



Walsall Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall to be held on **MONDAY the 6th day of November 2023 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Public access via: www.WalsallCouncilWebcasts.com

Dated this 27th day of October, 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

1. To elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are not present.
2. Apologies.
3. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18th September, 2023 – **(pages 7 – 12)**
4. Declarations of interest.
5. **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.
6. Mayor's announcements.

7. To receive any petitions
8. To answer any questions in accordance with Council procedure rules:
 - (a) From the public: None
 - (b) From members of the Council:

Councillor Smith

Walsall Town Hall, located in Leicester Street, which opened 120 years ago in 1903 and designated a Grade II listed building in 1986, is a landmark feature of our town, with which so many people, perhaps especially those who have lived the whole or much of their lives in Walsall, have had a connection with at one time or another.

Given this and also that apart from the nostalgic significance, there is a great deal of local historical significance to the Town Hall, some examples of which include:

- The famous pipe organ, made by the local firm of Nicholson & Lord and installed in 1908 to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria
- The matched pair of pictures by Frank O. Salisbury which were installed at the back of the stage, commissioned by a former local member of Parliament and Freeman of the Borough Joseph Leckie "to commemorate the never to be forgotten valour of the South Staffordshire Regiments in the Great War 1914 - 1918" and completed in 1920.
- The memorial plaque to Walsall's three recipients of the Victoria Cross, John Carless, James Thompson and Charles George Bonner unveiled there in December 2009: and

The countless memorable events and personalities at the Town Hall over the years including the famous organist Harold Britton recording a concert "Organist Extravaganza in 1991, the presence of the Antiques Roadshow in 1997, the performance of Rock musicians there including Slade in 1966, The Who in 1966, Robert Plant of Band of Joy (later of Led Zeppelin) in 1967, Black Sabbath in the late 1960s, the heavy metal band, Jameson Raid, in 1980 and the rock band Reverend and the Makers performed there in 2012,

Given all that and much more, can the appropriate Portfolio Holder inform me, this Council and the citizens of Walsall, why this beautiful building is standing unused most of the time and what plans there are for ensuring that our Town Hall has a future as the town centre's Number One community asset, owned by the Council and vibrant with activities and events as it has been for most of the past 120 years?

Councillor Cheema

With many families struggling to heat or eat, and given the cold winter months are drawing in, will Walsall MBC follow in the footsteps of neighbouring local authorities, to provide additional help during the cost-of-living crisis to struggling residents?

Councillor Smith

Given that at a meeting of the Social Care and Health OSC on 13/7 23. I asked a question about the extent of debt with regard to outstanding client contributions to Adult Social Care packages, with the Committee then being informed that as at January 2023 the debt stood at approximately £9million broken down into three key cohorts:

- (i) One cohort amounting to £2m being “not real debt” as it represented the bills sent out from the Council that clients may not even have yet received,
- (ii) A second cohort of approximately 60% (approx. £5.4m) of the total (£9m) being a figure that may not be accurate as it represents all those recipients of care packages where circumstances could change regularly and therefore where original invoices may be incorrect and therefore possibly needing a long process to credit those individuals, and
- (ii) The third cohort which was described as “real debt” (the remainder of the debt, approx. £1.6m) where clients may be in dispute or where a death may have occurred resulting in delays over Probate/Estate matters,

and given that it was also stated that a Report on this would be going to Cabinet CMT “later this month” and a report “will then go on to Cabinet” within the next couple of months” and be in the public domain, can the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public, given that 3 months has elapsed since then, what is the present level of debt regarding client contributions towards Adult Care package costs and what level of debt is being anticipated as the Council prepares for its 2024/5 Budget?

Councillor Cheema

What percentage of goods and services procured by Walsall MBC come from the borough itself and what checks are being carried out on procurement contracts to ensure cost effectiveness and value for money, and how often are these checks carried out?

Councillor Cheema

Given the huge popularity of Willenhall Bonfire celebrations, can the Portfolio Holder inform me why the decision was made to axe Willenhall Bonfire Night, and why only Bloxwich and Walsall were given consideration and the go ahead.

Councillor Cheema

Considering the increasing number of electric vehicles on the road, does Walsall MBC have any plans to introduce a fixed number of electric vehicles charging points at Council car parks across the borough.

9. To confirm the following recommendation of Audit Committee:-

Annual Audit Report 2022/23

- 1.1 That Audit Committee review and provide feedback on the proposed Annual Report; and
- 1.2 That, subject to any changes arising from recommendation 3.1, the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022/23 be approved and that the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee for that year present the report to the next meeting of Council.

(Note: Report to Audit Committee held on 25th September, 2023 reproduced for this meeting (**pages 13 to 31**))

10. To confirm the following recommendations of **Cabinet**:

(a) Biodiversity Net Gain

- 1.1 That the legal requirement to deliver biodiversity net gain from January 2024 and the planning processes required for its effective implementation, is noted.
- 1.2 That Council adopt and publish biodiversity net gain guidance for Walsall, as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 That Council adopt and publish the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy, as set out in **Appendix 2**, to be used as guidance and evidence in the planning process.

(Note: Report to Cabinet held on 18th October, 2023 reproduced for this meeting (**pages 32 to 201**))

(b) Food Law Enforcement Plan

That Council approves and adopts the Food Law enforcement plan for the year 2023/24.

(Note: Report to Cabinet held on 18th October, 2023 reproduced for this meeting **(pages 202 to 247)**)

11. **Appointment of the Independent Remuneration Panel - (pages 248 – 251)**

12. **Portfolio holder briefings.** To receive a 5 minute presentation from the following portfolios:

- a. Deputy Leader and Regeneration – Councillor Andrew **(To follow)**
- b. Adult Social Care – Councillor Pedley **(pages 252 - 257)**

(Note: A member of the Council may ask the portfolio holder any question and another associated question without notice upon each report. Questioning by members is limited to 10 minutes for each report presented.)

13. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by Councillor **Smith:**

It has recently been made public that Noddy Holder, a “Walsall –born Rock legend” as the Express & Star has recently described him, with his roots in Caldmore and Beechdale and who holds the Freedom of the Borough of Walsall, has been battling throat cancer for 5 years.

On behalf of the people of Walsall, this Council sends it thoughts and very best wishes to Noddy and his family and wishes him well for the future.

14. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by Councillor **Nawaz:**

This Council recognises

- The importance of secure and stable housing for our residents, their families, and their children.
- The number of residents in Private Rented Housing has increased hugely in the borough of Walsall
- That the cost of renting a property has increased exponentially in Walsall and that this has had a major impact on our resident’s quality of life
- The importance of ensuring that tenants are protected from unscrupulous landlords and the continued threat of eviction

- The impact that an eviction has on a family and particularly children and their mental wellbeing.
- The increased cost to the tax payer to find housing for those that are made homeless.

This Council calls upon the leader to write to the Government to express this Councils concern and opposition to the delay in outlawing section 21 – i.e No fault evictions and other housing reforms and to stress that the impact of this will be felt most strongly by the children of Walsall, who need a stable and safe home free from the risk of no fault eviction.