

# Review of Achievements 2018 – 2019



Walsall Council



## Introduction

The council continues to face challenging times but recognises there is much to be proud of in our communities and in the commitment of our staff. The end of year provides a timely opportunity to reflect on some of the key achievements delivered over the last 12 months in the context of our vision that 'inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised' and our purpose 'to create an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential'.

We recognise there will always be work to do and as a council it is vital that we have a strong understanding of all the communities we serve and of what matters most to them. This is not everything that has been achieved; but those achievement that are most directly aligned to the outcomes and priorities in our Corporate Plan. Our Corporate Plan reflects our understanding of our communities and our strategic priorities. Outcomes included in the Corporate Plan are reflected in this document as we review what has been delivered during the last 12 months.



Ref	Outcomes
E1	An infrastructure and business environment that supports job creation and accessibility throughout Walsall, supporting company expansion, relocation and competitiveness through sustainable job creation
E2	Residents are supported to possess the skills required to enter into and progress in work, through the delivery of the Walsall Inclusive Economic Growth Programme
E3	Our town and district centres offer a distinctive and vibrant mix of retail, leisure, business, community and cultural opportunities, and new housing

Ensuring there is an environment that nurtures the growth of businesses, attracts additional businesses and supports local people into training and employment opportunities is key to achieving economic growth for all people communities and businesses. During 2018-19:

- Supported 426 people into employment and 723 people to improve their employability.
- Supported 26 vulnerable young people to access apprenticeships as well as people with a multitude of barriers such as learning difficulties, poor health conditions, disabilities and criminal backgrounds to access opportunities.
- Collaborated with Transport for West Midlands to support the mid-life refurbishment of St Paul’s bus station.
- Supported the inaugural Black Country Business Festival, ensuring Walsall businesses were well represented.
- Progressed the major £65m highways project at M6 Junction 10 with Highway England. This will increase highway capacity, reduce delays and support and encourage economic growth throughout the borough.
- Created the Health and Economic Board which focuses on supporting healthy workplaces and promotes the wellbeing of employees. The Board aims to mitigate the impact of workforce sickness on local businesses which in turn helps the local economy.
- Received approval to extend the Black Country Impact programme until July 2021 to provided focused support for 16-29 year olds.
- Walsall’s claimant rate as a % of the working age (16-64) population is the lowest amongst the Black Country authorities.
- Received national recognition for our Walsall Works programme when it was nominated as a finalist for the ‘Best Council Services’ category in the Municipal Journal Awards.
- Secured a £170k extension at Bloxwich North Railway Station to increase the capacity of the park and ride facilities, progressed the plans for train stations at Willenhall and Darlaston and moved forward proposals for a railway station at Aldridge.



- Helped facilitate the multi million pound investment in Wisemore Central, which has seen the development of a Travelodge hotel alongside restaurant / commercial uses
- Completed the £14 million retail scheme in the St Matthews Quarter of the town centre, extending the retail offer in this part of town and creating an estimated 300 new jobs.
- Begun extensive public engagement on the development of the town centre masterplan, which will help us to respond to the well-known challenges and demands facing high streets. For example, the impact of structural changes in the retail industry and changing consumer behaviour driven by technology and prevailing economic conditions.
- Selected as one of five pilot town centres across the West Midlands Combined Authority to be supported in a process to reinvent themselves.
- Invested over £4 million on a package of works across town and district centres to replace worn road surfaces and footpaths. This is part of our plans to improve the commercial centres of communities.
- Issued a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre. This followed a period of extensive public consultation and came into effect from 28 September 2018.



Ref	Outcomes
P1	Enhancing quality of life for people with care and support needs and those with long term conditions
P2	Delaying and reducing the need for care and support
P3	People recover from episodes of health or injury
P4	The most vulnerable are protected from avoidable harm, including treating and caring for people in a safe environment

Supporting people to live independently and improve their personal health and wellbeing helps to ensure they are able to positively contribute to their communities and the local economy. This requires close collaborative working with key partners and agencies such as Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Walsall Healthcare NHS trust, Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Achievements in 2018-19 include:

- Through our Walsall Together Partnership we have developed and implemented 21 GP multi-disciplinary teams (MDT). They are able to coordinate care and support for residents to meet social and healthcare needs on a locality basis.
- Introduced a new model of integrated health and social care intermediate care which has positively impacted on the length of stay for people in hospital and improved the patient experience.
- Launched the ‘just checking’ service which focuses on keeping people fit and active. This monitors how active people are and identifies any changes in their activity levels which may indicate they need assistance.
- Held 14 all age disability workshops for internal and external stakeholders to share best practice and develop new ideas for how to improve quality within care homes.
- Established a Quality in Care (QiC) Board to oversee improving the quality of care homes and develop a business case to extend the quality improvement capacity across the council and CCG.
- Worked with Healthwatch to enable 190 care home residents with limited capacity to express their views in the annual Adult User Survey.
- Established the infection prevention team which works closely with council, CCG and CQC services to oversee the quality of care, deliver a programme of infection prevention audits and provider link worker training.
- Achieved increased take up of the NHS Health Checks programme, Walsall is ranked 20th out of 152 Counties and Unitary Authorities. We have broadened this programme to include awareness of the abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening, Bowel Cancer screening and wider lifestyle services e.g. park-based activities.

- Delivered a variety of lifestyle services connected to physical activity, smoking cessation, emotional health and wellbeing, long term conditions and debt management through our 'One You Walsall'.
- Enabled 3,145 adults to access a range of physical activity programmes in 2018-19 including led jogs and walks and specialist community based sessions (e.g. hydrotherapy, cardiac rehabilitation).
- The Making Connections Walsall programme (MCW) social prescribing initiative continues its success. Additional providers have been awarded grants to meet the demands of tackling loneliness and isolation amongst the older and more vulnerable residents of Walsall.
- Commissioned the Change Grow Live programme to deliver drug and alcohol addiction services. Over the last 12 months it has offered structured treatment to 999 opiate dependent residents and 422 alcohol dependent residents. The service works in close partnership with Children's Services to safeguard children and families, and with criminal justice agencies to positively impact upon community safety.
- Commissioned Walsall Healthcare Trust to deliver Integrated Sexual Health services including contraception, prevention, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. The key achievement of the last 12 months has been the improvement of the offer and uptake of HIV testing resulting in a reduction in late HIV diagnosis, which is the most important predictor of morbidity and short-term mortality.
- Assessed over 150 business with awards related to food hygiene and healthy food choices as part of the Health Switch award scheme.
- Completed an audit in relation to oral health in nursing homes.



Ref	Outcomes
I1	Modern services
I2	A resilient council

To ensure all council services are efficient and effective it is important that they are modernised, resilient and customer focussed. A number of achievements have been delivered in 2018-19 including:

- Established the Walsall Proud Programme to ensure all council services are modernised, resilient and customer focused so that they are efficient and effective. The programme has been designed to be cross-cutting, focusing on the way the council works across all services. Programme will run from April 2019.
- Improved service delivery in Clean and Green including tackling environmental crime, bin collections services, keeping the streets clean, tackling fly tipping and maintaining the borough’s trees and green spaces. There have been a number of pilot schemes to look towards delivering longer-term sustainable service changes to tackle fly-tipping. This included education campaigns, free skip day trials across all 20 wards, free bulky item collection trials and opening tips seven days a week, including one late night opening.
- Contracted with a West Midlands organisation, the Independent Care Act Advocacy to develop local employment, volunteering skills and opportunities and realised a saving of circa £59,500 per annum for the council. This is an example of how we recognise the council may not be best placed to deliver all services and our use of procurement to improve services.
- Introduced a text messaging service in Taxi Licensing for easier and more direct communication with drivers, to try and improve efficiencies and prevent delays in the licensing process. Also continued to investigate and scrutinise applications for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage drivers licences to ensure that only those that the council consider fit and proper hold a licence in the Borough.
- Extended the opening of libraries so they are now available on Sundays and introduced a new Saturday service for the mobile library.
- Worked to improve the integration of Licensing into wider Regulatory and Public Health service to improve targeted action against non-compliance.
- The consolidation of the redesigned 21st Century Information and Skills (Libraries) service and a £4.6m capital investment in the Lichfield Street hub that is home to the town’s adult, children’s and reference library, a small café offer, the Local History Centre and Archive (from Essex Street), an ICT training suite and hireable space.



- Launched PressReader, a new digital provision enabling 24/7 access to full digital editions of some 7,000 newspapers and periodicals, free for library users.
- Met shortened statutory timelines for delivery of statement of accounts with an unqualified audit opinion and reserves intact.
- Appointed as the single Accountable Body for all funds secured by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- Managed a number of legal cases which, had the potential to negatively impact on some of our communities, to a successful outcome.
- Invested in improving our technological platform to deliver efficiencies and provide an improved customer experience. For example increasing agile working capabilities for staff to streamline service delivery.
- Progressed the implementation of a new state-of-the-art cloud-based business system to improve business efficiency and quality of services.
- Refreshed our Corporate Workforce Strategy which includes our behavioural framework, corporate values and refreshed appraisal process that ensures employee wellbeing is at the heart of the process.
- Developed our apprenticeship programme with over 300 new or existing employees accessing the apprenticeship levy.
- Launched the Assessed Year in Employment programme for newly qualified social workers in Adult Social Care.
- Stabilised our workforce in children services, reducing the number of vacancies and use of agency staff and established the 'frontline fast track to social work' qualification as part of our recruitment initiatives.
- Won three awards from Birmingham University's Social Work Department which includes winner of Best Practice Educator, Best Placement Coordinator and runner up Best Local Authority.



Ref	Outcomes
Ch1	Children will be ready for school
Ch2	The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed for all under achieving groups
Ch3	Right children looked after, for the right length of time in the right placement
Ch4	Care leavers are economically active citizens of their community
Ch5	Young people are prevented from entering the criminal justice system

We recognise that for children to aspire and achieve their potential they must have the best possible start in life, being safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well. With this in mind we have:

- Recruited a new Assistant Director of Access and Achievement to work closely with and support schools, partners and council colleagues to deliver ambitious transformation plans. These will ensure that children and young people receive the quality education that they deserve and that educational outcomes are improved to maximise the opportunities that are available to the next generation of Walsall residents.
- Developed and launched the Inclusion Strategy, the blueprint of plans to secure the very best opportunities for all children and young people in Walsall. This will be overseen by the newly formed multi-agency Walsall Strategic Education Inclusion Board.
- Improved educational outcomes that include:
  - Children achieving a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage increased from 66% to 68%.
  - A 7 percentage point increase in children achieving at least the expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2.
  - The percentage of young people who achieved a grade between 9 and 4 (the new A\* - C grade) for English and Maths at GCSE level increased from 55% to 57%.
  - Engaged over 1800 children across the borough in the Summer Reading Scheme, 90% of participants said it helped them to enjoy reading and 85% of participants read more over the summer. Many of the parents surveyed emphasised that the challenge helped children read for pleasure.
- Launched the Walsall Right 4 Children transformation programme, which aims to ensure that the right children are in the right place at the right time and for the right amount of time. The focus of the programme is to:
  - Listen and respond to the voice of the child.
  - Embedding Restorative Practice – doing with families, not for or to.
  - Focus on making a difference.
- Constituted the corporate parenting board as a formal council committee and celebrated the achievements of over 400 children in care and care leavers.
- Recruited a children’s champion to support children who are looked after and care leavers, to ensure their voice is heard. Launched the Children in Care Council that actively contributes to service developments.
- Worked closely with neighbouring authorities to develop and implement the regional adoption agency, adoption at Heart. The agency aims to improve the processes around recruiting adopters to increase the opportunities for children whose permanency plan is adoption to find their forever homes. Timeliness of adoptions is also improving.

- A focused two-day Ofsted visit in September 2018 looked at the quality and impact of services offered to care leavers and the progress made since the full inspection we authority had in 2017. Ofsted concluded that we had made progress in all areas and have good awareness of our key strengths and areas for improvement. The inspection also found that:
  - Children leaving care and care leavers in Walsall benefit from a highly committed, stable group of social workers and personal advisors.
  - Workers speak highly of their managers, including the quality of supervision and support they receive from them.
  - Care leavers feel safe and secure where they live and increasingly benefit from good education, employment and training (EET) opportunities.
- Improved outcomes for care leavers including:
  - The percentage of care leavers that are in education, employment and training (EET) increased to 57% from 43% in 2017. This is better than regional and national averages.
  - The percentage of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation increased to 86% from 85% in 2017 and 81% in 2016.
- Employed a Principal Exploitation Reduction Officer with the remit of taking forward the council's Exploitation Reduction Strategy. This focuses on supporting the most vulnerable of children, has resulted in an increase of referrals to the National Crime Agency.
- Strengthened our Early Help partnership arrangements by co-locating professionals from school health, health visitors, childrens and adolescent mental health service (CAMHs) and the police within localities. This has enabled us to provide a more joined up, solutions-focused offer to children and families.
- Implemented an evidenced-based schools 'Preventing Violence Mentoring Programme' (PVMP) across all secondary schools alongside a transition programme for year 6 primary schools. We have secured funding from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide training and awareness of 'Parental Conflict' and highlight the impact that this on vulnerable young people.
- Launched a comprehensive online advice and guidance service for parents to access and a targeted group to support 'first time dads' with preparing for parenthood and understanding the important role they play in their children's lives.
- Worked with the CCG to create a range of bespoke placements that has reduced the number of Walsall children in mental health hospital facilities.
- Refreshed our teenage pregnancy reduction strategy which has increased partnership engagement. The aspiration is to follow best practice and evidence of what works, as highlighted as good practice by Ofsted and CQC.
- Worked with partners from the Black Country Healthy Pregnancy group to secure £185,000 to support 5 pilot programmes. The pilots will contribute to reducing infant mortality and creating a safer environment in the first year of a child's life.
- Launched a toolkit for parents, schools and early years providers. The resource helps them identify what can be done to raise emotional resilience in children and young people; how to support their emotional health and who to refer to when outside help is needed.
- Co-created the Love Your Feelings resource, aimed at helping children in Key Stage 2 to recognise and express their emotions. This uses drama, visual art and film to develop the concept of creating 'beings', who children take on a journey of emotional discovery.
- Worked with Creative Health CIC and two primary and two secondary schools to develop 'My Well Being: #my well school'. The resources enables schools to carry out their own 'health check-up' to gain insight into the health and wellbeing of their students and most importantly identify any areas for improvement.



Ref	Outcomes
Co1	Enable access and use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation
Co2	Reduce atmospheric pollution to improve long-term health of the population
Co3	Ensure all children are a healthy weight
Co4	Housing provision matches local need and reduces homelessness

Walsall benefits from strong, vibrant communities who we are committed to working with to build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion through the provision of safe and healthy places, meeting housing needs and providing opportunities to prosper. We have:

- Launched our Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy which enables services to access grant funding from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Current focus is on the clean and green agenda, housing standards and school admissions. Additional investment has also been made for community safety, outreach work, engagement with Roma communities and English as a Second Language (ESL) provision.
- Progressed roll out of locality model which connects service provision from a range of partners with communities and community groups in specific areas.
- Trialled measures to improve the cleanliness of the borough introduced throughout the year and continue to be rolled out. This includes:
  - Increasing Household Waste Recycling Centre opening times during peak Bank Holiday and summer periods
  - Introducing a fly-tipping hotline to allow easy access for residents to report environmental crime.
  - Trial free bulky waste collections and community skips.
- Provided additional litter bins in strategic locations including Walsall Town Centre to encourage appropriate litter disposal.
- Launched “Walsall’s Most Wanted”: an appeal to the public to identify people who have been captured on CCTV fly tipping but who have not been identified through the normal enquiries.
- Revised the Open Water Safety Policy to increase public awareness of the dangers of open water and identifies preventative measures that have been developed with actions for implementation.
- Developed and adopted the Walsall Green Space Strategy 2018-2022, which was informed by public and stakeholder consultation. It sets direction and provides an action plan going forward.

- Established a Healthy Spaces Steering Group to improve social inclusion and address health and wellbeing outcomes through physical and mental health initiatives.
- Retained six Green Flag awards for parks, achieved this status for two further parks and completed the HLF-funded Arboretum restoration project.
- Secured £200k two-year investment from Rethinking Parks to encourage individual and corporate volunteering in targeted parks such as Reedswood Park.
- Increased use of parks and green spaces by residents to support healthy living – use has increased by 12% between 2012 and 2018. Participants of led walks and jogs programmes have almost doubled over the year. Following success of adult park runs a junior park run is now delivered.
- Compliance with food hygiene law in Walsall businesses has continued to improve and is at the highest it has been since the introduction of the rating system in 2011. Nearly 90% of businesses have achieved a satisfactory assessment.
- Nine businesses have been formally closed using emergency powers due to pest infestations and 14 served with health and safety prohibition notices. There have also been a number of businesses who have received cautions or fines with some being prosecuted and receiving suspended prison sentences.
- Collaborative working between Trading Standards, Walsall Police, Border Control and HMRC has led to raids and the seizure of counterfeit and non-duty paid tobacco and the identification of illegal workers.
- Intelligence has led to identification of banned substances and fraudulent food sales, arrest of individuals selling bogus goods and others conducting bogus charity collections.
- The powers to serve notices contained in the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 have been used to clear two locations of rubbish that have been problem areas for many years.
- Developed community safety plan which will be presented to council in 2019.
- Increased membership of Active Living Centres to 6,400 from 2,400. Our philosophy to get “more people, more active, more often” helps to improve the mental and physical health and well-being of our residents. This is in addition to pay-to-play attendances and more than 2,500 children enrolled on the Walsall Leisure Swim Academy.



- Installed new interactive water features at Bloxwich Active Living Centre. The refurbishment of Darlaston Swimming and Fitness Centre has been completed, including new gym equipment, dance studio and changing village.
- Delivered a new approach to promote healthy weight in children and young people. We make funds available to local communities to develop projects that will increase healthy eating and reduce sedentary behaviour, in each locality.
- Implemented the Walsall Homelessness Strategy and via the local Housing First pilot we have successfully accommodated 23 rough sleepers in sustainable tenancies. The multi-agency Homelessness Strategy has a focus on:
  - Establishing protocols with external bodies such as health and criminal justice systems to ensure that homelessness is prevented at the point of discharge.
  - End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, and remodel the council's current temporary accommodation from the existing flatted block provision to a dispersed accommodation model.
  - Agreement to discharge homelessness duty into the private rented sector where appropriate.
  - Revision of the existing Allocations Scheme and carry out an options appraisal on the establishment of a common housing register and allocations policy.
  - Future commission of accommodation and support services for street homeless to be changed to a Housing First led service.
- Joint work with West Midlands Fire Service has proved particularly successful in identifying poor housing conditions and promoting the need for landlords to provide relevant smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Obtained our first Compulsory Purchase Orders on three long-term empty homes. This action, which was taken as a last resort, will help rejuvenate neighbourhoods blighted by properties in disrepair and bring much needed housing back into use for local people.
- Housing provision shortlisted by the National Charity for Home Improvement Agencies for an award of 'Adaptations Service of the Year'.





**Resources and Transformation**

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