

## Walsall for All Partnership Board Meeting

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**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

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

**Venue: Zoom Video Call**

### Welcome & Introduction

David Primrose welcomed board members to the online Zoom meeting.

### Walsall for All and COVID-19

Irena talked about the Walsall for All programme in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre COVID-19, several projects were running, with an emphasis on social mixing. When the pandemic emerged, some of the programme continued using digital technology.

Projects moving online:

- ESOL - offering online classes. For some, virtual classrooms are not possible and therefore packs are being sent out to providers and students.
- Community Researchers - carrying out interviews remotely by video call or telephone.
- Youth Ambassadors.
- Welcome Packs.
- Pledge and Training – establishing practices with sectors.

Irena mentioned that several projects were postponed or suspended, with Community Dialogue being one of them.

In Walsall, there is a lot of COVID-19 support work through food parcels, picking up prescriptions and befriending. This was compared to Bradford and Waltham Forest, in which they are running similar initiatives. In addition, a small team have been supporting the food distribution centre at Sneyd Community Association and as well as producing guidance in other languages.

There is the potential of looking beyond March 2021.

### Online Forum

Charlotte briefly mentioned that she is looking into developing an online forum for people to contribute stories and post information useful for Walsall residents. This suggestion follows Cheshire West's idea of giving residents the opportunity to submit something they are proud of. The online forum will give residents and the team the chance to build a picture of what is happening and could be ready within weeks.

## **Feedback to Irena and Charlotte**

- Acknowledgement of good work happening and praised Charlotte's work for being vocal. In addition, some of the work happening in Walsall has been picked up by the Express and Star.
- What is happening in response to COVID-19 is going to be very useful. Lessons learnt and the activities post-lockdown is something that should be considered.
- Putting stories on the website through the forum is a good idea. Who will it be targeted to and who will engage? Stories uploaded onto the forum should be accessible to everyone.
- Sarah (MHCLG) thanked Irena for her returns, which were clear and precise as to where Walsall for All is at the moment. She recognised the alternative ways to working and there is no need to return finances given the current position with adjusting to COVID-19. She noted the importance of continuing to engage with ESOL provision. She also thanked the wider team for their efforts.

There is a need to look at what Walsall for All could be like in the future and conversations would need to take place between Walsall for All and MHCLG.

## **Partnership Creator Commission**

In September 2019, the Board agreed to the commissioning of a Partnership Creator and an application for funding from The National Lottery was made through One Walsall, which was successful in December 2019.

A tender process took place between February 2020 and April 2020, of five applicants, four candidates were shortlisted and interviewed.

Publicus Ltd. were commissioned to undertake the Partnership Creation role. Matthew Green and Ian Cotterill will be leading on this.

Matthew said that at the time of the application, COVID-19 was not particularly dominant. He said that he and Ian want to deliver work that is robust.

Matthew and Ian outlined the process of the programme review:

- **Review process** - this will involve:
  - Mapping the terrain that exists, identifying key people, key documents and plans and agree a way of working together.
  - What is currently happening in the Walsall for All programme - specific activities, other local activity, gathering insights and mapping current partnership structures. One of the key questions that could be asked to an individual is: "If we wanted to develop something new in the area, who would you ask?"
  - Conversations with local stakeholders, conducting literature reviews and considering what "high impact" looks like.

- Looking to the future – considering aspirations from the group and the wider borough. One of the big questions is how the future will be resourced.
- **Involving People**
  - Matthew and Ian stressed that it's vital this review is a useful exercise and they are interested in hearing people's priorities and questions that should be asked.
  - Publicus will also be interested in:
    - Us and our experiences, as well as our history and role.
    - Conceptualisation of integration and its priorities for different people.
    - Whether views on the conceptualisation of integration is divergent or convergent.
    - Significance of integration and cohesion in general.
    - Programme activity and links.
    - COVID-19 and cohesion.
    - Aspirations for the future.
  - Publicus is very open to receiving contributions from anyone.
  - An online booking system has been set up for people to book appointments. The team are flexible and can work according to people's schedules (Monday-Sunday between 7am and 10am). Individuals can choose from a video call, normal telephone conversation or some other way that suits them.  
<https://walsallcohesionreview.youcanbook.me/>
  - Even if there are potentially problematic issues, these can be shared in confidence.
  - Interviews will be recorded and an AI service will be used to transcribe recordings. Interviewees may wish to see the transcription or recording and make corrections.
  - GDPR processes are also in place – no other person can access interview information.

### **Invitation to respond**

Following the presentation, the Board were invited to respond.

Discussions included:

- Involving in the review residents who want to benefit from better integration and cohesion, as opposed to known and possible actors.
- Engaging with those who don't want any more engagement and prefer segregation to continue.
- Engaging with residents who are not able to access online, but want to be involved in the review.
- Provisions for non-English speakers.

- Working with residents who engage with us on social media and email subscribers and key messages that can be used to encourage participants to share their views.
- Ensuring the review does not feel like a “survey” and then seeing no impact. Surveys can feel irrelevant to some people.

In response to some of these discussion points:

- Walsall for All’s job is to manage tensions and conflicts and that there’s not always a promise that changes will be happening. For Publicus, they believe people’s voices need to be heard. The way to do this is to look into what is going on in the community. For example, if someone is unhappy with a certain thing, then this point should be acknowledged and addressed.
- This is about getting the research and work done to reach “hard to reach” population. Interested in social networking analysis and where you can take the information from.
- Not everyone will welcome this work. There is a feeling that people will not be afraid to take on discussions around integration and cohesion. This gave Publicus the confidence to apply for the tender.
- Residents will be invited to get involved and the identity of participants can be known or not known.
- Flexibility is in place to accommodate for all interviewees.
- Inviting people into forums of discussion is not wrong, rather it encourages conversation.
- The AI system of transcribing may not be good with people’s accents and non-English speakers which is a weakness.
- MP3 recordings of interviews can be shared, if requested.
- In terms of social media engagement, this should be in a way that meets Charlotte’s objectives. Publicus can work with Charlotte on this.

### **Final Comments from the Board**

- Consideration should be taken into for those whose English is not their first language and would like to participate.
- Currently, we are going through challenging times and it would be interesting to see the outcomes of the review.
- Walsall for All is great in engaging. Aspirations is important.
- This commission is a real opportunity to get an understanding of where we are now, our achievements and the challenges we’re facing. There is a consensus that aspirations are so important and these must be recognised. It is also an opportunity to create a piece of work that different sectors and individuals can influence.
- There is a potential link between the commission and those progressing into employment. There is potential research into employers about the opportunities they are providing to everyone. The DWP Women Empowerment Workshops were a good example of engaging women across the borough.

- This commission will have a lot of emphasis on aspirations. It reminds of the away day that took place at the start of Walsall for All.
- The word “integration” is used by government a lot. If the Walsall for All team was taken out of the equation and it was just the government, there would be questions on how the programme could carry forward. The team should not necessarily influence this piece of work, as this agenda applies to everyone. This needs to be clear in the brand.
- There is interest in this research. Walsall College deals with over 20,000 students and all have different views on community activities. Some of the learning in the college should be used and the college is happy to offer interviews with community liaison officers. Interest in progression into education and getting residents out of poverty and into education and jobs.
- Darlaston, Willenhall and Bentley are important areas and tend to be overlooked.
- Looking forward to being involved and listening to people’s contributions.
- There is an element of getting buy-in from communities. Are we tackling community concerns or something else? The view of “Walsall progressing as a community” may not be shared by everyone.

Final comments from Matthew and Ian:

- Publicis have already received a wealth of information and data.
- There is a huge need to rely on the knowledge and experience of the localities.
- There will be stages to gather data and Zoom and phone calls will be useful technology to do this.
- The public engagement aspect of the programme is important.

One Walsall will be the point of contact for Matthew and Ian.

All board members are encouraged to book in interviews as part of the programme review.

The next board meeting will focus on the progress of the Partnership Creation and the existing stage of the Walsall for All programme.

**Dates of the next board meeting (all on Wednesday):**

June 24<sup>th</sup>

September 23<sup>rd</sup>

December 2<sup>nd</sup>

**In attendance were:**

A'isha Khan (Aaina Community Hub)  
Charlotte Gough (Walsall Council)  
David Primrose (Diocese of Lichfield and Board Chair)  
Davina Lytton (One Walsall)  
Deb Rajania (Walsall College)  
Gerry Lyng (DWP)  
Ian Cotterill (Publicus)  
Jamie Hobday (Walsall Police Partnerships)  
Janet Davies (Chair of Walsall Community Network and manager at Brownhills Community Centre)  
Kerrie Allward (Walsall Council – Adult Social Care)  
Matthew Green (Publicus)  
Maureen Lewis (Walsall Black Sisters Collective)  
Sarah Green (MHCLG)

**Apologies from:**

Andy Seager (Bloxwich Academy)  
Marie Smith (WATMOS)