pursuing sanctions, criminal or civil proceedings.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 10.1. Neither the Grant Recipient nor its Representatives shall engage in any personal, business or professional activity which conflicts or could conflict with any of their obligations in relation to the Grant Funding Agreement.
- 10.2. The Grant Recipient must have and will keep in place adequate procedures to manage and monitor any actual or perceived bias or conflicts of interest.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 11.1. Except to the extent set out in this paragraph 11 or where disclosure is expressly permitted, the Grant Recipient shall treat all Confidential Information belonging to the Authority as confidential and shall not disclose any Confidential Information belonging to the Authority to any other person

without the prior written consent of the Authority, except to such persons who are directly involved in the provision of the Funded Activities and who need to know the information.

- 11.2. The Grant Recipient gives its consent for the Authority to publish the Grant Funding Agreement in any medium in its entirety (but with any information which is Confidential Information belonging to the Authority or the Grant Recipient redacted), including from time-to-time agreed changes to the Grant Funding Agreement.
- 11.3. Nothing in this paragraph 11 shall prevent the Authority disclosing any Confidential Information obtained from the Grant Recipient:
 - 11.3.1. for the purpose of the examination and certification of the Authority's accounts; or pursuant to section 6(1) of the National Audit Act 1983 of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Authority has used its resources;
 - 11.3.2. to any government department, consultant, contractor or other person engaged by the Authority, provided that in disclosing information under the Authority only discloses the information which is necessary for the purpose concerned and requests that the information is treated in confidence and that a confidentiality undertaking is given where appropriate; or
 - 11.3.3. where disclosure is required by Law, including under the Information Acts.
- 11.4. Nothing in this paragraph 11 shall prevent either Party from using any techniques, ideas or know-how gained during the performance of its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement in the course of its normal business, to the extent that this does not result in a disclosure of the other Party's Confidential Information or an infringement of the other Party's Intellectual Property Rights.

12. TRANSPARENCY

- 12.1. The Authority and the Grant Recipient acknowledge that, except for any information, which is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the Information Acts, the content of the Grant Funding Agreement is not confidential.

13. STATUTORY DUTIES

- 13.1. The Grant Recipient agrees to adhere to its obligations under the Law.
- 13.2. Where requested by the Authority, the Grant Recipient will provide reasonable assistance and cooperation to enable the Authority to comply with its information disclosure obligations under the Information Acts.
- 13.3. On request from the Authority, the Grant Recipient will provide the Authority with all such relevant documents and information relating to the Grant Recipient's data protection policies and procedures as the Authority may reasonably require.
- 13.4. The Grant Recipient acknowledges that the Authority, acting in accordance with the codes of practice issued and revised from time to time under the Information Acts, may disclose information concerning the Grant Recipient and the Grant Funding Agreement without consulting the Grant Recipient.
- 13.5. The Authority will take reasonable steps to notify the Grant Recipient of a request for information to the extent that it is permissible and reasonably practical for it to do so. Notwithstanding any other provision in the Grant Funding Agreement, the Authority will be responsible for determining

in its absolute discretion whether any information is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the Information Acts.

14. DATA PROTECTION AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Data Protection

- 14.1. The Grant Recipient and the Authority will comply at all times with their respective obligations under Data Protection Legislation.
- 14.2. To the extent that the Grant Recipient and the Authority share any Personal Data for the purposes of this Grant Funding Agreement, the Parties accept that they are each a separate Independent Controller in respect of such Personal Data. Each Party:
 - (i) shall comply with the applicable Data Protection Legislation in respect of their processing of such Personal Data;
 - (ii) will be individually and separately responsible for its own compliance; and
 - (iii) do not and will not Process any Personal Data as Joint Controllers.
- 14.3. Each Party shall, with respect to its processing of Personal Data as Independent Controller, implement and maintain appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to that risk, including, as appropriate, the measures referred to in Article 32(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) of the UK GDPR, and the measures shall, at a minimum, comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation, including Article 32 of the UK GDPR.

Public Procurement

- 14.4. The Grant Recipient will ensure that any of its Representatives involved in the Funded Activities will, adopt such policies and procedures that are required in order to ensure that value for money has been obtained in the procurement of goods or services funded by the Grant.
- 14.5. Where the Grant Recipient is a Contracting Authority within the meaning of the Procurement Regulations the Grant Recipient will comply, as necessary, with the Procurement Regulations when procuring goods and services in connection with the Grant Funding Agreement and the Authority shall not be liable for the Grant Recipient's failure to comply with its obligations under the Procurement Regulations.

15. NOT USED

16. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- 16.1. Intellectual Property in all IPR Material will be the property of the Grant Recipient. Other than as expressly set out in these Conditions, neither Party will have any right to use any of the other Party's names, logos or trade marks on any of its products or services without the other Party's prior written consent.
- 16.2. The Grant Recipient grants to the Authority a non-exclusive irrevocable and royalty-free, sub-licensable, worldwide licence to use all the IPR Material for the purpose of supporting the Funded Activities and other projects.
- 16.3. Ownership of Third-Party software or other IPR necessary to deliver Funded Activities will remain with the relevant Third Party.

- 16.4. The Grant Recipient must ensure that they have obtained the relevant agreement from the Third-Party proprietor before any additions or variations are made to the standard 'off-the-shelf' versions of any Third-Party software and other IPR. The Grant Recipient will be responsible for obtaining and maintaining all appropriate licences to use the Third-Party software.

17. ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

- 17.1. The Grant Recipient shall perform the Funded Activities in accordance with the Authority's environmental policy, which is to conserve energy, water, wood, paper and other resources, reduce waste and phase out the use of ozone depleting substances and minimise the release of greenhouse gases, volatile organic compounds and other substances damaging to health and the environment.
- 17.2. The Grant Recipient shall pay due regard to the use of recycled products, so long as they are not detrimental to the provision of the Funded Activities or the environment, to include the use of all packaging, which should be capable of recovery for re-use or recycling.
- 17.3. The Grant Recipient shall take all possible precautions to ensure that any equipment and materials used in the provision of the Funded Activities do not contain chlorofluorocarbons, halons or any other damaging substances, unless unavoidable, in which case the Authority shall be notified in advance of their use. The Grant Recipient shall endeavour to reduce fuel emissions wherever possible.

18. ASSETS

Inventory of the Assets

- 18.1. The Grant Recipient shall agree in advance with the Authority any plans to purchase or improve any Fixed Assets at a cumulative cost exceeding £10,000 and must keep a register of all Fixed Assets acquired or improved at a cost exceeding £10,000, wholly, or partly using the Grant provided under the Grant Funding Agreement. Where the cost of purchasing or improving the Fixed Assets is less than £10,000 authorisation is not required, but the Asset should be recorded on the fixed asset register.
- 18.2. Assets purchased with Grant funding must only be used for delivery of the Funded Activities.
- 18.3. For each entry in the register the following particulars must be shown where appropriate:
- 18.3.1. date of acquisition or improvement;
 - 18.3.2. description of the Asset;
 - 18.3.3. cost, net of recoverable VAT;
 - 18.3.4. location of the Asset;
 - 18.3.5. serial or identification numbers;
 - 18.3.6. location of the title deeds;
 - 18.3.7. date of any Disposal;
 - 18.3.8. depreciation/amortisation policy applied;

18.3.9. proceeds of any Disposal net of VAT; and

18.3.10. the identity of any person to whom the Asset has been transferred or sold.

18.4. The Authority may require the Grant Recipient to maintain the information set out in paragraphs 18.3.1-18.3.10 for any additional items which the Authority considers material to the Grant.

Disposal of Asset

18.5. Where the Grant Recipient uses any of the Grant to develop, improve or purchase any Assets, the Grant Recipient must ensure that the Assets are maintained in good condition over the Asset Owning Period.

18.6. Assets purchased or improved using the Grant shall be owned by the Authority until ownership is transferred disposed or is otherwise agreed in writing by the Authority. The Authority reserves the right to determine the outcome of any Asset created as a result of the Funded Activities or purchased with the Grant.

18.7. The Grant Recipient must not dispose of any Assets that have been totally or partly bought, restored, conserved (maintained or protected from damage) or improved with the Grant without the prior written consent of the Authority. If the Authority grants consent to the Disposal, such consent may be subject to satisfaction of certain conditions, to be determined by the Authority.

18.8. If the Grant Recipient disposes of any Asset without the prior written consent of the Authority, the Grant Recipient must use all reasonable endeavours to achieve the market price for the Assets and must pay to the Authority a proportion of the proceeds of such sale, equivalent to the proportion of the purchase or development costs of the Assets that were funded by the Grant, provided that the Authority may at its discretion allow the Grant Recipient to keep all or a part of the relevant proceeds where:

18.8.1. the sale of the Assets takes place after the end of the Asset Owning Period;

18.8.2. the proceeds of sale are to be applied directly to the purchase by the Grant Recipient of assets that are equivalent to or replacements for the Assets; or

18.8.3. the Authority is otherwise satisfied that the Recipient will apply those proceeds for purposes related to the Funded Activities.

18.9. The Grant Recipient shall hold the proceeds from the Disposal of any Asset on trust for the Authority.

Charging of any Asset

18.10. The Grant Recipient shall not create any charge, legal mortgage, debenture or lien over any Asset without the prior written consent of the Authority.

19. INSURANCE

19.1. The Grant Recipient will during the term of the Funding Period and for 2 years after termination or expiry of these Conditions, ensure that it has and maintains, at all times adequate insurance with an insurer of good repute to cover claims under the Grant Funding Agreement or any other claims or demands which may be brought or made against it by any person suffering any injury damage or loss in connection with the Funded Activities or the Grant Funding Agreement.

- 19.2. The Grant Recipient will upon request produce to the Authority its policy or policies of insurance or where this is not possible, a certificate of insurance issued by the Grant Recipient's insurance brokers confirming the insurances are in full force and effect together with confirmation that the relevant premiums have been paid.

20. ASSIGNMENT

- 20.1. The Grant Recipient will not transfer, assign or otherwise dispose of the whole or any part of the Grant Funding Agreement or any rights under it, to another organisation or individual, without the Authority's prior approval.
- 20.2. Any approval given by the Authority will be subject to a condition that the Grant Recipient has first entered into a Grant Funding Agreement, authorised by the Authority, requiring the Grant Recipient to work with another organisation in delivering the Funded Activities.

21. SPENDING CONTROLS – MARKETING, ADVERTISING, COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTANCY

- 21.1. The Grant Recipient must seek permission from the Authority prior to any proposed expenditure on advertising, communications, consultancy or marketing either in connection with, or using the Grant.
- 21.2. The Grant Recipient should provide evidence that any marketing, advertising, communications and consultancy expenditure carried out in connection with, or using the Grant will deliver measurable outcomes that meet government objectives to secure value for money.

22. LOSSES, GIFTS AND SPECIAL PAYMENTS

- 22.1. The Grant Recipient must obtain prior written consent from the Authority before:

- 22.1.1. writing off any debts or liabilities;
- 22.1.2. offering to make any Special Payments; or
- 22.1.3. giving any gifts,

in connection with this Grant Funding Agreement.

- 22.2. The Grant Recipient will keep a record of all gifts, both given and received, in connection with the Grant or any Funded Activities.

23. BORROWING

- 23.1. In accordance with paragraph 23, the Grant Recipient must obtain prior written consent from the Authority before:
- 23.1.1. borrowing or lending money from any source in connection with the Grant Funding Agreement; or
 - 23.1.2. giving any guarantee, indemnities or letters of comfort that relate to the Grant Funding Agreement, or have any impact on the Grant Recipient's ability to deliver the Funded Activities.

24. PUBLICITY

- 24.1. The Grant Recipient gives consent to the Authority to publicise in the press or any other medium the Grant and details of the Funded Activities using any information gathered from the Grant

Recipient's initial Grant application or any monitoring reports submitted to the Authority in accordance with paragraph 7.2.

- 24.2. The Grant Recipient will comply with all reasonable requests from the Authority to facilitate visits, provide reports, statistics, photographs and case studies that will assist the Authority in its promotional and fundraising activities relating to the Funded Activities.
- 24.3. The Authority consents to the Grant Recipient carrying out any reasonable publicity about the Grant and the Funded Activities as required, from time to time.
- 24.4. Any publicity material for the Funded Activities must refer to the programme under which the Grant was awarded and must feature the Authority's logo. If a Third Party wishes to use the Authority's logo, the Grant Recipient must first seek permission from the Authority.
- 24.5. The Grant Recipient will acknowledge the support of the Authority in any materials that refer to the Funded Activities and in any written or spoken public presentations about the Funded Activities. Such acknowledgements (where appropriate or as requested by the Authority) will include the Authority's name and logo (or any future name or logo adopted by the Authority) using the templates provided by the Authority from time to time.
- 24.6. In using the Authority's name and logo, the Grant Recipient will comply with all reasonable branding guidelines issued by the Authority from time to time.

25. CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY'S REQUIREMENTS

- 25.1. The Authority will notify the Grant Recipient of any changes to their activities which are supported by the Grant.
- 25.2. The Grant Recipient will accommodate any changes to the Authority's needs and requirements under these Conditions.

26. CLAWBACK, EVENTS OF DEFAULT, TERMINATION AND RIGHTS RESERVED FOR BREACH AND TERMINATION

Events of Default

- 26.1. The Authority may exercise its rights set out in paragraph 26.3 if any of the following events occur:
 - 26.1.1. the Grant Recipient uses the Grant for a purpose other than the Funded Activities;
 - 26.1.2. the Grant Recipient fails to comply with its obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement, which is material in the opinion of the Authority;
 - 26.1.3. where delivery of the Funded Activities do not start within 3 months of the Commencement Date and the Grant Recipient fails to provide the Authority with a satisfactory explanation for the delay, or failed to agree a new date on which the Funded Activities shall start with the Authority;
 - 26.1.4. the Grant Recipient uses the Grant for Ineligible Expenditure;
 - 26.1.5. the Grant Recipient fails, in the Authority's opinion, to make satisfactory progress with the Funded Activities and in particular, with meeting the agreed outputs set out in Annex 6;

- 26.1.6. the Grant Recipient fails to:
- (i) submit an adequate Remedial Action Plan to the Authority following a request by the Authority pursuant to paragraph 26.3.4 or paragraph 6.2.4; or
 - (ii) improve delivery of the Funded Activities in accordance with the Remedial Action Plan approved by the Authority;
- 26.1.7. the Grant Recipient is, in the opinion of the Authority, delivering the Funded Activities in a negligent manner (in this context negligence includes failing to prevent or report actual or anticipated fraud or corruption);
- 26.1.8. the Grant Recipient fails to declare Duplicate Funding;
- 26.1.9. the Grant Recipient fails to declare any Match Funding in accordance with paragraph 4.7;
- 26.1.10. the Grant Recipient receives funding from a Third Party which, in the opinion of the Authority, undertakes activities that are likely to bring the reputation of the Funded Activities or the Authority into disrepute;
- 26.1.11. the Grant Recipient provides the Authority with any materially misleading or inaccurate information and/or any of the information provided in its Grant application or in any subsequent supporting correspondence is found to be incorrect or incomplete to an extent which the Authority considers to be significant;
- 26.1.12. the Grant Recipient commits or has committed a Prohibited Act or fails to report a Prohibited Act to the Authority, whether committed by the Grant Recipient, its Representatives or a Third Party, as soon as it becomes aware of it;
- 26.1.13. the Authority determines (acting reasonably) that the Grant Recipient or any of its Representatives has:
- (i) acted dishonestly or negligently at any time during the term of the Grant Funding Agreement and to the detriment of the Authority;
 - (ii) taken any actions which unfairly brings or are likely to unfairly bring the Authority's name or reputation and/or the Authority into disrepute. Actions include omissions in this context;
 - (iii) transferred, assigns or novates the Grant to any Third Party without the Authority's consent; or
 - (iv) failed to act in accordance with the Law; howsoever arising, including incurring expenditure on unlawful activities;
- 26.1.14. the Grant Recipient ceases to operate for any reason, or it passes a resolution (or any court of competent jurisdiction makes an order) that it be wound up or dissolved (other than for the purpose of a bona fide and solvent reconstruction or amalgamation);
- 26.1.15. the Grant Recipient becomes insolvent as defined by section 123 of the Insolvency Act 1986, or it is declared bankrupt, or it is placed into receivership, administration or liquidation, or a petition has been presented for its winding up, or it enters into any arrangement or composition for the benefit of its creditors, or it is unable to pay its debts as they fall due;

26.1.16. the Grant Recipient breaches the Code of Conduct and/or fails to report an actual or suspected breach of the Code of Conduct by the Grant Recipient or its Representatives in accordance with paragraph 31.1.2;

26.1.17. the Grant Recipient undergoes a Change of Control which the Authority, acting reasonably, considers:

- (i) will be materially detrimental to the Funded Activities and/or;
- (ii) the new body corporate cannot continue to receive the Grant because they do not meet the Eligibility Criteria used to award the Grant to the Grant Recipient;
- (iii) that the Change of Control would raise national security concerns and/or;
- (iv) the new body corporate intends to make fundamental change(s) to the purpose for which the Grant was given.

26.2. Where, the Authority determines that an Event of Default has or may have occurred, the Authority shall notify the Grant Recipient to that effect in writing, setting out any relevant details, of the failure to comply with these Conditions or pertaining the Event of Default, and details of any action that the Authority intends to take or has taken.

Rights reserved for the Authority in relation to an Event of Default

26.3. Where, the Authority determines that an Event of Default has or may have occurred, the Authority may:

- 26.3.1. suspend or terminate the payment of Grant for such period as the Authority shall determine;
- 26.3.2. reduce the Maximum Sum in which case the payment of Grant shall thereafter be made in accordance with the reduction and notified to the Grant Recipient; and/or
- 26.3.3. require the Grant Recipient to repay the Authority the whole or any part of the amount of Grant previously paid to the Grant Recipient. Such sums shall be recovered as a civil debt;
- 26.3.4. give the Grant Recipient an opportunity to remedy the Event of Default (if remediable) in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraphs 26.4 to 26.10; and/or
- 26.3.5. terminate the Grant Funding Agreement.

Opportunity for the Grant Recipient to remedy an Event of Default

26.4. Where the Grant Recipient is provided with an opportunity to submit a draft Remedial Action Plan in accordance with paragraph 26.3.4, the draft Remedial Action Plan shall be submitted to the Authority for approval, within 5 Working Days of the Grant Recipient receiving notice from the Authority.

26.5. The draft Remedial Action Plan shall set out:

- 26.5.1. full details of the Event of Default; and
- 26.5.2. the steps which the Grant Recipient proposes to take to rectify the Event of Default including timescales.

26.6. On receipt of the draft Remedial Action Plan and as soon as reasonably practicable, the Authority will submit its comments on the draft Remedial Action Plan to the Grant Recipient.

26.7. The Authority shall have the right to accept or reject the draft Remedial Action Plan. If the Authority rejects the draft Remedial Action Plan, the Authority shall confirm, in writing, the

reasons why they have rejected the draft Remedial Action Plan and will confirm whether the Grant Recipient is required to submit an amended Remedial Action Plan to the Authority.

- 26.8. If the Authority directs the Grant Recipient to submit an amended draft Remedial Action Plan, the Parties shall agree a timescale for the Grant Recipient to amend the draft Remedial Action Plan to take into account the Authority's comments.
- 26.9. If the Authority does not approve the draft Remedial Action Plan the Authority may, at its absolute discretion, terminate the Grant Funding Agreement.
- 26.10. The Authority shall not by reason of the occurrence of an Event of Default which is, in the opinion of the Authority, capable of remedy, exercise its rights under either paragraph 26.3.3 or 26.3.4 unless the Grant Recipient has failed to rectify the default to the reasonable satisfaction of the Authority.

General Termination rights – Termination for Convenience

- 26.11. Notwithstanding the Authority's right to terminate the Grant Funding Agreement pursuant to paragraph 26.3.4, either Party may terminate the Grant Funding Agreement at any time by giving 3 months' written notice to the other Party.
- 26.12. If applicable, all Unspent Monies (other than those irrevocably committed in good faith before the date of termination, in line with the Grant Funding Agreement and approved by the Authority as being required to finalise the Funded Activities) shall be returned to the Authority within 30 days of the date of receipt of a written notice of termination from the Authority.
- 26.13. If the Authority terminates the Grant Funding Agreement in accordance with paragraph 26.11 the Authority may choose to pay the Grant Recipient's reasonable costs in respect of the delivery of the Funded Activities performed up to the termination date. Reasonable costs will be identified by the Grant Recipient and will be subject to the Grant Recipient demonstrating that they have taken adequate steps to mitigate their costs. The amount of reasonable costs payable will be determined solely by the Authority.
- 26.14. The Authority will not be liable to pay any of the Grant Recipient's costs or those of any contractor/supplier of the Grant Recipient related to any transfer or termination of employment of any employees engaged in the provision of the Funded Activities.

Change of Control

- 26.15. The Grant Recipient shall notify the Authority immediately in writing and as soon as the Grant Recipient is aware (or ought reasonably to be aware) that it is anticipating, undergoing, undergoes or has undergone a Change of Control, provided such notification does not contravene any Law.
- 26.16. The Grant Recipient shall ensure that any notification made pursuant to paragraph 26.15 shall set out full details of the Change of Control including the circumstances suggesting and/or explaining the Change of Control.
- 26.17. Where the Grant has been awarded to a consortium and the Grant Recipient has entered into a collaboration agreement, the notification required under paragraph 26.15 shall include any changes to the consortium members as well as the lead Grant Recipient.

26.18. Following notification of a Change of Control the Authority shall be entitled to exercise its rights under paragraph 26.1 of these Conditions providing the Grant Recipient with notification of its proposed action in writing within 3 months of:

26.18.1. being notified in writing that a Change of Control is anticipated or is in contemplation or has occurred; or

26.18.2. where no notification has been made, the date that the Authority becomes aware that a Change of Control is anticipated or is in contemplation or has occurred,

26.19. The Authority shall not be entitled to terminate where approval was granted prior to the Change of Control.

27. EXIT PLAN

27.1. Where the Authority requires the Grant Recipient to prepare an Exit Plan to allow the cessation or seamless transfer of the Funded Activities, the Grant Recipient shall prepare the Exit Plan within 3 months of the signing of the Grant Funding Agreement and shall comply with the exit provisions set out in Annex 9.

28. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

28.1. The Parties will use all reasonable endeavours to negotiate in good faith, and settle amicably, any dispute that arises during the continuance of the Grant Funding Agreement.

28.2. All disputes and complaints (except for those which relate to the Authority's right to withhold funds or terminate the Grant Funding Agreement) shall be referred in the first instance to the Parties Representatives.

28.3. If the dispute cannot be resolved between the Parties Representatives within a maximum of one month, then the matter will be escalated to formal meeting between the Grant Manager and the Grant Recipient's chief executive (or equivalent).

29. LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

29.1. The Authority accepts no liability for any consequences, whether direct or indirect, that may come about from the Grant Recipient delivering the Funded Activities, the use of the Grant or from withdrawal, withholding or suspension of the Grant. The Recipient shall indemnify and hold harmless the Authority, and its Representatives with respect to all actions, claims, charges, demands Losses and proceedings arising from or incurred by reason of the actions and/or omissions of the Grant Recipient in relation to the Funded Activities, the non-fulfilment of obligations of the Grant Recipient under this Grant Funding Agreement or its obligations to Third Parties.

29.2. Subject to this paragraph 29, the Authority's liability under this Grant Funding Agreement is limited to the amount of Grant outstanding.

30. VAT

30.1. If VAT is held to be chargeable in respect of the Grant Funding Agreement, all payments shall be deemed to be inclusive of all VAT and the Authority shall not be obliged to pay any additional amount by way of VAT.

30.2. All sums or other consideration payable to or provided by the Grant Recipient to the Authority at any time shall be deemed to be exclusive of all VAT payable and where any such sums become

payable or due or other consideration is provided, the Grant Recipient shall at the same time or as the case may be on demand by HMRC in addition to such sums, or other consideration, pay to HMRC all the VAT so payable upon the receipt of a valid VAT invoice.

31. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GRANT RECIPIENTS AND BRANDING MANUAL

31.1. The Grant Recipient:

- 31.1.1. acknowledges that by signing the Grant Funding Agreement it agrees to take account of the Code of Conduct, which includes ensuring that its Representatives undertake their duties in a manner consistent with the principles set out in the Code of Conduct.
- 31.1.2. shall immediately notify the Authority if it becomes aware of any actual or suspected breaches of the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct; and
- 31.1.3. acknowledges that a failure to notify the Authority of an actual or suspected breach of the Code of Conduct may result in the Authority immediately suspending the Grant funding, terminating the Grant Funding Agreement and/or taking action to recover some or all of the funds paid to the Grant Recipient as a civil debt in accordance with paragraph 26.1.18.

31.2. The Grant Recipient shall at all times during and following the end of the Funding Period:

- 31.2.1. comply with requirements of the [Branding Manual](#) in relation to the Funded Activities; and
- 31.2.2. cease use of the Funded by UK Government logo on demand if directed to do so by the Authority.

32. NOTICES

- 32.1. All notices and other communications in relation to this Grant Funding Agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed to have been duly given if personally delivered, e-mailed, or mailed (first class postage prepaid) to the address of the relevant party, as referred to in Annex 7 or otherwise notified in writing. All notices and other communications must be marked for the attention of the contact specified in Annex 7. If personally delivered or if e-mailed all such communications shall be deemed to have been given when received (except that if received on a non-working day or after 5.00 pm on any Working Day they shall be deemed received on the next Working Day) and if mailed all such communications shall be deemed to have been given and received on the second Working Day following such mailing.

33. GOVERNING LAW

- 33.1. These Conditions will be governed by and construed in accordance with the law of England and Wales and the Parties irrevocably submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

SIGNED by:

.....
Signature

[insert authorised
signatory's
name]
for and on behalf of the
[insert name of Department]

Jamie Bennett
Chief Operating Officer
.....
Title
.....
Date

Commented [CS(3)]: SOR to sign and date after Grant Recipient

SIGNED by

.....
Signature

[insert authorised
signatory's
name]
for and on behalf of [insert
name of Recipient]

.....
Title
.....
Date

Commented [CS(4)]: Grant Recipient to sign and date

**ANNEX 1 – GRANT FUNDING LETTER AND GRANT APPLICATION
PART A - GRANT FUNDING LETTER**



Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
Clive House, 70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX
enquiries@yjb.gov.uk
www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice

Subject: West Midlands Addressing Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder

30 April 2024

Grant Scheme Ref: G2-SCH-2023-11-13055

Phil Rutherford
Strategic Lead – Youth Justice Services
Walsall Council
Civic Centre
Darwall Street
Walsall
WS1 1TP

Dear Phil

This letter advises you of the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder multiyear grant allocation for 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/7 and 2027/8.

The grant is up to a total of £750,000.

2024/25: £195,000

2025/26: £262,500

2026/27: £262,500

2027/28: £30,000

It will be a requirement that the West Midlands Ethnic Disparity Pathfinder develops a proof of concept to inform the subsequent development of a culturally sensitive, trauma informed programme for use across the YJSs in line with the YJB 'Child First' vision to ensure trauma, specifically racism, prejudice and discrimination are proactively considered.

Payment of these monies, to the agreed schedule is subject to your acceptance of this offer made through receipt of the signed Grant Agreement.

Should you provide this at a lower cost than the amount provided by the YJB, any underspend may be used for any other purposes consistent with the grant agreement.

YJB will continue to monitor the delivery of services over the period of the grant.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for supporting us in achieving the Board's strategic objectives to drive system improvements and improve outcomes for children. If you have any questions regarding the above, please do contact the YJB Grants team - YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Jamie Bennett
Chief Operating Officer
Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
E: Jamie.Bennett@yjb.gov.uk



Youth Justice Board Grant Team
70 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EX

Phil Rutherford
Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services
Walsall Council

1st March 2024

Grant Scheme Ref: G2-SCH-2023-11-13055
Addressing Ethnic Disparity – West Midlands Police Force Area (Walsall)

Annex 1 Part B

Grant Application Form

1. Section 1 - Details

1.1 Project Details		
Organisation Name:	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	
Charity No. or Companies House Registration No.	N/A	
Project Title:	West Midlands Disproportionality Pathfinder Project	

1.2 Lead Contact Details		
Name:	Philip	Rutherford
Email:	Philip.Rutherford@Walsall.Gov.Uk	
Phone Number	01922 652450	
Job Title / Position in Organisation:	Strategic Lead – Youth Justice Services	
Organisation Address:	Walsall Council	
Address Line 1:	Civic Centre	
Address Line 2:	Darwall Street	
Address Line 3:		
Address Line 4:		

Town / City:	Walsall
Postcode:	WS1 1TP

1.3 Summary of the aims and objectives of your organisation

Walsall Council is a metropolitan Borough in the Black Country, north-west of Birmingham and is predominantly urban with high levels of multiple deprivation (19th most deprived local authority in the country in the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children), though there are more affluent areas in the Borough, as well as more rural, green spaces. As a local authority, Walsall Council has responsibility for a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services, including (but not limited to) Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Waste, Benefits, Council Tax, Community Safety, Highways, libraries, parks and open spaces, art galleries and museums and more.

The Youth Justice Service is a child-first service that believes that offending behaviour is a symptom of childhood adversity and trauma and that developing strengths and resilience will be the most effective in reducing risk. Aligned with our Walsall Right 4 Children vision, it aims to ensure the right children are in the right place with the right support for as long as it is needed so they are safe from harm, happy and learning well.

The principle aim of the YJS partnership is to prevent and reduce offending and reoffending behaviour in children and young people and we have three national key performance indicators:

- 1) Reducing the number of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time
- 2) Reducing reoffending
- 3) Reducing the use of custodial disposals

The Youth Justice Service is a multi-agency partnership including staff and professionals from community safety, health services, West Midlands Police, National Probation Service and Walsall Council's Children's Services. It works closely with neighbouring Youth Justice Services across the West Midlands region, including Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell, Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull, who are all child-led and monitor the same KPIs.

Across the West Midlands region there are 314,083 children aged 10-17 (2021 census), 19% are of black or mixed heritage, yet 38% of children who are given a caution or sentence are black or mixed heritage.

1.4 If this is a joint / consortium bid please list all partners here. If a single bid, please enter 'Not applicable'.

Walsall Council (Lead)
Birmingham Children's Trust
Coventry City Council
Dudley Council
Sandwell Children's Trust
Solihull Council
Wolverhampton City Council

1.5 Please enter the amounts requested each year.

Year 1 2024-25 Provide breakdown of costs requested	£195,000	% of Annual Income	Breakdown provided on pages 12 & 13
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Year 2 2025-2026 Provide breakdown of costs requested	£262,500		Breakdown provided on pages 12 & 13
Year 3 2026-2027 Provide breakdown of costs requested	£262,500		Breakdown provided on pages 12 & 13
Year 4 2027-2028 Provide breakdown of costs requested	£30,000		Breakdown provided on pages 12 & 13
Total	£750,000	<1%	

1.6 What is your Annual Income as shown in your most recent audited accounts?

(Please provide a copy of your most recent audited accounts)

£772.278M

1.7 Since 2023, has your organisation been in receipt of other grant funding from the Youth Justice Board?

If so, please give details of what that is for, the time period it covers and the team you liaised with.

[Insert Department Name] Funding Source	Details	Period	[Insert Department Name] Team you liaised with
Social Enterprise Investment Fund	None		
Health & Social Care Volunteering Fund	None		
Innovation, Excellence, Strategic Developments Fund	None		
Strategic Partner Programme	None		
Other	None		

1.8 Has a member of the Board of Trustees / Directors signed-off this proposal to be made?

Please provide his/ her contact details

Colleen Male, Executive Director - Children's Services, Walsall Council and Chair of Youth Justice Board.

Colleen.Male@Walsall.Gov.Uk

01922 653718

1.9 Have you applied to, or do you plan to apply to, other funding sources to obtain support for this proposal? If so, please give details of the funding source(s), the application dates, and the amount(s) applied for. Have funding decisions been made? If not, when do you expect to be notified?

Failure to provide this information may delay / affect your application.

Not applicable

2. Section 2 – Eligibility

2.1 Have you applied for funding that is being provided by a similar project or service you are currently undertaken?

No

2.2 Where will the activity be delivered (across United Kingdom, Wales, England, Scotland Northern Ireland?)

☐ United Kingdom (Please state if area specific)

West Midlands – Birmingham, Dudley, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton

2.3 Is your organisation a non-profit making organisation?

(that is, carrying out not-for-profit activities but is not a public or local authority)?

If your organisation is not a registered charity (CIC or CIO) we may need to check your governing documents to assure ourselves that you are a non-profit making organisation.

No

2.4 Please state the legal structure of your organisation

☐ A Charity registered on the charity commission website

☐ A Corporate body – company limited by guarantee (registered at Companies House)

☐ A Community Interest Company (registered at Companies House or CIC regulator)

☐ A co-operative (we will need to see your governing documents)

☐ An Independent Provident Society (we will need to see your governing documents)

☐ New Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

☒ None of the above, but the organisation has a formal constitution (set of rules) or governing document which shows its objectives and management structure

Other please specify:- Local authority (Metropolitan borough)

2.5 Please indicate if, within the past five years you, your organisation(s), or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation(s) or any member of an organisation you intend to sub-contract to, has been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences listed within the Mandatory Exclusion Grounds:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551130/List_of_Mandatory_and_Discretionary_Exclusions.pdf

If the answer to the above is 'Yes', please provide further details.

- Date of conviction: specify which of the grounds listed the conviction was for, and the reasons for conviction.
- Identity of who has been convicted: if the relevant documentation is available electronically, please provide the web address, issuing authority, precise reference of the documents.
- Have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion?

No

2.6 Has it been established, for your organisation(s) or any organisation you intend to sub-contract to by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation(s) is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation(s) is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions?

If the answer to the above is 'Yes', please provide further details. Please also confirm you have paid or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including where applicable any accrued interest and/or fines.

No

2.7 Do you, or any organisation you intend to sub-contract to, have any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may be relevant to this requirement?

No

If you responded "Yes" to question 2.5 above we require that any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest in respect of this project are identified in writing. Potential Bidders must outline what safeguards would be put in place to mitigate the risk of actual or perceived conflicts arising during the delivery of these services. The Youth Justice Board will review the mitigation in line with the perceived conflict of interest to determine what level of risk this poses to them. Therefore, if Potential Providers cannot or are unwilling to demonstrate to the Youth Justice Board's satisfaction that they have suitable safeguards in place to mitigate any risk, then their Tender may be rejected.

Please attach a completed Conflict of Interest form if you answered Yes to above question 2.5.

2.8 Will all staff conducting fieldwork hold, or be prepared to undergo Enhanced DBS clearance if deemed necessary?

Yes

3.1 Robustness and suitability of the proposed approach for meeting the primary aims and objectives.

(Please refer to sections 7.2-7.3 of the 'Key Information for Grant Applicants' document)

- Full details of the delivery methodology and how this will meet the listed aims and objectives, including if delivery will be by the Grant Recipient or an organisation sub-contracted by the Grant Recipient.
- This must include the approach to establishing and overseeing the steering committee, the development of the Proof of Concept and model.
- Details of how children and others will be selected for the steering committee and the expectations of their roles and responsibilities, duration of their involvement and how you will maintain consistency of the committee members.
- Details of how you will ensure children will be safeguarded.
- Details of how you will support the project team to access other YJS and sector partners.
- Details of how you will gain the buy-in and collaboration from other YJS in the region.
- Explain how you will recruit, manage and support the project team operating across this geographical spread?
- Details of how the project team will disseminate and roll out the model and ensure delivery across the region, including learning on implementation that can be used to improve further delivery.
- What steps you will be taking to ensure that best use is made from the learning from this proposal to inform rollout of similar activity in other areas nationally?

(Please note that solely putting a report on a website and/ or holding a conference are not sufficient)

- Maximum 1250 words

We will create a co-produced (with children/families), culturally sensitive, trauma informed programme for use across the YJSs in line with the YJB 'Child First' vision to ensure trauma, specifically racism, prejudice and discrimination are proactively considered. While the final model will be co-produced, it is likely to include the need for staff to be confident to ask the right questions, and understand and meet the needs of children. It will facilitate improved practitioner skills in recognising and responding to a range of issues, including ACEs, adultification and disproportionality. Likely to include staff training, and a review of policies, procedures and practice such as Stop & Search it will create an inclusive and accessible, psychologically-informed safe space for staff, children/families to avoid re-traumatisation and ultimately achieve organisational cultural change.

The work will be delivered by a specialist sub-contractor and will be independently evaluated.

Delivery methodology:

Year 1:

- Appoint a Project Manager (PM) to plan, oversee, monitor and QA the project.
- Recruit a Specialist Delivery Partner (SDP) using competitive tender. SDP will have strong expertise in co-developing and mobilising trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive approaches with children.
- Recruit an independent evaluator (also through competitive tender) to create our Theory of Change (ToC) to evidence our proof of concept.
- Reflect on local data (e.g. stop & search, school exclusions etc) and use best practice and key national reports to establish how local policies may influence any overrepresentation in our YJS cohort, ensuring deeper understanding of the circumstances in each of the YJSs. This will inform the tender specification for the SDP.
- Create the Project Steering Group (PSG) and Children's Steering Groups (CSG).
- SDP to:
 - co-develop (children/families, stakeholders, external evaluator) the proof of concept via a ToC, using quantitative/qualitative methods to test and learn the strengths, weaknesses and impact of interventions in current delivery.
 - Create a Child-led Outcomes Framework for the programme e.g. 'feeling safe', 'trust'.
 - Horizon-scan for continuous learning, including specifically disproportionate use of 'Stop and Search'.
 - Co-design and deliver a culturally-sensitive, trauma informed and localised programme across the 7 YJSs (approx. 200 staff), implementing baseline indicators to measure proof of concept in place.

Years 2-3:

- SDP to:
 - Train staff (F2F and online) via co-designed culturally sensitive and trauma informed training.
 - Review policies and practice.
 - Establish a Champions group to enable project sustainability.
 - Pending the findings of co-production in Y1, deliver joint resources to help change local culture.
 - Disseminate and embed the model/programme across the region through events, webinars, virtual and/or in person training, workshops.
- External evaluator to produce mid-project evaluation report to inform learning and any adjustments needed for Y3.

The co-produced programme roll-out in Y2 will be sufficiently flexible to adapt to localised need in each locality, whilst retaining the consistency needed for the ToC impact measurement. Once evidence is available of the programme embedding in each locality, we will act on creating organisational change in practice e.g. understanding Stop and Search.

Year 4:

1. External Evaluator to produce final evaluation report.

Outcome: 80% of black and mixed heritage children (approx. 1500) in the YJS across the region will have

been supported by and benefitted from staff and services adopting a culturally sensitive, trauma informed approach in practice (the model) by the end of year 3.

Governance & Project Management:

A PSG will be established, formed from the 7 West Midlands YJSs, including the 7 service leads and other stakeholders as appropriate. The PSG will oversee delivery of the project, including the development of the proof of concept, the delivery model, and external evaluation.

The PSG will be supported by a PM, who will be recruited and employed by WMBC, reporting to the Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services at WMBC. Due to the systemic and institutional barriers, s/he may face they will be offered a buddy/coach to support wellbeing/reflective practice. The PM will report to the PSG to enable and QA the SDP, ensuring they meet agreed milestones and regularly report to the PSG. The PM will establish connections in each of the 7 YJSs who will enable access to offices, staff and local systems, established child engagement fora and enable effective information sharing in line with data protection and safeguarding policies. They will also be the point of contact for the independent evaluator.

The CSG will be created from children with youth justice experience from each area, ensuring equitable representation. We/SDP will collaborate with the CSG to co-produce the deliverables over the life of the project. Engagement in the CSG will vary depending on the needs of individual participants. It will be facilitated by SDP and YJS staff.

Terms of references will be completed for the PSG and CSG detailing roles and responsibilities. Each YJS will report to its local YJP Board to provide regular updates on the project and ensure it remains locally rooted.

Co-production:

To be successful and meet the needs of this cohort, this project needs to be led by their lived experience and expertise. All project information will be 'child' and 'age friendly' and appropriate to the needs of the children. Participation information including data sharing and how to 'opt out' will be user-tested and clear. Children will be incentivised for their time, skills and engagement through our 'Rewards and Recognition' policy e.g. shop vouchers. Methods of engagement will also be child-first e.g. stratifying engagement methodologies for age such as 11-15 and 16+, for gang/County Lines tensions, reasonable adjustments for disabled children and allowing for engagement at a pace/space/place that works for children. Engagement will include with lighter activities e.g. food, games to ensure children feel empowered leaving the session and have an information pack on where to seek further support.

Gatekeeping will be via trusted stakeholders in the children's lives as we know that skills, understanding, knowledge and integrity are the most important factors in supporting and promoting meaningful and effective engagement with this cohort. Building on the work of First Legacy Support, we will engage parents/carers to ensure a whole-family approach.

Safeguarding:

In addition to clear consent, information, engagement and data sharing protocols any children involved in this project in any way, directly or indirectly, will be covered by local safeguarding policies, including local safeguarding referral pathways. Children will be recruited from established groups. The PM and SDP will be trained in local safeguarding processes and unconscious bias including annual refreshers. They will have enhanced DBS checks and will be able to demonstrate they are 'trauma aware', anti-racist and have previous experience of working in a culturally appropriate way with 'vulnerable' children before appointment.

Dissemination & sharing of learning:

Stakeholders challenging systemic issues and tracking pathway outcomes will be key to this proof of concept. Building on the Fairness and Belonging Strategy, we will maximise the benefit of this project through effective communication and joined-up working, including regular updates to Children's Services, Community Safety, Education, Housing, Police, Probation, YOIs, Health, VRP, regional Pathfinders and local Magistrates. All representatives will be offered bite-sized, localised culturally sensitive and informed training.

The YJB regional oversight team will ensure that effective practice, findings/evaluation report, and any programmes, frameworks and process from the project will be shared on the YJB Resource Hub, through the YJB bulletin, organised YJB webinars and Association of Directors of Children's Services. We will continue to work nationally to develop a data picture against KPIs from comparable areas. This will provide us with a greater insight into our data, enable benchmarks and comparisons to the national picture and ensure continued development of good practice.

3.2 Project management arrangements and quality assurance

(Please refer to sections 7.1-7.2 of the 'Key Information for Grant Applicants' document)

- Provide a detailed project plan for the delivery period (April 2023- March 2028) including mobilisation (including recruitment and training for staff), delivery of the grant activities, key project milestones and deliverables, risks and mitigations and benefits management.
- There is no set word limit, but the project plan should be no more than 3 sides of A4 using Arial 10 Font
- Please set out your internal governance and management structures that will ensure successful project delivery.
- Please include full details of accountabilities and responsibilities within the YJS for oversight of the project.
- Details of the planned quality assurance procedures.
- Maximum of 1250 words.

Our partnership is poised to lead on this evidence based, psychologically and culturally informed model/programme of intervention across the seven YJSs, leveraging our collective expertise and successful track record in implementing large-scale programmes within and across our areas. Our partnership boasts a history of successful implementation of pivotal transformation programmes, notably, initiatives like Family Safeguarding in Walsall and Dudley, Family Drug & Alcohol Court in Walsall, Sandwell and Dudley and the HAF Programme, each standing as testament to our ability to orchestrate substantial impact and service reforms. These endeavours demanded strategic investment, operational adjustments, meticulous financial oversight, sustainable planning, cross-agency coordination, and the development of robust practice frameworks. There is an active and effective project team driving operational practice and ambitious YJS board(s) driving forward strategic improvement.

A Partnership Agreement will be produced clearly outlining the aims & objectives of the project, key milestones and outputs, areas of responsibility for each partner, lines of communication and information sharing protocol. Each partner will be expected to sign the Partnership Agreement, which will be a fundamental cornerstone of the project.

Structures & Systems

We will establish comprehensive project management structures in advance of implementation. This will include a dedicated team of key leaders within each local authority (LA) who will convene regularly to ensure seamless coordination, while our multi-agency strategic YJS boards will assemble monthly to provide oversight and assurance, thereby driving the implementation of our coordinated programme.

We have included budget for a Project Manager (hosted by WMBC) who will drive change, providing strategic and operational management across the 7 LA's. The PM will act as a key point of contact between the LA's, partners and stakeholders, facilitating efficient communication and fostering collaboration. The approach to project management will be reviewed towards the end of year 1 to ensure appropriate level of resources are dedicated during years 2 and 3, depending on the needs of the project.

A project steering group comprising of the nominated leads from each LA and key representatives, will meet monthly. As the Lead Authority, Walsall will ensure the presence of their Lead Accountant, legal and procurement officers (where necessary) ensuring comprehensive and well-informed decision making. We will establish clear Terms of Reference for the steering group, outlining areas of responsibility, membership, purpose and communication lines. The group will be chaired by WMBC's Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services.

Each participating YJP will establish locally appropriate working arrangements to aid communication amongst key local stakeholders and ensure effective implementation of recommended solutions within their respective authorities.

We will develop a consistent schedule for sharing information through existing channels within each LA and also build in opportunities for workshops and events.

Accountabilities & Responsibility

The Walsall Youth Justice Services Board will act as the Lead Board and will oversee and scrutinise the implementation of this work with Executive Director level and multi-agency representation including LA Children's/ Community Safety / Education Officers, Police, Probation, Public Health / ICB. The Board has oversight of deliverables, spend and quality assurance. The Chair of Walsall YJS Board, Executive Director – Children's Services, reports to Walsall Council Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team having overall accountability for funding. The Strategic Lead - Youth Justice Services reports to the Chair of the Board and will have direct line management responsibility of the Project Manager who will deliver the project and finance plan. Update reports including the outcomes of any key decisions made at Board level will be circulated among the partner YJS Boards in the interests of transparency and effective partnership working.

The Project Steering Group including Project Manager, LA representatives and stakeholders will meet monthly and report to the YJS Board on a quarterly basis overseeing delivery of the project plan, spend, issue and risk management and reporting.

Each YJP will have their own Local Implementation Group reporting into the Steering Group on a monthly basis, chaired by the nominated lead for the authority and driving forward project interventions.

Quality Assurance

Identifying and promoting effective practice in the youth justice system is a key objective of the Youth Justice Board overseeing the project. The YJB Quality Assurance Framework is an integrated cycle of assessment, planning, implementation and review, intended to ensure that all agencies are demonstrating, or working towards achieving, the required standards of process and service. This programme will form an integral part of a wider commitment from all authorities and agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of youth justice services, incorporated in project planning from the offset. Self-assessment is critical, forming the basis of a strong process of self-evaluation, across the project, that will underpin priority-setting, planning and ongoing improvement. Self-assessment will be widely used by LA's to understand and articulate the issues that influence the focus and direction of the project.

The Project Manager will work closely with the Specialist Delivery Partner to ensure quality of their work and approach, including where appropriate, periodic PM attendance at children's engagement sessions to monitor delivery. As the PM will be line managed by the Strategic Lead for YJS at WMBC, their work will be informed by best practice approaches, and they will have access to the wide range of training and professional development opportunities available at the Council. The Specialist Delivery Partner will be recruited specifically for their proven expertise in trauma-informed AND culturally sensitive approaches when working with children.

Walsall has significant experience in delivering large externally funded programmes, and has the financial stability and appropriate governance to accept, administer and account for the grant. Embedded in the democratic accountability processes of Walsall Council, we have strict management controls on approvals for expenditure with a committee reporting structure, elected representation signature and budgetary identification and coding pre-approval. This follows through with strict controls on any change requests within agreed budgets, whether externally funded or otherwise.

The project lead will work closely with finance colleagues on a regular basis to ensure spend is in line with the agreed grant conditions and restrictions as outlined in the grant letter and memorandum of understanding once developed and to ensure all grant returns are completed accurately, returned in a timely manner and authorised by the relevant person from the LA. We will also ensure controls are agreed and in place with the other Authorities to monitor and report on spend on a regular basis and to ensure transparency and accountability is upheld across the authorities. Walsall has experience in managing grants in this way as we

are also the Lead LA for the Family Drugs and Alcohol programme therefore similar governance and reporting procedures can be used in this instance. Walsall Council has recently procured VERTO Project Management system, which may be utilised to enable effective monitoring and reporting.

3.3 Evaluation methodology

(Please refer to sections 7.3 of the 'Key Information for Grant Applicants' document)

Please explain:

- a. How you will assess and evaluate the programme to test whether it has achieved the stated outcome(s) and provides value for money, and how you will generate learning for future or wider implementation? This should include information on the expected evaluation design, sample, methodology, timeline and planned outputs.
- b. Explain who will be doing the evaluating and;
- c. What qualifies that individual(s)/ organisation to do this?
- d. Demonstrate how you plan to monitor the expected outcomes. What systems will you put in place to collect information on expected outcomes throughout programme delivery.

- Maximum 750 words

The evaluation will be sub-contracted to ensure independent testing of the proof of concept. The evaluation spec will be co-produced with partners as the integrity of the data is likely to be higher, implementation safer and there will be greater buy-in to any subsequent recommendations. We envisage it taking a participatory, creative and co-learning approach including:

- Mixed methodology to ensure the evaluation is child first, the objectives are achieved and there is sensitivity to the context.
- Co-develop an outcomes framework aligned to sections 7.4/5 of the Application Specification and building on the Person-Centred, Theory Led SIM Framework for Youth Offending (Paterson-Young in HMIP, 2022) to capture impact over three years.
- Process evaluation to understand how and why the programme works and can be improved.

The evaluation plan will be approved and quality assured by the WMBC and the YJB.

Performance monitoring against core deliverables will include:

1) Preparation and background:

- Local data, literature review, funding requirements, internal data capture.
- Confirm evaluation objectives, co-create inclusive outcomes/indicators for programme performance and evaluation framework design.
- Comparator sites and contextual information about the region - number and characteristics of staff and children participating in the programme, e.g. county lines/exploitation, neurodiversity, ethnicity and individual differences.
- Develop a ToC, programme logic model by mapping inputs, outputs, outcomes and intended impacts of the programme.

2. Outcome and tool development:

- Co-create a low burden but high impact MEL strategy.
- Review programme indicators in line with programme aims.
- Develop a baseline for programme outputs and outcomes including demographics.

3. Data collection:

- Develop a facilitation plan and worksheets to co-develop with children and select appropriate child first and EDI informed collection practice and inclusive data collection methods and tools.
- Provide brief training on tools, dissemination and implementation for PM/SDP/Champions to ensure reliable and ongoing data capture.

4. Quality Assurance:

- Working with the team for ongoing performance monitoring.
- Co-create a baseline for ongoing learning testing and refining tools.

The findings on programme outcomes (at the system, staff and / or child level), will include consideration of whether any suitable comparator sites are available.

Methodology:

A Process Evaluation methodology will be utilised to enable staff to gain a deeper understanding of the key levers that support their own practice as well as have the ability to inform others interested in potentially adopting the programme. The process evaluation will determine the connection between programme services received and outcomes achieved i.e. proof of concept.

- 1) Problem statement, levels identification: Working with the CSG and stakeholders to test aims, processes and barriers at the programme level. Investigate key decisions made around the design of the programme, key success and challenges to implementation.
- 2) Create and test: Identify the benefits and opportunities for best practice, the successes and challenges to inclusivity, deploy a range of methods (surveys, journey mapping, focus groups) to understand pathways.
- 3) Reporting: providing action-oriented feedback on the programme; interim reports delivered annually plus a final report.

Two different Case Management Systems are utilised across the partnership. The Information Sharing Agreement will allow for the analysis of data to allow effective monitoring of pathway/outcomes across the different systems.

Sample size: min 20% of all staff and 5% of eligible children.

Timings and outputs:

Y1: Outcomes framework developed; Co-creation of ToC and Programme Logic Model; Inclusive tools developed; SU impact methodology co-produced; interim report.

Y2: Focus groups with staff and to be agreed methodology for engaging YP to explore and measure short to medium term impact. Accessible survey for all stakeholders; Y2 report with initial learning for dissemination events e.g. webinars.

Y3: Staff focus group, building on what works for YP engagement to analyse programme data collected.

End of Y3: Final report with learning and key messaging i.e. knowledge mobilisation such as Tik Tok, 'lunch n learn' on what worked and why to inform future replication. Ensuring we are child first, acknowledge and close the communication loop with all YP engaged and who shared their life experiences to improve the experiences of their peers.

Who:

The Council's procurement system 'Intend' will be utilised to allow for competitive tendering, also targeting individuals/companies with the following expertise:

- ✓ Child First values
- ✓ Extensive experience and engagement in intercultural understanding, equity, cultural safety and anti-racism in contexts such as policy, health, justice, immigration, poverty.
- ✓ Working with minoritised and racialised communities.
- ✓ Experience in evaluating children's services, wellbeing and justice sectors.
- ✓ Knowledge/tools to challenge prejudice, systematic racism and ableism to create opportunities for growth/support inclusion.

3.4 Describe how you will sustain the project after the grant funding has ended.

Please explain:

a) How will the work of this project will be sustained/ supported going forward?

- Maximum of 500 words.

The sustainability of this project is being considered now. We want to engage 80% of the target cohort via this model and create meaningful change in how Black and mixed heritage boys experience youth justice in the West Midlands. This type of societal change will take time. This project will help lay the foundation needed to effect this much needed change.

Co-production: by ensuring this model is developed based on experiences and expertise across the West Midlands the training can be localised and contextualised so that it feels and is real-time. This will aid ownership and buy-in from all stakeholders and will be pivotal to the success of the project during and after this funding round.

Mainstream learning into practice: We will adopt a Train the Trainer approach to plan for new starters, staff turnover, refresher training and to ensure learning continues to real-time and contextualised over the funded period. Through our Champions, we will raise the visibility and buy-in for this systemic change internally and across our strategic partnerships. Learning styles and access needs will be planned for with online/in person sessions, training tools and reference tools available to further achieve and embed learner outcomes. Core learning on cultural sensitivity can be mainstreamed in to established staff training from Y3 e.g. induction for new staff, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and/or Trauma Informed Approaches.

Iterative learning: Through the proposed co-production and annual evaluation process, we will keep the culturally sensitive programme up to date based on feedback, local and national learning and developments. This iterative updating of resources over the three years and beyond via established fora, will ensure the programme remains relevant post funding.

Learning into practice: Learners will have the opportunity to apply principles and awareness in practice. The training will be practical with a focus on how to apply a culturally informed lens and create more inclusive policy and practice in and across different areas e.g. via Stop and Search.

Train stakeholders: through the diverse representation on our Management Boards, we can share learning/evidence and gain buy-in to our approach to aid YJ wrap-around support and build culturally informed capacity e.g. LAs, Police, Probation, Health e.g. ICB, Violence Reduction Units, Young Offender Institutes and Magistrates.

Showcase learning and best practice: Working with the YJB regional oversight team effective practice can be shared. The evaluation report will include SMART recommendations by stakeholder including knowledge mobilisation techniques. Resources will be shared on the YJB Resource Hub, through the YJB bulletin/webinars and nationally via the Association of Directors of Children's Services. We will continue to work nationally to develop our data picture against our most similar YJBs.

Seek external funding opportunities: Through having a three-year established and independent evidence base on what works locally and regionally and why, we will be well placed to work with External Funding colleagues to diversify our income base.

3.5 Financial Plan (financial breakdown)

This is a mandatory document as noted below. Please ensure the breakdown details includes all costs associated with how the funding will be used within each year of the project to achieve the intended outcomes (recruitment/staffing costs//dissemination/ evaluation from the outset).

The financial breakdown will be assessed and scored as part of the evaluation. Please ensure the amount you are applying for does not exceed the total budget for each financial year. Any bid that exceeds the allocated budget will be rejected. The evaluation panel will score the plan based on an assessment of its thoroughness and the applicants' confidence in its accuracy.

This is an overview of the costs. Further details on cost justification given in the attached Financial Plan.

Cost heading	Partner	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	Total
Recruitment i.e. Bluetown	Walsall	£500				£500
Staffing Costs Project Manager (G12 grade, Yr. 1 @ 10 months, Yr. 2 & 3 + 5% annual uplift)	Walsall (shared resource)	£55,990	£70,547	£74,075		£200,612
Staffing Costs - Training & Expenses e.g. equipment	Walsall	£3,000	£500	£426		£3,926
Staffing Costs - Project support from LA partners	All partners	£65,510	£75,393	£81,939		£222,842
Flexi Funding - (funding that the provider can spend directly on children's expenses related to their participation in the steering committee and travel costs)	All - estimate £100 per child		£5,600	£5,600		£11,200
Delivery Provider (co-production, delivery, training, facilitation, dissemination)	Walsall (shared resource)	£50,000	£90,000	£80,000		£220,000
Overheads	All		£7,960	£7,960		£15,920
Evaluation (max £75k requirement)	Walsall (shared resource)	£20,000	£12,500	£12,500	£30,000	£75,000
Total		£195,000	£262,500	£262,500	£30,000	£750,000

Section 4 - Mandatory Documentation

4.1 Additional Information

Please ensure you send us the following documents which are required for the Grant recipient organisation and any organisation being sub-contracted to deliver the project:

Project Plan for the lifecycle of the project, showing what you plan to achieve for each year of the project	Please see attached – Project Plan.pdf
Please attach a detailed Risk Management Plan showing the top five risks to the success of your project. Please include how these risks will be managed.	Please see attached – Risk Management Plan.xls
Please attach a copy of your latest published accounts for your organisation if you are not a registered charity, CIC or CIO	Please see attached - WMBC Summary accounts 2022-23.pdf

Please attach a copy of your governing documents if you are not a registered charity	Please see attached - WMBC Part 02 – Articles of Governance.pdf https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmisis/Documents/Constitution.aspx
Please attach an Impact Assessment of your outcomes.	Please see attached - Impact Assessment.pdf
Please attach a copy of your data management plan	Please see attached - WMBC Data Management Plan.pdf
Please attach a detailed financial breakdown of your costs and resources for this grant.	Please see attached - Financial Breakdown.xls

4.2 Please confirm your organisation, and that of any organisation being sub-contracted to deliver the project has:

- ☒ Equal Opportunities Policy Statement
- ☒ GDPR / Data Protection Policy
- ☒ Safeguarding Policy
- ☒ Health and Safety Policy Statement
- ☒ Staffing Structure for Project

ANNEX 2 –THE FUNDED ACTIVITIES

1. Background/purpose of the Grant

The Youth Justice Annual Statistics for 2021/22 show us that children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds continue to be over-represented at most stages of the youth justice system.

The YJB has an ongoing commitment to tackling over-representation within the youth justice system and has been highlighting the issues within the system for a decade. Most recently, we have spoken about this through the publishing of our 'Exploring Racial Disparity'¹ and research into 'Ethnic Disparity in Remand and Sentencing'². Issues around ethnic disparity will also form part of the YJB's current commissioned research on pre-sentence reporting.

Many of the levers for delivering change sit outside of direct YJB control. We are therefore determined and committed to working with partners to address the elements that further contribute to cumulative disproportionality within the YJS. We believe this is critical to making any progress. The YJB has the opportunity to achieve this through targeted investment into pathfinder projects that deliver focussed interventions to change the 'status quo'. We are proposing to do this through investment into two Addressing Ethnic Disparities Pathfinder projects.

There is a wealth of evidence and data around disproportionality/over representation. We know that the intersectionality of the cumulative effect of several factors contribute to the over-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children within the youth justice system. Such as, poverty, mental health, exclusion from school, Looked After Child status, victims of crime. These are additional societal disparities that need to also be addressed in order to impact on the flow through and contribution to the likelihood of a child coming into contact with the youth justice system.

What is not fully understood is why interventions are achieving better outcomes for white children than for black and mixed heritage children and Youth Justice Services continue to identify disproportionality as area of concern in their Youth Justice Plans. The report from the HMIP thematic inspection highlighted issues around the 'worrying' level of unmet need among children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds and concerns around the limited understanding about the barriers that may be blocking their access to support before they enter the youth justice system.

The investment into this pathfinder will include an initial proof of concept prior to the design of the intervention model, to test and learn from the existing interventions to build on what we know works for black and mixed heritage children and avoid duplicating interventions that don't.

The proof of concept will provide a deeper understanding of how wider social, environmental, and economic factors impact black and mixed heritage children's level of engagement with interventions, supported by a comparison of model development within both rural and urban regions.

This deeper understanding will be used to inform the design and development of a psychologically informed model of interventions that will provide a regional response which can be embedded as systematic practice.

The investment will provide one pathfinder that is area-specific where the disproportionality is highest in context with the ethnic breakdown of the population.

YJAF data has been provided giving us the highest RRI (relative rate index) and second highest RRI amongst black and mixed heritage children across England and Wales. Data indicates that we should

¹ <https://prezi.com/view/TEmgQ5ThJLNTAFKULeC/>

² [Microsoft Word - BAME research report_final_v4.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

focus on London however, the YJB has already committed significant investment into London and therefore the Board and Executive are in agreement to invest in the West Midlands Police Force Area which has the second highest RRI.

Analysis of data in the YJB Ethnic Disparity Summary Tool for the period of March 2017- March 2022 evidenced that in the West Midlands Police Force Area:

- Black children are 8% overrepresented.
- Mixed children are 11% overrepresented when compared to the general population of children.
- The WMP area has some of the lowest FTE's nationally, however, there are high percentages of WM children in the secure estate who are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The intention of this investment is to see a reduction in the number of children who are black or mixed heritage being disproportionately represented within the youth justice system, furthering our work to encourage a Child First youth justice system as set out within the priorities of our strategic pillar 1: driving system improvement.

Priority 1: Drive system improvements that treat children as children.

Our ambition is to operate in a Child First system. We will focus our efforts on improving existing systems and influencing policy and practice at this current time.

2. Aims and objectives of the Funded Activities

The Funded Activity is outlined in section 3.1. of Annex 1 Part B: Grant Application.

The objective of this pathfinder is to reduce over-representation of black and mixed-heritage children within the youth justice system, with a specific focus on early intervention and prevention.

To bring together the learning around disproportionality and evidence of effective practice to develop a therapeutic, psychologically informed model that addresses the complex needs of black and mixed-heritage children in, or on the periphery of the youth justice system.

Investment into this pathfinder will include the recruitment of a project team to develop an initial proof of concept prior to the design of the intervention model, to test and learn from the existing interventions to build on what we know works for black and mixed heritage children and avoid duplicating interventions that don't.

The proof of concept will provide a deeper understanding of how wider social, environmental, and economic factors impact black and mixed heritage children's level of engagement with interventions.

This deeper understanding will be used to inform the design and development of a model/programme of intervention to support a regional response which can be embedded as systematic practice to address the needs of children living in built up urban areas as well as those living in rural areas.

The model will facilitate improved practitioner skills in recognising and responding to a range of issues, including ACEs, adultification and disproportionality.

Expected short term benefits/outcomes:

- Develop an evidence based, psychologically informed model of intervention specifically designed to meet the needs of black and mixed heritage children who are known to or are on the periphery of the youth justice system.
- By the end of year 3 delivery, 80% of black and mixed heritage children (approx. 1500) in the

YJS across the region will have been supported by and benefitted from staff and services adopting a culturally sensitive, trauma informed approach in practice (the model) by the end of year 3.

- Staff across the region to be upskilled.
- The model to be implemented across each region and embedded as system practice.
- Learning and resources which can be disseminated to replicate the model across the wider youth justice sector.
- Short term outcomes such as improved confidence & self-esteem. improved pro-social identity, improved family ties, engagement with ETE and other services.
- Other short term 'soft outcomes' bespoke to the child.

The expected end benefits/outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of statutory outcomes for children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area and South-West YJS region.
- Reduction in the over-representation of black and mixed heritage children from the West Midlands Police Force Area and South-West YJS region entering the youth justice system. (FTE).
- Reduction in the number of reoffences by children from a black or mixed heritage background in the West Midlands Police Force Area.

ANNEX 3 – PAYMENT SCHEDULE

INSTALMENT/ INSTALMENT PERIOD	GRANT SUM PAYABLE	PAYMENT SCHEDULE (Month and year)
Year 1 2024/25		
1 st	£97,500	July 2024
2 nd	£97,500	October 2024
Total for Year 1	£195,000	
Year 2 2025/26		
1 st	£131,250	July 2025
2 nd	£131,250	October 2025
Total for Year 2	£262,500	
Year 3 2026/27		
1 st	£131,250	July 2026
2 nd	£131,250	October 2026
Total for Year 3	£262,500	
Year 4 2027/28		
1 st	£15,000	July 2027
2 nd	£15,000	October 2027
Total for Year 4	£30,000	
Total for Grant	£750,000	

ANNEX 4 – GRANT RECIPIENT'S BANK DETAILS

Commented [CS(5)]: Grant recipient to populate, sign and date

Part 1: Grant recipient details

Name of Main Grant Holder

Address of Grant Holder

Grant Determination number

Postcode:

Grant name

Contact telephone number

Part 2: Bank details

Bank / Building Society name

Account name

Account number

Bank sort code

Account type

Building Society roll number

Branch address

Postcode:

Part 3: Address for remittance advice

Choose one method only

Postal address (if different from Part 1)

Send our remittance advice by post

Postcode

Send our remittance advice via email

Part 4: Authorised signatories

The names and specimen signatures of people authorised to sign claim forms on behalf of the person who signed the Grant Funding Agreement are shown below. These signatures are binding on this organisation in respect of the Agreement.

Name

Name

Position in the organisation

Position in the organisation

Signature

Signature

Date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Part 5: Grant recipient declaration

To be completed by the person who signed the Grant Letter/ Grant Funding Agreement

I certify that the information given on this form is correct.

I agree that following discussions, any overpayments can be automatically recovered from future payments.

Name

Signature (*the person who signed the agreement*)

Date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Return this form to the address indicated in the Grant Letter, alongside a signed Grant Funding Agreement.

General Data Protection Regulation (2018): The information on this form will be recorded on the Authority's computer system. The information provided will be used for paying your fees and will not be passed to anyone outside of the Authority without the permission of the Grant Recipient.

ANNEX 5 – ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE SCHEDULE
(Breakdown of forecast grant expenditure)

Budget

The funding consists of £750,000.00 inclusive of VAT over four years:	Financial Year	Value	Item
2024-25 £175,000 for salary costs	2024/25	£175,000*	Staffing
2025-26 £250,000.00 salary costs and overheads	2025/26	£250,000	Staffing & dissemination overheads
2026-27 £250,000.00 salary costs and overheads	2026/27	£250,000	Staffing & dissemination overheads
An additional £75,000.00 will be invested for the evaluation and this is expected to be split across years 1-4 (2024/5 to 2027/8) in order for the evaluation to be an ongoing process.	2024 - 2028	£75,000	Evaluation

Financial Breakdown

Cost heading	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	Total
Recruitment i.e Bluetown	£500				£500
Staffing Costs Project Manager (G12 grade, Yr. 1 @ 10 months, Yr. 2 & 3 + 5% annual uplift)	£55,990	£70,547	£74,075		£200,612
Staffing Costs - Training & Expenses e.g. equipment	£3,000	£500	£426		£3,926
Staffing Costs - Project support from LA partners	£65,510	£75,393	£81,939		£222,842
Flexi Funding - (funding that the provider can spend directly on children's expenses related to their participation in the steering committee and travel costs)		£5,600	£5,600		£11,200
Delivery Provider (co-production, delivery, training, facilitation, dissemination)	£50,000	£90,000	£80,000		£220,000
Overheads		£7,960	£7,960		£15,920
Evaluation (max £75k requirement)	£20,000	£12,500	£12,500	£30,000	£75,000
Total	£195,000	£262,500	£262,500	£30,000	£750,000

ANNEX 6 – AGREED PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND OUTCOMES

The Walsall Youth Justice Services Board will act as the Lead Board and will oversee and scrutinise the implementation of this work with Executive Director level and multi-agency representation including LA Children's/ Community Safety / Education Officers, Police, Probation, Public Health / ICB. The Board has oversight of deliverables, spend and quality assurance. The Chair of Walsall YJS Board, Executive Director – Children's Services, reports to Walsall Council Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team having overall accountability for funding. The Strategic Lead - Youth Justice Services reports to the Chair of the Board and will have direct line management responsibility of the Project Manager who will deliver the project and finance plan. Update reports including the outcomes of any key decisions made at Board level will be circulated among the partner YJS Boards in the interests of transparency and effective partnership working.

A Partnership Agreement will be produced clearly outlining the aims & objectives of the project, key milestones and outputs, areas of responsibility for each partner, lines of communication and information sharing protocol. Each partner will be expected to sign the Partnership Agreement, which will be a fundamental cornerstone of the project.

Terms of Reference will ensure that the Board is accountable for spending and achieving the pathfinder objectives. There will be an annual appraisal of progress combined with scrutiny of the plans for each accommodation prior to funds being released.

The Project Steering Group including Project Manager, LA representatives and stakeholders will meet monthly and report to the YJS Board on a quarterly basis overseeing delivery of the project plan, spend, issue and risk management and reporting.

Each YJP will have their own Local Implementation Group reporting into the Steering Group on a monthly basis, chaired by the nominated lead for the authority and driving forward project interventions.

A project steering group comprising of the nominated leads from each LA and key representatives, will meet monthly. As the Lead Authority, Walsall will ensure the presence of their Lead Accountant, legal and procurement officers (where necessary) ensuring comprehensive and well-informed decision making. We will establish clear Terms of Reference for the steering group, outlining areas of responsibility, membership, purpose and communication lines. The group will be chaired by WMBC's Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services

The YJB Quality Assurance Framework is an integrated cycle of assessment, planning, implementation and review, intended to ensure that all agencies are demonstrating, or working towards achieving, the required standards of process and service. This programme will form an integral part of a wider commitment from all authorities and agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of youth justice services, incorporated in project planning from the offset. Self-assessment is critical, forming the basis of a strong process of self-evaluation, across the project, that will underpin priority-setting, planning and ongoing improvement. Self-assessment will be widely used by LAs to understand and articulate the issues that influence the focus and direction of the project.

The evaluation will be contracted to ensure independent testing of the proof of concept. The evaluation spec will be co-produced with partners as the integrity of the data is likely to be higher, implementation safer and there will be greater buy-in to any subsequent recommendations. We envisage it taking a participatory, creative and co-learning approach including:

- Mixed methodology to ensure the evaluation is child first, the objectives are achieved and there is sensitivity to the context.
- Co-develop an outcomes framework aligned to sections 7.4/5 of the Application Specification and building on the Person-Centred, Theory Led SIM Framework for Youth Offending

(Paterson-Young in HMIP, 2022) to capture impact over three years.

- Process evaluation to understand how and why the programme works and can be improved.

The evaluation plan must be approved and quality assured by the WMBC and the YJB.

Performance monitoring against core deliverables will include:

1. Preparation and background:
 - o Local data, literature review, funding requirements, internal data capture.
 - o Confirm evaluation objectives, co-create inclusive outcomes/indicators for programme performance and evaluation framework design.
 - o Comparator sites and contextual information about the region - number and characteristics of staff and children participating in the programme, e.g. county lines/exploitation, neurodiversity, ethnicity and individual differences.
 - o Develop a ToC, programme logic model by mapping inputs, outputs, outcomes and intended impacts of the programme.
2. Outcome and tool development:
 - a. Co-create a low burden but high impact MEL strategy.
 - b. Review programme indicators in line with programme aims.
 - c. Develop a baseline for programme outputs and outcomes including demographics.
3. Data collection:
 - a. Develop a facilitation plan and worksheets to co-develop with children and select appropriate child first and EDI informed collection practice and inclusive data collection methods and tools.
 - b. Provide brief training on tools, dissemination and implementation for PM/SDP/Champions to ensure reliable and ongoing data capture.
4. Quality Assurance:
 - a. Working with the team for ongoing performance monitoring.
 - b. Co-create a baseline for ongoing learning testing and refining tools.

The findings on programme outcomes (at the system, staff and / or child level), will include consideration of whether any suitable comparator sites are available.

Methodology:

A Process Evaluation methodology will be utilised to enable staff to gain a deeper understanding of the key levers that support their own practice as well as have the ability to inform others interested in potentially adopting the programme. The process evaluation will determine the connection between programme services received and outcomes achieved i.e. proof of concept.

1) Problem statement, levels identification: Working with the CSG and stakeholders to test aims, processes and barriers at the programme level. Investigate key decisions made around the design of the programme, key success and challenges to implementation.

2) Create and test: Identify the benefits and opportunities for best practice, the successes and challenges to inclusivity, deploy a range of methods (surveys, journey mapping, focus groups) to understand pathways.

3) Reporting: providing action-oriented feedback on the programme; interim reports delivered annually plus a final report.

Two different Case Management Systems are utilised across the partnership. The Information

Sharing Agreement will allow for the analysis of data to allow effective monitoring of pathway/outcomes across the different systems.

Sample size: min 20% of all staff and 5% of eligible children.

Timings and outputs:

Y1: Outcomes framework developed; Co-creation of ToC and Programme Logic Model; Inclusive tools developed; SU impact methodology co-produced; interim report.

Y2: Focus groups with staff and to be agreed methodology for engaging YP to explore and measure short to medium term impact. Accessible survey for all stakeholders; Y2 report with initial learning for dissemination events e.g. webinars.

Y3: Staff focus group, building on what works for YP engagement to analyse programme data collected.

End of Y3: Final report with learning and key messaging i.e. knowledge mobilisation such as Tik Tok, 'lunch n learn' on what worked and why to inform future replication. Ensuring we are child first, acknowledge and close the communication loop with all YP engaged and who shared their life experiences to improve the experiences of their peers.

Who:

The Council's procurement system 'Intend' will be utilised to allow for competitive tendering, also targeting individuals/companies with the following expertise:

- ✓ Child First values
- ✓ Extensive experience and engagement in intercultural understanding, equity, cultural safety and anti-racism in contexts such as policy, health, justice, immigration, poverty.
- ✓ Working with minoritised and racialised communities.
- ✓ Experience in evaluating children's services, wellbeing and justice sectors.
- ✓ Knowledge/tools to challenge prejudice, systematic racism and ableism to create opportunities for growth/support inclusion.

Outcomes will be monitored through a minimum of monthly checkpoint meetings between the Authority and Pathfinder Project Manager to support the plans to develop the pathfinder and address any short comings.

The Grant Recipient is required to achieve the following milestones/performance measures and outcomes in connection with the Grant:

Key milestones	Date
Establish Walsall YJS Partnership Board	July 2024
Board Partnership Agreement and ToR	July 2024
Establish Steering Committee	July 2024
Steering Committee ToR	July 2024
Information Sharing Protocols	July 2024
Recruitment of Project Manager	July 2024
Evaluator procured	September 2024
Specialist Delivery Partner procured	September 2024
Proof of Concept developed	February 2025
Theory of Change model agreed	March 2025

Evaluation Framework / MEL Strategy produced	March 2025
Sustainability Plan produced	March 2025
End Yr. 1 Evaluation Report	March 2025
End of Yr. 2 Evaluation Report	March 2026
Final evaluation report	June 2028

PROJECT MILESTONE PLAN

		Year 1												Year 2				Year 3				Y4
What	Who will carry out the task	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr 1	
Funding confirmed																						
Project Kick-off & Management																						
Draft Partnership Agreement circulated for comment	YJS Lead																					
Draft Information Sharing Protocol circulated for comment	YJS Lead																					
Project Manager recruitment	YJS Lead																					
Walsall YJS Performance & Partnership Board meetings	WMBC																					
Partnership Agreement Signed	All Partners			*																		
Information Sharing Protocol Signed	All Partners			*																		
Steering Group meetings	All Partners																					
Quarterly Project Monitoring	Project Manager																					
Procurement																						
Market warming events	Project Manager / YJS Lead																					
External Evaluator Procured	Project Manager					*																

Specialist Delivery Partner (SDP) Procured	Project Manager																			
Coproduction/Codelivery																				
Data Reflection & horizon scanning, including data analysis, best practice research	Project Manager / SDP																			
Children's Steering Group events	SDP																			
Proof of Concept Developed	SDP																			
Policy Review	SDP																			
Child-led Outcomes Framework	SDP																			
Co-production of localised programme	SDP																			
Staff training events	SDP																			
Establish Champions Group	SDP																			
Evaluation																				
Draft Theory of Change model circulated for comment	External Evaluator																			
Theory of Change model agreed	All Partners																			
Baselines established	External Evaluator																			
Evaluation Framework / MEL Strategy produced	External Evaluator																			
Sustainability Plan produced	SDP																			
End Yr 1 Evaluation Report	External Evaluator																			

End Yr 2 Evaluation Report	External Evaluator														*					
Final Evaluation Report	External Evaluator																			*
Dissemination & Communications																				
Dissemination / workshops / webinars / training / events	Project Manager																			
Press Releases	Project Manager																			

ANNEX 7 – CONTACT DETAILS

The main departmental contact in connection with the Grant is:

Name of contact	Phil Rutherford
Position in organisation	Strategic Lead for Youth Justice Services Walsall Council
Email address	Philip.Rutherford@Walsall.Gov.Uk
Telephone number	01922 652450
Fax number	N/A
Postal address	Walsall Council Civic Centre Darwall Street Walsall WS1 1TP

This information is correct at the date of the Grant Funding Agreement. The Authority will send you a revised contact sheet if any of the details changes.

The Grant Recipient's main contact in connection with the Grant Funding Agreement is:

Reference	
Organisation	Youth Justice Board
Name of contact	Sally Charles
Position in organisation	Head of Programme Governance
Email address	Sally.charles@yjb.gov.uk
Telephone number	07977333988
Fax number	N/A
Postal address	YJB, 5 th Floor, 70 Petty France, Clive House, London, SW1H 9EX

Please inform the Authority if the Grant Recipient's main contact changes.

West Midlands Regional Independent Fostering Agency Framework

Portfolio: Councillor Elson – Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People

Related portfolios

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. To ensure our children in care and care experienced young people live in safe, nurturing homes or settings that offer value for money, this report seeks approval to join the new West Midlands Regional Foster Care Framework (the 'new Framework') and to call off (order, arrange and pay) for foster placements from this framework.
- 1.2. Local Authorities in the West Midlands region have a strong history of working together and jointly commissioning children's services providers for a range of services, including foster placements and this new Framework has been procured on behalf of the West Midlands region by Coventry City Council. It will replace the current Foster Care Framework that expires on 30th September 2024.

2. Summary

- 2.1. There are **665** children in care in Walsall (as of 31 March 2024): **480** children placed with foster carers, of which **236** with foster carers approved by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).
- 2.2. The current West Midlands Fostering Framework is due to expire on the 30 September 2024 and the West Midlands Authorities/Trusts shall cease to use this and the new framework will commence.
- 2.3. Coventry City Council is the lead local authority for this new framework, which will be accessed by 12 other West Midlands Local Authorities and 2 Children's Trusts.
- 2.4. The West Midlands Regional Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Framework remains the primary means by which foster care homes are sourced in the region from the independent market. Over **90%** of our IFA placements are made via the current framework. Renewing the framework is therefore central to the

West Midlands Local Authorities and Children's Trusts' strategy for securing sufficient foster homes to meet need in the coming years. The tender exercise was compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

- 2.5. To continue to source foster placements with IFAs, Walsall Children's Services need to ensure continued access to the new Framework, offering placements with foster care agencies who have been subject to competition and due diligence, with agreed terms and conditions and prices. The value of these arrangements is substantial, with **£10.5m** spent by the Council on IFA foster placements during 23/24.
- 2.6. Approval for Coventry City Council to progress with the West Midlands Fostering Framework tender on behalf of the region was ratified by Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) in January 2024. The Council has been party to the tender and is named in the tender documentation along with 12 other West Midlands Local Authorities and 2 Children's Trusts.
- 2.7. Approval is sought to allow the Council to call off foster placements from the new Framework, which will commence on 1 August 2024. The new Framework will last for 4 years with the provision to extend by 2 increments of 3 years with an expiry date no later than 31 July 2034.
- 2.8. This is a key decision due to the estimated value of **£47m** over the initial 4 years of the Foster Care Framework.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet authorise the Council to enter into the Access Agreement with Coventry City Council to join the new West Midlands Regional Fostering Framework.
- 3.2. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to subsequently authorise the sealing of deeds and/or signing of contracts and any other related documents for the provision of such services, as appropriate, including any agreement with Coventry City Council to facilitate these services.
- 3.3. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for such services should this be required throughout the duration of the term of any contracts.
- 3.4. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to enter into 'call off' contracts with Independent Fostering Agencies who are awarded 'Fostering Framework Agreement' contracts by Coventry City Council pursuant to the new West Midlands Regional Foster Care Framework for a period of 4 years from 1 August 2024 with the provision to extend the ability to

call off for by 2 increments of 3 years to an expiry date no later than 31 July 2034.

- 3.5. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to enter into 'spot contracts' where the framework does not meet capacity and/or capability requirements.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1. New framework analysis was undertaken regionally to understand the changes which have taken place at a national level and in the local foster care market. This included analysing trends and participating in engagement events with providers, promoting effective joint working. This approach informed the development of the specification and contractual process for the new Framework.

- 4.2. The key features of the new Framework are:

a) **Lot structure** - The new framework has four Lots: Standard Foster Care, Enhanced Foster Care, Specialist Foster Care, Parent and Child Foster Care.

b) **Annual Uplift Policy** - The permeable price cap and the provider's tendered pricing shall be fixed until 31 March 2025 and there forward the following annual review policy will apply:

- A standard formula will be used to calculate the uplift percentage. This will be comprised of the National Living Wage increase (for the concurrent April where the increase will come into effect) and the Consumer Price Inflation including Owner-occupiers' Housing costs (CPIH) rate for August (of the year before the uplift) in a 50:50 ratio.
- Providers will receive an automatic uplift annually on all their stated placement costs. New prices will be implemented on 1 April each year. Where a Provider has submitted a standard placement fee above the permeable price cap, they will not automatically be eligible for the annual uplift. Their standard placement cost will be held while it remains above the permeable price cap. The price cap will increase year on year with the application of the annual uplift. Once the Provider's fees fall at or are below the price cap, they will become subject to the automatic annual uplift.

c) **Method of call-off** - The method of call from the new framework will be 'Direct award' or 'Mini Competition.' When an Authority/Trust has a referral, they will contact all the Providers on the Framework under the relevant Lot for the service required, to share high level referral information regarding the child or young person. The Authority/Trust will determine whether the Providers have placement availability according to the specific needs of the child or young person and how quickly they need to be placed. If only one Provider can potentially meet the requirement, the Authority/Trust will follow a Direct Award Process. If the Authority/Trust identifies more

than one Provider that can potentially meet the requirement, a Mini Competition will be conducted.

d) **Pricing Schedule** - For the new framework, a full cost breakdown is required for the standard placement cost and for Lot 3 specialist placement cost. The cost of pocket money, savings and gifts will not be included in the placement weekly cost that is submitted at tender stage. The level of pocket money etc. to be given to the child will be discussed at the point of placement, according to the Placing Authority's local policy and guidelines. Details of these costs and processes will be included within the Individual Placement Agreements (IPA) and Providers will be required to add the agreed costs to their total weekly placement cost.

e) **Legacy Placements** - All legacy placements will transfer onto the new framework at their existing prices. As children age and move into a new age band, i.e. at 5, 11 or 16 years their placement will move onto the new price for the age band. In addition, all legacy placements will be subject to the terms and conditions of the new framework and therefore will be subject to the annual uplift policy.

f) **Data Protection** - The new framework has a Data Sharing Agreement for the sharing and protection of children's Personal Data and Special Categories of Personal Data between the Providers and Placing Authorities. Each Provider will have its own Data Sharing Agreement that will be signed by all 14 Authorities/Trusts.

g) **Insurances** - Under the new framework, Public Liability cover has been increased from £5 million to £10 million. Sexual abuse and molestation public liability cover has been increased £500k to £5 million. All other insurances levels remain the same. After the framework has expired, Providers are required to have Medical Malpractice insurance cover in place for a further 5 years and Professional Indemnity Insurance for a further 6 Years.

h) **Contract Management** - In the new framework there are 3 KPIs that Providers will be monitored against and performance management information that will be required either a quarterly or annual basis.

i) **Discounts** - The new framework requires no mandatory discounts from Providers. However, a Provider can offer a voluntary discount for sibling groups where they are placed together.

The Procurement/Tender Process

4.3. Tenders were sought for the provision of foster care placements with IFAs through an open procurement process using Coventry City Council's e-tendering system CWS-JETS.

4.4. The West Midlands Fostering Recommissioning Group, which included representation from Walsall Children's Commissioning, oversaw the development of the tender and tender documents. The Group will also support the quality evaluation aspects of the tender from 1 June 2024.

- 4.5. It is envisaged that the Framework Agreement will be awarded to around 60 Providers across Lots 1 - 4 for sufficiency purposes across the West Midlands region. The tenders will be evaluated against the criteria included in the Invitation to tender of a Selection and Award Process Criteria (Pass/Fail). Providers who had met all the mandatory and/or minimum requirements (Pass/Fail Criteria) will be awarded onto the framework for the Lots that the Provider had applied for.
- 4.6. The services will be subject of review in the 4th and 7th years and the results of those reviews will inform the West Midlands Region's decision whether to offer any extension.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.7. The Council's Corporate plan: 2022-25, sets out a commitment to give children and young people the best possible start in life ensuring they are safe from harm, happy, healthy, and learning well. The provision of quality foster placements to keep children safe is central to this priority.

Risk management

- 4.8. Potential risk and liabilities as identified through the implementation and procurement process are managed through the development and enforcement of the terms of the overall Framework, individual call off contracts and the Access Agreement, all developed by Coventry City Council and agreed by the Council.

Financial implications

- 4.9. The Council's expenditure was **£10.5m** on foster placements managed by IFAs in 2023/24. There are currently **214** young people in foster placements purchased through the framework and **21** placed via spot purchases. Work continues to recruit and maximise the use of our internal foster carers, however we have more children and young people who are placed in IFAs due to overall demand increases.
- 4.10. The current average cost for internal foster care is **£558** per week compared to the IFA average of **£876** per week. Spot purchase placement costs are on average **£1,199** per week, which is **37%** higher than the cost of an IFA on the current Framework. The majority of IFA placements are made through the Framework arrangements, with only **9%** of IFA placements on more costly spot purchases. This evidences that the previous Framework arrangements are utilised comprehensively and highlight the importance of sustaining access to these collaborative arrangements.
- 4.11. Renewing the Framework has come at a time of considerable financial pressure for Councils and Trusts, as well as increases in costs for the providers. In response, commissioners have worked to provide a balance between these pressures to set fair pricing expectations by simplifying the new framework, to enable providers to offer fair and competitive prices and free up capacity to

build meaningful relationships between providers and placing authorities in the best interest of their children and young people.

- 4.12. The tendering exercise has been supported by the West Midlands Commissioning Hub. No additional financial contribution is required from the other West Midlands Local Authorities for Coventry City Council leading on this framework.
- 4.13. Placing authorities for this framework are committed to working together to ensure our children in care who require foster care placements receive the best and most appropriate care to enable them to achieve their full potential. Not being part of the new regional framework arrangements would leave the Council vulnerable to market driven forces, resulting in an increase in spot purchased placements, and potentially increase overall costs. The current framework arrangements have been successful in maintaining costs and has helped the Council access a wider market of IFA providers. Therefore, renewing these regional arrangements will help the Council to continue to manage the market through a collaborative approach.
- 4.14. Where there is an identified health need, the council will continue to seek funding from the relevant health funding stream, for example, Continuing Health Care Funding would be sought where appropriate, which could provide an additional contribution to overall foster placement costs.
- 4.15. The current Medium Term Financial Outlook includes a **4%** uplift per annum for all IFA framework placements at a total cost of **£332k** in 2025/26.
- 4.16. As at the end of April 24, **204** of the **214** framework placement rates were below the proposed price cap. The full year impact of these increasing to the price cap, when the child enters the next age bracket, is **c.£1.16m** over six financial years. This impact per financial year is as below:

24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
280,767	176,764	235,268	259,511	140,514	1,160,111

If future uplifts were to be higher than the budgeted 4%, further annual pressures would be realised.

Legal implications

- 4.17. The contractual documents for the new framework have been developed by Coventry City Council Council's Legal Services.
- 4.18. The overarching Framework and Access Agreement will outline the responsibilities and accountability of Coventry City Council and each participating Local Authority in relation to their use of the Framework and include indemnities that protect the Council from the actions of other participating Local Authority in their use of the new Framework.

- 4.19. While Coventry City Council will be contracting with each IFA, for each Walsall Council placement, the council will enter a 'call off' contract with an IFA, which will specify the terms on which each foster care placement is ordered, arranged, and paid for.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.20. The procurement process has been conducted in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the Council's Contract Rules, and Social Value Policy.
- 4.21. The collaborative procurement process has the benefit of shared resource, knowledge, and experience. However, care has been taken to protect the Council's interest and minimise any increased procurement related risk that may be associated with such arrangements. Procurement advice was sought to minimise procurement-related risk. However, there will always remain an inherent risk of legal challenge associated with any procurement undertaken.
- 4.22. Social value is an integral part of this contract and all tenders have been evaluated based on their ability to bring social value including employment and volunteering opportunities as part of their service delivery. The successful bidders will need to clearly demonstrate their social value through a commitment to create opportunities for local people and voluntary sector organisations.
- 4.23. The recommendation to award report will be presented to Third Party Spend Board (TPSB) Gateway 2 and will provide full details on the procurement process and how the evaluation was undertaken.

Property implications

- 4.24. There are no property implications.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.25. The content of this report has considered the Marmot objectives. Our priority is that Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration, and support to be their best: Walsall children are provided with the best start in life so they can fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to their communities. The new framework arrangements for the provision of fostering placements will keep children safe and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences on our children in care and care experienced young people population and associated health inequalities. This is an explicit objective of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Walsall Plan – Health and Well Being Strategy 2022-2025.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.26. The new Framework arrangements will support our Children in Care and aim to maximise opportunities for them, reducing inequalities for this cohort of children and families.

Staffing implications

- 4.27. Foster placements are sourced by Walsall Children's Services Home Finding Team. The new Framework arrangements support this small team to source foster placements in a more effective, efficient, and compliant way.

Climate Impact

- 4.28. There are no climate impact implications. All contracts, monitoring and placement searches are done online to reduce our carbon footprint.

Consultation

- 4.29. The tender was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including IFAs at provider events to discuss the tender. The event gained feedback on current provision, future needs and identified issues and changes to be considered in the development of the new Framework.
- 4.30. Changes to the new framework aim to enable providers to offer fair and competitive prices and free up capacity to build meaningful relationships between providers and placing authorities in the best interest of the children.
- 4.31. There are many opportunities for engaging with children and young people on an individual basis and these inform the ongoing management and delivery of the framework.
- 4.32. This paper has been brought to Cabinet following internal consultation with Council representatives, directors, and the portfolio holder for Children's Services.

5. Decide

- 5.1. This report recommends that Walsall Council joins the new Framework to enable the council to enter 'call off' contracts with Providers to ensure the purchasing of individual foster care placements which are compliant, subject to due diligence and quality checks and offer value for money.

6. Respond

- 6.1. The implementation and management of the new Framework is managed by Coventry City Council in partnership with West Midlands regional authorities. This includes both individual authority and collective contract management as well as processes for addressing concerns. Walsall's Children's Home finding Service are embedding the new Framework arrangements within their Placements Process, supported by the Children's Commissioning Team.

7. Review

- 7.1. The new Framework Arrangement is monitored and managed by Coventry City Council with performance management supported collaboratively across the region. Performance information will be reported to both the Operational and Strategic Regional Commissioning Groups at which Walsall Children's Services has consistent representation.

Author

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Signed



Colleen Male
Executive Director, Children's Services

17th June 2024

Signed



Councillor Elson
Portfolio holder, Portfolio Holder for
Children & Young People

3rd July 2024

Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder Programme

Portfolio: Councillor Elson – Children's

Related portfolios:

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Families First for Children Wave Two Pathfinder (henceforth the 'Families First Programme'), and the key actions and areas of work which will be undertaken to deliver this programme.

2. Summary

- 2.1. This report provides an overview of the Families First Programme. This paper is presented to set out the Families First Programme proposals now that the Delivery Plan and Costed Plan has been developed, and to outline the opportunities that this presents.
- 2.2. The sponsor for the Families First Programme will be Executive Director for Children's Services, Colleen Male.
- 2.3. The detailed Delivery Plan and Costed Plan for the programme carries significant potential benefits in the delivery of services for children and families, and making sure they receive the right help for their needs. If successful, this will build on the implementation of the Family Safeguarding Programme and is about creating better outcomes for children and their families by meeting needs at the earliest opportunity through coordinated multi-agency services working together as closely as possible with families, as well as with their networks and with communities. For many families, this will mean they receive the right help escalation of families through statutory systems. This could lead to a safe reduction in the numbers of children entering care and of care numbers overall, and where children of those who enter care support, it will enable more to live in their family and community networks. This will in turn have significant financial benefits through the year-on-year reduction of cost pressures for placements. Initial modelling based on a moderate reduction of children in care profiles potential savings of £3.47m over the next 4 years. This is not the full modelling of the financial impact and potential savings and benefits of the Families First Programme, and a cost benefit analysis model for this is being

developed. This will capture a range of other benefits and savings for families not escalating through Children's social Care systems. This figure sets out how the programme will enable a safe reduction of the numbers of children in care, and the significant financial impact of this.

- 2.4 The programme does require significant investment. A £2.23m grant has been provided to the local authority by the Department for Education (DfE) to implement the reforms. Appendix One provides the costed Plan that sets out how the £2.23m grant will be used. The current grant guidance suggests that the grant funding must be fully spent by 31st March 2025, however the grant is a Section 31 grant therefore it is understood that any funds not spent by the end of the financial year can be carried forward to the following financial year as long as they are fully committed.
- 2.5 To continue the Families First Programme in the future as set out in the Delivery Plan, and as per the requirements of the DfE, continued investment will be required. There are ongoing conversations with the DfE about the continuation of the programme, and the very basis of the programme is that Walsall and others are 'Pathfinder' authorities for what will become national reforms. However, at this stage, there is no clear established position about what happens following 31st March 2025. It is requested that the investment needed is factored into Budget setting for 2025/26 to enable the Families First Programme to continue. The total amount will be equivalent to the £2.23m awarded, to provide a basis for the ongoing conversations with the DfE. However, there will be contingencies built in to review the impact of the Families First Programme, and understand the investment required to realise substantial cost savings, and to assess the impact of different strands of Families First Pathfinder activity and to decide what to keep and what not to keep.
- 2.6 In order to be able to successfully recruit resources needed to enable the programme, fixed term contracts of at least 1 year will need to be created. The grant in this financial year covers the costs for circa 7 months employment in 2024/25; therefore, funding for the remaining 5 months will be needed in 2025/26. If no further external funding is received, there is a risk to the local authority of £818k to fund these remaining costs. Decisions around the future plans for these roles will be made following further confirmation of future funding and a review of which aspects of the Families First Programme have been successful, and which posts will be required after 31/03/25.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 3.1 Approves the Families First Wave Two Pathfinder Programme;
- 3.2 Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to subsequently sign contracts or other related documents and to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements should this be required;

- 3.3 Notes the initial overview and activity, the proposed structure, financial plan and implications for future budget setting.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The Families First Programme is an exciting opportunity to lead national level reforms of Children's Services and partnership working to protect children and help and support families. The programme is a central feature of the government's 'Children's Social Care Strategy Stable Homes Built on Love'.
- 4.2 Stable Homes Built on love responds to recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, completed in 2022. It also responds to key outcomes from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report on Child Protection in England and the Competitions and Market Authority's Market Study of Children's Social Care Provision.
- 4.3 The central contention of the Independent Review was that a radical shift in Children's Social Care is required, for families to receive responsive, respectful, and effective support, at the earliest possible point. This support should draw on the strengths and resilience of family and community networks, and move away from processes which are professionally led, and require hand off and multiple, overlapping interventions by different services.
- 4.4 It is argued in the Independent Review that at present we have:
- 'a system increasingly skewed to crisis intervention, with outcomes for children that continue to be unacceptably poor and costs that continue to rise...Without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor and by this time next decade there will be approaching 100,000 children in care (up from 80,000 today) and a flawed system will cost over £15 billion per year (up from £10 billion now). Together, the changes we recommend will shift these trends and would mean 30,000 more children living safely and thriving with their families by 2032 compared to the current trajectory.'
- 4.5 The Families First Programme is about implementing the fundamental changes identified in the Independent Review to help families sooner, drawing on the strengths of family and community networks, and to act decisively and purposefully where children are identified as at risk of harm or experiencing abuse. This sits within getting multi-agency arrangements right, and change cannot just be about any one organisation but the whole system. The Families First Programme has four key reforms strands:
- Family help
 - Child protection
 - Family networks
 - Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

- 4.6 Three local authorities were approached to be Wave One Pathfinders to develop and test reforms based on these four strands. Those local authorities are Dorset, Lincolnshire and Wolverhampton.
- 4.7 Local authorities were invited to bid to become Wave Two Pathfinders, commencing in April 2024 with implementation commencing in July 2024. This was a highly competitive process with the indication being that nationally seven local authorities would be selected, including two local authorities from a grouping of the East Midlands, West Midlands and South-West. In March 2024 Walsall received confirmation that they had been successful in their bid to be a Wave 2 Families First Pathfinder.
- 4.8 Walsall's bid was founded on building on current strong partnership relationships as identified in Walsall's JTAI Inspection in November 2022 - ([ofsted.gov.uk](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk)) and developing further a strong multi-agency offer to help and support families through the Family Safeguarding Model and our Early Help Offer. The strengths of these approaches provided the foundation for the proposed programmatic reforms to implement multi-agency systems centred on relational family help, and rigorous, timely child protection practice.
- 4.9 The Families First Programme represents an exciting opportunity for Walsall Council and Children's Services to be at the forefront of sector-wide reforms, to design and test those reforms and support their implementation nationally. Walsall is well placed to learn from the Wave One Pathfinders, but also to innovate focus on getting this right for Walsall and the needs of our children and families, centred on our service provision models.
- 4.10 The programme provides opportunity to create a system-wide delivery model and ethos, building on strengths in service areas. It also provides opportunities for investment to deliver sustainable service improvement and changes which will mean children and families receive the right help as soon as possible.
- 4.11 The key project timescales to date have been that a Wave 2 Delivery Plan and Costed Plan was provided to the DfE by the 31/05/24 setting out how the Programme Design Specification will be fully realised across the four key reform strands. This plan has been reviewed by the DfE and endorsed, and the programme will formally commence on the 1st July 2024, running until 31st March 2025.
- 4.12 The programme is a Test and Learn approach, with an emphasis on local authorities designing and delivering reforms and continuing to learn and develop thinking and practices across the Pathfinder period. It is anticipated that aspects of the programme will change and evolve based on learning, feedback and analysis of implementation of reforms. The proposals in Walsall's Delivery Plan under the four reform strands will now be briefly set out.
- 4.13 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

A project team has been established including senior local authority officers from Children's Social Care and Early Help Services, and Strategic Leads for

the Police, Health Services and Education. Other key posts include a Senior Systems Development Lead, a Practice Development Lead, an Outcomes and Performance Lead, and a Participation Lead have also been established.

These project team arrangements will enable the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements elements of the Design Specification to be met through work undertaken with the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and leaders and practitioners within different organisations in the partnership. The Families First Programme is a partnership endeavour, and engaging professionals from across the partnership will be essential to the programme's success. This will include enhancing the strategic and operational role of education in safeguarding arrangements and practice and developing a shared Families First practice framework to align values, language and practices.

Children's, parents', and family members' voices are at the heart of the Families First Programme. The Big Conversation has been a key feature of the Walsall Right 4 Children Programme, and this sits at the heart of the Families First Programme. The Big Conversation includes a wide-ranging consultation programme to engage with parents and families who have had support from Children's Social Care and Early Help Services. A series of activities is being undertaken, from a broad exercise to seek feedback from all parents and families, to in-depth engagement activities and collaborative design workshops to be undertaken across the Pathfinder period.

In addition to the Big Conversation, a parallel 'Big Consultation' is being undertaken to engage with our staff and with professionals across the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership. This approach is intended firstly to seek their views and to recognise how it is essential their practice wisdom shapes the Families First reforms. Second, this consultation programme is itself significant in developing a collaborative approach to multi-agency working and to getting professionals together to build a shared ethos and practices.

4.14 Family Help

Walsall has a co-located locality offer, with targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care services for families currently based in four locality hubs. Targeted Early Help services are multi-agency, with key partners including 0-19 Health Services, locality and school policing, targeted Youth Workers DWP and Benefits Support, Housing, Independent Domestic Abuse Workers, Reducing Parental Conflict and Parenting Support. Family Safeguarding has been the practice model for Children's Social Care for over three years. This includes multi-agency help to families delivered through Adult Specialist Practitioners including Independent Domestic Abuse Workers, Domestic Abuse Officers who work with perpetrators of abuse, Substance Recovery Workers and a mental health team. These teams operate a hybrid model and are physically co-located one or two days a week.

Multi-agency Family Help Teams will be developed through aligning the targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care locality teams to create an integrated locality Family Help Services. The Family Help Service will consist

of a wide range of practitioners, with recruitment to address key identified areas of need:

- Vulnerable Adolescents Practitioners
- Youth and Community Workers
- Best Start 0-5 Practitioners
- School Inclusion Officer
- Mental Health Practitioner

Alongside Family Networks below, Family Help accordingly forms the most significant staffing ask for the Pathfinder.

Another key ask is in respect of the training budget to train and develop our own staff to develop areas of specialist knowledge and expertise. Key areas for family help support will be reviewed – such as domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse – to enhance and develop our service offers. The aim will be to provide responsive multi-agency support across the spectrum of families where there are family help needs.

The operating model for Early Help and Children's Social Care will be further developed to provide the framework for a Family Help model. This will include:

- A focus on consistent relationships for all children and families. Where additional help is needed, this will be delivered through a Family Help Lead Practitioner who will generally remain with the family as the allocated caseworker.
- As children's and family's needs escalate or decrease, additional multi-agency professionals will join and step back from a Team Around the Family.
- The current processes and thresholds for children and families to 'Step Up and Step Down' from services will be replaced with an integrated Locality Conversations model, which is about identifying the right support for children and families as soon as possible.
- All children and families where there are identified levels of need will receive Family Help support. Children who are a 'child in need' and a 'child in need of protection' will still be identified and will receive intensive Family Help support.
- Supervision arrangements will be reviewed so that all children and families, receive multi-agency Family Help Supervision coordinated by a suitably qualified Team Manager.
- The principals of the Family Safeguarding model will be expanded to provide a practice framework for Family Help. The approaches for assessment, collaborative supervision, and case discussion and recording in Family Safeguarding have been shown to provide a strong foundation for effective multi-agency practice, and these will be developed across the remodelled Family Help Service.

A fundamental feature of this approach is how Family Help Teams integrate with Family Hubs, and other community and Early Help Services. Locality Family Help Services will be co-located with Family Hubs, and a joined-up needs-led model of service provision will look to understand and meet childrens' and family needs at the earliest point, with universal services and early support services being connected to family help services, and increasing support being available to reflect increasing family needs. Community, VCS and early support services are already aligned with Early Help Services and individual locality offers. The Families First Programme will include a wide-ranging commissioning, community and voluntary sector engagement exercise. This will map local support services and networks, and to look to identify gaps and meet needs.

4.15 Family Networks

There are two key aspects of how family networks will be placed at the heart of the Pathfinder. The first is through the development of a Family Service to deliver a service wide offer for Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences, and to provide intensive out-of-hours family outreach support. The second is through the provision of Family Network Support Packages.

Family Network Meetings and Family Groups Conferences have been a key model in delivering Families First services. This is because they have been a central feature in improving practice and outcomes for children and families in some local authorities that have successfully embedded these approaches in their standard working practices (ref). There is an ethical case as Family Network Meetings and Group Conferences can empower families and put them at the heart of decision-making to develop their own help plans. This is shown to increase how meaningfully engaged and supported children, parents and family members feel when they are involved with children's services (refs). In turn, this has been demonstrated to help prevent families from escalating through Children's Social Care, to reduce the numbers of children coming into care, and increase the numbers of children who are able to live with a member of their family or community network (refs).

Walsall has an existing Family Network offer; however, the intention is to be ambitious in expanding this. This will be an offer across the Family Help Service, for all families. Every family will receive the offer of a Family Network Meeting or Family Groups Conference alongside allocation of a lead practitioner in the Family Help Service, and this will be centred on their needs.

Another key aspect of this proposal is how support can be provided by Children's Social Care and Early Help to families outside of normal working hours and when more intensive outreach support is needed, especially at points of crisis. A key aim of service development is to support families to prevent crisis occurring through effective targeted support. There will also be families where intensive interventions are required, including high frequency out of hours support. For many children, this support will be preventative to enable a child to remain living at home or with family. For some children coming into care

is the right outcome, and this support will be about managing this transition, so moving into care can where possible occur in a planned way to an identified home that can best meet the child's needs.

To achieve these aims, the proposal is to create a new Family Service of 14 practitioners and managers. This is an ambitious proposal. It is modelled on the needs for families who become supported by Children's Social Care and Early Help Services and being able to offer Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences across the service, as well as to respond to families with high levels of need.

The second aspect of the proposals is the use of Family Network Support Packages. These are packages of financial support provided to meet children's needs and mobilise family networks to come together and provide help to the family in ways that would not be otherwise possible. A framework for how these can be most effectively used and for consistency and accountability is being finalised. The bid for the Pathfinder requires that 25% of the total funding is provided for Family Networks equating to £558k. In turn, 75% of this funding has to be spent on Family Network Support Packages equating to £418k. This budget has been assigned to this activity in our costed plan. It is ambitious but also has the scope to be transformative in respect of delivering and understanding the impact of direct funding provided to families.

A case for the sustainability of Family Network Support Packages will need to be developed through an analysis of the impact for children and families. If they are effective in providing families with support at an early stage and preventing more costly local authority interventions, then a business case will be developed for their continued use.

4.16 Child Protection

The key requirements of the Child Protection reform strand are parental advocacy - to establish a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team and to test out the role of Lead Child Protection Practitioners. Lead Practitioners are proposed as being experienced, non-caseholding social workers who will support and drive standards in child protection as well as leading Section 47 Child Protection enquiries and chairing Child Protection Conferences.

Parental advocacy within child protection forms part of a wide-ranging programme of participation activity across the Programme. A key requirement is specifically to test parental advocacy in Child Protection Conferences. Commissioning opportunities are currently being explored.

The Multi-Agency Child Protection Team is proposed as a virtual, networked team. This is about developing systems and practices with partners: in particular, the police, health, and probation services to provide an expert network of child protection leads and specialists. This network will provide support to frontline practitioners dealing with Child Protection Enquiries, have oversight of child protection across the borough, and support the development of child protection training, systems, and practices. A key feature of this is to

focus on how child protection needs to be a multi-agency endeavour where agencies are able to work together collaboratively and purposefully on a day-to-day basis.

The new Lead Child Protection Practitioners will form a key part of this multi-agency team. The aim in testing the role will be to start smaller in scale, review, learn and expand the role across child protection practice if it is successful. The role will work alongside the allocated social worker to lead Child Protection Enquiries and will be focused on our most vulnerable children. The proposal for the Pathfinder period is to recruit 3 Lead Child Protection Practitioners, and to convert some existing roles, to be able to test out the changes and understand their impact. The role has significant potential to significantly enhance child protection enquiries and practice. The investment required has been based on modelling on current and projected workloads and creating scope to work differently to improve practice.

5. Council Plan priorities

- 5.1 The Pathfinder programme will provide a significant opportunity to develop services for vulnerable children and families in Walsall, impacting on the Council Plan priority that children 'have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well'. It continues the transformation work that is being undertaken through the Walsall Right 4 Children programme which focusses on the aspiration that every child and family in Walsall is understood, feels happy and safe, with a strong sense of belonging enabling them to learn, achieve and succeed.
- 5.2 The Pathfinder reforms, especially in respect of Family Help, are about ensuring that all children and families who need additional help for children to thrive receive that help from the right professional who they can develop a relationship with and have consistent support from. As needs increase or situations change, the level of support will increase but remain coordinated by a consistent professional. Children and families will be encouraged to work with their wider family and community networks, and to identify the help they need from professionals and services.
- 5.3 Pathfinder directly contributes to the below Council plan outcomes and markers of success:
 - Outcome 7 – Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential.
 - Marker of success 13 - Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities and schools are more inclusive.
 - Marker of success 14 - Children and young people with additional needs or in specific circumstances are identified and supported to have their health and education needs met.
 - Outcome 8 - Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere.

- Marker of success 15 - Services and support are responsive to needs of different communities, partners are proactive in responding to these needs and children and families have easier and timelier access to services.
- Marker of success 16 - Children and families are better connected with community resources to enable them to build resilience, are involved in developing their plans and can provide regular feedback.

5.4 Participation of the Pathfinder creates opportunities to elevate Walsall's public profile. This will potentially enhance recruitment opportunities across the system from fostering to practitioner recruitment as it will make Walsall appealing as an innovative place to work and do business with. A communication and marketing strategy will be built into the overall project plan.

6. **Risk management**

6.1 As with any programme, the implementation of Pathfinder will introduce key risks outlined below in Table 1 – these will be managed, mitigated and monitored throughout the duration of the programme. The success of this project plan is dependent on this work being prioritised across the workforce, having the right arrangements in place, and to be supported effectively by wider council services and systems.

Key Risk	Mitigation
The Pathfinder Programme involves an intensive period of change that will impact across Children's Services, but in particular Children's Social Care and Early Help Services. This may be disruptive and whilst initial feedback from staff is they recognise the opportunity this brings, it will create anxieties.	This needs to be managed through coordinated project management so that staff are and engaged and consulted throughout the change management process, and briefed and prepared for changes as they are implemented.
There is a level of risk that the Pathfinder Reforms can impact on service delivery. For example, a move to an integrated Family Help model could result in increased referrals and demand on services	What is key here is the project and change management process, and that changes are carefully considered, consulted and tested. A central feature of the Pathfinder Programme is to trial reforms and learn, and there is scope to iteratively design and develop, and to test reforms as they are implemented. To return to the example just given, this will mean: understanding and benchmarking current data and trends, creation of new policy and process in consultation and collaboration with frontline practitioners, introducing

	these changes in a coordinated way, with a clear communicated and quality assurance plan, with a cycle of analysis and refinement and adaptation as required. This process of continual learning will be central to the implementation of the Pathfinder.
There is a risk that the Pathfinder could negative impact on partnership arrangements and relationships, if it is regarded that reforms involve Children's Social care moving statutory responsibilities to other agencies. On the other hand, if the reforms are implemented well with partners, they could have a significant positive impact, creating a shared framework for partners working together to meet statutory responsibilities for all organisations as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.	This will be mitigated through a strong programme board which will be supported by a communications plan to ensure all changes are clearly understood as to both their implementation and rationale.
There is a risk that the Pathfinder investment requires financial commitments from the local authority for the financial year 2025-26 because the Pathfinder period only runs until the end of the 2024-25 financial year, and service delivery and changes will need to continue beyond this point.	These risks can be mitigated through how the proposals are embedded and with continued review of the Pathfinder budget position as set out below. There is also the potential for significant financial benefit from the investment that could result in overall savings and costs avoided.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The Pathfinder grant is aimed at providing investment to support Local Authorities in testing reforms and creating sustainable change. It is believed that these reforms will improve family help and early help services to support ongoing cost reductions linked to Children in Care.

The total grant funding allocated to Walsall for the Pathfinder Programme in 2024/25 is £2.23m. The grant conditions specify that 25% of the total grant must be spent on Family Networks (£558k) and 75% of this should be spent on Family Network Support Packages which provide direct financial assistance to families (£418k).

- 7.2 A costed plan has been submitted to the Department for Education on 31st May 2024 as shown in the table below. Further detail is also included in Appendix One.

Reform Strand	Staffing costs (7 months)	Staffing costs (12 months)	Non-staffing / Commissioning costs	Total
Project Costs and Multi-Agency Arrangements		£422,218	£301,000 (Training budget)	£723,218
Family Help	£557,612		£86,601 (Equipment and mileage)	£644,213
Family Networks	£284,898		£418,125 (Family Network Support packages)	£703,023
Child Protection	£129,547		£30,000 (Parental Advocacy)	£159,547
			Total	£2,230,000

- 7.3 The grant has been awarded for 2024/25 and guidance suggests that all funding should be fully spent by 31st March 2025. Conversations have been had with the DfE to confirm the understanding of the guidance, where they indicated that as long as any funding not spent by 31st March 2025 is fully committed, the grant can be carried forward to the next financial year to support these costs.
- 7.4 The DfE are currently unable to confirm if any further funding will be available to support this program going forward. Therefore, if the LA chose to continue to provide this service in 2025/26, internal investment may be required. The level of service provision and therefore ongoing costs would need to be reviewed prior to any final agreements. The local authority would also explore with partners potential contributions to enable the Families First Programme as a partnership model to be a sustainable framework for service deliver.
- 7.5 If ongoing funding is confirmed, this will be of significant benefit to the Local Authority creating the foundations for sustainable transformation. It will also enable the continuation of the additional resources and activity detailed in the costed plan to continue, and would allow for the continued commissioning of advocacy services and the provision of the Family Network Support Package.
- 7.6 If ongoing funding is not confirmed, internal investment will be needed if the decision is made to continue with the Programme. It is requested that this investment is noted in the Budget setting for 2025/26. The preferred investment required will be equivalent to the £2.23m grant awarded. This will support ongoing conversations with the Department for Education evidencing Walsall's commitment to the programme and the level of resource required. However, before final commitment to investment is made, there would need to be a review of the impact of the Families First Programme to assess the impact of the

different strands of the Families First Pathfinder activity and decide which elements would need to continue and which could be ceased. This will then inform the level of investment required ongoing and the relative financial benefits that can be realised from the outcomes of the programme.

- 7.7 The 2024/25 funding allocation is sufficient to cover the proposed staffing costs for 7 months. However, to enable successful recruitment, the posts will need to be recruited to on a 12-month fixed term basis. Therefore, there is currently no confirmed funding for the remaining 5 months of these posts. If the grant continues in 2025/26, this can be used to support these costs. If the grant does not continue, there is a financial risk to the LA of £818k maximum to fund the remainder of the posts.
- 7.8 This risk may reduce if not all posts are recruited to within the expected time frame and will be fully reviewed alongside the decision-making process around the future of the project when further information around future funding is known.
- 7.9 To note, the project team costs are fully funded for 12 months from the start of the programme.
- 7.10 It should also be noted that in addition to the grant funding provided, existing resources across the LA are also being utilised to support the initial set up and implementation of this programme to ensure it is efficient and effective. This is a further cost to the LA of circa £500k of existing resource, including finance support, project team support, admin support and HR, DATs and transformation other support. Some of these costs are only expected to be one off and will not be needed in future years, and some costs are related to the conversion of social work and other operational posts
- 7.11 The Families First Pathfinder Programme is expected to support the Local Authority to achieve cost and service benefits in a number of ways including:
- the reduction of children and families requiring more intensive, costlier professional intervention;
 - reductions in the number of children entering care;
 - an increase in children who are able to live with wider family and network Connected Carer Foster Carers compared to other foster care placements;
 - lessened use of crisis commissioned services;
 - less use of commissioned experts and interventions that will be delivered in-house;
 - increased workforce stability.
- 7.12 Initial, high-level modelling of the savings and benefits of the Families First programme has been undertaken. From this, it has been projected that the programme will enable the service to realise (£5.17m) of new savings over the next 4 financial years in addition to (£0.73m) of additional savings relating to existing STPs as detailed in the table below.

7.13 However, the impact of the programme has also been reviewed in line with existing savings already included within the MTFO. There is a current saving relating to extension of the family safeguarding model into corporate parenting which focuses predominantly on reunification of children in care with families. Given the Families First Pathfinder is aimed at reducing the number of children entering care, this reduces the ability to achieve the existing saving. This has been included within the table below and reduced the total additional savings achievable to £3.47m over the next 4 financial years.

Saving	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Extend family safeguarding into corporate parenting (existing STP)	920,656	755,218	755,218		2,431,092
Adolescent service – Early Help Avoidance (existing STP)	(200,854)	(177,679)	(177,679)	(177,679)	(733,891)
NEW – Pathfinder connected carers	(184,835)	(295,476)	(295,476)	(295,476)	(1,071,263)
NEW – Pathfinder Avoidance of Care IFAs	(297,525)	(550,523)	(550,523)	(550,523)	(1,949,094)
NEW – Pathfinder Lower cost placements	(247,467)	(634,220)	(634,220)	(634,220)	(2,150,127)
Total	(10,025)	(902,680)	(902,680)	(1,657,898)	(3,473,283)

7.14 The modelling used in the savings calculations is based on the following:

- Existing STP Adolescent Service - A key part of the Families First Programme is specialist Adolescent Practitioners and preventative Youth and Community Workers. This will help to support the specialist work needed with our most vulnerable adolescent children and their families. It has been projected that if 6 adolescent children avoided care, this would be a total annual saving of (£1.93m). Some of this is already included within the current MTFO although it is understood the Pathfinder work will support achievement of the current savings target and has enabled the target to be increased by (£0.73m) over the next 4 years.
- NEW Pathfinder Connected Carers – This is based on an increase of 10 children being able to be placed with family Connected Carer Foster Carers rather than external fostering placements. Total projected saving of (£1.07m).
- NEW Pathfinder Avoidance of Care – This is based on a reduction of 12 children entering care in external fostering placements due to pathfinder interventions that have enabled them to remain with their parents or with a member of their family. Total projected saving of (£1.95m).
- NEW Pathfinder Lower Cost Placements – This is based on the Pathfinder model reducing the number of children in existing foster placements therefore making more foster carers available for new children entering care. The saving includes 2 children entering an external foster placement rather than an external residential placement with a total projected saving of (£2.15m).

- 7.15 A full cost benefit analysis model for the Families First Programme is being developed, and this will be taken forwards by the Data, Performance and Outcomes Lead once appointed to the programme. It is anticipated that this model will identify further savings from 2026/27 onwards in addition to those detailed above. This is based on embedding preventative family help across Children's Social Care and Early Help services, meaning that there are fewer families that require higher-cost crisis interventions and court Care Proceedings. However, until the Programme is further embedded and outcomes framework is in place, it is difficult to quantify what this may look like. This project will require the comparative analysis and mapping of outcomes for families during the pathfinder period, compared to analysis of outcomes during previous years.

8. *Legal implications*

- 8.1 Statutory guidance has been amended through Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 to enable the programme reforms. Legal Services are being consulted about proposed changes, and any potential legal implications. The area where this may be most relevant is in creating guidance around the provision to families of packages of financial support known as 'Family Network Support Packages', to ensure consistency and accountability, and alignment with statutory provisions under the Children Act 1989.

9. *Procurement Implications/Social Value*

- 9.1 A key feature of the Families First Programme will be to review support for children and families at a local level, and across Walsall's communities. The aim will be to scope what is available and to identify and meet gaps. This will have potential implications for procurement and commissioning of services and adding social value to local areas.

10. *Property implications*

- 10.1 There are no new property implications as a result of this proposal. There is ongoing work to identify and continue to develop the Locality Hub buildings.

11. *Health and wellbeing implications*

- 11.1 Staff wellbeing is a key part of the service Workforce and Wellbeing Strategy. This is being updated for 2024-25 and will include consideration of the Pathfinder.

12. *Reducing Inequalities*

- 12.1 The impact of the families First Programme will be beneficial to reducing inequalities. It will enable Children's Services to redesign core systems in line with feedback from Walsall's children and families, and from our staff. This will support accessibility for the service and the offer to children and families in respect of both Family Help and Child Protection. One key strand of the

programme is to review and develop our Family Help offer for parents of disabled children, and children with additional learning needs and special educational needs.

13. *Staffing implications*

- 13.1 The Families First Programme will mean there are changes in Children's Services, especially Children's Social Care and Early Help. As set out above, staff consultation and engagement will be essential to effectively deliver the programme, as staff need to feel a part of and buy into the changes and new ways of working for these to be implemented effectively and make a difference.
- 13.2 Staffing changes for the initial duration of the programme will involve recruitment into the service to be able to deliver key reforms and aspects of the Design Specification, such as creating roles to deliver Family Help Services, and Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences.
- 13.3 There may be changes identified through the Pathfinder to roles and service structures. These will be understood through internal quality assurance and performance analysis, and through the programme evaluation methods. Any proposed changes will be implemented through the appropriate council Business Design and HR processes. JNCC will receive regular updates as to the progress.

14. *Climate Impact*

- 14.1 There is no climate impact as a result of this update/proposal.

15. *Consultation*

- 15.1 A Big Conversation Consultation exercise is underway with families. This begins consultation activity that runs throughout the duration of the Families First Programme and is a part of the Design Specification that needs to be delivered upon. A Participation Lead is being recruited to lead this activity.
- 15.2 Engagement with key partners and stakeholders, with our workforce and with families will be fundamental to the effective implementation of the Families First Programme. There is a counterbalancing need to move at pace and have an overview of planned reforms with clear timescales for implementation, and to properly consult and engage with people about these proposals, and for them to be based on the best available evidence of needs and performance indicators about current practices and the impact for children and families. There are two key strands to engagement activity. First is the Big Consultation programme across Children's Services and the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The second is a series of more in-depth Working Groups to lead on the development of specific reform areas.

16. *Decide*

- 16.1 Cabinet are not required to make any formal decisions at this stage – Cabinet are being asked to endorse and support the Families First Programme in Children’s Services, and note the initial overview and activity set out in this report.

17. Respond

- 17.1 The date for the i programme to begin is the 1st July 2024. This is the start of the Test and Learn phase to understand and implement reforms. The proposed launch for the key strands of the reforms will be September and October 2024. The Pathfinder period will then run until 31st March 2025.
- 17.2 It is requested that Cabinet endorse the proposals for the Families First Pathfinder Programme and note the investment provided, the need to review continued investment as the programme progresses and there is further clarity from the Department for Education, and the financial implications and projected savings from the programme.

18. Review

- 18.1 The Pathfinder Programme will report progress into Proud Board and the Walsall Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Leadership Team. The Pathfinder programme will operate with a Programme Board that will meet monthly. The Programme will also require regular reporting to the Department for Education. All project groups and boards will have an appropriate Terms of Reference to reflect their purpose.
- 18.2 The governance proposal builds on existing arrangements and is developed from the previous Family Safeguarding Board arrangements. Working groups have been established based on the four key reform strands which will report into the board. The working groups will have appropriate partner representation and will also be charged with ensuring there is meaningful consultation with children, parents, and communities about the proposals as they develop.

Appendices

Appendix One – Costed Plan

Background papers

Author

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Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Colleen Male'.

Colleen Male
Executive Director Childrens Services
03.07.2024

Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Councillor Ellson'.

Councillor Ellson
Portfolio holder

03.07.2024

FFC Pathfinder Costed Plan

Guidance

1. This costed plan is designed to provide more detail on provisional costs from what was
2. Costs for key programme areas have been broken down by the reform strands.
3. In the workforce costs column, you might include additional family help or social work partners for additional services and/or workforce arising from the programme. One-off training
4. Family Network reform costs should account for between 20-25% of overall grant costs accounts for approximately 75% of overall Family Network costs (K24).
5. Overall grant costs should not exceed the upper limit of your grant band (Annex A).
6. On this tab (Tab 1: costed plan), please submit in column C workforce costs until March

	Workforce costs (please submit costs until March 2025 only)
Primary change	
Family Help reform	
Reforms to Family Help	£ 557,611.01
Child Protection	
Child Protection reform (excluding parental advocacy, to be included separately in row 18)	£ 129,547.25
Parental engagement and advocacy	
Child protection total:	£ 129,547.25
Family Network reforms	
Family Network reforms excluding family network support packages	£ 284,898.11
Family Network Support Packages (FNSP).	
Family network total:	£ 284,898.11
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	
Education as a strategic partner and partner resource committed to pre-implementation planning and delivery'	
Change management and transformation	
Programme management and business support function	£ 422,218.00
Data and information sharing (including changes to Case Management Systems and reporting)	
Leadership and Governance	
Learning, development and training	

workforces. Commissioning costs might include additional services you plan to procure to deliver r
ansformation costs might include programme management functions.
(as shown in cell K23). **Family Network Support Package costs should be separate from your Fan**

[illegible]

nd/or workforce arising from the FFC Pathfinder programme.

reforms ie. parental advocacy. Partnership costs might include funding distributed from the l

nily Network Reform costs. FNSPs should be itemised separately in row 24. Row 24 should

submit costs for positions as if they would last a full calendar year.

Description of funding provided to partners	One off transformation costs	Description of one off transformation costs	Other costs
	£ -		
	£ 418,125		
	£ 418,125		£ -
			£ 86,601.00
	£ 301,000.00	Training and development	

	£ 301,000		£ 86,601.00
	£ 719,125.00		£ 86,601.00
	£ 719,125		£ 86,601

ocal authority to

show that FNSP

Description of 'other' costs	Total grant costs
	£ 557,611.01
	£ 129,547.25
	£ 30,000.00
	£ 159,547.25
Family Network Reform costs 20-25% of overall grant costs	£ 284,898.11
Family Network Support Packages should be approximately 75% of overall Family Network costs	£ 418,125.00
	£ 703,023.11
	£ -
Equipment and mileage	£ 508,819.00
	£ -
	£ -
	£ 301,000.00

[illegible]

Cost as a percentage of total bid	
	25%
	6%
	1%
	7%
13%	
19%	
	32%
	0%
	23%
	0%
	0%
	13%



Cabinet – July 2024

Draft Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029

Portfolio: Councillor Lee

Related portfolios: All

Service: Council Wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1** The report presents the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2029, '*Ensuring Equity*', for review and for approval of the strategy going out to public and partner consultation during the summer and early autumn. The aim of the strategy is to strengthen the Council's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through a clear, coherent strategy and the development of an associated work programme.

2. Summary

- 2.1** The Public Sector Equality Duty places a requirement on Councils to publish their equality objectives and outline the work and activities being undertaken to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy outlines Walsall Council's objectives towards EDI and articulates our great strides in improving EDI across workforce, policy, services and community in recent years.
- 2.2** The draft strategy is aligned to the Local Government Association Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) to ensure that we can benchmark ourselves, measure progress and easily learn from best practice across the sector.
- 2.3** The Strategy has been developed from extensive feedback from Council staff, Walsall For All community workshops and best practice knowledge from across Local Government. Following Cabinet agreement, the strategy will go out for an eight week period of consultation to seek partner, community, and resident views before coming back to Cabinet for final approval in December.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Cabinet note and approve the draft EDI strategy for public consultation.
- 3.2. That Cabinet note the future plans and work already underway to strengthen EDI across the Council aligned to the EFLG.
- 3.3. That Cabinet agree to the inclusion of Armed Forces as a local characteristic for EDI to be included within the Equality Impact Assessment process, alongside the existing 9 statutory characteristics and the existing local characteristic of care leavers.

4. Report detail - know

- 4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that equality and diversity are considered and embedded across our services and functions. The supporting Public Sector Equality Duty requires that Councils consider how people will be affected by decisions and services, prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives (at least every four years), and ensure that public services meet the needs of all different groups of people.
- 4.2 The Council has reviewed its current approach to EDI in recent months and carried out extensive engagement with staff, staff equality networks and community groups through Walsall for All partnership to understand and determine refreshed objectives within a new Council wide EDI strategy and aligned to the newly developing Council Plan.
- 4.5 The draft strategy has been developed to align with the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). The framework offers a useful guideline for the Council's continued improvement journey with respect to EDI. It contains four main thematic areas of focus with supporting considerations:
 - 1. Understanding and working with communities.
 - 2. Leadership and organisational commitment.
 - 3. Responsive services and customer care.
 - 4. Diverse and engaged workforce.
- 4.6 The objectives currently within the new draft strategy are:

Communities Objective: To work in partnership with our communities to build a borough where people belong and thrive.

Leadership Objective: To embed equitable and inclusive policy and decision making at the heart of the organisation.

Services Objective: To design and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse population.

Workforce Objective: To be an inclusive organisation, with staff at all levels who represent the diversity of our borough.

- 4.7 These draft objectives align closely to the four themes of the EFLG, which means that as a Council we can map our current activity against the framework, identify any gaps, and determine what is needed to progress against three levels – ‘developing’, ‘achieving’ and ‘excellent’. Within the strategy we have outlined our ambition to ensure we are ‘achieving’ across all elements of EDI within 2 years, seeking Local Government Association EFLG accreditation to validate and confirm that position and to support the Council to then move towards ‘Excellence’.
- 4.8 Within the strategy we outline the nine statutory characteristics the Council must consider when designing services, implementing policy and have due regard to when consulting: age, sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and marriage/civil partnership. In April 2024, Cabinet agreed to the adoption of a local characteristic, care leavers, to highlight the importance the Council places on supporting our care experienced young people.
- 4.9 Alongside these existing characteristics the Council, through the Armed Forces Covenant, has already agreed to a local duty to consider Armed Forces in relation to housing, education, and employment. Within the draft strategy it is proposed that this be widened to ensure that Armed Forces are adopted as a local characteristic so due regard must be given to armed forces personnel and families across all Council services. Around 2.2% of the Walsall population is identified as a veteran and this equates to around 6,500 people (Office for National Statistics, 2021).
- 4.8 The draft EDI Strategy highlights the good work that is already underway across the Council against each objective. The associated ‘We will’ statements outline our plans for continued improvement and development across the four facets of EDI. Examples of great activity underway and planned include:
- Review of Council governance and refresh of EDI governance to ensure service and customer have a clear role in shaping the EDI work across the Council.
 - Development of staff networks to ensure all staff can have a voice.
 - Extension of Equality Champions across the Council to ensure EDI is at the heart of all directorates and the work we do.
 - Developing ‘health in all policies’ work to ensure addressing health inequalities is considered in policy and service design and delivery.
 - Ensuring newcomers are welcome to the borough and supported to integrate and belong.
 - In line with We are Walsall 2040 aims, that we celebrate our heritage and culture and champion the diversity and strength of Walsall.
 - Review and refresh of EQIA process including addition of new locally chosen characteristic of carer leavers and armed forces.

- 4.9 This strategy has been developed alongside the refresh of our Council Plan 2025-2029. 'Ensuring equity' is an underlying principle in the draft Council Plan, identified as being an essential consideration that will enable us to deliver our corporate vision and ambitions. The title of the draft EDI Strategy therefore emphasises this alignment. In developing both the EDI Strategy and new Council Plan we carried out a range of consultation and engagement. We have consulted with our workforce, stakeholders and partners during the development phase. We reached out virtually and through online surveys and provided opportunities to consult in-person for staff at drop-in sessions at Walsall Council and the locality centres across the borough.
- 4.10 An Engagement Toolkit was designed for the workforce which provided an opportunity for all teams across Walsall Council to discuss and feedback their thoughts on the how we can drive forward greater equality, diversity and inclusion and the areas of inequality they feel the strategy should address.
- 4.11 Following agreement from Cabinet the strategy will be circulated to partners across the Borough for comment and feedback. The strategy will also be publicly available on the Council website and hosted on Commonplace engagement platform to enable us to seek structured feedback from residents, staff, and partners. We will also ensure accessibility by all groups, and availability of hard copies in a variety of locations across the borough with residents able to request a hard copy. Formal consultation on the draft strategy will be open for a period of eight weeks over the summer and early autumn. Following consideration of all feedback the strategy will be amended as required and come back to Cabinet in December for final approval.
- 4.12 The strategy will have a supporting clear work programme with actions for delivery included within an annual EDI Action Plan. This work programme will be monitored through the Council's Corporate Equality Group and regular updates provided through the Portfolio Holder briefings process – equality is now included as a key functional area within the Cabinet portfolio of Cllr Lee. Furthermore, the Council has a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty to produce an EDI Annual report for publication in March each year. The next report in March 2025 will provide a public outline of progress at that point against the new strategy/objectives.

Risk management

- 4.13 There are no significant risks associated with the EDI strategy or associated work programme.

Financial implications

- 4.14 There are no direct financial implications related to the report.

Legal implications

- 4.15 There are no direct legal implications from this report. The draft EDI strategy outlines new objectives and approaches for the Council against EDI to ensure compliance against the Public Sector Equality Duty, Armed Forces Covenant and Equality Act 2010.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

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

Property implications

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

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.18 There are no direct implications in this report.

Staffing implications

- 4.19 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

- 4.20 Our EDI activities highlighted in this strategy strengthen the delivery of Our Council Plan and We are Walsall 2040 borough plan which both have reducing inequalities and addressing social justice at their heart.
- 4.21 The EDI strategy is aligned to the new draft Council Plan which has Ensuring Equity as a core foundational principle at its heart to ensure we remain focussed on reducing inequalities.

Climate Change

- 4.22 There are no direct implications.

Consultation

- 4.23 The report highlights that the new EDI Strategy has been shaped from extensive staff, community, and customer feedback and will be subject to a formal consultation in the summer to seek clear views from staff, residents, and partners on the objectives within the draft document.

5. Decide

The report presents a draft EDI Strategy for consideration and approval by Cabinet. The report also asks Cabinet to agree that Armed Forces becomes a local Equality Characteristic for Walsall Council to expand on current duties within the Armed Forces Covenant.

6. Respond

The Council is already undertaking programmes and activities that strengthen EDI across the Council. This existing and planned work will continue alongside some new actions identified through the EDI strategy. Governance for EDI sits with the Corporate Equalities Group with a line up to Corporate Management Team to ensure strategic fit with wider corporate priorities.

7. Review

The EDI strategy will be monitored and reviewed regularly through Corporate Equality Group. Furthermore, the Council's EDI Annual Report, which is approved at Cabinet in March each year, is an annual document highlighting our progress towards our equality objectives. The next report in March 2025 will outline our progress to date against the EDI objectives and our plans.

Background papers –

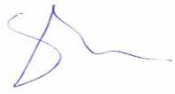
Annexes:

Appendix 1 Draft EDI Strategy

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Signed

Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director
Resources and Transformation
June 2024

Edward Lee

Signed

Councillor Lee
Portfolio Holder Internal Services
09 July 2024

Ensuring Equity:

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029

DRAFT



Walsall Council

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DRAFT

Foreword

This Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy reflects Walsall Council's unwavering commitment to equity within our services, workforce, and communities. We strive to reduce inequalities and maximise potential across the borough, reinforcing our dedication to fostering an inclusive and fair environment for all.

Our focus on EDI is central to our mission, ensuring that Walsall remains a great place to live, work, and visit. We are proud of the progress made and remain dedicated to continuous improvement, guided by our community's feedback and aspirations.

Recognised by the 2023 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, the strategy aligns with the *Council Plan 2025-2029*, 'Striving for Excellence', and builds on the *We are Walsall 2040* vision. It focuses on promoting equality, tackling inequity, and fostering good relations – involving residents, community groups, and staff to address EDI challenges.

The strategy emphasises enhancing understanding and perspectives on inequalities and outlines actions to ensure progress towards equity and excellence.

Cllr Lee: Cabinet Portfolio Holder Internal Resources

Introduction

'Ensuring Equity': Our Walsall Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, sets out Walsall Council's commitment to advance equity across all our services, our workforce, and our communities right across the borough.

Our Council has a clear mission to reduce inequalities and maximise potential. We have made great strides in recent years to support our workforce to better represent the communities they serve, to strengthen our governance around EDI and to ensure our staff voice is heard at all levels. Our *2023 LGA (Local Government Association) Corporate Peer Challenge* highlighted the work we have done and the improvements we are making with respect to EDI. This strategy underpins the vision and priorities of our *Council Plan 2025-2029* and builds upon the strong foundations laid down in the *We are Walsall 2040 Strategy* – the partnership-owned strategic vision and ambitions for the type of borough we want to be in the future. Promoting equalities, tackling inequity, and fostering good relations across our diverse communities is at the heart of our work across the borough in making Walsall a great place to live, work and visit.

Through this strategy we are committing to work with our residents, local community groups, and staff to address any challenges relating to EDI. This strategy incorporates feedback from our communities and staff, enabling us to address any challenges relating to inequalities that may have been raised by our workforce, residents, and the local communities within the borough which we serve.

To support us in achieving our ambitions, we recognise that it is important to enhance our understanding and perspectives on matters relating to inequalities across the borough and addressing these through initiating positive and preventative actions through our workforce, via policies and programmes and through community cohesion and by reaching out through our partners organisations. This strategy outlines how the council will progress with equality, diversity, and inclusion and how it will monitor progression made through its work programme and activities to ensure we aim for equity and move towards excellence.

Our Legal Duty

Under the Equality Act 2010, when delivering its services and functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- and foster good relations between people.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in society and within the workforce. This Act introduced nine 'protected characteristics' and made it unlawful for people to be discriminated against based on these characteristics. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that equality and diversity are considered and embedded across our services and functions and our partnership work. The protected characteristics are:



Under the Equality Act, Councils also have specific duties and must:

- publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Duty annually. This information must include information relating to employees;
- prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives (at least every four years) which will help us further any of the aims of the Equality Duty: this strategy sets out our objectives for the period 2024-2029.

The Equality Act is supported by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public bodies such as Councils to consider how people can be affected by decisions that are taken and to ensure that the design and delivery of services meet the needs of different people.

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Who We Are

Walsall borough is made up of six towns – Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston, Walsall and Willenhall – and is home to 284,400 residents. Each of our 20 wards has its own distinct identity and diverse populations. This brings a vibrant character to the borough, but also means we need to understand the range of needs faced by those living within all our communities.

Deprivation

Walsall borough was ranked as the 25th most deprived local authority in England (in the Indices of Deprivation, 2019). However, the experience of life in the borough varies for residents across different neighbourhoods. There are pockets of extreme deprivation in some areas and over a quarter of neighbourhoods (44 of 167) are amongst the most deprived 10% in England – an increase since 2015. The wards in the centre and west of the borough are typically much more deprived than those to the east, however pockets of deprivation exist even alongside the more affluent parts of the borough.

Inequalities

The geography of deprivation directly maps onto a wide range of inequalities including poor educational attainment, unemployment, ill-health and higher rates of crime with some groups more impacted by the effects than others. For example, Walsall is the authority with the 17th highest levels of income deprivation affecting children. And many of the most deprived neighbourhoods are around the town centre, which is also the focus of our newly arrived migrant communities.

Resident Characteristics

The information gathered from the 2021 Census has been invaluable for understanding equality and diversity down to a neighbourhood level. The questions asked capture many of the defining characteristics of our population: who we are, how we live and what we do. This is vital for assessing need, setting priorities, and developing strategy. This gives us an opportunity to understand all aspects of our residents' identities, providing a full and timely picture of inter-related protected characteristics. For some protected characteristics (such as gender identify and sexual orientation) this is the first time we have had access to any robust data about how our residents identify themselves.

Our Characteristics – *to be displayed as a 1-page infographic in final design*

Resident Population

- Walsall has a **resident population** of 284,400, which has been steadily growing over the past two decades.

Sex

- This resident population consists of 145,000 women and 139,000 men.

Age

- Walsall's resident population has a median **age** of 38 which is a decrease of one year from the 2011 census.

Marital Status

- Those who are **married or in a civil partnership** account for 45% of residents (aged over 16) with the proportion who have never been married (38%) increasing.

Sexual Orientation

- 1 in 50 (2%) residents aged over 16 identified in the 2021 census as gay, lesbian, or bisexual – very slightly below the national average.

Ethnic Groups

- Although most people identify their **ethnic group** as being White (71%), this has decreased over the past decade and around 1 in 3 residents are now from a minority ethnic group (i.e. non-White British).
- The second largest ethnic group remains Asian, which has increased to 19%, and residents from Black (5%) and Mixed (3%) ethnic groups have also increased.

Disability

- Approximately 20% of residents identify as **disabled** due to experiencing a long-term condition that limits their daily activities.

Religion

- Many residents still claim to have a **religious affiliation**, although the proportion with 'no religion' is now close to a third (30%).

- The largest religious group remains Christian (45%), although this has been falling with Muslim (11%) communities the second largest faith community, followed by Sikh (6%) which has increased over the past decade.

Gender and Gender Reassignment

- There are just under 600 residents whose **gender identity** is different to the sex they were registered with at birth.
- Of those providing further detail, around 200 identify as trans men and 200 as trans women

Care Leavers

- Walsall currently has 665 children **in care**, and we are supporting 285 young people that have now left our care. This is line with a national picture of an increase in children entering care over the past decade.

Armed Forces / Veterans

- Around 2.2% of the Walsall population is identified as a member or veteran of the armed forces, equating to around 6,500 people – many of whom will also have families who fall within the Armed Forces Covenant.

Carers

- Among Walsall adults, 11.4% provide unpaid care for a family member, friend or neighbour who has long-term physical or mental health conditions, or problems related to old age.
- Over half of these unpaid carers (6.3% of all adults) are providing over 20 hours of care a week.

Our Objectives

This strategy supports the delivery of our key ambitions within our *Council Plan 2025-2029*, and ensures we remain community focussed to deliver our collective vision in the *We Are Walsall 2040 Strategy*. This strategy draws together all the strands of EDI into a coherent set of objectives that are directly linked to other relevant strategic documents, such as our *Organisational Development Strategy* and *Workforce Strategy*, and the Walsall For All plan for *Community Cohesion 2024-2034*.

The Local Government Association has developed an Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) built around four improvement modules:

- Theme 1: Understanding and working with our communities
- Theme 2: Leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment
- Theme 3: Responsive services and customer care
- Theme 4: Diverse and engaged workforce

This framework is widely adopted across the local government sector, and there are clear activities under each theme against different levels of progression: Developing, Achieving and Excellent. We have aligned our EDI objectives to this framework to support us in continuing to meet our Public Sector Equality Duties and strive towards excellence. Our four objectives are centred on:

- Communities
- Leadership
- Workforce
- Services.

Through continuous improvement, we aim to ascend the three Levels of Achievement for each EFLG theme through our objectives and their associated activities, with an aspiration to reach 'Achieving' level across all elements by the end of 2026. We will then work towards becoming an 'Excellent' EDI Exemplar in the local government and wider public sector.

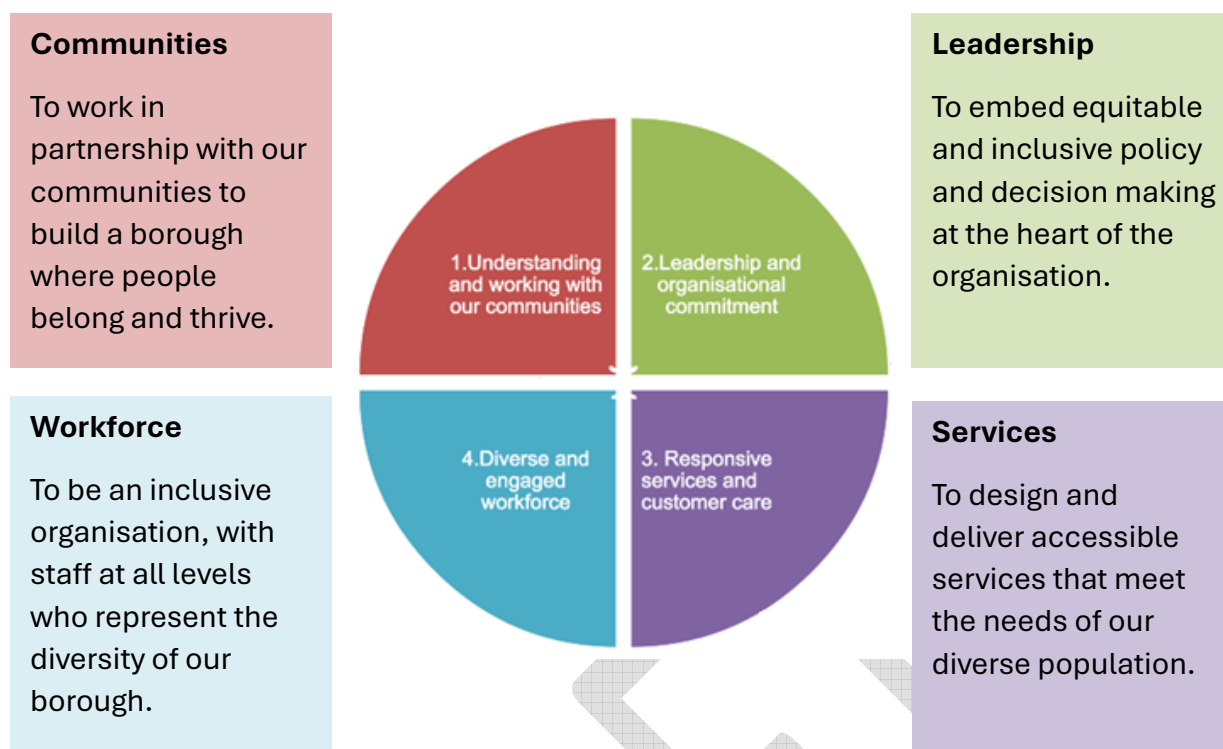


Figure 1: Walsall Council Equality Objectives 2024-2029

Objective: Communities

To work in partnership with our communities to build a borough where people belong and thrive

Our approach

Understanding and working in partnership with our communities is essential to build a borough that supports our *We Are Walsall 2040* ambition that people belong, thrive and are happy. Walsall is becoming richer in diversity, with people that have varied lived experiences and with neighbourhoods that are experiencing rapid changes in their ethnic makeup. We are committed to having a borough that respects and is tolerant to all. We want to achieve racial equality and recognise that racial inequalities and intolerance driven through beliefs, assumptions and biases can have adverse impacts on individuals and wider communities. We believe it is everyone's responsibility to educate ourselves, challenge biases, adopt an anti-racist attitude, and take positive action by addressing prejudice and intolerance and shaping solutions within our communities.

Our Walsall Community Cohesion focus has been developed with Walsall for All Partnership and is based on a comprehensive engagement exercise co-designed and co-facilitated by the communities themselves. The work identified seeks to reduce the impact of any inequalities from a social cohesion perspective and enable all in the borough can work together collectively in building a borough where Walsall is not just a place to live, but also a place to belong and thrive.

We will continue to understand and work with our diverse communities and partners to recognise and address local inequalities that exist across the borough to shape and transform services that drive positive change. We are focussed on becoming more culturally competent through recognising differences in cultures, beliefs and cross-cultural communication to improve our engagement and service delivery with diverse communities across the borough. We will provide opportunities for youth participation so young people from all backgrounds have a voice to share their aspirations, concerns, and views from across the borough which will support us in designing better services for the future.

We understand the importance of bringing people together from a wide range of backgrounds to enhance our understanding of any local inequalities and to direct our focus on the actions we need to take to address any local matters. Through harnessing diversity,

we can create a safe and accessible borough where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their perspectives and abilities.

Our Walsall Community Cohesion focus developed with Walsall for All Partnership

Walsall for All is a partnership that aims to improve social cohesion and integration in the borough. The members include local organisations and groups that work in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, as well as public sector providers (including housing, health and more). Walsall for All works with diverse cultures, faiths, and communities. Walsall for All listens to their views and finds solutions to any challenges they may have accessing services and living in Walsall. One of its goals is to promote neighbourhood level partnerships between existing indigenous communities and new emerging communities. During 2023/24, Walsall for All co-produced a new Community Cohesion and Integration plan together with Walsall Council and launched 'a call for evidence' in relation to social justice with a focus on working class communities. They also established a new network of community run English as a Second Language providers – Skills for Life and appointed 6 Community advisors.

We will:

- Become more culturally competent in and through our engagement with diverse communities.
- Work in partnership with Walsall for All and voluntary, community and statutory sectors to recognise local inequalities across the borough and take action to reduce the impact on our communities.
- Provide opportunities to encourage integration, interaction, empathy and understanding amongst diverse groups in the locality through our engagement work.
- Collaborate and listen to the views of people on EDI and take action to improve their lives where people can belong, thrive and be happy in the borough.
- Celebrate different heritage, cultures, and traditions to champion diversity across the borough.
- Provide access to services, resources, and opportunities thus allowing people to advance, feel engaged and empowered.

Objective: Leadership

To embed equitable and inclusive policy and decision making at the heart of the organisation.

Our approach

Our Council's governance and strategic leadership plays an essential role in steering the organisation to maintain a strong focus on ensuring equitable and inclusive council and partnership policies. Our organisation is committed to ensuring EDI is a fundamental aspect of all decision-making across the Council and when working locally and regionally with partners such as West Midlands Combined Authority and Integrated Care Systems to ensure local community perspectives are embedded in everything we do.

We understand the importance of reassuring both local communities and the workforce of our organisational commitment to our socio-economic duty within the Equality Act 2010 and our equality priorities through inclusive strategies and clear implementation programmes. Our senior leaders and Members act as ambassadors for EDI and work together with partners and communities to drive the vision in Our Council Plan 2022-2025 that 'inequalities are reduced, and all potential is maximised'.

Strengthening our Council's internal EDI governance structure supports our leaders to reinforce our commitment to develop a more centred approach for equity when collaborating with our stakeholders and partners. Our leaders continue to raise the profile of issues around inequalities and drive change through equitable and inclusive policies and decision-making and via implementing coherent improvement workstreams. Reviewing our policies and procedures is key in identifying gaps, inconsistencies, or barriers that may affect inclusion and equity.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) are a fundamental tool for ensuring our policies are equitable and inclusive when considering impact on equality groups. The EqIA process considers all nine protected equality characteristics when considering a new policy, strategy, or service change. We are committed to doing more so have taken the decision to include local characteristics. Cabinet agreed in 2024 to make care experienced/care leavers a local extra characteristic within our EqIA process to ensure that this group of young people do not continue to experience inequalities and are supported to thrive. To reaffirm our commitment and duty to the Armed Forces Covenant, we will strengthen how armed forces are

considered in our policy development and decision making through inclusion of this local characteristic in our Equality Impact Assessments. The EqlA process ensures we consider any adverse impacts that budget and service delivery changes can have on people's lives and that we mitigate any impacts where we can.

It is also important for us to consider the impact of other drivers of inequality such as health determinants across the borough. We will incorporate a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach through our equality analysis toolkit to ensure health equity is considered when we develop any strategy, policy or make changes to services. In this way we can ensure we work to minimise and reduce any adverse impact on those experiencing health inequalities.

Care Leavers as a local protected characteristic in Walsall Council

Walsall Council has recognised care leavers as a local protected characteristic and acknowledged that the care experienced can face discrimination, stigma and prejudice. A motion was first put forward at Full Council meeting in February 2024 requesting members to treat 'care experience' as a local protected characteristic in Walsall in line with the other nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

At Cabinet in April 2024, two of Walsall's care leavers explained some of the everyday challenges and prejudices they have faced. Both young people now live independently and shared some of their aspirations for the future which included wanting to give back to children and young people who may have similar childhood experiences to them.

The Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity between those with care experience and those without. Care experienced people often face discrimination in everyday life including access to housing, health, education, relationships, employment.

Recognising care leavers as a local protected characteristic allows us to provide them with greater opportunities in accessing work, training opportunities and better access to our housing offers. It helps us to design future equitable policies, consider needs through equality impact assessments, and deliver accessible services as their needs are better recognised and understood.

We will:

- Ensure EDI is evidenced through equitable and inclusive policies and decision-making.

- Adopt an anti-racist organisational approach, ensuring cultural competence and awareness across our staff, programmes and policies.
- Work with our regional partners and stakeholders on our shared equality priorities, objectives and outcomes for the borough so they are understood and acted on at all levels.
- Continue to review and improve our equality impact assessment toolkit to ensure effective equality analysis at the start of policies, projects, or decisions and when considering budget setting, service delivery and ensure any adverse impact on equality groups are understood and mitigated.
- Develop a Health in all Policies (HiAP) approach in our toolkit to judge and mitigate impact on equality groups and advance health equity through everything we do.
- Continue our work with Members to help them understand and champion equity and the needs of the communities we serve. [OBJ]

Objective: Services

To design and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse population.

Our approach

We strive to design and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse population through a detailed understanding of our residents, service users and their needs. We deliver a range of services and support across the borough. As emphasised in our Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2026, we strive to increase performance, efficiency, and champion the design of services to meet the service needs of a range of people across Walsall including everyone living, working, volunteering, running a business, investing or studying across the borough.

A key aspect that supports this is through knowing and understanding the needs of our communities, residents and businesses and ensuring we have appropriate, relevant, and accurate data to identify gaps and design and deliver the right services at the right time and in the right way that are more accessible and joined-up. We are determined to continue to work with all services to establish how EDI can be better embedded and measured through our service design by using data to understand the needs of our service users – recognising that some of our services are still working towards developing this detailed picture of the characteristics of their users. Our Corporate Equalities Group is committed to ensure that equality objectives are integrated into planned service outcomes when creating services and opportunities for everyone.

Our approach is aligned to our corporate values which highlight how the Council works with local communities and businesses and influences choice and behaviours. We want services in the Council to understand what residents want, to enable us to design and deliver an excellent service user experience, make reasonable adjustments for service users, reduce inequalities, be fair, and provide good customer care for all the diverse range of people we serve. We will continue to deliver accessible communication support through an Interpretation, Translation and Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) system to allow all service users to access information and support. We will work across all our services to ensure they are looking at their communities and service users, understanding EDI requirements and ensuring they take account residents voice and views in service design and accessibility.

Commissioning and procuring services in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way is also important to achieve our equality objectives within the local economy. We aim to up skill our staff to design and deliver accessible services for the changing needs of our diverse population.

Our Corporate priorities feed into our outcomes to enable us to provide an excellent customer experience for all, increase digital contact from users through web accessibility, comply with accessibility standards and to act on service user feedback to improve service delivery. In recent years we have designed and delivered locally accessible services and ensured locality approaches were appropriate to ensure our services can be accessed where the public need them. Our Walsall Connected model has 29 hubs across the borough and offers localised support for accessing council services and build resilient communities.

Another key method that underpins our determination to improve is through our behavioural science approach. This is used to determine the motivators, lived experiences, barriers, challenges, and enablers faced by residents when using our services. This approach supports the designing of accessible services that meet the accessibility needs of its users through gaining these insights from hard-to-reach populations. The behavioural science team have worked closely with the Adult Social Care team to produce accessible communications and resources, including easy read options, to help residents with financing their care needs as well as working with mothers from all communities to identify local barriers and opportunities around infant feeding choices and explore how we can help marginalised and vulnerable communities to make informed life choices.

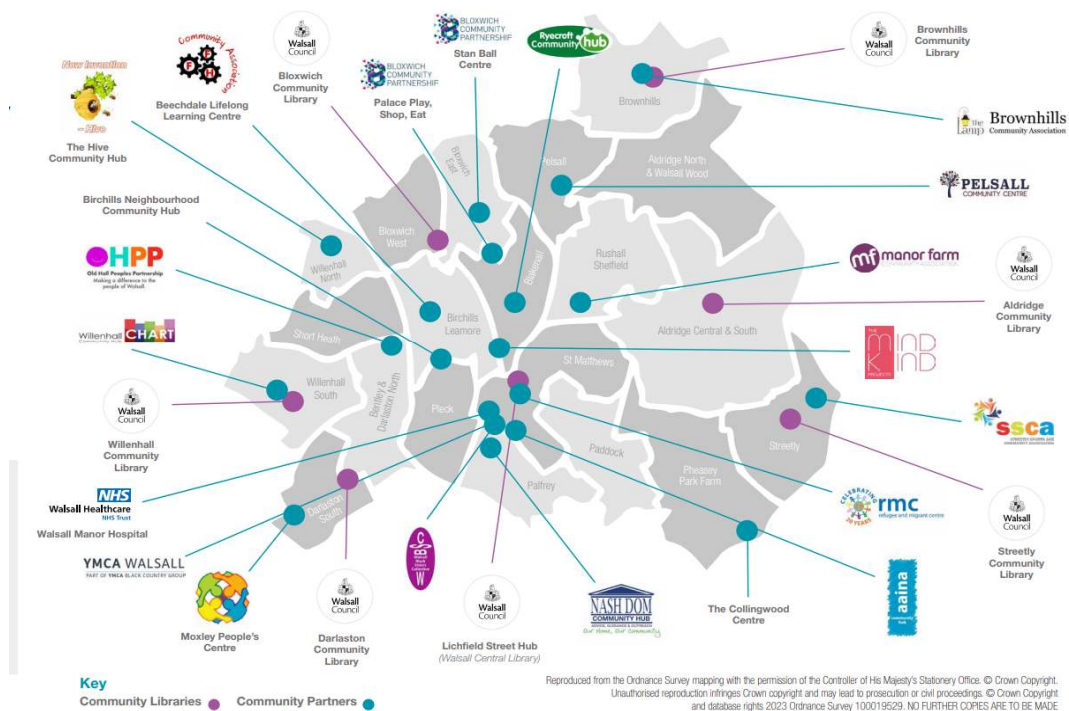
Walsall Connected – A collaboration with the community

Walsall Connected is a collaboration between the council and its partner organisations to build resilient communities across the borough – helping over 10,000 residents in 2023. There are 29 Connected ‘hubs’ across the borough manned by trained staff and volunteers, with each local hub offering services aimed at developing residents’ digital literacy, increasing access to first-line Council services, and creating a strong and sustainable community network.

The initial aim of Walsall Connected is to ensure digitally excluded residents receive consistent support and gain essential everyday transferable digital skills. Walsall Connected is ‘open to all’, any resident can receive support through any of the 28 Walsall Connected centres. Walsall Connected has expanded from its initial focus of reducing

digital exclusion across the borough, with the initiative now used to raise awareness of important local assets such as libraries and community groups.

Throughout 2023 there has been an increase in individuals accessing connected hubs, with three of the most common inquiry types, Food Banks (343), Homelessness (866) and the Household Support Fund (909) evidencing the reliance of vulnerable individuals on these hubs.



We will:

- Champion the design of accessible services to meet needs of service users.
- Ensure all services delivered by the council and through our statutory duties are accessible through a range of channels.
- Achieve a better understanding of who our service users are and their needs
- Improve service user engagement across all services to understand any barriers with accessing our services.
- Deliver accessible communication support through an Interpretation, Translation and Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) system.

- Develop our staff to design and deliver services to meet the changing needs of our service users.
- Develop our behavioural science approach to improve our services.

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Objective: Workforce

To be an inclusive organisation with staff at all levels who represent the diversity of our borough.

Our approach

We aim to improve the diversity of our workforce at all levels, so it represents the people who use our services from across all communities within the borough. We will do this through attracting, recruiting and upskilling individuals from all backgrounds and lived experiences. Our Organisational Development and Workforce Strategies outline what we will do to recruit the right staff to represent the people we serve, and how we plan to achieve an engaged workforce that understands the benefits that EDI brings. By attracting, welcoming, developing and advancing a diverse mix of individuals that represent the communities we serve we can bring real lived experience and knowledge to policy and service design, management of our programmes and activities, and ensure our work reflects the real needs of the borough. Therefore, our ongoing commitment to embed equality in our recruitment and selection processes is key. We will continue to maximise employee retention, retain knowledge, reduce skills gaps, and reduce recruitment costs through being a good employer.

We are planning for the workforce we need now, and in the future, to ensure the ongoing success of the Council. We will identify the skills and abilities we need to meet the needs of services and ensure staff are up skilled and re-skilled to meet these changing demands. Embracing new ways of working and ensuring a talented and motivated workforce, to give Walsall residents what they need and deserve, is at the heart of everything we do.

Our staff networks are crucial in allowing EDI to be better deployed through our working practices and allow a platform for every voice to be heard and valued. Equality Champions are embedded across all directorates to support colleagues in all aspects of EDI and staff who experience issues around inequality can raise these through our EDI concerns resolution process: *'Voices from Within: Navigating Employee EDI Concerns.'* Our pilot Accelerating Diverse Talent Programme has allowed staff from underrepresented groups to develop their skills and aspire to further development opportunities – and we want to continue to roll out this programme and do even more to advance diversity, voice, and inclusion across our workforce.

Staff Networks

Staff networks at Walsall Council were initiated during the pandemic and continue to be a useful platform to allow every voice to be heard and valued. Our Staff Networks have gone through a period of change and rejuvenation. Feedback received through a Council-wide staff survey and a Staff Network Development Day ensure they reflect the forums staff need and want.

There are six staff networks:

- The Disability Network
- Parents and Carers Network
- Ethnically Diverse Network
- Emerging Professional Network
- LGBTQ+ Network
- All Workers Welcome Network

A senior level Executive Director sponsor has been assigned to each network to provide support and resources for their successful implementation. Alongside this our Equality Champions Network has been equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver their role to help drive positive EDI changes within the Council. Equality Champions provide advice, support and challenge within their teams and directorate to drive forward EDI in everything we do. This supports our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment where the Council is well-positioned to meet the diverse needs of its workforce and promote a culture where everyone is empowered, respected, valued, and listened to.

We will:

- Attract, welcome, develop and advance a diverse mix of individuals to ensure we employ a workforce at all levels that represents the communities we serve.
- Become an inclusive employer through embedding equality in our recruitment processes.
- Maximise employee retention, retain knowledge, reduce skills gaps, and reduce recruitment costs through being a good employer.
- Ensure identification of skills and abilities to meet the needs of services and staff.

- Up-skill and re-skill staff through our effective workforce and succession planning processes.
- Develop and support our staff networks and Equality Champions to ensure all staff have a voice and can support our EDI principles across the organisation.

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Delivering Improvement and Monitoring Our Progress

The Council has a clear governance structure in place to ensure EDI is embedded at the heart of our service design, delivery, workforce, and strategic decision-making. Our Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) governs EDI to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty, and Human Rights Act. CEG comprises senior managers and leaders from across the Council to ensure we represent all aspects of our equality objectives with a broad service perspective. The strategy will be monitored and reviewed regularly through this group. Furthermore, we have now embedded equality as a key priority for our Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Internal Resources from the start of the 2024/25 municipal year.

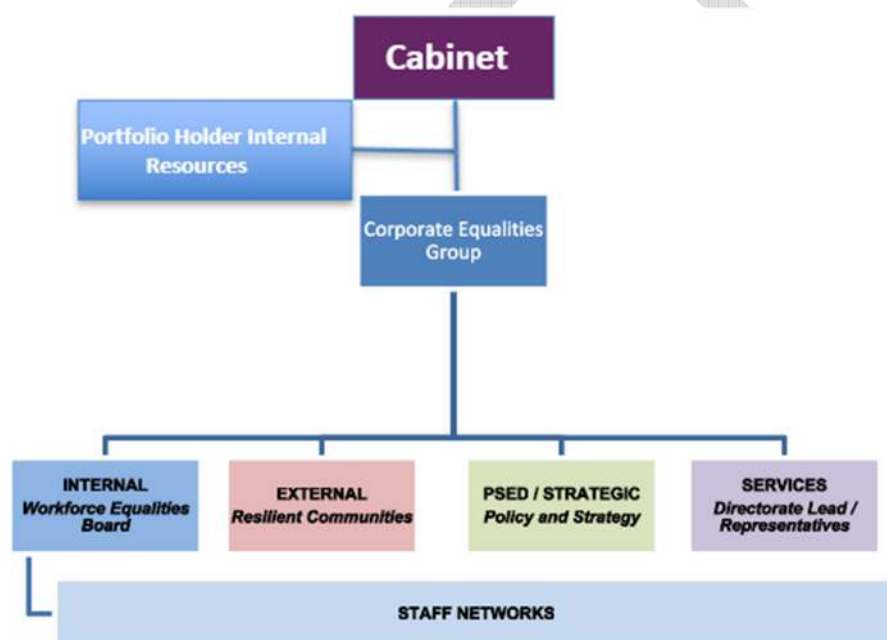


Figure 2: EDI Governance Structure

CEG reports upwards to the officer senior management group – our Corporate Management Team (CMT) – to ensure strategic alignment and focus on delivery of our equality objectives. Our EDI Portfolio Holder will be briefed on progress and regular updates provided through the Portfolio Holder's Internal Resources briefings at Cabinet and Council.

Our responsibility for tackling inequality sits at every level across the Council and we understand the importance of having a good governance structure in place to deliver our EDI objectives. It allows our residents, businesses and workforce to understand our views on EDI

and what they can expect from us through our EDI-related decision-making processes and service delivery. The Council's governance and strategic leadership continues to promote a strong organisational culture that drives EDI through forming partnerships and positive relationships where people from all backgrounds are valued, respected, and supported.

This governance enables EDI to be an integral aspect of all decision making and is fundamental in the design and delivery of all policies and supporting action and delivery plans, hence making them equitable and inclusive. We will continue to address inequalities and implement solutions through making decisions that lead to positive equality outcomes through taking actions that are transparent and ethical.

The CEG monitors the work programme to ensure we deliver our equality objectives. This work programme will be developed through creation of an annual delivery plan to help us to achieve the objectives within this strategy and identify areas for improvement and growth. As we have aligned our approach to the EFLG, the work programme will be delivered through an action plan which underpins each EDI objective and is aligned to the criteria under each of the four modules of the EFLG. To ensure we can measure progress against the EFLG criteria, we will rely on good evidential data that reflects the equalities profile of the communities in the borough based on national and local data that is regularly reviewed and considered. This will support us to disaggregate data relating to relevant performance indicators and actions to analyse and demonstrate improved equality outcomes. The criteria under each module will allow opportunity to plan activity so we can work towards the 'Achieving' level across all elements by 2026, self-assess, and undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge to identifying our areas of strength and development in EDI. We will also outline our annual progress against the new strategy and EDI objectives in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report that is approved at Cabinet in March each year as a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Interim provision of street lighting services

Portfolio:	Councillor Murphy – Street Pride
Related portfolios:	Councillor Andrew – Economic Growth & Regeneration
Service:	Street Lighting - Highways, Transport & Operations
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. The council has a statutory obligation to maintain the highway in a safe condition. This includes the maintenance and management of highway lighting to provide a safe environment in which road users can navigate the road network efficiently and effectively.

2. Summary

- 2.1. The streetlighting service is provided through a contract with Walsall Public Lighting (WPL) Ltd under private finance initiative (PFI) arrangements. The 26 year PFI arrangement commenced on 28 March 2002 and expires on 30 April 2028.
- 2.2. WPL and their subcontractor Amey are responsible for the maintenance and operation of the borough's adopted highway lighting assets for the period of the contract and are required to manage them appropriately to deliver the lighting standards detailed in the contract. On expiry of the PFI, this responsibility will fall back to the council and therefore, appropriate service delivery arrangements will need to be in place.
- 2.3. In October 2023, Cabinet considered the future service delivery options and resolved to approve the commencement of preparations for a procurement exercise for a combined highway infrastructure services contract. Additionally, Cabinet resolved to enter negotiations with Walsall Public Lighting with a view to extending the Public Lighting PFI contract by 11 months.
- 2.4. Subsequent discussions with the Infrastructure Projects Authority and Department for Transport have indicated that this is likely to be unacceptable to HM Treasury, citing the 2018 Budget when the Chancellor announced that the government would no longer use PFI or PF2 for new projects as it was

considered inflexible, overly complex and a source of significant fiscal risk to government.

- 2.5. Advice has therefore been sought in respect to alternative approaches and this is set out in the report.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That, following consideration of the confidential report in the private part of the agenda, Cabinet delegate authority to the to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth & Regeneration, to enter negotiations with Amey with a view to directly awarding a contract for delivery of public lighting services for the 11-month interim period between the end of the PFI contract and the commencement of the combined highway services contract.

4. Report detail - *know*

Context

- 4.1. The council has a statutory duty to maintain around 528 miles of highway network across the borough, excluding the M6 motorway and the A5 trunk road. This network has a gross replacement value in excess of £1.5billion, including street lighting assets to the value of £50million, making it the most valuable asset owned, managed and maintained by the authority.
- 4.2. The council's highway infrastructure includes 30,098 lit highway assets, comprising streetlights, lit signs, lit bollards and other ancillary lighting. Although the council has no obligation to light the adopted highway, there is a statutory obligation to maintain existing lit highway assets in a safe condition.
- 4.3. A recommendation was put forward to the council's Cabinet on 18 October 2023:
- That cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to enter into negotiations with Walsall Public Lighting with a view to extending the Public Lighting PFI contract by 11 months [Option 3].
- 4.4. The proposed contract extension was intended to commence on 1 May 2028 to 1 April 2029 with an estimated indicative contract value of £2million.
- 4.5. The Cabinet resolved to:
- approve the commencement of preparations for a procurement exercise for the Combined Contract; and
 - delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy, Environment and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to enter into negotiations with Walsall Public Lighting with a view to extending the Public Lighting PFI contract by 11 months [Option 3].

- 4.6. Subsequent council engagement with the Department for Transport (DfT) and Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) highlighted that at Budget 2018, the Chancellor announced that the government would no longer use PFI or PF2 for new projects as it was considered inflexible, overly complex and a source of significant fiscal risk to government.
- 4.7. The advice given by DfT and IPA officers was that the council would need to provide HM Treasury (HMT) with a full and detailed business case and that, based on previous experience, the end-to-end process would likely take two years. Furthermore, based on the Budget 2018 position and an understanding of HMT's response to a request for a PFI extension in another sector, it was unlikely HMT would support an extension to the contract.
- 4.8. It isn't clear if HMT could veto any attempts to extend a PFI without their prior approval and neither DfT officers nor IPA officers have been able to advise on this point.
- 4.9. In view of the ambiguity and costs involved in extending the PFI, an alternative approach, namely directly awarding the 11 month interim contract to the incumbent subcontractor Amey, has been explored.
- 4.10. To inform the recommendation to Cabinet, legal advice was sought from Bird & Bird, an international team of lawyers dedicated to advising both the public and private sectors on all aspects of procurement law.
- 4.11. The advice received from Bird & Bird can be found in **the private session**.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.12. Well-maintained highway lighting advances the council's corporate plan priorities by contributing to safety, sustainability, and community well-being.
- Effective lighting provision enhances road visibility, reducing accidents and promoting safe travel for residents and visitors alike, aligning with the council's commitment to public safety.
 - An approach that embraces innovation and promotes energy-efficient lighting options. lower electricity consumption and align with the council's sustainability goals, reducing environmental impact, and cutting costs.
 - Intelligently lit streets create a sense of security and encourage positive nighttime activities, fostering vibrant and connected communities.

Risk management

- 4.13. In their advice, Bird & Bird have noted that directly awarding a contract is rarely without risk however, notwithstanding this, there are very strong practical and commercial reasons for the council's decision to pursue a combined highway service contract. To do this, a short-term, interim arrangement to bridge the gap on street lighting between the expiry of the existing contract and the new combined contract is essential.

- 4.14. Bird & Bird consider that from an audit perspective, so long as this decision is robustly justified in terms of the benefits to the council in respect of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, it should be possible to explain and justify this to a local government auditor.
- 4.15. Bird & Bird believe that it is relevant to consider the wider implications, not least the effort, time and cost likely to be incurred in each case.
- 4.16. Given that some procurement risk will inevitably accrue in pursuing this approach, Bird & Bird have set out practical options for mitigating any procurement risk that might be associated with its implementation:
- Manage the narrative around the interim contract, including managing prospective bidders understanding of why the interim contract has proved necessary and providing reassurance that a new procurement is planned.
 - Ensure bidders have confidence that the council is taking a professional and open approach with respect to the combined highway services contract.

Financial implications

- 4.17. The annual spend on street lighting service delivery, excluding energy costs, is £3.985million. This includes PFI credits which are fixed at £1.595million for the life of the PFI and partially offset the service element of unitary payments. The balance, £2.390million is funded from the PFI reserve.
- 4.18. The earmarked PFI reserve is forecast to be fully utilised by the end of the current PFI term.
- 4.19. There is an electricity budget of £0.727million. Volatile contractual inflation remains a high financial risk.
- 4.20. The fall out of the PFI credits will form part of the budget setting process.
- 4.21. The net controllable revenue budget for post PFI street lighting services, excluding electricity, is £2.209million, assuming investment is given for fall out of the PFI credit. The interim arrangement will be met from the existing cash limit for the service including the allowance for indexation.
- 4.22. External capital grants may be available for specific works but will be subject to strict conditions restricting their use and requiring the authority to demonstrate that they have not been used to replace existing budgets.

Legal implications

- 4.23. The legal implication of not maintaining street lighting is a complex and context-dependent issue. However, some general principles are:
- A highway authority may provide and maintain street lighting for any highway or proposed highway for which they are responsible.

- A highway authority may alter or remove any works constructed by them or vested in them for street lighting purposes.
- A highway authority shall pay compensation to any person who sustains damage by reason of the execution of works for street lighting.
- A highway authority has a duty of care with respect to maintaining street lighting in a safe condition.

The procurement advice considers the council's options in the context of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Act 2023.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

4.24. The October cabinet report considered a number of potential procurement options have been considered in preparing this report. These were:

- A dedicated procurement exercise
- Commissioning the service via an existing framework contract
- Concluding the Highway Infrastructure Services Contract [HISC] earlier than planned
- Varying the scope of the HISC to include the street lighting service.
- Direct award to the current service sub-contractor [Amey].
- Extending the PFI.

4.25. The procurement advice on which the recommendation is based, is provided in the private session.

Property implications

4.26. Amey are now co located with the wider Highways, Transport and Operations service at the council's environmental depot. To mitigate the risk of duplicated legal fees the lease was drafted with a mutual break clause in 2028 in the event that the council do not negotiate a contract extension to the end of March 2029.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.27. A well-maintained highway network, including well-lit assets, significantly bolsters health and wellbeing. Adequate lighting enhances road safety, reducing accidents and anxiety-inducing driving conditions. Improved visibility lowers stress levels and fosters a sense of security, positively impacting mental health. Well-lit highways facilitate smoother traffic flow, curbing congestion-related air pollution and promoting cleaner air quality. Accessible and well-lit roadways enable faster emergency responses, potentially saving lives and minimising trauma. Additionally, illuminated highways encourage nighttime mobility, promoting active lifestyles and social engagement.

Reducing Inequalities

4.28. A well-maintained highway network, including well managed highway lighting, plays a pivotal role in reducing inequalities by enhancing accessibility and connectivity. It supports equal opportunities for economic growth, social

development, and improved quality of life. In remote or marginalized areas, a reliable highway network connects residents to essential services, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in urban centres. This access enables people from all backgrounds to participate in the economy and access resources previously out of reach.

- 4.29. A functional highway network facilitates the efficient movement of goods and services, fostering trade and market integration for both rural and urban areas. This, in turn, promotes equitable economic development and reduces regional disparities. By levelling the playing field and enabling efficient interactions, a well-maintained highway system stands as a tangible catalyst for reducing inequalities and fostering a more balanced, inclusive society.

Staffing implications

- 4.30. The recommended approach has no direct staffing implications for the council.

Climate Impact

- 4.31. The provision of highway lighting has a significant impact on the council's energy consumption. A project to convert 23,000 of Walsall's streetlights to energy efficient LED technology is nearing completion and will dramatically reduce consumption.
- 4.32. By securing a long-term delivery partner who can drive innovation, the council will be best placed to implement further measures to mitigate the climate impact of the highway infrastructure they maintain.

Consultation

- 4.33. Post PFI options were initially appraised in March 2023 at a partnership day. A workshop led by an independent facilitator involved council officers, Equitix [the investors owning Walsall Public Lighting], Amey [the contractor] and a representative from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority [IPA]. The session saw all parties consider the options for post PFI service delivery and the associated opportunities and risks.
- 4.34. As set out above, following the partnership day, discussions with a small number of national contractors, local authorities and peers on the ADEPT Engineering Board were used to better understand the market position and best practice. This provided helpful context and the benefit of lessons learned. Their feedback also indicated that the approach set out by Bird & Bird was something that they would consider to be reasonable not something that they would likely challenge.
- 4.35. In May 2023 the cabinet members for Regeneration and Street Pride were consulted in respect to priorities, outcomes and the options being considered by the council.

5. Decide

- 5.1. Cabinet previously considered several options in respect to the future of the street lighting service:
- Option 1: Create an in-house provision by in-sourcing the street lighting service.
 - Option 2: Procure a standalone street lighting service.
 - Option 3: Procure a combined highway services contract comprising the scope of the current highway infrastructure services contract and street lighting
 - Option 4: Establish a shared street lighting service with neighbouring authorities
- 5.2. Option 3 was recommended and approved by cabinet. In responding to the approval, the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, was to enter into in principle negotiations with WPL Ltd in respect to an 11 month extension to the PFI.
- 5.3. In view of the advice from the government departments and the procurement advice from Bird & Bird, Cabinet need to consider if a direct award to Amey is an acceptable amendment to this approach.
- 5.4. If the direct award is not acceptable, the council will need to progress a short term interim service procurement noting the risk of little market interest due to the following points:
- There is a long-term incumbent already “on-site”.
 - It is likely to take most of the proposed 11 month term to mobilise/transition the contract.
 - Competitive pricing may prove challenging as any provider, other than the incumbent, will likely need to recover the cost of mobilising the contract over a short duration.

6. Respond

- 6.1. Subject to approval, the Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Street Pride, will enter into in principle negotiations with Amey in respect to an 11 month interim public lighting contract.
- 6.2. If negotiations are successful, a report regarding the contract award, will be provided to Cabinet.

7. Review

- 7.1. Progress will be monitored against the key milestones and high-level project plan established for the expiry of the PFI. Highlight reports are provided to the portfolio holders and Walsall Network Board on a quarterly basis.

7.2. Details of plans for the expiry of the Street Lighting PFI and the procurement strategy for the combined highway services contract will be presented to Cabinet in autumn 2024.

8. Appendices

8.1. Public Lighting Procurement Advice

9. Background papers

9.1. Cabinet Report - October 2023 - [Future provision of street lighting services](#)

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Kathryn Moreton
Director
On behalf of

Dave Brown
Executive Director

4 July 2024



Councillor Murphy
Portfolio Holder

4 July 2024

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Recommendations from Scrutiny Overview Committee regarding the Housing Standards Working Group

Portfolio: Councillor Andrew – Associate Leader, Economic Growth & Regeneration

Related Portfolios: Councillor Garcha – Portfolio Holder for Resident Access & Housing Support

Service: Public Health

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Aim

To receive recommendations from the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee made on 18 April 2024.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet consider the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee as contained within the Housing Standards Final Report as attached in appendix 1.

3. Report detail – know

At its meeting of 18 April 2024, the Scrutiny Overview Committee received the final report of the Housing Standards Working Group which was established on 28 September 2023.

The Working Group conducted research and examined the following topics:

- Enhancing Energy Efficiency
- Quality of Housing
- Promotion of Housing Standards
- Housing Supply and Demand
- Healthy Spaces and Communities
- Local Planning Policies and the Housing Strategy

Due to the limited timescales, there was an onus on independent research and study. To complement this work, the Members invited representatives from Social

Housing Landlords, private landlord representatives and Walsall Council teams such as regeneration, strategic housing standards and customer engagement.

Members considered the findings and the recommendations of the working group report, which were both supported unanimously by the Committee.

4. Decide

The recommendations of the Committee are set out and the Cabinet could choose to:

1. Accept the recommendations as set out;
2. Reject the recommendations; and/or
3. Choose to receive a report in more depth at a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Respond

Following the decision of Cabinet, the Scrutiny Overview Committee will be advised of the outcome of their recommendation.

6. Review

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, further reports at Scrutiny Overview Committee meetings or Cabinet meetings may be required.

7. Appendix

Housing Standards Working Group Final Report

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Housing Standards Working Group Report



As presented to the Scrutiny Overview Committee – 18 April 2024



Walsall Council

Foreword from the Lead Member Councillor A. Hicken.

The Scrutiny Overview Committee asked members to form a working group to address concerns in regard to housing standards across the borough. As committee members, five of us volunteered to take on this task and have met over a number of months to examine evidence and conduct research. I am pleased to present the Housing Standards Working Group report along with a series of recommendations.

If this working group had been established just a few years ago this report would have looked very different. Over the last few years we as a society have faced the coronavirus pandemic, a cost of living crisis, and an incredible surge in the demand for housing. This has led to incredible pressures on both individuals and families not only across the borough of Walsall, but also nationwide.

A war in Europe has pushed rising energy prices and has plunged more residents into fuel poverty. There has become a fear of the cost of heating homes, which has discouraged people from ensuring that their home is kept at a healthy temperature. This has also contributed to less ventilation and worsening health conditions as a result.

The changing housing market and surge in demand has led to severe pressure on the housing waiting list. This has led to individuals and families living in properties which are not suited to their needs. This can range from individuals with accessibility issues, to families without enough bedrooms.

As we have seen during the coronavirus pandemic that people depend upon access to public open space. As residents increasingly live in properties that are unsuitable for their needs access to good local amenities is essential.

Members of this working group have had to work within a tight timeframe for delivery of this report. As a result, we have conducted independent research to understand the difficulties which were facing residents. It has been challenging to understand the issues and to work through possible recommendations in such a short window of time. As part of our work, we questioned social housing landlords, private landlord representatives, and also from teams from across Walsall Council.

As we conclude our work, it has become clear that the standard of housing across the borough is not only unacceptable, in some areas it has worsened in recent years. This report shows the something clearly has to change. Over the last few years fuel poverty has grown as a result of rising energy bills. We also believe that health conditions caused or worsened by the standard of housing is avoidable and should be treated as such.

As well as concerns over the number of people on the housing waiting list, and the unsuitability of some properties, we also examined the risks to those living in temporary accommodation. There is a real risk that temporary accommodation

can become increasingly long-term as the demand for properties grows. This not only places significant financial pressure on local authorities, but also increases the harm of people being placed into unsuitable properties.

Whilst we cannot solve our housing crisis without government support, it has become clear that efforts to increase housing supply will alleviate some demand in the market. This will create opportunities for movement in housing supply and demand and create more opportunities to allocate the right homes to the right people.

We were pleased to hear that one of our local social housing landlords, whg, have partnered with local health providers to proactively solve housing issues that affect their residents. Work done in this area will possibly lead to health benefits and put less long-term pressure on healthcare providers. We believe that this kind of partnership work will help increase the quality of life for residents and is something that should be encouraged and expanded upon with other social housing providers.

We have also found through our work that social landlords are more likely to be engaged with retrofit projects than private landlords. Retrofit projects are likely to improve energy efficiency of dwellings and as such, lower heating bills and create a more comfortable environment for tenants. Private landlords are often dependent on grant schemes to engage in such projects, which means that their tenants can sometimes be faced with larger energy bills as their homes are less energy efficient.

We were also concerned that the move to reduce costs by eliminating gas supplies from properties, also meant that more residents were forced into expensive electric heating. This inadvertently increases the risk of individuals and families falling into fuel poverty, as their bills can sometimes be around four times more expensive than those with gas-powered heating systems.

We also examined energy performance of both existing and new build properties. We felt that it was of vital importance to see retrofits on existing properties, but also improved standards of new housing, so that the condition of housing across the borough improved. We found that there is a risk that even new build properties will not be built to a high enough standard to prevent the need for retrofitting in the future. This will lead to additional costs that could have been avoided, and by their very nature, mean that families will be living in properties which could have been made to a better standard.

As part of our work to examine the condition of housing across the borough, we found that public amenity was of importance to those living in poor housing conditions. We have seen during the coronavirus pandemic that people value public spaces and that they can play a role in improving both mental and physical health. As such, we feel that investment in local parks and green spaces will improve the quality of life for residents.

Housing policies should take into account the need for open space if we are to build more housing. Higher densification of housing in existing areas will also

mean that more people will make use of green spaces. We should react accordingly and make sure that they are well placed to cater for their increased use. Investment in these areas may also help to achieve other health related targets.

In this report you will find further information and a series of recommendations that we believe should be considered by policymakers. I would like to thank all members of the working group for their input, and also to thank those who engaged with us in our work.

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Introduction and Context

Where people live impacts health, educational achievements, and life chances in general. Housing is a key determinant of health; poor quality housing being intrinsically linked with poor health. Condition of housing may either cause ill health or over the long term make health conditions worse. Addressing defect causes within homes can improve occupants' health and lower the costs to the NHS through fewer GP visits, fewer emergency admissions to hospital and fewer accidents that then require expensive and intensive rehabilitation.

Poor housing affects children particularly, not just in childhood but throughout their life. Guaranteeing all children, a decent quality home that their family can afford would transform lives for decades to come.

People should all be able to afford to rent or buy a home that meets their needs, whatever their income. Housing costs shouldn't stop people buying life's essentials or stand in the way of getting a job or higher pay.

All homes should be places of security and comfort, where people can relax free from risks and with the right support in place. Homes should support people's health and wellbeing, not make it worse.

Homes must be comfortable to live in, cheap to heat, and no longer reliant on burning expensive fuels for energy.

Investment in housing, and the dynamics of the housing market itself, have wide-ranging impacts on growth, jobs, skills, productivity, and financial stability at a local and national level. Housing strategies must actively support objectives for local growth and stability.

('Why We Need a Long-term Plan for Housing 2023' - National Housing Federation)

Terms of Reference

The draft terms of reference were discussed and agreed by a meeting of the working group that took place on 23rd January 2024. The terms of reference were subsequently considered at a meeting of the Scrutiny Overview Committee on 14th March 2024.

The full version of the Working Groups terms of reference can be found at Appendix 1 to this report. The Working Group was supported predominantly by:

Elise Hopkins – Director (Customer Engagement)
Appollo Fonka – Strategic Housing and Standards Lead
Nikki Gough – Democratic Services Officer

Methodology

The Working Group has held six formal meetings during its investigations, considering the views of several witnesses. Members also met informally to progress their investigations.

The Working Group wished to understand how Walsall Council could design and deliver a long-term plan to meet the following themes, as set out in the National Housing Federation's report – 'Why we need a long-term plan for housing'.

1. Every child should live in a good quality, secure home with enough space to play and learn.
2. Everyone lives in a home they can afford, and that makes work pay.
3. Everyone lives in healthy and safe home, which meets their needs.
4. Everyone lives in a warm and energy efficient home.
5. Housing underpins local growth and economic stability.

In order to achieve this, adopted the following approach:

- Who do you want to see?
- When do you want to see them?
- What will you ask them?
- What other information will you want to see?

Members of the Working Group had regular informal meetings to information share and identify topics for further consideration. This was feedback at formal Working Group meetings.

Membership

The Working Group membership consisted of the following Councillors:

Councillor A. Hicken
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor V. Waters
Councillor M. Follows

Witnesses

The Working Group met and interviewed the following witnesses:

Director, Customer Engagement.
Strategic Housing and Standards Lead.
Representative from the Private Landlord Steering Group.
Whg
Green Square Accord.
The Head of Regeneration.
The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Working Group Findings

Enhancing Energy Efficiency

The cost of heating a home has risen in recent years, this has pushed families into fuel poverty. The Working Group considered how the reduction of energy bills was key to improving not only comfort levels, but also the quality of houses. Residents can be fearful of adequately heating and ventilating their home due to the high cost, this worsens health conditions and affects the fabric of the property through damp and mould.

Members discussed the ways in which high quality insulation, on both new builds and retrofits, could be used to lower energy bills for residents whilst maintaining or increasing the health of residents and their homes. Concern was expressed that there was a large stock of older homes within the Borough, meaning that fuel bills would remain high, and the housing standard would remain poor.

It was acknowledged by the Working Group that some work had been done by Registered Social Landlords to improve their properties, Private Landlords often relied on Government subsidies to fund such works. Without sufficient grant funding available, the Working Group were concerned that private landlords would be unwilling to improve the energy performance of their properties. As the percentage of those in rented accommodation increases, this leaves an increasing number of residents at risk of higher energy bills and suffering from health conditions linked to their home. The Working Group would therefore like to see higher quality homes being constructed, with energy efficiency being a key consideration in construction.

The Working Group heard that the Council had adopted the Home Energy Conservation Act Action Plan, which sought to tackle fuel poverty within the Borough. In addition to working with energy companies to seek to bring funds and help to residents, the Council had a duty to enforce minimum energy efficiency standards in private rented properties under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015, which established a minimum level of energy efficiency for privately rented property in England and Wales.

Members discussed that energy efficiency and the reduction of energy bills for residents should be a key focus. It was acknowledged that an energy efficient home was more enjoyable and healthier to live in. The Working Group felt that it was important to encourage the adoption of better building standards for new constructions and the retrofitting of existing buildings with energy-efficient technologies. As new developments were created, communities could benefit from enhanced energy saving measures. It was acknowledged that homes built with better energy efficiency reduced energy usage and had lower energy bills, thus fuel poverty could be reduced. Members felt that in this request, consideration of appropriate energy efficiency should be done wherever possible, but with a particular focus on affordable homes.

Independent research was conducted by Members, and through this it became apparent that the current model of Energy Performance Certification was becoming increasingly ineffective in calculating energy efficiency improvements. Consideration was given to the suitability of the Energy Performance Certification (EPCs) and the benefits that this provided to residents. The Working Group was concerned that EPCs were not fit for purpose and suggested that a new approach to assess energy efficiency should be considered as EPC's were not effective at assessing the true energy cost of a property. This undermined efforts to create more affordable and healthier homes in communities. A Working Group Member provided information on 'Passivhaus', which was a system that used just 10% of the energy to heat a home compared to the UK average property would only ever reach an EPC-rating of 'C' due to the criteria used.

Members felt that it would be beneficial for the local authority to work with Registered Social Landlords to develop a comprehensive programme for retrofits to make homes more energy efficient. Members considered the role of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Local Authorities' role in managing the issuing of grants for the renovation of social housing and in developing and managing a retrofit plan for Walsall. As part of this plan, it was considered beneficial to examine which areas of the Borough were most in need of energy saving measures and to assess the cost of such a plan.

Quality of Housing

The Working Group considered the standard of housing in Walsall and was informed by the Strategic Housing and Standards Lead that the following types of complaints were most prevalent from service users:

1. Issues relating to damp and mould.
2. Excess cold due to lack of heating.
3. Falls around the home.

Preventing and treating damp and mould was highlighted by the Working Group as a priority. The Working Group considered ventilation and felt that it would be beneficial to conduct assessments to identify measures which could address any issues identified. This could include retrofitting older buildings with new ventilation systems or installing trickle ventilation.

Census data indicated that 7.8% of properties in Walsall had electrical central heating, which increased to above 35% in some areas of the Borough, and increased to 60-80% in some particular areas. The cost of heating properties using electric panel and oil radiators was far higher than other heating systems. The Working Group was concerned that an increasing number of tenants were facing fuel poverty, were struggling to heat their homes, and may therefore be fearful of allowing adequate ventilation into their properties. This could inevitably cause long-term health problems and should be a serious public health concern. The Working Group thought that improving the overall standard of housing by ensuring landlords were informed and engaged was important.

Members felt that poor air quality impacted on housing standards, and that a pro-active approach to the maintenance of properties to prevent poor health should be adopted by the local authority – this should include work to make sure that air quality was monitored.

The Working Group were supportive of a scheme operated by Walsall Housing Group which received referrals from healthcare providers if there was a health issue which could be related to housing standards. It was felt that this could be further expanded to identify such links and support that could be provided to residents.

There was an acknowledgment that the impact of anti-social behaviour on residents' health and wellbeing. Although outside of the remit of the Working Group it was suggested that the Council should give further consideration to the impact of anti-social behaviour on the quality of life of residents and how it could be tackled.

There was a concern regarding the increased use of temporary accommodation due to ongoing difficulties in the housing sector. This brings both a higher cost to the Council, but also often places families in unsuitable or unsustainable properties. It was suggested that where possible, and whilst demand dictated, reclaimed land and new housing supplies should be utilised to cater for those families currently living in temporary accommodation to mitigate this issue.

Promotion of Housing Standards

The Working Group learned that the Housing Standards Service in Walsall was until August 2023, provided as part of the Housing Standards and Improvement Team. However, this team had been incorporated into Housing & Resettlement. Members were informed that the work of the team and noted that the team was principally one of law enforcement to secure remedial works in dwellings and supporting activities for landlords to help them provide safe and healthy dwellings for their tenants. Providing advice to tenants and acting as liaison between tenants and landlords was also routine for the team.

The Working Group heard that the Council responded to queries and complaints from tenants and other residents regarding problem private properties and where appropriate, took enforcement action using a range of legislation. Over the past 6 years, the team had received an average of around 715 service requests annually. Most of these related to general advice on tenancy related matters and to unsafe and dangerous living conditions in privately rented dwellings.

Members of the Working Group were happy to hear that the Housing Standards Team had a close working relationship with other sections of the Council including, Housing & Welfare Support, Community Protection, Environmental Health, Legal, Asset Management, Public Health, Planning and Building Control. It also worked closely with external organisations such as the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and the West Midlands Police. The Group noted that there were often overlaps between housing standards work and community protection enforcement functions such as empty properties, elements of drainage, structural noise in residential properties, and rubbish accumulations and pest infestation in residential premises.

There was a recognition of the role of the team in regulating the private rented sector and to improve the standard of properties through enforcement action, education, advice, and grant assistance. This was achieved through property inspections/visits, preparing, and issuing enforcement notices, preparing and issuing financial penalty fines, dealing with service requests, processing and issuing HMO and caravan site licences, reviewing and commenting on relevant planning applications, and seeking to bring long term nuisance empty properties back into use.

The Working Group considered the Renters Reform Bill which proposed considerable changes to the private rented sector with the intention of creating more security for tenants. Because the changes were so significant, the Government had consulted with tenants, landlords and agents.

The Working Group heard details of the proposed changes as detailed in the Renters Reform Bill, which included the following: -

- Section 21 or 'no fault evictions' would be abolished. Landlords would not be able to evict tenants after the end of a fixed term without giving a specific reason.
- Rented properties would not have a fixed term, they would have a "periodic tenancy" which means a rolling tenancy each month and no specific end date.

Two months' notice would be required by the landlord/tenant for the tenant to leave unless there were issues with rent payments or anti-social behaviour.

- Rents to be increased on an annual basis only, requiring two months' notice and tenants would be allowed to challenge excessive rises.
- Landlords would be required to join an Ombudsman Scheme.
- A new 'Privately Rented Property Portal' would be introduced to give landlords and tenants information on their rights and responsibilities. The portal would ensure that landlords demonstrated they were compliant with lettings legislation for example, showing their membership of the Ombudsman Scheme, who owned the property and the property's energy performance.
- Landlords would not be able to flatly refuse tenants with pets unless the property wasn't 'suitable', for example a large dog in a small flat or ownership was banned by a leasehold agreement. Both landlords and letting agents should be able to require pet insurance to cover any damages.
- Local authorities would be given more enforcement powers to crack down on criminal landlords.

In the future, landlords would also be required to provide homes which were of a specified 'decent standard' and would not be able to reject tenants because they had children or received benefits.

The Working Group was advised that where new legislation was introduced, there was often no corresponding resources to allow for its enforcement. For example, the proposals to the sector through the Renters Reform Bill. If approved, this bill would bring in additional responsibilities that the team would have to comply to on behalf of the Council. As such, additional requirements, would lead to an increased volume of work.

It was noted that there was not a national register of landlords in Walsall, however, there was a mailing list of landlords who had opted to join. This was alongside a landlord steering group to discuss common themes between landlords, the Council and other partners. The Working Group met with the Chair of the Landlord Steering Group to discuss challenges faced by the sector and explore the support it needed to provide a high quality of housing to Walsall residents. This included a better partnership with the Council and access to information and support in a timely manner. Members heard that this was previously provided and had been of great benefit to the sector.

There was a consideration of the challenges facing the sector, which included the complexity of the regulatory framework along with limited resources and capacity within Councils. It was noted that there was a lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities among both tenants and landlords. There were concerns that due to an ever-increasing housing demand, there was an imbalance of power between landlords and tenants, and this limited choice in the market. Members also considered the fast-changing nature of the sector (Air BnB, guardianship, rent-to-rent).

There was an acknowledgement that there were numerous high-quality landlords and letting agents providing a range of property types throughout the Borough to meet a broad range of housing needs. Whilst the biggest proportion of the private rented sector was well run by responsible landlords there was a serious concern about the housing standards of the bottom end of the housing market and the vulnerable residents who accessed it.

Housing Supply and Demand

The Working Group heard from the Group Chief Executive and the Corporate Director of Operations & IT (whg) and considered the context and history of the social housing stock transfer in 2003. As part of this discussion, it was noted that Walsall's affordable housing stock had remained static over the last decade accounting for a quarter of the stock. Housing growth (5.7%) had kept up with household growth (4%) between 2011 and 2021 (ONS 2011 & 2021 Census), private sector properties made up 16% of the total stock.

The Group questioned challenges facing the social housing sector and was informed that demand far outweighed the supply of housing, despite whg being the biggest house builder in Walsall. An issue for whg was the lack of land supply, and often premium priced land. Land which had previously been used for industrial use was often uneconomical for landowners to sell, the Working Group was informed that construction costs had increased by 25%. Members also learned that it could prove difficult for whg to source contractors.

The Chief Executive informed the Group that a significant proportion of their stock was under occupied, despite efforts to provide incentives to free up larger houses. It was acknowledged that this may in part be due to close knit communities who did not want to move from their locality. To continue to build and invest more homes in the Borough it may be necessary to densify and design homes in a different way.

The types of homes being built was discussed and it was noted that it could depend upon the size of the site, although often a range of properties were built. Members wished to explore the use of modular homes in Walsall, however the Chief Executive stated that this type of housing would not necessarily achieve a quicker turnaround. This type of housing was not, by default, of better quality or cheaper by a significant amount to be of benefit. whg prioritised build quality, and it was stressed that a more energy efficient home had a higher build cost.

Members were informed that a key form of private rented property in Walsall was Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). The Working Group learned that the definition of a HMO included bedsits, shared houses, flats, lettings with their own facilities but which were not self-contained, and some types of poorly converted 'self-contained' flats. HMOs were properties that were occupied by a least 3 different tenants, forming more than 1 household whereby the tenants shared facilities such as cooking or sanitary facilities. The Working Group were concerned that HMO's may not provide a good standard of housing.

An assessment of HMO conditions (based on the 2019 Stock Condition Survey) had been undertaken and the details below summarised some key data:

- 2,030 HMOs (11.3% of all private rented stock).
- 356 HMOs (17.5% of all HMOs) have a Category 1 hazard.

Members discussed HMOs and were informed that in general they were both a popular and valuable type of residence for many younger residents and for residents on lower incomes who needed an affordable home. It was a more accessible form of tenure for many vulnerable residents than other forms. The Council was committed to ensuring that this type of accommodation, as with other forms, were of a good quality. Quality in this type of accommodation was represented by homes that were kept in good repair condition, not overcrowded, were safe and offered a reasonable standard of basic amenities such as bathrooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. It was recognised however, that there were landlords and agents who were not managing their HMOs effectively, however the Working Group noted the work of the Council to mitigate this issue.

The Head of Planning presented information in relation to a 'Article 4 direction' which was described as the removal of permitted development rights (meaning small HMOs would need to apply for planning permission). Walsall Council did not currently use Article 4 Directions to restrict houses in multiple occupation, however the Council had commissioned a company to gather data to determine if there was a need to apply for an Article 4 Direction. It was clarified that Article 4 Directions were for perpetuity. The use of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) was explored as a tool to improve the standard of HMOs. Officers confirmed that these could be built into the Walsall Local Borough Plan. When considering Article 4 directions, the Working Group felt that the following point should be acted upon and carried out:

- a) Conduct consultations with stakeholders, including landlords, tenants, local residents, businesses, and community groups to justify the introduction of the direction.
- b) Create detailed guidance documents for property owners, outlining the requirements and implications of the Article 4 direction including information as such as planning permissions, exemptions, and the application process for converting properties into HMOs.
- c) Allow a reasonable transition period for existing HMOs and those in the planning stages, providing clarity on how existing properties will be treated and any grace periods for compliance.
- d) Outline a clear enforcement strategy for non-compliance, including penalties and the process for addressing unauthorised HMOs.
- e) Provide resources and support for landlords to understand their responsibilities under the new regulations and for tenants to understand their rights.
- f) Establish a system for monitoring the impact of the Article 4 direction on the local housing market and community. Regularly review and, if necessary, adjust the approach to ensure it remains effective and responsive to changing circumstances.
- g) Launch a public awareness campaign to inform the community about the Article 4 direction, its objectives, and the benefits it aims to bring to the area.
- h) Consider collaborating with neighbouring local authorities to ensure a coordinated approach to HMO management, especially in areas where housing markets are interconnected such as the neighbouring Black Country authorities.

- i) Encourage the improvement of HMOs' sustainability and living standards by linking the Article 4 direction with broader housing quality initiatives, such as energy efficiency programs and minimum space standards.

The Working Group found that due to the lack of housing availability, residents were more likely to be in properties which were unsuitable for their needs. From growing families to people with accessibility issues, the definition of unsuitable was very dependent on the circumstances of the individual or family.

As the demand for housing increases and the availability of properties remains a challenge, the Working Group considered it important that a solution was found to these issues. Living in unsuitable properties could pose a risk to the health of the occupant and affect their quality of life.

Healthy Spaces and Communities

The Working Group felt that the promotion of healthy spaces and communities was integral to the overall wellbeing of residents and contributed to the social, economic, and environmental vibrancy of an area. Members felt that further work should be done by the Council to facilitate healthy spaces when new developments were at the planning stage. If new developments considered physical activity, social cohesion, and access to green spaces it would benefit the health and wellbeing of communities.

The Working Group considered extreme weather events and measures that could take place to reduce their impact on communities. The following methods were considered to be of benefit and could be investigated further by the Council.

- a. Flood defences.
- b. Heatwave mitigation through tree planting and reducing the urban heat island effect.
- c. Sustainable urban drainage systems.

A Member conducted independent research into the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) section on 'Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities'. Members felt that it was essential that communities were able to benefit from well maintained and good quality public amenities. As was seen during the pandemic, parks and open spaces were highly valued among residents and were beneficial in improving mental health and increasing levels of physical activity. As housing challenges continue, the Working Group considered good public amenities to be essential for health and wellbeing.

Local Planning Policies and the Housing Strategy

The Working Group received and considered the Housing Strategy, which aimed to deliver the Walsall Plan priorities and support the Council's other strategies.

Members considered its six objectives:

1. Increase housing supply and choice for our residents.
2. Improve the energy efficiency of homes.
3. Improve housing conditions and tackle rogue landlords.
4. Create and maintain resilient and integrated communities.
5. Promote independent living, and health and wellbeing.
6. Preventing and reducing homelessness.

Members of the Working Group discussed key targets that had been set to deliver the strategy and the progress made to achieve these. The Group noted key targets and deliverables set in the Housing Strategy including achieving 25% of affordable housing on all applicable sites, which had been accomplished.

The Working Group considered that the Walsall Borough Local Plan outlined the Council's vision for the Borough. Policies should promote sustainable development while protecting and enhancing the local environment. Members acknowledged that the Council was in the process of preparing the Walsall Borough Local Plan and suggested that this was an opportunity to influence and shape the way that homes were built in the Borough.

Policies in relation to 'Technical Housing Standards', particularly with a focus on aspects like the 'Nationally Described Space Standard' (NDSS) were considered crucial for ensuring quality, sustainability, and comfort in housing. By focusing on these areas, new housing developments could not only meet the minimum space and quality requirements but also contribute positively to the overall living environment and community well-being.

The Working Group considered the following areas of benefit:

- Regular review of local building regulations and alignment with the latest Technical Housing Standards and best practices in housing design and construction.
- Technical Housing Standards to emphasise sustainability and accessibility.
- Implementation of a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Technical Housing Standards on new housing developments.
- The balance of high standards alongside the need for affordable housing.
- Partnership work with housing associations, non-profit organisations, and community housing groups to ensure that standards were met in all sectors of the housing market, including social housing.

Conclusion

As part of the Working Groups efforts to examine housing standards across the Borough, Members have become concerned at the issues facing families and individuals. There is a large proportion of individuals living in fuel poverty, and the standard of some housing is poor. Preventing and treating damp and mould should be particularly highlighted as a cause of deep concern.

Improving the standard of the housing stock in Walsall is a complex situation which does not have a simple fix. New build suitable housing for residents is dependent upon land availability and willingness of owners to supply that land, which is linked to commercial viability for the landowner. Where land is secured for construction and homes are built to a higher standard/more energy efficient this is more expensive to construct and purchase/rent – which is again linked to commercial viability. Social landlords in the Borough face issues with land availability and cost, and demand far outweighs supply.

Retrofitting of older stock is costly, slow and can displace residents, meaning careful partnership working is needed if any future large-scale schemes were to be planned. Social landlords will need to consider if retrofitting older homes is cost effective and the best way to improve housing standards in the Borough.

It is clear that, all Partners have a role to place in ensuring that the current and future housing stock of Walsall is of a good standard. This work will be underpinned by the Housing Strategy and legislation which gives the Council the power to become involved where necessary. The Group noted that the issues faced in Walsall are replicated nationally, with no clear best practice to draw from.

Through the investigations and information gathered by the Working Group, several recommendations have been identified and are listed below. These include work to educate homeowners/landlords, the improvement of existing properties and the construction of new properties. This combined with the use of planning policies can help to improve and future proof properties for the future – providing a higher standard of housing for Walsall residents.

Recommendations

Enhancing Energy Efficiency

In order to improve the standard of housing in Walsall, the following is recommended:

1. That the Council consider a grant scheme or other incentives for property owners who improve their buildings energy performance.
2. That the 2025 – 2030 Housing Strategy contains priorities and actions on retrofitting properties to improve energy efficiency.
3. The Council works in partnership with Registered Social Housing Landlords and other Partners to review the cost effectiveness and benefits of retrofitting the housing stock in Walsall.
4. That Cabinet calls upon the West Midlands Combined Authority to write to the Government requesting that Councils be given the power to be more actively involved in the retrofitting plans for their area.
5. The Chairman of the Housing Standards Working Group, in conjunction with the Chair of the Scrutiny Overview Committee, write to Government to call for a review the methodology used to create Energy Performance Certificates to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Quality of Housing

To improve the quality of housing in Walsall, the Council should:

6. Launch public awareness campaigns to educate residents and businesses about the importance of good ventilation and indoor air quality, including practical tips for improving air flow and reducing indoor pollutants.
7. Implement a program for monitoring indoor air quality in public buildings, such as schools, libraries, and community centres, to ensure they meet health-based standards. Publish the results to promote transparency and accountability.
8. Extend the scheme operated by WHG in offering housing assessments for individuals with health conditions living in all housing types.
9. Integrate ventilation and air quality improvements into broader climate adaptation plans, ensuring that buildings remain resilient and habitable as temperatures rise and air quality challenges increase.
10. Include air ventilation as a metric in future stock condition surveys.

Promotion of Housing Standards

11. That the Council should consider the following actions in relation to the promotion of Housing Standards:
 - a) Ensure regular inspections of privately rented properties to ensure compliance with housing standards and use enforcement powers to compel landlords to carry out necessary repairs and improvements, especially in cases where tenants' health and safety are at risk.

- b) Run public awareness campaigns to educate both landlords and tenants about the importance of regular maintenance, the potential health impacts of neglected repairs, and the support available from the council.
 - c) Support community-based initiatives and social enterprises that provide free or low-cost repair and maintenance services, especially targeting vulnerable populations or areas with higher needs.
 - d) Develop a robust system for reporting and tracking housing repair issues within the private rented sector.
 - e) Offer training and resources for landlords on property maintenance, legal responsibilities, and best practices in property management.
12. The Council should consider the assignment of a link officer to improve engagement with the Landlord Steering Group and the establishment of a Registered Social Landlord steering group to improve access to support services for landlords and to share best practice and common issues.

Housing Supply and Demand

13. Building on the work of the Derelict Land Taskforce, a Housing Land Taskforce be established to:
- a) unlock the borough's land supply, to continue to identify underused, derelict, or brownfield sites within the borough for residential development.
 - b) Engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority and/or Homes England to utilise their CPO powers to assist with this objective.
 - c) Set a target for the completion of a number of Compulsory Purchase Orders on derelict land and empty properties each year.
14. The Council should consider the evidence in favour of applying for an Article 4 direction to provide a strategic approach to manage and control the number of HMOs, ensuring that housing standards and community cohesion are maintained. If possible, the Article 4 direction should cover the entire Borough of Walsall, and/or a particular focus on areas where the proliferation of HMOs could detrimentally impact the housing market or community balance. This should include the following objectives:
- Preserving housing stock for families.
 - Maintaining neighbourhood character.
 - Ensuring a balanced community.
 - Sufficient provision for cooking and washing facilities.
15. The Council introduce policies to control and manage the growth of HMOs in a sustainable and proportionate way – limiting the effects of over-supply on local communities. The policy should also consider off-street parking, the sandwiching effect, radius, and proximity of other HMO's.
16. The Council should investigate the potential to establish a local lettings agency within the Council to manage private rental properties on behalf of landlords, offering a guaranteed rent scheme to provide a more cost-effective source of temporary accommodation and better standards for tenants.

Healthy spaces and Communities

To create healthy spaces and communities, the Council should consider the following:

17. New developments should contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of community by reducing environmental pollution and by engaging with communities in the planning process.
18. Develop policies to deal with climate change prevention measures to reduce vulnerabilities of communities to extreme weather events.

Local Planning Policies

That in recognition of the importance of the Walsall Borough Local Plan and associated planning policies, the following points are considered for inclusion:

19. Promote higher standards of construction, in relation to energy efficiency, for new build properties in the upcoming Walsall Borough Local Plan and associated planning documentation as required, such as Passivhaus.
20. That as part of the Walsall Borough Local plan the following should be promoted:
 - a. Mechanical ventilation systems are installed as standard on new-build.
 - b. Heat exchanger technology to recover heat and therefore lower energy usage whilst still maintaining adequate ventilation.
 - c. New builds to exceed national standards for ventilation and indoor air quality. (This would include advanced ventilation systems that ensure a consistent supply of fresh air).
 - d. Promote the development of green roofs, walls, and other green infrastructure, which can improve outdoor air quality and reduce pollution infiltration into buildings.
 - e. Consider introducing air quality as a planning consideration.
21. Technical Housing Standards, including space standards, are integrated into the local development plans and frameworks, such as the Walsall Borough Local Plan. This integration should consider the specific needs and characteristics of the local area while adhering to national standards.
22. Formally adopt the Nationally Described Space Standard within local planning policies to ensure that all new dwellings meet minimum space requirements. (This adoption should be backed by clear enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance).
23. Ensure that the technical housing standards emphasise sustainability and accessibility, energy efficiency, water conservation, and design features that support aging in place and accessibility for people with disabilities.

Scrutiny Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Housing Standards Working Group

Initiation Document

Working Group Name:	Housing Standards Working Group
Committee:	Scrutiny Overview Committee
Municipal Year:	2023/24
Chair:	Councillor Hicken
Lead Officers:	Elise Hopkins (Director, Customer Engagement) Appollo Fonka (Strategic Housing and Standards Leas) Nikki Gough (Democratic Services Officer)
Membership	Councillors A. Nawaz, V. Waters, P. Bott, A. Hicken, Follows
Co-opted Members	Not specified

Context

- 1.1 During the first round of Overview and Scrutiny meetings, Housing Standards was identified as a potential working group topic. It was agreed that this Working Group would commence in January 2024.
- 1.2 Where people live impacts health, educational achievements, and life chances in general. Housing is a key determinant of health; poor quality housing being intrinsically linked with poor health. House condition may either cause ill health or make it worse. Addressing defect causes within homes can improve occupants' health and lower the costs to the health service through fewer GP visits, fewer emergency admissions to hospital and fewer accidents that then require expensive and intensive rehabilitation.
- 1.3 Poor housing affects children particularly severely, not just in childhood but throughout their life. Guaranteeing all children, a decent quality home that their family can afford would transform lives for decades to come.
- 1.4 People should all be able to afford to rent or buy a home that meets their needs, whatever their income. Housing costs shouldn't stop people buying life's essentials, or stand in the way of getting a job or higher pay.
- 1.5 All homes should be in places of security and comfort, where people can relax free from risks and with the right support in place. Homes should support people's health and wellbeing, not make it worse.
- 1.6 Homes must be comfortable to live in, cheap to heat, and no longer reliant on burning expensive fuels for energy.
- 1.7 Investment in housing, and the dynamics of the housing market itself, have wide-ranging impacts on growth, jobs, skills, productivity and financial stability

at a local and national level. Our housing strategy must actively support our objectives for local growth and stability.

Objectives

- 2.1 To determine how Walsall Council can design and deliver a long-term plan to meet the following themes, as set out in the National Housing Federation's report – 'Why we need a long-term plan for housing'.
- 2 Every child should live in a good quality, secure home with enough space to play and learn.
- 3 Everyone lives in a home they can afford, and that makes work pay.
- 4 Everyone lives in healthy and safe home, which meets their needs.
- 5 Everyone lives in a warm and energy efficient home.
- 6 Housing underpins local growth and economic stability.

Scope

In order to review the Borough's readiness to meet the themes outlined in the plan the working group will consider the following:

- 'Why we need a long-term plan for housing' - National Housing Federation's report.
- Stock Condition Survey 2019.
- Walsall Council Housing Strategy.
- Housing availability and need.
- Understanding the responsibility of tenants and landlords.
- Feedback from local residents.

In addition to the above we will also consider the readiness of other providers such as:

- Social Housing providers.
- Private Landlords.
- Housing of Multiple Occupation providers.

Equalities Implications

The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to housing, education, clubs, the provision of services (including healthcare) and work.

The public sector equality duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act requires public bodies, including local authorities and healthcare providers, to take active steps to eliminate discrimination and to do positive things to promote equality.

Who else will contribute?

6.1 Walsall Housing Group, Green Square Accord, Head of Regeneration, Cabinet Members National Housing Federation, National/local landlord forums. Feedback from local residents.

Timescale and Reporting Schedule

The following dates are based upon the need for the working group to be completed in the same municipal year:

Terms of Reference to be approved by Overview Scrutiny Committee – 6 February 2024

Draft report to be considered by Working Group – Early April 2024

Final report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 April 2024

A detailed timetable of meetings and activities can be found at Appendix A.

Risk Factors

The following table documents potential obstacles to the progress of the working group:

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
Short timescale to complete work.	Medium	Realistic expectations of what can be achieved. Clearly defined objectives and timetable.
Social Landlords are not able to engage within timescale.	Medium	Invite Partners as soon as possible, allow virtual attendance.
Objectives of the Group are broad within the timescales available.	Medium	Members complete research and information gathering outside of meeting – report back at meetings.

Appendix A Timetable

Date at 5pm.	Activity
23 rd January	Initial meeting – Terms of Reference agreed.
6 th February	Terms of Reference presented to Scrutiny Overview Committee.
13 th February	Information and evidence gathering by Working Group.
26 th February	Information and evidence gathering by Working Group.
12 th March	Information and evidence gathering by Working Group.
21 st March	Information and evidence gathering by Working Group.
8 th April	Draft conclusions and recommendations agreed by Group.
18 th April	Present final report and recommendations to Scrutiny Overview Committee.

Cabinet – 17 July 2024

Recommendations from Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Primary Care Access and GP Access Working Group

Portfolio: Councillor Flint – Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing

Related Portfolios: Councillor Pedley – Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

Service: Public Health

Wards: All

Key decision: N/A

Forward plan: N/A

1. Aim

To receive recommendations from the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee made on 4 April 2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the recommendations of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee as contained within the Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group Final Report (see attached);
- 2.2 That, the Cabinet, supports the recommendations of Working Group in relation to those made to the Black Country Integrated Care Board, NHS England and the Department for Health and Social Care;
- 2.3 That, in connection with (2) above, the Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces and the Chair of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee jointly write to NHS England and the Department of Social Care and Health respectively in relation to the recommendations made to them.

3. Report detail – know

At its meeting of 4 April 2024, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the final report of the Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group which was established on the 27 July 2023. The Working Group reviewed the current models of GP service delivery, planned national changes and local initiatives. There was also a focus on digitisation of services and the national work force strategy. Due to the complexity of the topics explored the recommendations of the Working Group were split into three parts, those for: The

Cabinet, The Black Country Integrated Care Board and, NHS England and The Department of Health and Social Care.

Members considered the findings and the recommendations of the working group report, which were both supported unanimously by the Committee.

The Committee requested that the report's recommendations, be considered by the Cabinet and applicable recommendations in relation to the Black Country Integrated Care Board, NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care be forwarded for their consideration.

4. Decide

The recommendations of the Committee are set out and the Cabinet could choose to:

1. Accept the recommendations as set out;
2. Reject the recommendations; and/or
3. Choose to receive a report in more depth at a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Respond

Following the decision of Cabinet, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be advised of the outcome of their recommendation.

6. Review

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, further reports at Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings or Cabinet meetings may be required.

7. Appendix

Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group Final Report

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Primary Care Access and GP Service Working Group



Walsall Council

Foreword

Increasing pressure on GP practices and primary care services has come to the forefront in recent years with a feeling of general dissatisfaction in the delivery of publicly run health services both nationally and locally. This dissatisfaction has become more pronounced and acute since the COVID-19 Pandemic in which the NHS was put under immense pressure. The subsequent adaptations to the Pandemic and the ongoing changes to health service delivery has left many residents feeling left behind and frustrated with services, in particular in relation to the accessibility of GP services.

Thus, the Working Group were driven to understand the current climate in which GP practices operated, changes that were planned and/or already being implemented with a focus on the increasing amount of digitisation and the recruitment and retention of clinicians. A wide range of evidence was received by the Group which informed its conclusions and recommendations.

The Group hopes that through its recommendations to the Council, the Black Country Integrated Care Board (BCICB), NHS England, and Department for Health and Social Care that improvements can be made that will benefit all residents in accessing GP services and primary care. In addition, it is hoped that the recommendations will bolster the ongoing work to drive improvements and reduce inequalities in access.

I would like to thank the witnesses who have given their time and advice to the Working Group, as well as the support of officers, Jack Thompson, Dr Nadia Inglis, Andrew Osborn, Deborah Hipkins, Ruth Smith, Helen Billings and Matthew Powis. I would also like to thank Members of the Working Group for their constructive feedback, analytical approach, and their passion in helping to find solutions to the problems residents face in accessing primary care and GP services.



Councillor Khizar Hussain

Chair, Primary Care and GP Access Working Group

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Introduction

At its meeting on the 28 September 2023, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered issues surrounding patient access to Primary Care and General Practice (GP) Services following a number of previous discussions about the subject. The Committee noted that there had been increased pressure on Primary Care access, including general practice, pharmacy, optometry and dentistry services nationally and locally since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The increased pressure had made it harder for residents to secure appointments with GPs and other clinicians in a timely manner, causing frustration and affecting health outcomes. This was coupled with increased pressure in other parts of the health system, which had increased wait times for referrals, elective care and mental health services which in turn added pressure to GP Practices. The Committee therefore sought to establish a Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group, which would focus mainly on general practice.

Members of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already been consulted on the ongoing national work to improve access to GP services such as the General Practice Improvement Programme and efforts at the Black Country Integrated Care Board (BCICB) level, such as moving all practices to a digital telephone system. However, it was felt that more work was needed to address ongoing issues with access and that some of the changes already being made were leaving some residents behind.

Therefore, the Working Group sort to review the current GP commissioning model so as to understand what changes had taken place for GPs. In addition, Members wished to explore the current issues raised by residents with a particular focus on vulnerable residents and investigate where improvements could be made.

Terms of Reference

The draft terms of reference were discussed and agreed by a meeting of the Working Group that took place on 27 July 2023. The terms of reference were subsequently approved at a meeting of the Scrutiny Overview Committee 7 December 2023.

The full version of the Working Group's terms of reference can be found at **Appendix 1** to this report. The Working Group was supported predominantly by:

Andrew Osborn	Director of Commissioning
Dr Nadia Inglis	Interim Director of Public Health
Matthew Powis	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jack Thompson	Democratic Services Officer

Membership

The Working Group membership consisted of the following Councillors:

Councillor K. Hussain (Chair of the Working Group)
Councillor P. Gill
Councillor R. Martin
Councillor R.K. Mehmi
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor A. Nawaz

Witnesses

Deborah Hipkins	Head of Primary Care and Place for Walsall (Black Country Integrated Care Board)
Ruth Smith	Primary Care Commissioning Manager (Black Country Integrated Care)
Helen Billings	Head of Partnerships (Black Country Integrated Care Board)
Joanne Wright	Project Lead (Walsall Connected)
Dr Paulina Ramirez	Assistant Professor of International Business (University of Birmingham)
Emma Sharman	Digital Inequalities Lead (Black Country Integrated Care Board)
Nicola Waite	Resilient Communities Lead (Walsall Housing Group)
Fran Freeman	Senior Project Manager (Black Country Integrated Care Board)
Andrea Smith	Head of Integrated Commissioning (Black Country Integrated Care Board)
Elise Hopkins	Director of Customer Engagement (Walsall Council)
Rehan Symonds	Healthwave Hub

Findings

The Working Group received information mainly from the BCICB and the Walsall Together team on the current services being offered and national and local changes taking place to GP services. In addition, the Working Group reviewed national documents and publicly available data.

Current service delivery and data

The Working Group received information on the different types of GP contracts commissioned through BCICB and core parts of GP contracts. The core parts of the General Practice contract include:

- Agreement of the geographical or population area the practice will cover.
- Requirement for the practice to maintain a list of patients for the area and under what circumstances a patient might be removed from its register.
- Establishment of the essential medical services a general practice must provide to its patients.
- Set standards for premises and workforce and requirements for inspection and oversight.
- An outline of expectations for public and patient involvement.
- Provision of a list of key policies including indemnity, complaints, liability, insurance, clinical governance and termination of the contract.

There are two different GP contracts commissioned in Walsall:

1. General Medical Services (GMS): This contract can either be held by an individual medical practitioner or two or more individuals practising as a partnership where at least one partner is a medical practitioner, or a company limited by shares. These contracts last in perpetuity and payments are made based on a list size.
2. Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS): This contract can be held by a range of individuals or organisations. These contracts are time limited and will have an end date. These contracts are usually awarded through a competitive procurement process and the payment structure will vary for each contract.

In Walsall, there were six practices who held an APMS contract and forty-four who held a GMS contract. It was noted that contracts are updated as a minimum once a year with nationally negotiated contract variations.

There were fifty GP practices operating within the Borough and these were separated into seven Primary Care Networks (PCNs). The breakdown of the seven PCNs and GP practices under each can be found in **Appendix 2**. In addition to the two current GP commissioned contracts, additional services were contracted to GP practices both locally and nationally through the Direct Enhancement Service Contract, the Quality and Outcomes Framework and the Primary Care Offer. There were eight locally commissioned schemes provided by the BCICB. More information

on these additional national and local commissioned services can be found in **Appendix 3.**

Data provided by the BCICB showed the number of patients registered with GP practices within the Borough in October 2022 and October 2023 and the number of GPs working within the Borough.

Primary Medical Services - Workforce Data				
	2022	2023		
Total Patients	297840	305979		
	2022		2023	
	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE
GP - Total	245	177.18	249	181.47
GP - Senior Partner	33	28.03	31	25.73
GP - Partner	79	58.01	80	59.08
GP - Salaried	59	35.95	57	32.79
GPs - 60-64 (excludes locums)	16		17	
GPs - 65-69 (excludes locums)	6		5	
GPs - 70 plus (excludes locums)	8		8	

It was noted that GP practices were paid for each patient registered and not per appointment offered, moreover, according to The King's Fund the average cost of a GP appointment in 2021/22 was £42.¹

Members were then informed of the inspection process for GP Practices. Practices rated good and outstanding by the Care Quality Commission² would be reviewed once every twelve months, whereas those rated poor would be inspected every twelve months and those rated inadequate every six months. Healthwatch Walsall also carried out 'Enter and View' inspections of Practices and collected feedback from patients. More information on Healthwatch and its recent report can be found in **Appendix 4.**

Data from the GP Patient Survey³ was also considered. It was highlighted that this was an independent national survey carried out by Ipsos Mori on behalf of NHS England. The data showed that Walsall, compared to national and Black Country level data, performed worse and better respectively in terms of patient satisfaction. The data also showed that the decrease in patient satisfaction since 2020, was more marked in Walsall than the national figures, but similar to the decrease for the Black Country.

The graphs below show the levels of satisfaction for GP practices from 2020 to 2023. The first graph shows the break down at the national (England), Black Country and Borough level. The second shows the breakdown between the seven PCNs in the Borough, with lower satisfaction levels in the South 1, South 2 and North PCNs.

¹ NHS: Key Facts And Figures | The King's Fund ([kingsfund.org.uk](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk))

² How we monitor GP practices - Care Quality Commission ([cqc.org.uk](https://www.cqc.org.uk))

³ GP Patient Survey (gp-patient.co.uk)

As part of their role, Healthwatch Walsall carried out 'Enter and View' inspections of practices in the Borough and would collect patient feedback directly. There was a mix of feedback from patients with some positive and some negative feedback being expressed. Some examples of this feedback are listed below:

*"Last 6 months appointments have increased, no issues getting appointments"*⁴

*"Telephone issues getting through sometimes"*⁴

*"Get called back, no issues with appointments"*⁵

*"Train receptionists – can be rude"*⁵

*"Staff always accommodating"*⁶

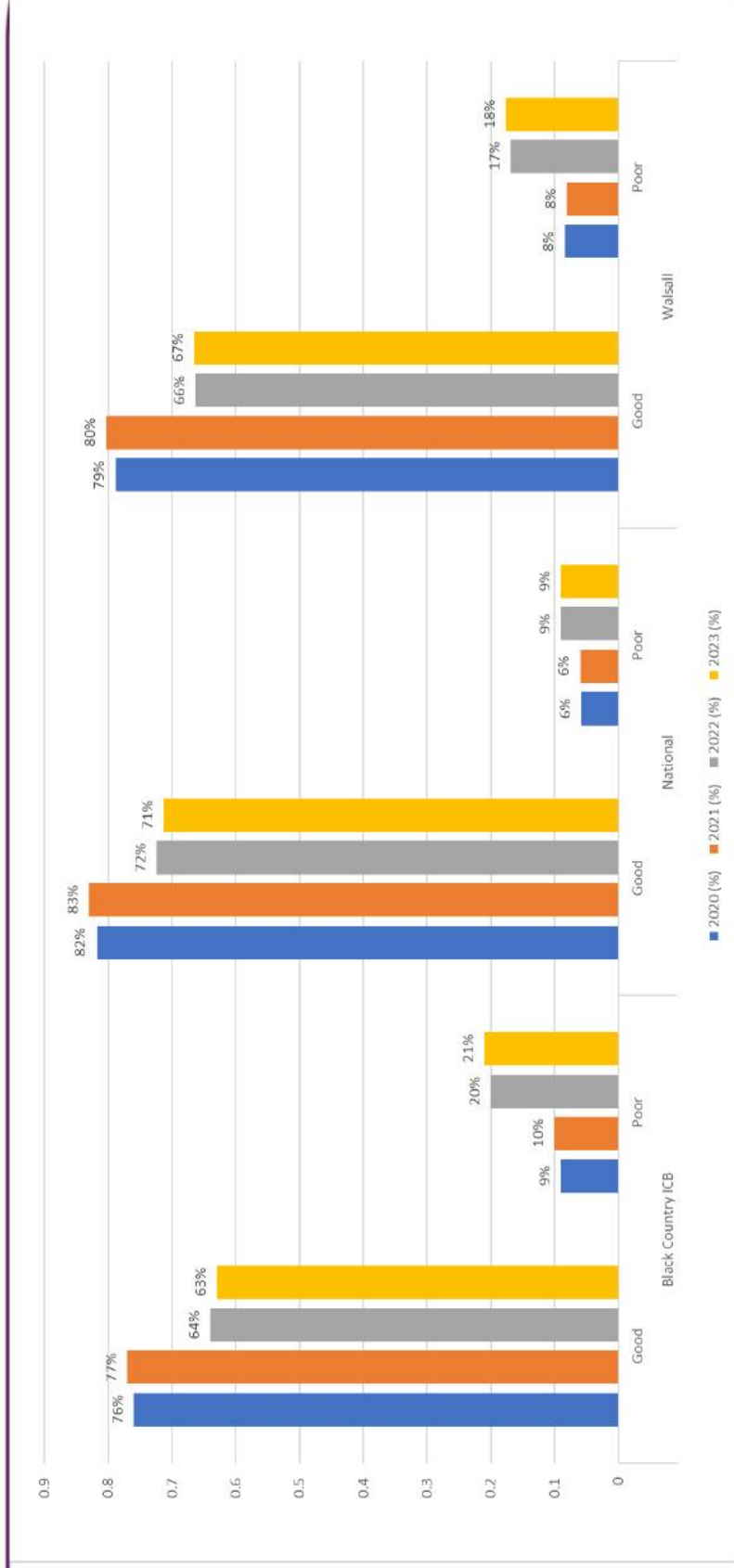
*"Can't get GP, can't get through on phone, don't use I.T."*⁶

⁴ [Final 301123 Palfrey Health Centre \(1\).pdf \(healthwatchwalsall.co.uk\)](#)

⁵ [020823 Final Pleck Health Centre.pdf \(healthwatchwalsall.co.uk\)](#)

⁶ [BFP FINAL report 310523 0.pdf \(healthwatchwalsall.co.uk\)](#)⁶

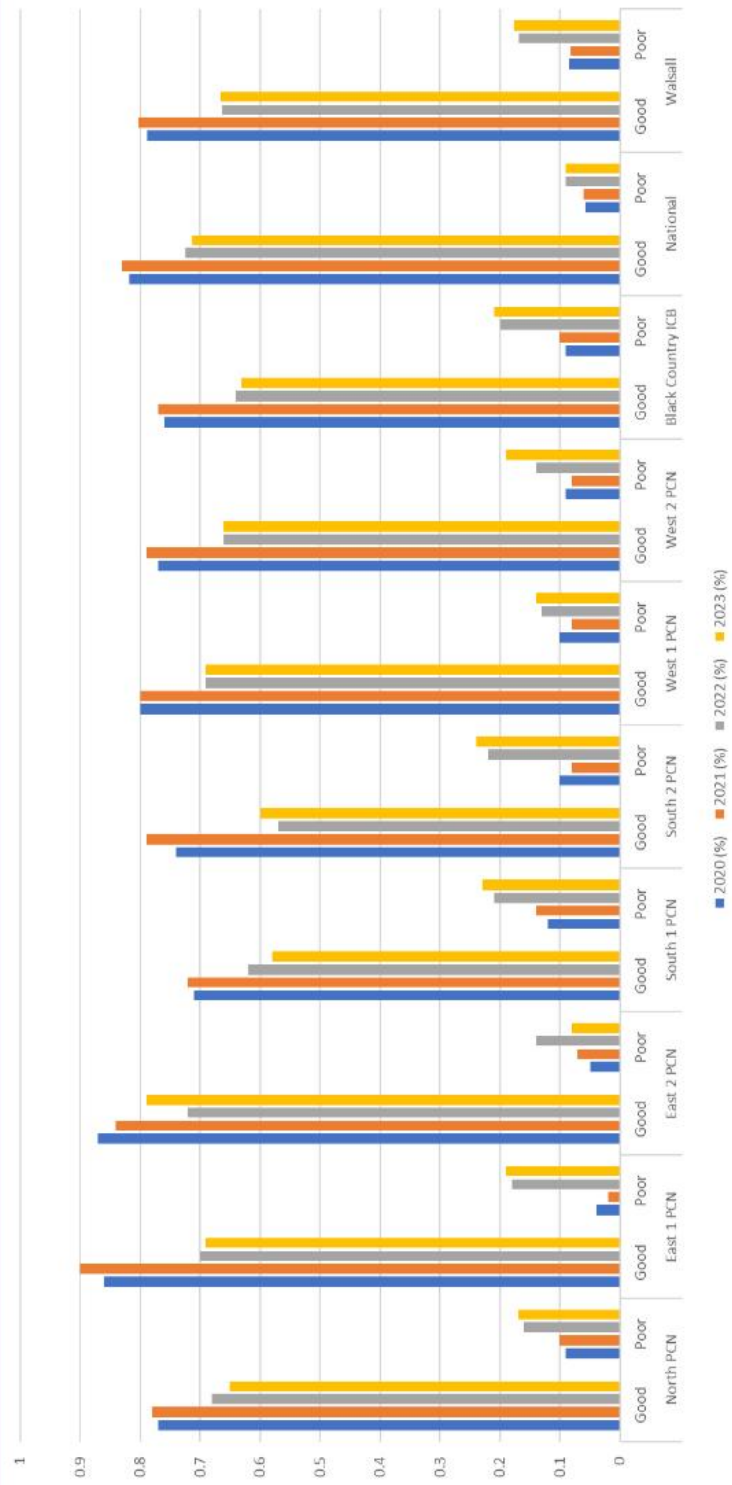
Overall, how would you describe your experience of your GP practice



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST, OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

Overall, how would you describe your experience of your GP practice



Ongoing changes

With the aid of BCICB colleagues, the Working Group received a comprehensive report containing recent appointment data, how GP contracts had changed, and how changes are being made to improve access including the national model for Modern General Practice.

Members learned that there had been a 16% increase in the number of appointments offered from 2022 to 2023. In addition, all but nine of the GP practices within the Borough had updated their websites to improve access to information for patients.

The Working Group expressed a particular interest in appointment methodology. They were advised that the introduction of the Modern General Practice⁷ model would support Practices in providing the best appointment options for patients whilst achieving efficiencies. Furthermore, the introduction of The Modern General Practice Model by NHS England would enable practices to:

- see all patient need, by providing inclusive, straightforward online and telephone access.
- understand all need through structured information gathering.
- prioritise and allocate need safely and equitably (including continuity of care).
- make best use of other primary care services and the multi-professional team.
- improve the efficiency of their processes and reduce duplication.

Equity of access is key to a delivery of a modern and effective primary care system. Access to GPs is known to be poorer in areas with more deprived communities, linked both to community and staffing related⁸ factors.

The Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care⁹ underpinned the Modern General Practice model and outlined the practice steps that would be implemented to achieve the ambitions of the model.

Members of the Working Group were particularly focused on the proposed changes to the triage process in General Practice and that patients would now be required to complete an online form or engage with a receptionist to ascertain what medical help they require. Following this the patient would then be clinically triaged by a GP. This new method of triage was also known as 'Total Triage'. In practice, this would be mean:

1. If their need is clinically urgent it should be assessed on the same day by a telephone or face-to-face appointment. If the patient contacts their practice in the afternoon they may be assessed on the next day, where clinically appropriate.

⁷ [NHS England » Modern general practice model](#)

⁸ [Tackling the inverse care law | Health Foundation](#)

⁹ [NHS England » Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care](#)

2. If their need is not urgent, but it requires a telephone or face-to-face appointment, this should be scheduled within two weeks.
3. Where appropriate, patients will be signposted to self-care or other local services (e.g. community pharmacy or self-referral services).

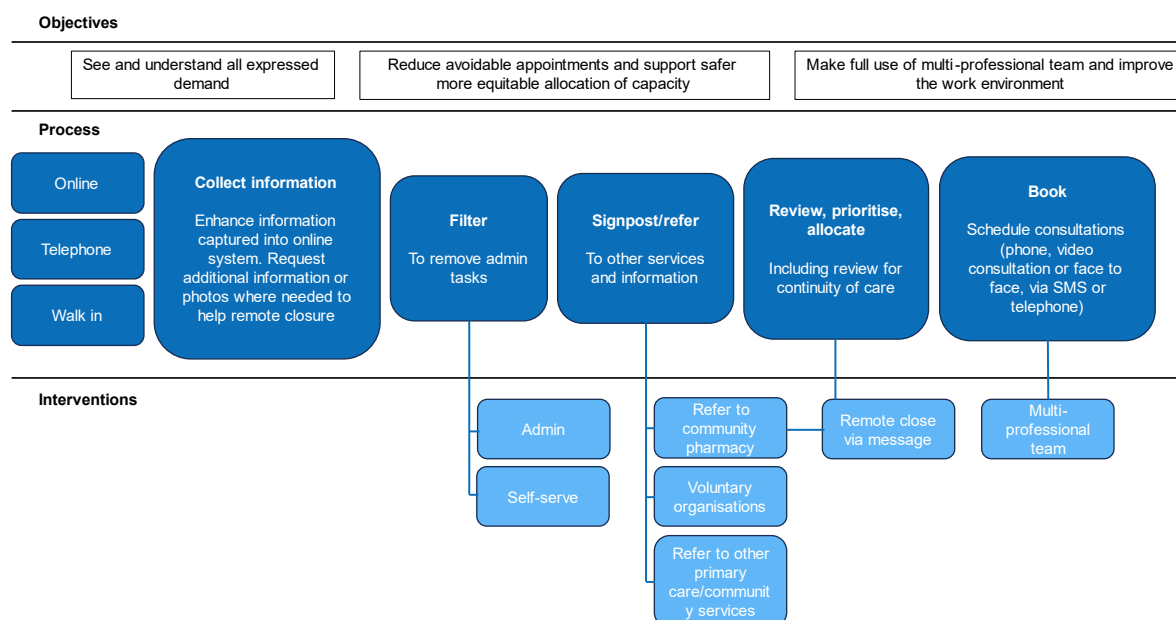


Figure 1 - visual representation of the Modern General Practice Model (BCICB)

Additionally, the BCICB was supporting practices across the Black Country transitioning onto the new model with 64% of practices across the Black Country having completed a baseline assessment to determine what support they will need to move towards to the Modern General Practice Model.

There were also planned improvements in building capacity within Primary Care, through the introduction of new roles such as social prescriber paramedics, pharmacists, advanced nurse practitioners and physiotherapists. In addition, there were plans to reform GP pensions to encourage practitioners to stay in general practice for longer. There were also proposals to change guidance for local planning authorities to engage with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) when large housing developments were proposed to ensure that capacity within primary care was sufficient.

It was noted that work was also being undertaken as part of the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan to cut bureaucracy in general practice with a focus in relation to referrals to secondary care. The planned work would reduce the number of administrative tasks generated by the interactions between primary and secondary care services, such as:

- secondary care carrying out onward referrals for an immediate or related need rather than referring back to general practice.

- secondary care ensuring that patients have fit notes on discharge rather than requesting they attend their GP practice.
- secondary care having effective call and recall systems in place.
- primary care having clear points of contact within secondary care.

There was support for the work being undertaken to help improve access and capacity at GP Practices, however, the Working Group had several concerns about the current training of GP reception staff and the process for ordering repeat prescriptions. There was an overall consensus that even with the proposed changes under Modern General Practice there were still a large number of inconsistencies between GP practices across the Borough and that there needed to be a more guaranteed level of service for residents.

Additionally, the level of inconsistencies and the planned changes would make it more difficult to navigate primary care for residents even if some of the changes would eventually reduce the level of inconsistency in the longer term. To support this, there was a desire for the creation of a toolkit to help Elected Members to support residents with up-to-date information on how services would be delivered, what they should expect from primary care and how to effectively escalate issues.

Members were informed of the increased use of clinicians other than GPs to enable and empower patients to see the right person for their needs. They expressed concerns at the lack of understanding amongst the general public of the roles of other clinicians and how clinical oversight was carried out, which they felt could lead to some confusion. More information on how these clinicians fitted into the primary care offer would give reassurance to residents when they were offered an appointment that was not with a GP.

Members of the Working Group were supportive of efforts within the BCICB to secure funding for a Black Country level diagnostic centre to help alleviate demand on primary care services.

Digitisation

The Working Group received a detailed presentation from NHS, Walsall Housing Group and Council Officers on the transitional arrangements towards digital health service delivery and what support was being offered to residents.

Members noted that whilst digitisation of health services could bring great benefits in areas of high economic and social deprivation, it could also exacerbate already existing digital inequalities. The main source of digital inequality was the lack of skills and confidence to engage with technology. To address this, it was highlighted that a local system of training and skills development was needed in tandem with ongoing support to enable groups to engage with digitisation in a sustainable way. The Group noted that assuming technology dependency based on generational stereotypes was not always accurate and that older generations were more likely to access technology with a stable support network.

Members also heard how the Council had moved to support the digitisation of its services through the Walsall Connected service and the work being carried out by the West Midlands Combined Authority in this area as well. There was also support offered by the BCICB's Black Country Connected programme, which offered support to people with limited or no access to digital devices and/or internet connections and those with limited digital skills. As a result, it was recommended that, following the successful rollout of the Walsall Connected Partnership, the Council offer support to residents in using the NHS app, subject to resource being available, as part of national digitalisation initiatives.

Members were very interested to receive information on the NHS App¹⁰ and the planned expansion of its functionality. The Working Group noted the following functions of the NHS App:

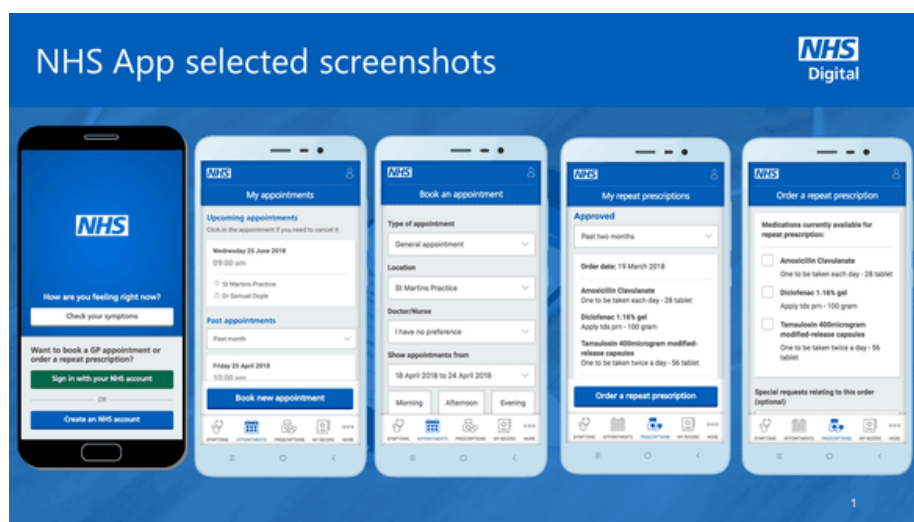
- ordering repeat prescriptions and nominating a pharmacy where you would like to collect them.
- booking and managing appointments.
- viewing your GP health record to see information like your allergies and medicines (if your GP has given you access to your detailed medical record, you can also see information like test results).
- booking and managing COVID-19 vaccinations.
- registering your organ donation decision.
- choosing how the NHS uses your data.
- viewing your NHS number or finding out what your NHS number is.
- using NHS 111 online to answer questions and get instant advice or medical help near you.

The Working Group also noted that, depending on the GP Practice or hospital, the App could allow the user to:

- message a GP surgery or health professional online.

¹⁰ [About the NHS App - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

- access health services on behalf of someone they care for.
- view and manage hospital and other healthcare appointments.
- view useful links sent by a doctor or health professional.
- view and manage care plans.



Members of the Working Group were concerned by the varied uptake of the App across the Borough. The data did however show that the uptake of the NHS App was higher in Walsall at 56% compared to Black Country Average of 48%. See **Appendix 5** for further information.

Taking into consideration the level of disparity across the Borough in relation health inequalities and health outcomes Members were concerned that evidence showed a correlation between poor health outcomes and digital poverty. Therefore, there was a risk that the digitisation of GP services would disproportionately affect those already experiencing poor health outcomes. The Working Group supported the ongoing work to help alleviate the potential negative effects of digitisation of the services but stressed that more work was needed to make sure that local systems of support were robust and were built with patient support and not imposed upon them.¹¹

Members of the Working Group noted the range of opportunities involved in increased digitisation, yet they were concerned that residents, in particular vulnerable residents, could be left behind by these changes. It was suggested that workshops in each locality of the Borough be offered and that digital support for using the NHS App be considered by the Council through the Walsall Connected service, subject to resource availability.

¹¹ What Good Looks Like for Our Communities Report 1, July 2023: Research Results from work by whg peer researchers (University of Birmingham & whg)-
https://www.biis.org.uk/files/ugd/ac4bc9_5fa8f8fb2ca545f2b287d09b457654f8.pdf

Workforce Strategy

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan was published by NHS England in June 2023. This plan was built on three pillars:

- Train – Growing the workforce.
- Retain – Embedding the right culture and improving retention.
- Reform – Working and training differently.

Members were supportive of the ambition to increase the number of training places for GPs by 50% to 6000 by 2031/32 and the ambition to train more staff domestically.

There was a concern that, without intervention, current modelling predicted a shortfall of qualified GPs of 15,000 full time equivalents by 2036/37. There was also support for making sure that all foundation doctors carried out at least a four-month placement in a General Practice setting and for a proposed new way of working which is to be developed to allow non-GP doctors to work in General Practice settings under the supervision of a GP.

The initiative to increase the number of training places for all doctors including additional training places for GPs was welcomed. However, the recruitment and retention of staff within primary care was seen as the key to delivering better services for residents and meeting current levels of demand.

Concerns remained about the current disputes between NHS workers and the Government over pay and conditions and the impact this would have on efforts to recruit and retain staff. The Working Group felt that progress in this area would be vital to improving the level of service delivery for primary care. Members also wished to see more promotion of health careers at a secondary school level, as it was felt that too much focus was currently placed on sixth form and university level students.

There were concerns that training for reception and other front of house staff may not be adequate enough to support vulnerable residents. There was a view that comprehensive training was required for reception staff to support them in helping residents navigate the changes to booking appointments and accessing digitised services so that vulnerable or digitally excluded patients were not left behind. There was also concern that abuse of these staff led to higher turnover which would negatively affect the service delivered to residents. As such the Working Group supported the sector wide zero-tolerance approach to abuse of NHS staff.

Conclusion

Increasing demand on health systems across the UK and a shortage of trained clinicians including GPs has created an acute problem for residents who need to access primary care services. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the accelerated use of technology and the digitisation in accessing care and risked leaving vulnerable residents behind.

The current data and services provided within the Borough showed the hard work that clinicians carried out on a day-to-day basis with increasingly high workloads. There was also an understanding that while there had been an increase in the percentage of patients who viewed GP services as poor, the majority expressed a positive view of services. The current changes through the Modern General Practice would deliver a better service to patients and help to reduce the inconsistencies between GP practices. However, the changes relied heavily on increased digitisation and risked leaving some patients behind. Moreover, some of the digitisation work that had taken place, for example through the NHS App, did not yet deliver what had been expected.

The data was clear that the demand on services vastly outstripped the supply of clinicians and whilst the planned changes could help make efficiencies in care delivery and triaging patients more effectively it was clear that to solve underlying problems in Primary Care and GP services an increase in the training of doctors and other clinicians was needed. As such, there was a view that the Council should work with partners to help facilitate this aim and make Walsall an attractive Borough in which to train and gain experience as a clinician.

Using other clinicians to supplement the work of GPs was welcomed but more work was needed to explain their role to the public and how the quality of care would be maintained and improved. Overall, there was a consensus that improving pay and conditions for clinicians would go some way to improving the recruitment and retention crisis currently being experienced by primary care.

To tackle the issues in accessing care requires a national approach, however, there were opportunities locally to help improve the experience of accessing care for residents and reducing inequalities in access. The importance of partnership work was also highlighted through the information received by the Working Group and there was a desire to see this work bolstered to support residents, particularly in relation to adapting to the increased digitisation of services. Many of the recommendations by the Working Group are focused on changes that would need to be directed by National Government through NHS England, however, Members reflected that the current system had not deviated from its original model as established in 1948 and could be easily modified. However, Members felt that this should not deter local NHS bodies such as the BCICB and partners from making local changes to help and support residents, reduce variation, and continue to push for reform at a national level.

Recommendations

Walsall Council

1. That, the Council work with partners to develop a toolkit to assist Elected Members to help constituents navigate primary care access.
2. That, the Council and partners work with Walsall Healthwatch as an effective tool for GP engagement and as an independent body for the public to voice complaints and concerns.
3. That, the Cabinet explore the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and assistive technology in Adult Social Care to help those receiving care to access primary healthcare and improve efficiencies.
4. That, the Council support GP Practices to reduce abuse of staff and work with partners to encourage health professionals to develop and train in the Borough. This could include:
 - a. Supporting staff by offering training on conflict resolution and lone working;
 - b. Supporting practices through the Safer Streets team by providing on the ground support for practices experiencing continuing problems;
 - c. Utilising community outreach to reinforce zero tolerance of abuse policies in GP Practices.
5. That, following the successful rollout of the Walsall Connected Partnership, the Council consider, subject to resource considerations, supporting residents in using the NHS app as part of national digitalisation initiatives.

Black Country Integrated Care Board

6. That, the Integrated Care Board work with local GP Practices on advertising and explaining Social Prescribing (including the ranges of schemes available in Walsall), and its benefits in tandem with clinical advice.
7. That the ICB works with GP Practices to modernise the way they operate in relation to appointment booking, triage systems and repeat prescriptions in line with national guidance taking account of the needs of their local population. This could include:
 - a. Booking appointments
 - i. These should be offered to be booked in person, via the phone and through the NHS App.
 - b. Ordering repeat prescriptions
 - i. Ordering repeat prescriptions should be offered through the NHS App, via the phone and where needed paper forms should still be available at practices.
 - c. Telephone systems
 - i. All practices should move to the cloud-based telephone system that allows residents to be called back when it is their turn in the queue.
 - d. The offer of both same day and future appointments

- i. Subject to triaging, all practices should offer a face-to-face or telephone appointment with a GP or other suitable clinician within two weeks.
- e. Total Triage
 - i. The move to the 'Total Triage' model of offering appointments should be consistent in its triaging, operation and staff training across the Borough to avoid confusion and frustration from patients.
 - f. Prioritising digital skills development at a very local level, through understanding and working with communities, as well as for GP staff to ensure patients adapt to increase uptake of digital options for appointments such as video consultation.
- 8. That, the Integrated Care Board provides an update each municipal year to both the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on inequalities in access and outcomes, and the quality assurance of GP Practices within the Borough, and any variations in quality.
- 9. That this report be shared with the Walsall Primary Care Collaborative and so that general practice within the Borough can engage in the delivery of its recommendations.

NHS England and The Department of Health and Social Care

- 10. That, the NHS App be the primary app utilised across all GP Practices to reduce inconsistencies with digital service delivery.
- 11. That, NHS England and the UK Government work to increase funding to ensure more GP appointments can be made available.
- 12. That, NHS England together with the Department for Health and Social Care strengthen the intervention power of Integrated Care Boards to intervene in underperforming practices. This should include powers, in exceptional circumstances, to directly buy out and take control of practices as set out in the recommendations of the Hewitt Review¹².
- 13. That, NHS England allow and create the following functionality within the NHS App: (NHS England)
 - a. The option to request a GP appointment by leaving a voice note;
 - b. Video consultation functionality;
 - c. The reason for the refusal/delay of repeat prescriptions and referrals.
- 14. That, NHS England develop a national advertisement campaign on the roles of clinicians and support operatives (i.e. other roles within GP practices) with the aim of creating a greater understanding amongst the public that other clinicians may be better placed for their care and that clinical oversight of care takes place.
- 15. That, the Department of Health explore alternative funding arrangements for GP Practices to allow the flexibility to increase funding to practices in areas of high deprivation and poor health outcomes.

¹² [The Hewitt Review: an independent review of integrated care systems \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674441/hewitt-review-report.pdf)

Background Papers

- The Hewitt Review: an independent review of integrated care systems - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642b07d87de82b00123134fa/t/he-hewitt-review.pdf>
- The NHS Constitution for England NHS Constitution for England - GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>
- Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care NHS England <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/delivery-plan-for-recovering-access-to-primary-care/>
- GP Patient Survey Datam GP Patient Survey - Analysis Tool <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/>
- NHS Long Term Workforce Plan – June 2023 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/nhs-long-term-workforce-plan-v1.2.pdf>
- What Good Looks Like for Our Communities Report 1, July 2023: Research Results from work by whg peer researchers https://www.biis.org.uk/files/ugd/ac4bc9_5fa8f8fb2ca545f2b287d09b457654f8.pdf

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group

Initiation Document

Working Group Name:	Primary Care Access and GP Services Working Group
Committee:	Social Care and Health
Municipal Year:	2023/24
Chair:	Councillor Hussain
Lead Officers:	Andrew Osborn (Director of Commissioning, Lead Health and Social Care Officer) Jack Thompson (Democratic Services Officer) Matt Powis (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Membership	Councillors P. Gill, R.K. Mehmi, K. Hussain, R. Martin and W. Rasab.
Co-opted Members	Not specified

1. Context

- 1.1. On 28 September 2023, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered issues surrounding patient access to Primary Care and GP Services.
- 1.2. Members noted that since the Covid-19 Pandemic there has been significant pressure on GP Practices and Primary Care Access nationally and within the Borough. This has made it harder for residents to secure appointments with GPs and other health professionals in a timely manner, causing frustrations and affecting health outcomes. Coupled with this has been the increase in wait times for referrals, elective care and mental health services which further adds pressure onto GP Practices.
- 1.3. The General Practice Improvement Programme (GPIP) is being implemented by NHS England and delivered by the Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) to help improve support for GP Practices to meet demand and improve patient satisfaction. In addition, continued work is being undertaken by the ICB to improve GP telephone systems and complaints processes.
- 1.4. There was a consensus that the Committee needed to establish a working group to investigate and review obstructions within the industry and work with partners to improve patient outcomes.

2. Objectives

- a. Review the current GP commissioning model, the National General Practice Improvement Programme and rights of patients under the NHS Constitution;
- b. Understand changes made to GP and primary care access in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and review delivery plan for recovering access to primary care;
- c. Explore the current issues raised by residents, in particular those who are vulnerable, in regard to accessing GP appointments and primary care access and identify salient themes;
- d. Investigate improvements that could be made to primary care access and healthcare pathways.

3. Scope

- 3.1. Consider the issue around primary care and GP access within the Borough.
- 3.2. Investigate and consider the actions of local health partner led services:
 - a. GP practices (commissioned through the Black Country ICB)
 - b. Walsall Urgent Care Centre (Walk in Centre - commissioned through the Black Country ICB)
 - c. Urgent and Emergency Care Centre (A&E – Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust)
 - d. Referrals and elective surgery (Black Country ICB and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust)
 - e. Mental health services (Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust)

- f. West Midlands Ambulance Service
- 3.3. To identify key points for the improvement in access to primary care and access to GP services within the Borough, and develop a joint strategy with partners to improve the healthcare pathways for residents.
- 3.4. Review delivery plan for recovering access to primary care.

4. Equalities Implications

- 4.1. The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to housing, education, clubs, the provision of services (including healthcare) and work.
- 4.2. The public sector equality duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act requires public bodies, including local authorities and healthcare providers, to take active steps to eliminate discrimination and to do positive things to promote equality.

5. Who else will contribute

- 5.1. In addition to lead officers and members contributions will be required from the following partners and stakeholders:
 - a. Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB)
 - b. Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
 - c. Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
 - d. West Midlands Ambulance Service
 - e. Public Health (Walsall Council)
 - f. Healthwatch Walsall
 - g. Adult Social Care (Walsall Council)
 - h. Child Services (Walsall Council)
 - i. Walsall Housing Group and WATMOS

6. Timescale and Reporting Schedule

- 6.1. The following dates are based upon the need for the working group to be completed in the same municipal year:
 - a. Terms of Reference – November 2023
 - b. Terms of Reference to be approved by Overview Scrutiny Committee – 7 December 2023
 - c. Draft report to be considered by Working Group – TBC
 - d. Final report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee - TBC
- 6.2. A detailed timetable of meetings and activities can be found at Appendix A.

7. Risk Factors

- 7.1. The following table documents potential obstacles to the progress of the working group:

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
Input from officers will detract from service delivery.	Medium	Identify a manageable scope.
A lack of engagement from external partners.	Medium	Early engagement to provide the best opportunity to identify a mutually convenient time for input.
Complexity of current overlapping health systems	Medium	Provide the working clear guidance on current systems and processes operated.

Appendix A Timetable

Date	Activity
27/10/2023	Issue draft Terms of Reference for consideration and comment
03/11/2023	Comments on Terms of Reference returned to officers
07/11/2023	Final Terms of Reference agreed with group members
07/12/2023	Terms of Reference presented to Scrutiny Overview Committee
TBC	Review the current GP commissioning model, the National General Practice Improvement Programme and rights of patients under the NHS Constitution.
TBC	Understand changes made to GP and primary care access in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and review delivery plan for recovering access to primary care.
TBC	Explore the current issues raised by residents, in particular those who are vulnerable, in regard to accessing GP appointments and primary care access and identify salient themes.
TBC	Investigate improvements that could be made to primary care access and healthcare pathways.
TBC	Review evidence and draw conclusions in preparation for a draft final report with recommendations.
TBC	Present final report and recommendations to Scrutiny Overview Committee.

Walsall Primary Care Networks

Walsall PCNs:	GP Practices
North PCN	Mossley Fields Surgery
	Bloxwich Medical Practice
	Leamore Medical Practice - Dr P L Kaul
	Khan Medical Practice
	St Mary's Surgery
	Lower Farm Health Centre
	Birchills Health Centre
	St Luke's Surgery
	Pinfold Medical
	Blakenall Family Practice
East 1 PCN	Parkside Medical Practice
	St John's Medical Centre
	Streets Corner Surgery
	Chapel Street Surgery
	New Road Medical Centre
	Holland Park Surgery
	Walsall Wood Health Centre
East 2 PCN	Pelsall Village Surgery
	Portland Medical Practice
	Northgate Practice
	Rushall Medical Centre
	Collingwood Family Practice
	Blackwood Health Centre

South 1 PCN	Little London Surgery
	Brace Street Surgery - Dr A Sinha
	The Saddlers Health Centre
	Beechdale Surgery
	Forrester Street Practice
	Pleck Health Centre
	Ambar Medical Centre
	Brace Street Health Centre - Dr Mahbub
	Brace Street Health Centre - Dr Kumar
	Broadway Medical Centre
South 2 PCN	Palfrey Health Centre
	St Peter's Surgery
	Umbrella Medical
West 1 PCN	Kingfisher Berkley Practice
	Modality Darlaston Practice
	Darlaston Health Care - Dr Quresh
	Darlaston Family Practice - Dr Khan & Dr Merali
	New Invention Practice
	Stroud Practice
West 2 PCN	Croft Surgery
	Darlaston Medical Centre – Dr Ismat & Imam
	Lockfield Surgery
	Lockstown Practice
	Moxley Medical Centre
	Rough Hay Surgery
	Sina Health Centre
	The Keys Family Practice

Primary Care Offer (all practice signed up to):

- end of life supportive care: practices to keep a register of patients within their last year of life and patients on this list should have an advanced treatment plan.
- carers: practices to increase the number of people coded as carers, offer the carers a flu vaccination and smoking cessation.
- Multi-disciplinary teams supporting adults with complex health and care needs: practices to identify the top 1% of severely frail patients to be referred to the multidisciplinary team who will review patients care.
- Frailty – practices to support patients living with severe and moderate frailty and provide a medication review, have a falls review and have asked consent to activate their summary care record.
- Diabetes – practices to increase the number of people reaching all 3 NICE treatment targets.
- COPD – practice to record CAT score, carry out a medication review and have a personalised care plan in place.
- Bowel Cancer Screening – practices to improve uptake of bowel cancer screening.
- Electronic Palliative Care Coordination Systems –practices to provide people on the gold standards framework register with information on their end of life wishes, details of illness and next of kin recorded either via Electronic Palliative Care Coordination Systems or Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment (ReSPECT).
- Practices are paid based on their performance against each of the elements.

Black Country Integrated Care Board – Locally Commissioned Schemes (LCSs):

- Electrocardiograms (ECGs).
- Treatment room (dressing of wounds including: surgical wounds, removal of sutures/clips/staples and compression bandages for skin ulcers.).
- Near patient testing (monitoring of bloods for patients on licensed disease modifying drugs for rheumatoid arthritis).
- Phlebotomy.
- Insertion, change and removal of ring pessary.
- Severe Mental Illness Health Checks (9 point health check for patients suffering from an SMI).
- Spirometry test to diagnose lung conditions.
- Prescribing Incentive Scheme.

Practices are paid on activity/performance.

Additional information on GP contracts and additional commissioned services can be found in the below links:

Document:	Link:
GMS Contract	PR00497-standard-general-medical-services-contract-august-2023.pdf (england.nhs.uk)
APMS Contract	PR00497-standard-alternative-provider-medical-services-contract-august-2023.pdf (england.nhs.uk)
Network Contract DES	Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service - Contract specification 2023/24 – PCN Requirements and Entitlements (england.nhs.uk)
Network Contract DES: Capacity and Access Improvement Plan Guidance	PRN00157-ncdes-v2-capacity-and-access-payment-2023-24-guidance.docx (live.com)
Network Contract DES: Investment and Impact Fund	Report template - NHSI website (england.nhs.uk)
Quality and Outcomes Framework	NHS England » Quality and outcomes framework guidance for 2023/24

Healthwatch Walsall Intelligence on GP Issues



March 2024



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Solutions

healthwatch
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Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care issues in Walsall. Healthwatch Walsall collect feedback from the public in Walsall about their experiences of using health and social care services and use that feedback to work with service providers and commissioners to find ways to improve services.

Healthwatch Walsall receives regular patient feedback regarding primary care services and were are pleased to be able to support the work of the Democratic Service Team being undertaken for the Health & Social Care OSC, a brief overview of our intelligence is included in this paper.

Intelligence Received

From November 2023 to date the following intelligence has been recorded. The sources of data include speaking to people through our community outreach work, website submissions, "Have Your Say" feedback platform and from Enter & View visits.

During the period noted above, the intelligence received is themed as:

- Difficulties in getting G.P. appointments.
- Attitude of Reception staff.
- Patients unable to see the same G.P.
- Lack of knowledge of Extra GP Appointments.
- Dissatisfaction about how being treated by the practice.
- Inaccurate information on patient record.

From our recent work project around the Accessible Information Standard, we met service users with sensory impairment/disability and there were a number of issues raised from these focus groups which are as noted below:

- Lack of appointments/GP access.
- Paramedics give advice and this is overridden by GP.
- GP and Pharmacy information not consistent.
- Electronic patient check in system no good to a blind person.
- No Audio at GP have to rely on names being called out
- Issue around having to book two weeks in advance to see a GP for an interpreter to be present for the appointment.

From the survey used for this project, we learned that 32 out of 61 service users had difficulties using GP services due to communication problems.

Enter & View

Part of Healthwatch Walsall remit is to carry out Enter & View visits to health and social care premises and we have undertaken visits to GP Practices. We speak to service users directly to understand their experiences and their feedback is included in the reports, the links for which are shown below.

Palfrey Health Centre: <https://www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/report/2023-12-01/our-enter-view-visit-report-palfrey-health-centre-now-available>

Pleck Health Centre: <https://www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/report/2023-08-02/our-latest-enter-and-view-report-pleck-health-centre-now-available>

Blakenall Family Practice: <https://www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/report/2023-05-31/our-enter-and-view-report-blakenall-family-practice-now-available>

All the reports contain both positive and negative patient feedback.

For the forthcoming work year, we will continue our E&V visits to GP practices. Our reports are shared with providers, Walsall place ICB, CQC and Healthwatch England. Reports are also available through our website.

Through our contact with patients, it is clear there is a lack of patient awareness of alternative GP access routes, such as 'Extra GP Appointments'. So Healthwatch Walsall staff have been able to signpost patients, relatives and carers to this opportunity.

In addition we have been able to update GP practices around the change of service provider for adult carers which has changed within the last 18 months as some practices were displaying out of date information.

healthwatch

Walsall

Share your health or social care services experiences
by visiting our 'Have Your Say' section of our website
<https://www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/share-your-views>



Contact us

Blakenall Village Centre
79 Thames Road
Blakenall
Walsall
WS3 1LZ

Tel: 0800 470 1660

Email: info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk



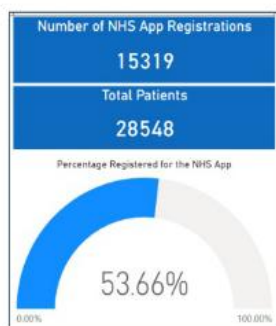
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NHS App Uptake by PCN

Data taken from Black Country ICB Digital First Dashboard (as of 16.01.2024)

(Number of Practices in each suburb in brackets)

Walsall East 1 (8)



Walsall East 2 (5)



Walsall South 1 (9)



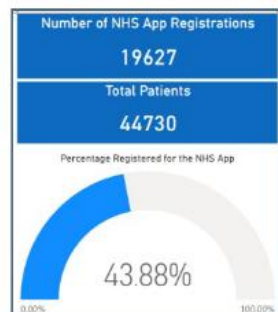
Walsall West 1 (6)



Walsall East (1&2) are particularly strong >55% across the patch.

Walsall South 2 has one of the lowest uptake Practices (Hatherton Medical Centre) c.20%

Walsall North (10)



Walsall South 2 (3)



Walsall West 2 (8)



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST, OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE