

Review of Achievements 2019 – 2020



Walsall Council



Introduction

Like all local authorities Walsall has faced many challenges linked to national austerity measures but through our local and regional partnerships the Council has retained a strong position that continues to be built upon. There is also the international challenge of climate change and fulfilling our responsibility to do what we can to reduce the negative impact from our activities on the environment whilst serving all our communities.

Reflecting on what has been delivered during 2019-20 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' provides an opportunity to recognise the commitment of staff and some of the key achievements of the last year. It also allows focus on the year ahead and ensuring we continue to focus on what matters most to the communities we serve as the organisation seeks to secure the future of services through an ambitious transformation programme and the development of variety of service delivery models.

As this report was being compiled the world was battling the COVID-19 pandemic. In responding to this the Council had to adapt planned activity to ensure essential services were maintained, guidance from central Government was followed and cascaded and Government initiatives to help residents and businesses were implemented in a timely and efficient way. Elements of this work have been added to this review although it is recognised that a full understanding and assessment of activity will not be possible until after the crisis is over.



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. This is not something that the Council can do on its own or in isolation of the wider region. During 2019-20, through working with private, voluntary and public sector we have:

- Worked closely with rail operators to progress the reopening of the Walsall to Wolverhampton line including new stations in Willenhall and Darlaston with planning applications now logged with the council.
- Advanced works in preparation for the £78 million complete redevelopment M6 junction 10 to improve the infrastructure for the borough including intelligent traffic signal technology installations along A454 and A4148.
- As the accountable body for the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, successfully administered almost £300 million of funding across the Black Country, with £100 million supporting regeneration activities and transport improvements that benefit the borough.
- Smart technology installations such as CCTV, Variable Message Signs and Journey Time Monitoring. This will allow for real time monitoring of the network, improving local network resilience and driver information. There have also been upgrades to traffic signal technology and significant junction improvements at Mellish Road Roundabout and Hatherton Street.
- Agreed a visionary Walsall Town Centre Masterplan together with a 6 month action plan to make our town centre cleaner and safer - responding to what residents and visitors told us during consultation. To support the Masterplan's delivery we are pursuing Future High Streets Funding and LEP and Combined Authority money to deliver our ambitions for our town, focused on the Prominent Rail Station and Connected Hubs elements of the Masterplan.
- Commenced the procurement and delivery of the Willenhall Master Plan with a focus on housing delivery as part of the Walsall to Wolverhampton Growth Corridor.
- Completed the £9 million Wisemore Central scheme including a new 60-bed Travelodge, the Explore Learning tuition centre and retail / commercial space.

- Multi-million pound investment has been secured to support the remediation of the Phoenix 10 site which will deliver 57,575sqm employment floorspace and circa 1100 new jobs once completed.
- Secured almost £1million EU funding to deliver the Black Country Community Grants Programme and through the first round 23 grants were offered to Walsall CVS groups. This totalled £228,479 of support that directly benefited 414 local residents to undertake activities to move them closer to achieving their economic goals.
- Through various schemes supported approximately 500 people into employment and an additional 1,000 into improving their employability through the Walsall Works and Black Country Impact Programmes, with the number of businesses committing to supporting local people to access jobs and training rising to 1,000.
- Supported young people and adults with a range of disabilities to secure work experience as part of time limited paid introduction to work or as part of voluntary work placements within the adult provider resources.
- Expanded the role and remit of the successful private sector-led Walsall Economic Board, to include steering the development of the Town Deals for Bloxwich and Walsall. Our Town Board could lever an additional £50million of government investment into these areas to help with their economic growth.
- Developed a business case to promote the delivery of a lottery bid that supports the inclusion and development of Community partnerships to maximise the use of third sector resource for young people and adults with disabilities. The aspiration to deliver jobs, work experience and universal resource as part of the proposal.
- Worked on a number of schemes to develop new homes in the borough including securing £9.7 million investment, in collaboration with the WMCA and BC LEP, to deliver approximately 603 new homes on the former Caparo, Goscote Works and Harvestime Bakey sites. Construction of 407 new homes commenced on the former Goscote estate, which will include 126 affordable properties and 205 new homes at Wards Keep and Heathfield Lane West.
- Re-energised the Rethinking Parks project so that it now delivers a set of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sponsorship Packages, providing businesses the opportunity to invest in parks and green spaces in Walsall.
- Delivered a pilot scheme to Walsall Town Centre and Beechdale working in a more intense and targeted way to improve and maintain the environment to help businesses and communities to thrive. The approach involves working with partners, businesses and communities to deliver improvements to the environment. Examples include working with property owners and Community Payback on graffiti removal and a mixed service approach the lease to a piece of land which was subject to fly tipping was terminated and the site secured to prevent recurrence.
- To the end of February 2020, over 180 fly tipping incidents captured on dedicated CCTV cameras have been investigated by Community Protection Officers. Resulting in, 37 FPNs issued and 4 court appearances. Two fly tippers were identified through “Walsall’s Most Wanted”. Community Protection Officers investigating fly tipping featured in the Christmas Special on Channel 5’s “Grime & Punishment”.
- During COVID-19 we shifted the focus of our support to residents looking for work to align them with the opportunities in retail and distribution that arose as part of the response to coronavirus. The Council also facilitated the issue of business rate relief grants and the council tax relief processes to maximise the take up in Walsall of the national schemes.



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

People being able to live independently and improve their personal health and wellbeing enables them to positively contribute to their communities and local economy. Responsibility for the health and wellbeing of people is shared across a number of key partners such as Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Walsall Healthcare NHS trust and agencies such as Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Achievements in 2019-20 include:

- Implementing a new Strengths Based Approach in adult social care to improve outcomes for adults with care and support needs and their families. The introduction of the ‘3 conversations’ model as a strengths-based innovative to needs assessment and care planning focuses primarily on people’s strengths and community assets.
- Maximising the use of corporate assets such as Goscote centre to enable co-location of Children with Disabilities and SEND with Learning Disabilities promoting wider partnership working and encouraging more local conversations with health colleagues to develop all age approach.
- Progressing the discussion and arrangements for the Walsall Together Partnership, focussing on the integration of services across the borough.
- Development of the All Age Disability (AAD) hub, focussing on statutory and none statutory functions to promote independence and reduce reliance on long term social care where this is possible. This approach builds the relationships and interdependencies across the younger person’s health, education and social care needs by jointly thinking how we can deliver key messages that affect the lives and wellbeing of younger people preparing for adulthood to enable them to thrive.
- Working with young people and their families to co-design the resources for younger people moving into adulthood..
- Investing in the Care Quality Team to support providers to improve on the quality of service in Walsall.
- Increasing nursing bed capacity within the Borough to meet increased demand and support discharges from the local acute service.

- Providing employment support to 172 people who presented with a health barrier or learning difficulty, including poor mental health, physical disability, dyslexia or dyspraxia through our Walsall Works programme. 35% of the young people engaged in the Black Country Impact programme declared a disability or health issue.
- Delivering a range of public awareness campaigns to assist self care including:
 - Cook and eat sessions
 - Let's Talk about Suicide Prevention leaflets
 - Stay Safe with Medicines
 - Procurement of Integrated Drug and Alcohol service
- Progressing the Making Connections Walsall (MCW) approach which has fostered genuine partnerships including with statutory services. A strategic aim of this initiative was to develop the provider sector and service hubs have grown in knowledge and confidence and developed links with a wide range of charities, services and wider organisations. Their knowledge of local services has been praised. In addition the funding invested in grass-roots organisations has provided new activities for clients and the wider community. This was an essential element of the response to COVID-19 in getting support to vulnerable residents.
- Protected the most vulnerable through covert enforcement operations to ensure taxi and private hire drivers are carrying users of wheelchairs and people supported by assistance dogs properly. One driver was convicted in court for failing to carry a passenger in a wheelchair securely and was ordered to pay £980 and 3 points added to his driving licence.
- As part of the council's response to COVID-19 we worked with colleagues in health services, care homes and care providers to ensure the continual delivery of quality services and the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers.



Internal Focus

All council services are efficient and effective.

Ref	Outcomes
I1	Modern services
I2	A resilient council

The development of resilient and modernised services and service delivery models is key to ensuring all council services are efficient and effective. Significantly our ambitious Walsall Proud Programme is transforming the way we work to:

- Improve outcomes and customer experience
- Improve employee satisfaction and engagement
- Improve service efficiency and performance.

A number of achievements have been delivered in 2019-20 including:

- A balanced budget for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to address reductions in government funding, whilst providing significant service revenue and capital investment and an appropriate level of reserves.
- Attracting additional funding in excess of £3 million through developing detailed financial modelling for bids to set up Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) initiatives.
- Co-located adult social care teams in localities with other health and care professionals to provide more streamlined services in community settings. Similarly we have strengthened locality working by aligning children social work teams and virtually aligning other areas, to existing Early Help and partnership localities to improve community focus and provide a more joined up, solutions-focussed offer to children and families.
- Implementing the Perform+ approach in key front line services to improve service efficiency and responsiveness with plans to roll out further across more services.
- The use of more technologies to enable more flexible working to better serve customers. We are modernising our IT services to increase availability and improve resilience so we can better meet the needs of our customers.
- Launched the newsroom webpage to improve communications with customers and provide a platform to increase and promote news. This also provides media with opportunity to track news without having to submit an enquiry.
- Increased income generation by increasing the range of services offered by the Register Office.

- Modernised services for customers and delivered a number of improvements including:
 - Making it easier for people to claim council tax reduction with 80% of applications now received on-line, speeding up the process
 - New online functionality for Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit has increased the opportunities for customers to interact with the council when convenient to them. This has seen a 30% in the last six months in the use of online facilities.
 - Dealing with housing benefit applications quicker than the national average (11 days compared to 17 days nationally) meaning residents are less likely to fall into rent arrears. Changes in entitlement to housing benefit are also managed quicker than the national average.
- A rolling programme of testing of Business Continuity Plans has provided assurance that services are well prepared; to be a resilient council it is important that there are effective arrangements to continue service delivery in a host of potential situations.
- Strengthening our Apprenticeship Programme with currently 394 staff (Corporate – 226, Schools – 168) accessing our Apprenticeship Levy, spent on improving the skills / qualifications of the workforce, ensuring they are fit for the future.
- Launched the Mental Health First Aider Scheme and have 40 individuals engaged in providing mental health support to employees experiencing a mental health episode. These mental health first aiders were key to supporting staff mental health and well-being during the response to coronavirus.
- Launched initial alcohol and drugs testing sessions which have been well received by managers and employees. The programme of random testing will now continue on an ongoing basis with the option for managers to be able to request one-off testing of individuals in cases of cause and suspicion.
- In improving services the council has received national recognition in a number of areas, including:
 - Securing the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) innovation award in collaboration with Tarmac and their service delivery partner Kaarobontech.
 - Winning the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) award for our Welfare and Housing Benefits service.
 - Winning an award at the British Parking Awards for our leading work in partnership with Penham Excel to remove untaxed vehicles from the borough's roads – improving the safety of Walsall and helping to disrupt and reduce crime.
 - Adaptations team were winners of the Technical Officer of the Year award.
 - Awarded Corner Stone Employer status by the Black Country Careers Hub for our Apprenticeship Programme for our commitment to helping young people reach their full potential, promoting social mobility and supporting equal opportunities for all.
- Our enabling technology workstream plans were fast tracked to enable remote working for whole workforce so to comply with Government guidance regarding essential only travel and social distancing whilst also prioritising customer access to essential services.



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

Children that have the best start in life, are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well are more likely to achieve their potential and we are committed to providing opportunities for children to aspire and achieve. Key achievements during 2019-20 include:

- Ensuring that parents, children and families have the opportunity to be involved in decision making and service design and that our young people’s achievements are celebrated by:
 - Holding our ‘Big Conversation’ with parents, children and families, to gather their feedback and ensure that their voices are heard as we transform our services.
 - Encouraging and enabling young people to be engaged and consulted when senior appointments are made.
 - Holding our ‘Excellent Night Out’ event for children in care
- Increased the number of 2 year-olds accessing early education by encouraging and supporting parents to identify and access suitable provision. Around 80% of eligible children now benefit from early education which will help to ensure that they develop the skills needed to be ‘school ready’ when they begin their formal education.
- Supported our more vulnerable children to improve their education outcomes. At key stage 2, the gap for the percentage of children who achieve the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths has reduced by:
 - 2% points between children who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not
 - 3% points between children who are in receipt of SEN Support and those who are not
 - 4% points between children who are in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan and those who are not.
- Developing the Keep In Touch Programme to provide support to vulnerable children and young people throughout the school holidays.
- Secured a place on the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme to implement the Family Safeguarding Model. This will significantly enhance our locality model, improving the services and support we are able to offer to children and families in Walsall.

- Received positive feedback from a focussed two-day Ofsted visit in October 2019 which looked at the quality and impact of services offered at the front door. It concluded that **“The quality of work in responding effectively to contacts has improved since the last inspection in 2017. This is positive for children and families in Walsall, who receive a timely response to initial identified needs and concerns”**.
- Launched Turning Point – our specialist provision to support adolescent with complex needs and prevent them from coming into care. This service has been developed in close partnership with young people to ensure that it is focussed on meeting their needs.
- Continued to ensure that outcomes for Care Leavers improve with:
 - Over 60% of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training – higher than the national average.
 - 10% of Walsall’s care leavers go onto higher education compared with just 6% nationally
 - Over 40% of care leavers remain living with their foster carers after the age of 18 ensuring that they continue to benefit from stability and support.
- Reduced the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System through our partnership between our Youth Justice Service and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit and established a ‘place based’ violence reduction pilot through working closely with our partners Walsall Police and Walsall College.
- Launched the 'Don't hurt the one you love' campaign at Walsall College to encourage young people to drive safely and responsibly with passengers in their car and for passengers to speak out if they feel unsafe in a vehicle being driven dangerously.
- Supporting the development of the Safeguarding agendas inclusive of exploitation, financial abuse and working groups that support and promote the message that Safeguarding is everyone’s business.
- Working with the home to school transport team, 23 vehicles were checked. 17 were fully compliant and advice and cautions were issued for a range of minor breaches.
- 2 multi-agency operations were carried out to ensure the safety of our young people attending schools’ proms events. As well as some vehicle defects, officers warned the driver of an ice-cream van about its unsuitability to transport passengers.
- During COVID-19 we continued to support our most vulnerable children utilising IT software and solutions to maintain contact with them, enable contact with families and continued to manage case conferences.



Communities

Are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

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

Our varied, strong and vibrant communities are the basis of why Walsall is the place it is and we are committed to working with these communities to continue to build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion. In 2019-20 we have:

- Facilitated a range of activities in our green spaces across the borough, including our 7 Green Flag status parks and greenspaces, to encourage people to be active and get healthy. These include:
 - Park Runs
 - Nordic Walking Programmes
 - Adventure Walks
 - 4 new health walks
 - Couch to 5k jogs
- Through the One You Walsall Healthy Lifestyle Service we have managed over 4000 referrals with the majority of individuals achieving a positive change in their health. We are also supporting 24 businesses to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees.
- Food for Life (Healthy eating in schools programme) are now working with large numbers of early years settings and primary schools to embed healthy eating into the school/nursery day and encourage communities to grow and prepare healthy food.
- Working with the CCG and West Midlands Fire Service launched smoke-free homes initiative highlighting the hidden dangers of smoking indoors, the dangers of second-hand smoke and the risk of house fires.
- Facilitated annual Sha’ban event for members of the Muslim community. This event entails a gathering of community members at Streetly Cemetery after sunset to carry out a full evening of prayers for their departed loved ones.

- Clean and Green improved the quality of the environment across the borough by increasing the frequency of weed spraying and grass cutting on verges and large open spaces, and adding to the provision for arboriculture work.
- Extended the services offered by the Register Office to include EU Settlement Scheme, which allows European nationals living in the UK to apply for settled status and ‘Opposite sex Civil Partnerships, enhancing the range of choices for formalising partnerships available to our residents.
- Through the Homeless Night Shelter, with support from volunteers, supported 26 individuals to be re-housed and 2 individuals have been assisted to reconnect with their own area.
- Built on the use of the Lichfield Street Hub, a Grade II listed Edwardian building formerly known as the Central Library following completion of a sensitive £4.56m renovation. The Hub offers a diverse range of activities for Walsall residents and communities from ‘Tiny Tots’ to Walsall Works Job Clubs to mindfulness colouring groups.
- Raised fine levels for all environmental crime in the borough together with an active campaign against flytipping, with fixed penalty notices and prosecutions clamping down on those who choose to break the law and blight our communities.
- Reduced charges for bulky waste collection and opened both household waste and recycling centres for 7 days a week to assist the lawful disposal of waste.
- Set out how the Council and partners will seek to improve the housing offer in Walsall over the next 5 years, with the adoption of Walsall’s Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025. It provides a focus on new and energy efficient homes, integrated and resilient communities, independent living and preventing homelessness, and tackling rogue landlords.
- Fully modernised our Homelessness services, enabling over 240 homelessness preventions, and over 300 reliefs whilst also working towards an end to street homelessness through
 - Reducing rough sleeping by 45%,
 - Leading the West Midlands with the Housing First initiative which provides rough sleepers with a home of their own and as much support as needed, with over 50 people housed and supported,
 - Developing and launching an Alternative Giving Scheme, to enable public and business donations to help rough sleepers



- Worked to ensure stability for our residents threatened with homelessness:
 - minimising the number of households placed in Temporary Accommodation, averaging 0.8 households per 1000 households, which is well below the national average,
 - reduced the number of homeless families placed in bed and breakfast to 0 in March 2020,
 - successfully piloting dispersed Temporary Accommodation to help provide a more modern service for our families who find themselves homeless, with 5 additional pilot homes provided by the Council and partners
- Completed over 700 property adaptations to enable our residents to remain in their own home and live independently for as long as possible.
- Worked with energy partners to provide 1000 energy efficiency measures ranging from central heating systems to smaller works such as draught proofing to keep our residents safe and warm.
- Agreed the Safer Walsall Partnership Plan with its '20-20 vision' to tackle crime and disorder and create a safer Walsall, aspiring for strong and resilient communities where people are safer from harm and feel they belong.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic with One Walsall and our four locality hubs we co-ordinated the volunteer and community response, providing support to thousands of vulnerable residents, everything from befriending and support with shopping to providing food parcels.



Resources and Transformation

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