

Cabinet Member Update - The Clean & Green Portfolio



Our residents have told us that they want Walsall to be somewhere that is seen as “a thriving, safe and clean place to live.” Delivering cleaner, greener streets and open spaces is a key part of realising this aspiration and something that I am passionate about as the Clean & Green portfolio holder.

Our Service Delivery

Waste Collection

Our refuse collection teams collect over 600,000 bins every month, maintaining a missed bin rate of just 0.04%. This is almost half the national average and a fantastic achievement for the residents of Walsall.

We’ve made approximately 79,000 trade collections over the course of the year, serving around 1690 organisations including service provision to schools and council premises.

Thirty bulky collection slots are offered daily resulting in some 7,500 collections being completed over the course of the year. The online booking service creates a simple way for residents to arrange a collection and the service continues to offer excellent value for money to our residents.

By the end of the financial year we will have collected over 110,000 tonnes of municipal waste. Between April and November we collected 18,000 tonnes of garden waste to be processed for agricultural fertiliser. This service was provided at no cost to our residents which is not the case in many other local authority areas. Over 90% of the waste collected was diverted away from landfill including over 64,000 tonnes sent for energy recovery and 20,000 tonnes sent to be recycled and reused.

Fly-tipping

Since April the council has cleared over 3,200 instances of fly-tipping on the highway and council owned land. Over two thirds of the waste cleared is household waste and operational teams work closely with Resilient Communities colleagues to take enforcement action where it is feasible and appropriate to do so. Education also has a key role to play in preventing fly tipping in the first place. In the last quarter, we have been trying a new approach to highlight the fact that fly-tipping is an environmental crime and we’ve already achieved some great successes.

Grass cutting

Around 2 million square metres of grass were cut every 3-4 weeks throughout the summer with work already well underway to prepare for the 2024 spring/ summer season. This work forms a key part of the approach to preserving the appearance of the borough and is delivered alongside our routine street cleansing, litter picking and grounds maintenance activities.

Street Cleanings

The council maintain around 520 miles of street scene. Residential streets are visited by a barrow team every 2 weeks with deep cleans completed every quarter using mechanical sweepers and litter pickers. Town and district centres are cleaned daily from Monday to Friday with additional weekend provision due to be introduced imminently.

The council provides around 880 litter and dog waste bins on the highway and green spaces. This year, an audit showed that the vast majority of bins are well located with appropriate emptying regimes - either daily or on alternate days depending on their location.

Weed Control

We are now self-delivering herbicide treatment of weeds on the highway, paths and in our town and district centres. The team have introduced a greener method of working, using an electric quad bike to deliver the treatment of weeds. This has already been noted within the industry with others looking to follow Walsall's lead.

Tree Inspections

The council maintain around 40,000 trees and various areas of woodland which enhance the boroughs street scene and create valuable biodiversity. A new contract for tree inspections is now embedding and working well to ensure that the borough's trees are checked and maintained in a timely manner and to a safe standard.

Fleet Services

Finally, our Fleet Services have continued to keep our operational services on the road throughout the year. They've carried out nearly 3,000 MOT tests for council vehicles and taxis and an external audit of the service found them to be in the upper quartile, nationally, in terms of their systems, management and operations.

Our Strategies

Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Stronger

Our five-year plan for improving Walsall's streets scene and open spaces will put people and communities at the heart of their streets, encouraging and empowering them to create the environment in which they want to live. The services the council deliver will be clearly defined, embrace innovation and reflect our residents' priorities. Where behaviour change is needed, the council will strive to educate and enforce fairly when people don't live up to the standards our residents aspire to.

We already have a great foundation on which to continue building our approach. The council has a key role to play in delivering services but the help and support of key partners such as housing associations and the third sector, will also be essential. We have to embrace new technology, empower communities, encourage positive behaviours and, in some cases, charge for what we do. No matter how hard the circumstance, together, we will rise to the challenge.



Waste strategy



In order to achieve our commitment to be a net zero council by 2039 we will need to manage our waste in a more sustainable way. A new long term waste strategy will provide framework for achieving this.

Developed in line with new statutory duties, as set out in the Environment Act 2021, the strategy will set out how the council will work towards achieving the national target of recycling 65% of municipal waste by 2035 and to send less than 10% of municipal waste to landfill within the same timescale.

The strategy will also set out the council's long term investment strategies necessary to deliver the required waste infrastructure to ensure that all waste is processed in the most sustainable way.

A key part of the waste strategy will include an approach to shifting consumer behaviours that promote the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle in the goods, services and products we buy, and will include ways of promoting those behaviours that make the greatest contribution to carbon reduction and efficient resource management.

Our Projects

HWRC and Transfer Station

In May planning consent was granted for the new HWRC and transfer station at Middlemore Lane. This £37.8m project will provide a state of the art facility with 100 parking spaces across the site including EV charging provision. The new facility will provide capacity to deal with our waste as the population grows, reduce queuing for residents and introduce a small trader scheme for local businesses to dispose of their waste. Work has continued to discharge the planning conditions, engage with the market, and develop the contracts for the design and construction.

MRF Joint Venture

The borough's recycling is currently taken to Leicester for processing however this will change in the coming months. The council is has a 20% share in a joint venture to build a new material recycling facility [MRF] in Coventry. Over the past year, construction work has been completed, processing equipment has been installed and we look forward to seeing the facility open in the summer. Once complete, the facility will be the most advanced MRF in Europe and provides a great example of council's working together to deliver cost effective services that embrace innovation.

Environmental Crime Scenes

In 2023 we have been taking a new approach to tackling fly-tipping. Following an approach from a resident led programme in Palfrey, the council has been trialling environmental crime scenes. In two short months we've seen three instances of fly-tipping cleared quickly and at no cost to the council. We are now rolling out a borough wide implementation of this approach aligned to our quarterly deep cleans.

Thank you

Finally, I want to conclude my first report to Council by recognising the significant contribution made our staff, our partners and our communities.

Our frontline teams, based largely at the Environmental Depot, work hard throughout the year, in all weathers, to ensure that waste is collected on time, litter bins are emptied, streets are cleaned and the council's soft landscape is maintained. Our service managers embrace innovation and the last 12 months has seen new technology embedded into the way that we work improving efficiency, transparency and customer service. A large proportion of our workforce are also our residents and they demonstrate genuine commitment and passion as they carry out their daily tasks in a borough that they're proud to also call home.

The council cannot create a cleaner, greener borough in isolation. Over the past 12 months, collaboration with our supply chain and partner agencies has continued to grow and is something we look forward to building on in the year to come.

Finally, our community groups and volunteers do invaluable work to supplement the services the council provide. The council spend £1.5m tackling the problem of litter dropped by an inconsiderate minority. Our local volunteers do a great job giving their support to us in our fight against litter as a part of all our efforts to make Walsall a attractive place to live, work and visit.



Cllr Kerry Murphy, Cabinet Member - Portfolio Holder for Clean & Green