

## Walsall for All Partnership Board Meeting

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**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021**

**Time: 16:30 - 18:30**

**Venue: Microsoft Teams**

### Welcome & Introduction

David Primrose welcomed board members to the online meeting. He gave an overview of the meeting ahead. Three substantial matters were to be discussed: **Community Champions, Walsall for All programme update and the future of Walsall for All.**

In particular, Stephen Gunther (Director of Public Health Walsall) and James Henderson (Transforming Communities Together) were welcomed as guests to the meeting.

Laurence Lessard-Phillips announced that she was going on maternity leave in April and that this would be her last board meeting. David and the board members congratulated Laurence and thanked her for her contributions.

Laurence said it was a pleasure to be part of the board and to be a critical voice throughout this endeavour.

### Matters Arising

#### Black Lives Matter

- Maureen Lewis said that a number of organisations have been working with One Walsall to submit a collaborative bid for Windrush Day 2021. The deadline was 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The application asked for match funding and Maureen has approached the Council to ask for its support. It is an opportunity to engage with the community and raise awareness of the contributions from African-Caribbean communities and the Windrush generation to the UK.
- Dee Lytton said it has been great to work with the organisations to put together the bid. Legacy, raising awareness and education are the main outcomes. Any match funding will support the bid.
- David responded that it is fundamental to the business of Walsall for All.
- Walsall for All is supportive of the bid and hopes match funding will be possible.

No other matters arising.

## Community Champions

### Part one: setting the scene - current Covid-19 situation in Walsall and emerging issues

David invited Stephen to provide some data and insights on the current situation in Walsall (as of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021).

Key headlines:

- The rates are beginning to go down. These were higher in previous weeks, mostly due to surge testing.
- Vaccination rates are in the top 15 in the country.
- When the pandemic started, they were looking at risk factors of transmission e.g. underlying conditions, structural inequalities, close proximity of housing and deprivation. This has not been as evident during the pandemic. As a community, we have responded together very well.
- Throughout the third lockdown (January to March 2021), we have seen higher rates among certain ages and those in public facing/physical jobs.
- As of March 2021, there have been over 25,000 cases and 900 deaths in Walsall, which shone a light on inequalities across the borough.
- The pandemic has shown that we have responded and engaged as a community, through Walsall for All and other partners.
- Working with partner organisations to target the intended reach has been crucial.
- Investing resources has been key to its success, such as using community organisations during surge testing.
- Making Connections Walsall to continue seeing investment and capacity building.
- We now need to look at inequalities and what needs to be done for long-term investment.
- Vaccination uptake continues, however, there is some vaccine hesitancy in communities. As we widen out into younger adult population, we could see more hesitancy and refusal. In the short term, we need to explore why there is hesitancy. In the long term, we need to explore and understand the impact.

Feedback:

- Paul Gordon thanked Stephen and his team for the work they have done in handling the pandemic. The partnerships have been key in this important work.
- Dee noticed the 'same message for everyone' and highlighted that there may be different messages for different communities. The Community Champions project will explore what those messages will look like.

- Stephen said that if we are building capability and capacity, we need to look at what is next and how we can build this for the medium to long term.

## **Part two: overview of Community Champions.**

Irena Hergottova gave an overview of the community champions.

Walsall has secured funding for the COVID-19 Community Champions programme. The Walsall for All model has been key in this bid.

Time and energy will be invested in working with community leaders to increase vaccination uptake and address vaccine hesitancy. Some of the work will involve groups going out into the communities, for example to do door knocking. There will be some promotional activity involved.

As there is an established engagement model through Walsall for All, those networks will be utilised to invite them to apply for small grants and come up with possible solutions as part of the process.

The project will involve engagement with Public Health and greater information sharing.

Irena emphasised the importance of having ongoing conversations with regular feedback from all parties involved.

Key dates are:

**15<sup>th</sup> March** – The landing page and application form will be available and include an explanation of the funding stream and supporting information:

<https://www.walsallforall.co.uk/community-champions>

**23<sup>rd</sup> March** – An information webinar will take place to give the opportunity to ask questions. The recording can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/T48Me5n6lvI>

**31<sup>st</sup> March** – Deadline to submit applications, in line with MHCLG expectations and timeframes.

The mailing list will be the tried and tested list of community cohesion, faith sector, ethnic minorities and disability organisations. The list has been regularly updated and Irena is confident that we will know where to go in order to encourage people to apply.

James displayed his presentation and explained how Transforming Communities Together supports the community. This piece of work comes under Community Cohesion but they are also involved in health and wellbeing, and social financial inclusion. They support communities in various ways, for example by getting them online to allow them to share information and upskilling them so that they can be ambassadors in the community. They are funded by MHCLG through Near Neighbours, with whom they have a longstanding partnership.

James gave examples of projects they are working on:

- Vaccine Voices involves engaging with people across the Black Country and feeding key messages for them to pass onto their communities. 12/13 groups have been funded across the Black Country, 4 of which are in Walsall. People have shared their experiences of the vaccines which has given reassurance to others.
- Working with Black Country Healthcare in the Black Country and West Birmingham on vaccine webinars, which are interpreted into British Sign Language. Key faith leaders are involved, including Dr Masood Ahmed who has been answering lots of questions. The webinars provide the public with the opportunity to ask questions in a safe environment. The webinar tomorrow focuses on members of the black community and will be chaired by Councillor Sandra Samuels of Wolverhampton Council.
- A course called Diverting to Digital is available to upskill people digitally.
- Bringing People Together work tackles social isolation during lockdown.
- Ripple Effect involves working with young people in a number of communities helping them to develop leadership skills and introduce them to the workings of politics, encouraging them to become ambassadors and leaders of the future.

Irena added that the micro-funds are likely to be between £5,000 and £15,000, depending on the expected reach of the organisation in terms of demographics such as languages and age groups.

Dee and Manjit offered One Walsall's help in promotion and assistance with funding applications. Even during COVID, a number of new organisations have emerged. Manjit added that targeting young people with a clear message is important and something to be grown.

### **Walsall for All Programme Update**

Irena gave an update on projects, noting that activities based on face-to-face interaction have been postponed due to the pandemic.

The table shows that approximately 30% of the projects have been completed, most of which are from the innovation funding stream.

Several projects have continued with blended delivery styles and have asked for extensions. Some examples are DWP's Empowering Women's coffee mornings, and an initiative to help ex-offenders back into employment. Some have continued

virtually but people are keen to meet face to face again. DWP is aiming to have these carried out in person again by summer.

The buddying scheme run by Nash Dom aims to connect people who have recently settled in Walsall with people who have lived in Walsall for a long time, enabling new people to build friendships and contacts.

MHCLG has approved these projects for extension until September.

Other projects cannot be extended without clarity on rules around meeting in person. As these are open to people without appointments who don't have to give contact details, this will not be practical at the moment and will need to be re-evaluated in spring / summer.

The Cultures of Walsall festival has been postponed until September. They would like to have stalls in park as they do every year. This is a popular event and will be kept if possible.

Jane Murray has put together an evaluation document against projects that are fully or half completed, looking at participation levels and performance against outcomes. This has been compared to the work by Publicus which looks at Walsall for All's strategy and progress.

Several projects still need to be completed and evaluated. Walsall for All are working with MHCLG on sharing good practice.

Laurence said it was great to see all the projects that are happening. She asked how much was evaluated so far and what challenges there have been.

Irena said that Walsall for All have developed an evaluation template. Some of the evaluation requires analysis to help with conclusions. This is something that could be shared at the next meeting. An interesting picture could be emerging from the evaluation and impact of projects.

Jamie asked about the disclosure regarding the traveller site in Pleck and whether the Community Dialogue project and its 'Community Connectors' could be involved? In addition, he asked if it could help with improving integration and cohesion in the longer term.

Irena responded that The Faith and Belief Forum would be finalising the project in April, but she could look into it. Currently, Walsall for All are working with the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups and have attended formal meetings. The feedback to accommodate travellers was positive, but assurance needs to be provided within the wider community. A piece of work that could be done under the Walsall for All umbrella.

## The future of Walsall for All

Matthew Green said it was good to hear Stephen talk about capacity and capability building. In the Walsall for All programme, some projects have not delivered as anticipated during COVID.

Matthew highlighted that groups went on to form partnerships with other organisations, some for the first time. This was very encouraging to hear.

There are some lessons that can be built into community champions. It needs to be done in a smart way. On the back of this will be some cohesion benefits.

Matthew explained stages two and three of the Walsall for All legacy.

Since the last meeting, several conversations have been taking place about having an independent Walsall for All. These continued to be positive. An outline proposal was put to David and Irena, with a couple of stages of further work required on implementing the recommended model:

1. Test out some of the assumptions that the initial recommendation was built upon, with the hope that partners will support the new organisation.
2. If we get to a place where we feel confident in the model proposed and partners are happy, we can move to the stage of setting up the organisation.

There are some uncertainties within these stages.

Publicus delivered the first stage and led on the review. Matthew highlighted that at some point, the work needs to become sustainable in the long term, without the need for Publicus.

Feedback:

- Paul mentioned that Walsall for All has been a fantastic piece of work. He highlighted the question – is there money available? The people around the table have made Walsall for All a fantastic product. He suggested that a small working group might be needed to take this forward. We should think outside the box when it comes to funding.
- Jamie is in support of the proposed approach. He will liaise with Police bosses on the proposed recommendations. He added that it would be good for David and Matthew to talk to his senior leadership team. A conversation would also be valued with the Police and Crime Commissioner's office.
- Maureen said Walsall for All has been excellent, providing opportunities for mixing with different communities and community cohesion. She is looking forward to how it develops. Walsall for All has been a platform for engaging with communities.
- Dee mentioned that partnership work is so strong and everyone is going in the same direction. Now more than ever, equality, diversity and inclusion is going to be important, especially with COVID. The conversations are going to be

exciting, yet important. It is about everyone coming together with the same message.

David summarised the discussion by highlighting the following:

- The need for a small working group to support with moving forward to stages two and three.
- Strong affirmation from different sectors represented at the board meeting.
- Any actions should be taken in the next few weeks.
- Information will be circulated on community champions in due course.
- Any further information to be shared on the legacy of Walsall for All.

### **Any other business**

Claire Wills said it was great to see all the positivity. She mentioned that the Black Country Impact and Community Grants programmes have been extended and she wants to work with the board to continue the partnership. She does not want Walsall to miss out. Both programmes complement each other. She added that it was also great to see some of the projects have been able to deliver during COVID.

A'isha and Claire said the Walsall for All programme update was informative.

Ibrahim Sohail mentioned that young people are a top priority in the recovery of pandemic. Young people have been impacted by issues such as employment and mental health.

Jane Murray received thanks for collating the programme update. She said it was interesting to hear from Matthew on how Walsall for All could move forward.

David encouraged Jane to go back to the team and thank them for their hard work during the pandemic and knowing there is a future for the work being done.

As it was Laurence's final meeting, she was asked by David to provide some words of empowerment:

She said that it has been a pleasure to be part of this venture from an external and critical point of view. She added that it has been great to see everyone come together and see all the enthusiasm. She hopes by the time she returns, Walsall for All will still be active.

### **Dates of the next board meeting**

All meetings will be online, taking place on a Wednesday from 4.30pm to 6.30pm.

- June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021
- September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

**In attendance were:**

A'isha Khan (Aaina Community Hub)

Charlotte Gough (Community, Equality and Cohesion - Walsall Council)

Claire Wills (Black Country Impact - Walsall Council)

David Primrose (Board Chair)

Dee Lytton (One Walsall)

Jamie Hobday (Walsall Police Partnerships)

Ibrahim Sohail (Youth of Walsall)

Irena Hergottova (Community, Equality and Cohesion - Walsall Council)

James Henderson (Transforming Communities Together)

Jane Murray (Community, Equality and Cohesion - Walsall Council)

Laurence Lessard-Phillips (University of Birmingham)

Manjit Dehal (One Walsall)

Matthew Green (Publicus)

Maureen Lewis (Walsall Black Sisters Collective)

Paul Gordon (Director, Resilient Communities - Walsall Council)

Stephen Gunther (Director, Public Health - Walsall Council)

**Apologies:**

Kerrie Allward (Executive Director, Adult Social Care – Walsall Council)