

WE ARE WALSALL 2040

Our Future, Our Borough
Annual Report 2025

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Foreword

Many of those who will reach adulthood in 2040 were born in 2022, during our consultation phase on key priorities. This strategy was crafted with a vision of what we aspire Walsall to become for that next generation. It is imperative that we create robust prospects for their future, ensuring a thriving borough that offers ample opportunities for play, leisure, culture, and education. Accessible health services, decent affordable housing, and access to good jobs are essential components of this vision.



Community plays a crucial role in this endeavour. It is the glue that binds us together, fostering good relations and creating a sense of pride and place. By nurturing strong community ties, we can build a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and connected. This sense of belonging is fundamental to the well-being of our residents and the overall success of our borough.

To achieve this, we must invest in infrastructure and services that cater to the diverse needs of our population. This includes developing recreational spaces, cultural venues, and educational institutions that inspire and empower our youth. Health services must be readily accessible to ensure the physical and mental well-being of all residents. Affordable housing should be available to provide stability and security, while economic opportunities must be created to enable individuals to thrive and contribute to the community. Our £1.5 billion investment in the borough is a transformative step towards a brighter future for all our residents.

By prioritising these areas, we can lay the foundation for a prosperous future where every individual has the chance to succeed and where the community flourishes. Together, we can build a borough that not only meets the needs of its residents but also inspires pride and fosters a strong sense of place.

Our Future, Our Borough.

Councillor Mike Bird
Council Leader

Introduction

This is the first bi-annual report of the We Are Walsall 2040 Partnership. In June 2023 the We Are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan was agreed and signed off by all partners. It was a landmark occasion bringing together a coalition of partners from across the public, private and community sectors to identify a shared vision for the future and the steps necessary to effect change. Since the Strategy was agreed a wide range of work has been undertaken to embed and deliver the strategy.



This report details progress, results, projects and milestones achieved over the last 18 months by the working together of partners and the public across Walsall.

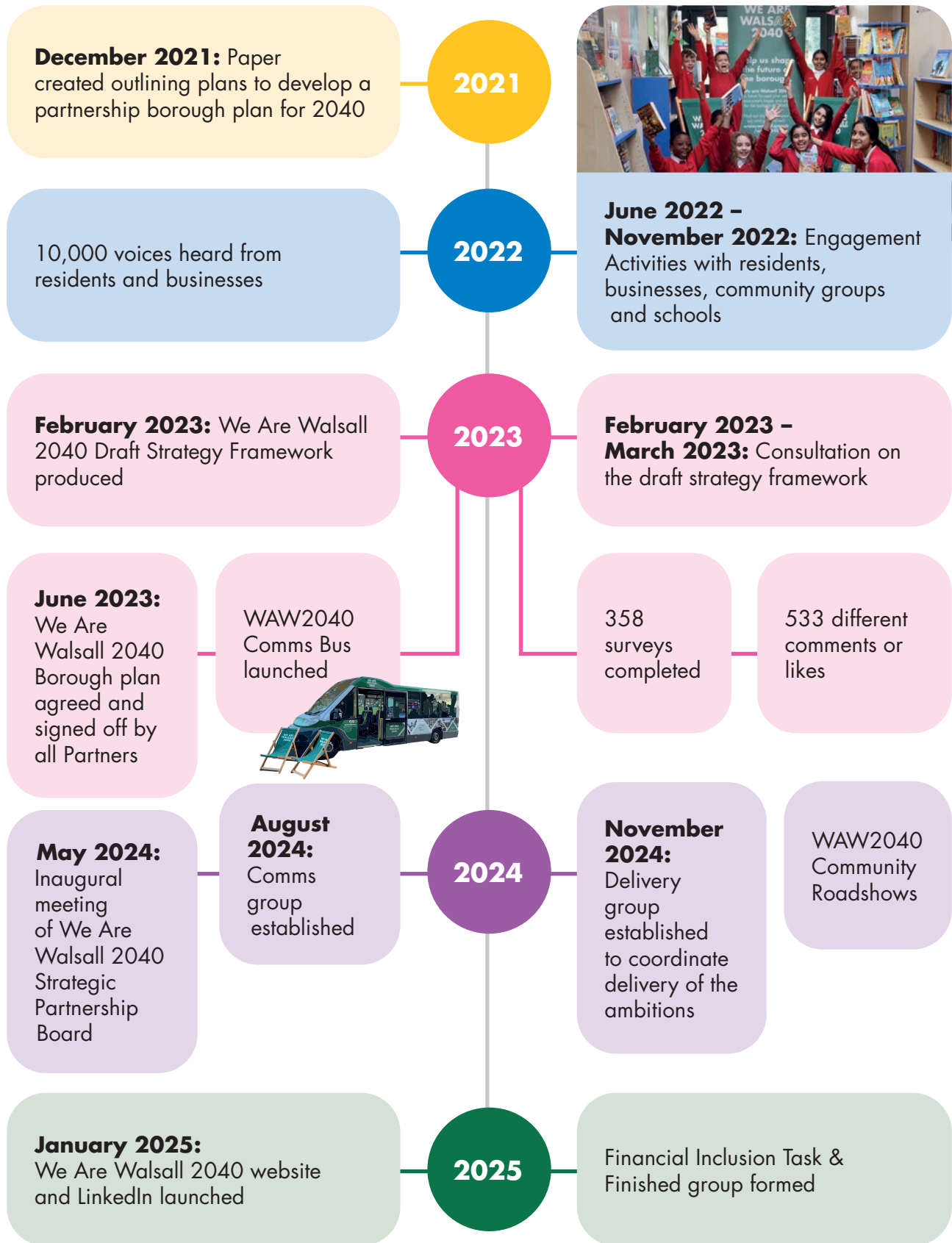
One of the key objectives for 2025 and beyond will be to improve the way we measure progress against our objectives. Work is well underway on the development of a new performance framework, and we will begin reporting on this methodology throughout the year.

Copies of this report can be downloaded from wearewalsall2040.walsall.gov.uk

Thank you to all the organisations and individuals in the borough who have continued to support the We Are Walsall 2040 vision and contributed to making tangible outcomes a reality for Walsall.

Emma Bennett
Chief Executive

We Are Walsall 2040 Timeline



How have we got here

In 2023 the We Are Walsall 2040 Strategy was published. It was the product of our borough's commitment to come together to agree and work for the future we want for Walsall.

More than 10,000 residents, businesses, and organisations shared their views, helping us create a strategy that truly represents Walsall's future. Feedback from the engagement focused on the need to continue to create a thriving borough where people feel safe, with clean green streets and spaces, good jobs and leisure opportunities for all.



**WE ARE
WALSALL
2040**

Our Vision

Walsall in 2040 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.

We will be a safe borough, a healthy borough and be a green borough.

We built the strategy on 4 ambitions of We Are Thriving and Happy, Healthy and Well, Prosperous and Innovative and Proud of our Borough. Organised by 12 themes intended to serve as challenges to the Borough.



Progress

Each theme in the strategy is accompanied by specific outcomes that the partnership aims to report on. We have established an ambitious strategy with challenging outcomes, but we are confident in our ability to move forward and achieve these goals together. This progress update offers an overview of the activities achieved through collaborative efforts, but it is not a comprehensive list.

2040 Ambition:

We Are Thriving and Happy

Goal: By 2040 we will be a borough where all people feel safe, where communities and people do more to help each other and themselves, and children have the best start in life.

**We Are:**

We are fostering strong and empowered communities to help people live happier and longer lives. By encouraging active participation and giving everyone a voice, we are enhancing belonging, trust, and reducing isolation, improving physical and mental wellbeing. Empowered communities are resilient and are driving local change.

We are creating a Walsall where everyone can volunteer and engage in community life, ensuring the sustainability of our vibrant community sector. We are committed to providing all children with access to quality education and opportunities to lead fun, safe, and healthy lives. We are supporting children and families now and, in the future, helping them grow, learn, and thrive.

We are addressing safety as a top priority, the root causes of crime and safeguarding our community to make Walsall safer. By fostering empowered communities, we ensure everyone can participate in community life and maintain the vibrancy of our community sector.

**Child Friendly
Borough**

Feeling Safe

**Empowered
Communities**



Our Successes

Family Hubs



Family Hubs, launched in the summer of 2023, providing a welcoming space where families can access advice and support from various services. These hubs are designed to assist families with children aged 0-19 years, or up to 24 years for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Located in four hubs across the borough, these centres offer a range of services under one roof, making it easier for families to get the right help at the right time. The team includes family support practitioners, health visitors, school nurses, early help, police officers, domestic abuse support practitioners, mental health support, and substance misuse support.

In April 2024, the Family Hubs received a Certificate of Commitment, marking their first step towards recognition by the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Baby Friendly Initiative. This global programme, in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO), aims to transform healthcare for babies, their mothers, and families. In the UK, it works with public services to support families with feeding and developing close, loving relationships, ensuring all babies get the best possible start in life. The Certificate of Commitment acknowledges that a healthcare facility is dedicated to implementing recognised best practice standards.

A **higher** proportion of schools in Walsall have been graded to be '**Good**' or better by **Ofsted** than the national average.

Knife Angel



Knife crime destroys lives and tears communities apart. We all have a part to play in tackling this issue. The 'Knife Angel' was a powerful symbol of the impact of knife crime in our communities, and arrived in late December 2023. The Knife Angel originated from the British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry and was crafted by sculptor and artist, Alfie Bradley and has become recognised as a National Monument Against Violence and Aggression. It was brought to the town through a partnership with local stakeholders.

Deployed additional Anti-Social Behaviour **Youth Outreach** Workers across the borough.

Streetwatch pins of honour awarded to **Walsall College**. Protective services students and staff at Walsall College have been congratulated by West Midlands Police for their five years of support on a community patrol.

Operation Adhesion - Police Neighbourhood Teams linked up with the National Police Air Service (NPAS), WMP traffic and WMP's off-road bikes teams to seize off road bikes. The seized bikes are used for the community projects.

Manchester Bee



The Manchester Bee monument completed its tour of schools in Walsall, as part of an anti-violence campaign with West Midlands Police in July 2024. The 27ft bee, made from seized guns and knives, visited 25 schools in the borough during June and July, encouraging young people to talk about the dangers and consequences of carrying a knife.

The bee brought entire school communities together to reflect on its symbolism. Schools hosted assemblies, talks, and creative activities so children and young people could spend time discussing the bee and its message.

Knife crime **ambassadors** selected at a Bloxwich school as part of a special pilot project launched to educate young pupils about the dangers of carrying knives.

Operation CeCe - Crackdown on the illicit tobacco trade with a large number of illegal cigarettes, tobacco and disposable vapes with a retail value of approximately **£260,000**.

Operation Marigold - Tackling shoplifting across Walsall Town Centre with patrols targeting anti-social behaviour and working in partnership to tackle street drinking, begging and drugs within the town centre.

Walsall Youth Summit Shaping Services for Children & Young People



Up to 100 children and young people came together in Walsall to have their say on services offered to them. The youth summit, Shaping My Tomorrow, involved 9 to 25 year olds discussing council decisions that affect them.

The summit was inspired by the region wide My Tomorrow campaign, which launched in May 2024 aiming to empower young people across the West Midlands. It provided a platform to celebrate the younger generation, challenge stereotypes which are holding them back in life and open doors for them to influence policymakers.

My Tomorrow was funded by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) with backing from its partners, including charities, schools, West Midlands Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, local government and children's and youth offending services.

Children and young people in Walsall will be able to influence decision-making and have their voices heard as Walsall Council committed to setting up a Youth Council.

Launch of **Youth Advisor Panel**.
Opportunity to engage and understand the needs and concerns of young people.

2040 Ambition:

We Are Healthy and Well

Goal: By 2040 we will be a wellbeing centred borough where people are healthy and live full and active lives.



We Are:

We are addressing Walsall's health challenges, where healthy life expectancy is low and many live in poor health. With an ageing population and the shift to digital services, we are rethinking future health and care services to ensure accessibility for all.

We are tackling barriers to service access and leveraging community assets to reduce inequalities. Promoting healthy lifestyles is crucial. We are collaborating with communities to adopt a preventative approach, prioritising health and wellbeing, and encouraging everyone to live healthier lives. We prioritise people in services and decisions, ensuring they have choice, control, and flexibility to live well, age well, and die well.

We are aiming to improve mental health awareness, understanding, and access to support, ensuring residents recognise the importance of mental wellbeing and can access guidance when needed.

Living Active
Lives

A Community
That Cares

Good Mental
Health



Our Successes

Wellbeing Support directly in Communities



The Thrive Mobile Wellbeing Project delivered by Bloxwich Community Partnership, Manor Farm Community Association, Walsall Community Transport, and Citizens Advice Sandwell and Walsall. It supported 4,759 individuals during 2023, with 495 people assisted through Citizens Advice, yielding a substantial financial benefit of £472,623 for Walsall residents.

The project, also known as the 'Let's Chat' bus, is a friendly local service that supports residents' wellbeing. Part of the No Wrong Door approach, the service helps connect residents to the right support when it is needed. The bus visits communities across Walsall, providing a wide range of support on financial concerns, employment, housing challenges, fuel crisis and signposting to wellbeing activities.

The service also offers residents the opportunity to complete an 8 Steps to Wellbeing plan, which helps residents and others to understand what is important to keep healthy, well and independent.

The Big Active - Walsall Council partnered with Triathlon England to develop a long-term plan to support local people to get active and improve their health and wellbeing.

£2.5 million improvements scheme including a **cycle route** and better pedestrian crossings on the A454.

New £24.3m Mental Health Unit at Dorothy Pattison Hospital



A brand-new, purpose-built mental health unit opened at Dorothy Pattison Hospital, marking a significant milestone in how older adult mental health care is delivered across the Black Country.

The unit, which replaces the outdated Bloxwich Hospital, offers a safer, more dignified, and recovery-focused environment for older adults with dementia and functional mental health conditions. The £24.3 million investment represents the most significant upgrade to specialist mental health services for older adults in Walsall and the Black Country in a generation. As the need for older adult mental health services continues to grow, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has been working to strengthen community-based support while ensuring that, when inpatient care is required, it is delivered in a modern, therapeutic setting.

Public Health, Health Inequalities small grant funded 30 community organisations to deliver projects focused on physical activity, good food and access to green spaces.

Community **weight management pilots** for primary aged children, delivered through 6 community organisations.

New Walsall Wellbeing Directory



The Walsall Wellbeing Directory went live in January 2024 featuring a wide range of support, advice, activities, and events available across the borough to support the wellbeing of local citizens. The directory included information on money matters, wellbeing groups, public health and mental wellbeing services, social groups and help with accessing online services.

The directory was developed by the Walsall Together Partnership in collaboration with local citizens and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector who actively support local communities with their health and wellbeing.

New Community Shop Open to Support Residents



Community shops typically offer an array of food and everyday necessities like personal care items, pet supplies and household cleaning materials at greatly reduced prices.

Walsall Council committed £200,000 in funding to support the establishment of these not-for-profit shops, which are aimed at helping struggling families and elderly residents who are impacted by the UK's escalating cost of living. Any income generated through the shops is used for future produce and running costs.

Two shops have opened in Stan Bull Centre in Bloxwich and Old Hall People's Partnership in Bentley.

Walsall Council **installed outdoor gym equipment** and scheduled a series of Community Workout sessions to help residents maximise the benefits of these new additions.

Walsall FC Foundation received Grant from the Sky Bet EFL Building Foundations Fund to start the delivery of their Back on Your Feet programme. A programme for unemployed residents in Walsall who have fallen into a sedentary lifestyle, addressing the skills gap to support individuals back into work.

Launch of Pathway to Independence, a new approach to adult social care which aims to support adults who need social care services to achieve their personal goals and help them live as independently as possible for as long as possible in their own home.

Walsall Connected, a programme within Walsall Together, won a PENNA Award in 2024.

Walsall Together won the HSJ Place Based Partnership and Integrated Care Award in 2023.

The University of Wolverhampton, in collaboration with the British Judo Association and Parkinson's UK, launched a new course for people living with Parkinson's to help increase their confidence in movement and physical activity homes.

New state-of-the-art fitness space opened. **BOX12 studio** is hosting functional fitness and boxing workouts at Oak Park Active Living Centre.



2040 Ambition:

We Are Prosperous and Innovative

Goal: By 2040 Walsall will be a place that is easy to get around, where people are confident to access services digitally and the economy works for everyone.



We Are:

We are ensuring the availability of quality homes to support Walsall's economic and social growth. We are focusing on building and maintaining homes to high standards, preventing homelessness, and collaborating with property owners.

We are addressing deprivation in Walsall by improving jobs, skills, and leveraging our assets. Our economic strategy promotes lifelong learning and investment in skills development.

We are enhancing transport options to connect Walsall locally and beyond, promoting walking and cycling, and ensuring high-class connectivity. We are also boosting digital connectivity, supporting residents and businesses in accessing online services and improving digital skills.

Quality Homes

Strong
Economy
for All

Connected
Borough



Our Successes

Lockside Development



A new development of quality affordable homes for the over 55s has officially opened in the heart of Walsall.

The first residents have moved into Lockside Pointe in May 2024, which forms part of the new Lockside development in Birchills.

Lockside is a new 324-home community on the sites of the former Caparo steelworks and Metafin factory. whg is working with Lovell Partnerships to transform the brownfield land which has stood empty for several years. This vibrant new place to live will provide a mixture of affordable rent, shared ownership and outright sale homes, meeting multigenerational needs.

Regulator of Social Housing awards **whg** the **highest rating** following inspection.

whg built **503 new homes**, ensuring that good quality, affordable housing is available for those that need it.

whg wins ESG Team of the Year **Unlock Net Zero Award**.

New Employment and Skills Hub Launched in Walsall



The Link is a partnership-led facility delivered with support from Walsall College, The Job Centre (DWP), The National Careers Service, whg, the University of Wolverhampton, and Walsall Council. West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) provided £200,000 funding toward the facility. The Link has been designed in direct response to the Levelling Up, Pathfinder agenda.

Located at 46 Park Street, The Link operates 0915-1630 from Monday to Friday and is managed by a team from Walsall College who are trained to provide customers with guidance on pre-employment training, apprenticeships, employability skills, CV writing and careers advice amongst many other services. They're also equipped to signpost users to a wide range of other service providers that include housing, benefits, public health services, mental health support and childcare.

It is intended to empower residents, regardless of their current employment, education, or training status, to seek guidance on the options available to improve their employment opportunities.

Nearly 1000 people attend successful **Walsall Works Expo**. One of the biggest jobs fairs in the region.

Walsall Connected helps more than 20,000 residents get online



Walsall Connected ensures that residents who feel digitally excluded or have a disability that makes it harder for them to access online services independently can get support to access first-line council advice or information easily.

There are now 29 Walsall Connected centres across the borough. All centres have free Wi-Fi and access to public computers, with trained staff and volunteers on hand to assist people and teach them valuable digital skills.

Walsall Connected has provided face-to-face support to 21,741 residents on a wide range of topics, from council tax enquiries to providing adult social care and Blue Badge information.

The number of Walsall Connected Centres has grown from two to a network of 29, incorporating council-owned libraries, community partnerships and other partner organisations. One of the most popular centres can be found at Walsall Manor Hospital and since it opened in July 2023, this Walsall Connected site has provided support to more than 1,000 people.

Walsall Town Centre's Digital Skills Hub



Located in Walsall town centre, converted from four previously empty shop units, the new Hub boasts a large communal learning and meeting space, a specialist IT training suite and an additional flexi-space available for training, private hire, and co-working spaces for digital professionals.

Digital Skills Hub is run by The Mercian Trust and funded by the UK Government and Walsall Council as part of the Town Deal, providing access and opportunities to grow vital skills across the borough. It is part of a network of digital focused support including the Walsall Connect centres located in over 25 libraries and community venues across the area.

Walsall attended UKREiiF, the country's biggest investment conference to showcase the Borough on a national stage.

£1.5billion investment across Walsall creating thousands of jobs and new housing.

2040 Ambition:

We Are Proud of our Borough

Goal: By 2040 we will be a borough known for having vibrant clean towns with quality green spaces that we all enjoy, a place where residents and partners take responsibility to respect the environment and are climate ready, and where communities come together to celebrate their heritage and culture.

We Are:

We are committed to creating clean, green, and safe streets in Walsall, fostering pride and encouraging active, healthy lives. We are collaborating with residents to reduce waste, recycle, and maintaining vibrant neighbourhoods.

We are focusing on protecting biodiversity, building climate resilience, and promoting eco-friendly practices. We value green spaces and parks, ensuring their quality and accessibility. By embracing modern technologies and sustainable transport, we are aiming for a thriving borough by 2040.

We are celebrating our heritage and cultures, aiming to build a dynamic arts, heritage, and leisure sector. Our regeneration plans will transform Walsall Town Centre, fostering community pride.



Clean and
Green

Celebrate our
Heritage and
Culture

Vibrant
Towns



Our Successes

Walsall Energy Action Project



Walsall Council and partners from the voluntary and community sector announced a £1.5m project to help residents and communities in Walsall with rising energy bills and climate action. The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest community funder in the UK, awarded £1.5m to help local organisations support Walsall residents and communities to act on high energy bills and the climate crisis.

Residents in Walsall who are struggling with their energy bills can get free advice from the Walsall Energy Action Project. This includes 6 community energy hubs that are located at community buildings, where residents will be able to find advice sessions and resources to inspire energy and climate action.

Group sessions and individual 1-2-1s will be available to help people understand their energy bills and easy ways to save money and carbon. Libraries of Inspiration have energy monitoring kits available for loan alongside books and case studies on energy and climate actions.

The Walsall Energy Action Project is a partnership project between Ryecroft NRC, Aaina Community Hub Ltd, Brownhills Community Association, Darlaston All Active, Nash Dom CIC, Walsall Working for Change CIC and Walsall Council.

Walsall Council converted streetlights to low **energy LED lighting**, reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.

MakerFest



Over 50,000 people celebrated the local creative community at Walsall MakerFest in Summer 2024. Walsall MakerFest aimed to spark the town's creativity and build momentum for the opening of the new Creative Industries Enterprise Centre which will provide space and facilities for a number of creative businesses.

Makers from Walsall and the surrounding area, along with the town's regular market traders, spanned Park Street selling their wares. Showcasing ceramics, leather goods, cakes, bath products, prints, illustrations, cards, street food, jewellery, and more.

Walsall MakerFest was delivered by Walsall Council in partnership with local non-profit Urban Hax CIC, The New Art Gallery Walsall, and Walsall Cultural Compact. It has been supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)'s Cultural Development Fund: Round Three through Arts Council England.

Members of the Walsall community celebrated the hard work and dedication of the council's Early Help and Family Hub **volunteers**.

Brand-new Class 730 **electric trains** calling at Walsall Train Station as part of the West Midlands Railway's £1 billion investment.

Community Litter Watch



Since 2019, group volunteers have removed 67,461 bags of rubbish from Walsall's streets. The total weight of this rubbish is estimated to be 539,688 kilograms, equivalent to 108 Elephants, eight Space shuttles or 60 T-Rex's.

Volunteers were invited to an afternoon at the Mayor's Parlour, which celebrated all the hard work that has taken place over the past five years.

Walsall Community Litter Watch (WCLW) was launched in October 2019 in response to requests from residents expressing an interest in litter picking. WCLW works in partnership with residents, community groups and volunteers, empowering them to take responsibility for improvements to their locality.

Since 2021, volunteers have given up 29,382 hours of their time, the equivalent of 3 years, 18 weeks, 3 days, 6 hours, and 34 minutes.

The group has 1,182 signed up volunteers and has seen multiple award successes. WCLW won the Keep Britain Tidy Community Award in 2021, and member Mike Hawes won the Litter Hero award in 2023.

Walsall has achieved WMCA funding to create one of the **UK's first net zero neighbourhoods** through enhanced energy efficiency regeneration in Dudley Fields, Bloxwich.

Restored **Bailey's Pool** for community use in collaboration with the **Canal and River Trust, Enovert Community Trust** and **volunteers**.

Fly tipping Summit brought together partners to discuss the best way forward to address current challenges in Walsall's fight against fly-tipping and agree a strategy to foster collaboration across agencies and deliver solutions to prevent fly-tipping and protect Walsall's environment.

University of Wolverhampton hosted the Kabaddi World Cup. The first **global** sporting event ever to be held in the borough.

University of Wolverhampton, Walsall Campus signed a three-year partnership deal with the Birmingham Panthers to become the official training base for the Netball Super League team.

Nearly 6,500 people attended Walsall Arboretum to celebrate its **150th anniversary**.

The New Art Gallery celebrated its **25th anniversary**.

Looking ahead for Walsall

There are lots of new exciting opportunities and developments planned for Walsall to help reach our vision. Some of these include:



Next Steps for 2025

We thank everyone who has come on this journey with us. We have learnt a lot, and this is shaping our next steps for 2025.

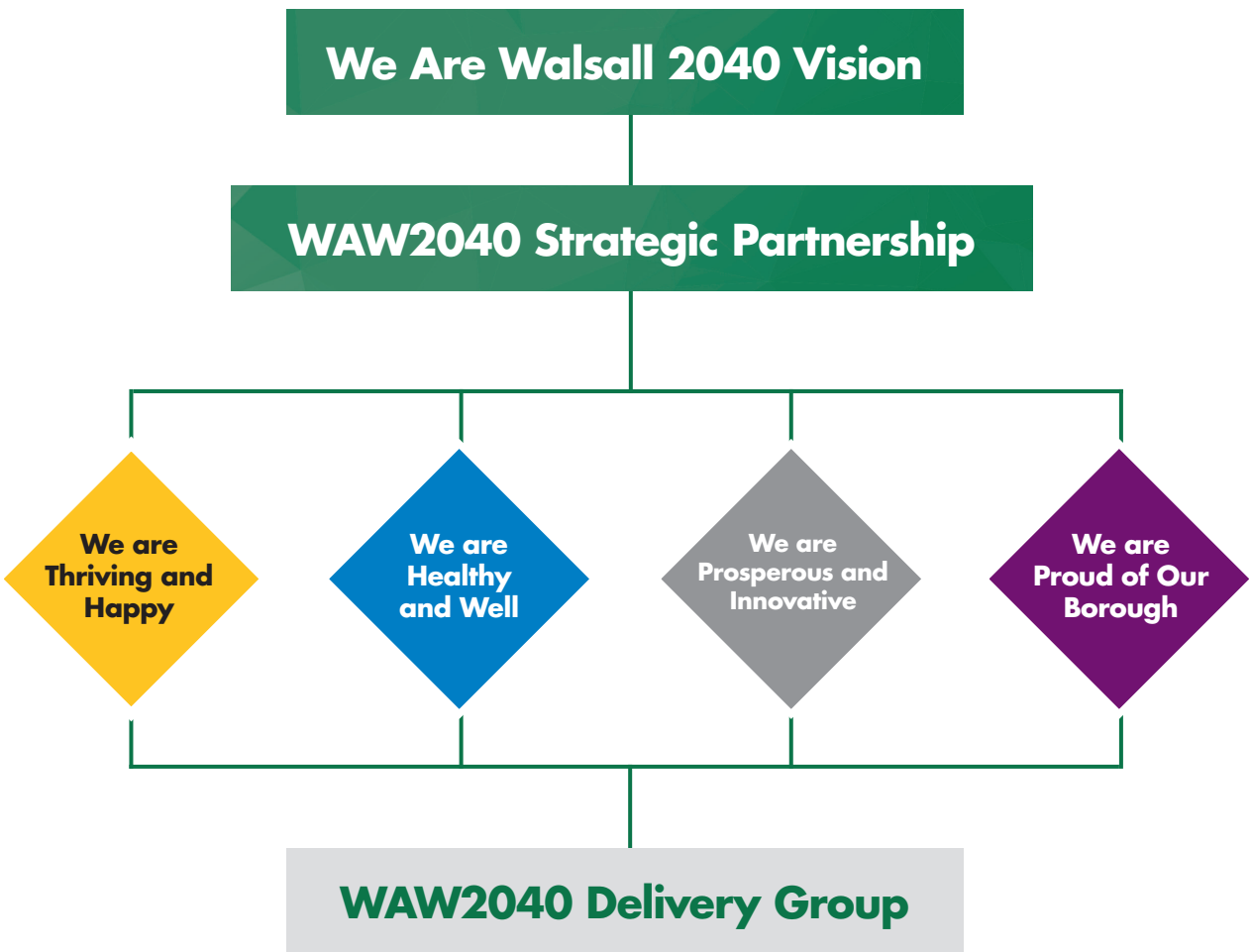
Next Steps for 2025 include:

- **Community engagement** providing an opportunity for residents to voice their opinions, concerns and suggestions, fostering a sense of involvement and ownership in local decision making
- A new programme of **raising aspirations** with Walsall Voices, a podcast to showcase the vision for the borough and promote the successes of residents
- Continue to develop the **performance framework** providing a structured approach to collecting data enabling evidence-based decision making
- Working with **themed partnerships** to align with the overall 2040 vision, themes and ambitions, creating a cohesive and unified approach.
- Introduction of the **WAW2040 champions**, local individuals who will engage with residents, act as a voice for the community, and demonstrate a strong commitment to our shared vision.



Governance

Good governance is important to ensure that we remain on track, delivering the right projects in the right places at the right time. The We Are Walsall 2040 Strategic Partnerships oversees the delivery of our ambitious plan. The partnership emphasises on collaboration, transparency, and accountability, fostering a thriving and sustainable community.



We are sustainable. 

We are inclusive. 

We are local. 

We are resident focused. 

We are honest. 

Partners

Thank you to all our partners for all your support.



Walsall Council



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE



WALSALL F.C.
FOUNDATION
THE CLUB'S CHARITABLE CHARITY
REGISTERED



Walsall Healthcare
NHS Trust



Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Walsall Together
Collaborating for happier communities



Black Country
Integrated Care Board



Walsall College



UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
KNOWLEDGE • INNOVATION • ENTERPRISE



Black Country
Chamber of
Commerce



fsb
Experts in Business



WALSALL LEARNING
ALLIANCE



WE ARE WALSALL 2040

Together to achieve a better Walsall

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