

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON



NEW HORIZONS

How Wolverhampton is gearing up to become a city of opportunity



City movers

While debate about devolution all too often focuses on the giving and taking of power, little is said about its ability to empower. When the dust settles in a few years' time on the devo deals currently being done across England, it may well be looked back upon as the period when Wolverhampton got its mojo back.

Like many places, the city was floored by the recession in 2008 as carefully laid plans were left in tatters and the local authority was left to pick up the pieces. Slowly but surely it has got back on track and the ambitious plans that are now in place to drive the city forward are an indication of just how much confidence has grown.

Whether it's opening up the city centre to multi-million pound investment opportunities (see pages 4-7) or major developments in its education offer such as Europe's biggest construction college (pages 12-13), the signs of change are crystal clear. Over the last decade Wolverhampton has grown into its role as the city of the Black Country at one of the most pivotal times in the area's long history. Together with its three neighbouring authorities the city council is not only driving forward prosperity in the Black Country but also spearheading devolution across the West Midlands.

The City of Wolverhampton is transforming itself as a city and it has a council with the confidence and capability to lead the way

Managing director Keith Ireland admits it had been 'one of the quietest councils' around. Not anymore.

Transforming from the inside out

The recession, austerity and the nationwide drive to transform public services have catalysed the council and given it a renewed sense of purpose to lead the city forward. Through its Confident, Capable Council programme – C3 for short – it has engaged staff in changing the way it works, encouraging employees to come forward with ideas to change the culture of the authority.

In just 100 days it implemented 112 ideas and many more continue to be put into practice, such as a council eBay account to turn surplus items into cash.

Substantial investment in ICT, largely driven by ideas from staff, has not only changed the way the council works and saved money in the process, it is responding to the changing demands of residents. For example, when it discovered half of the 6,000 transactions handled by its website every day were made via hand held devices, it made sure its online services were mobile friendly.

It's an example of evidence based decision making, says Keith: 'Rather than us decide what's best for people, look at the evidence and what it is telling us.'

That same ethos is being applied to businesses – 'they



Managing director Keith Ireland (left) with council leader Roger Lawrence

don't want money, they want our support' – and key service areas like children and adults social care where the council is working more closely with families to keep them together (see pages 14-15).

As a council with a key enabling and stewardship role to play, Keith says it has been vital to bring different directorates closer together.

In part, it is recognition of the inextricable links between education, skills, local economic growth and future demand on services provided by the council

and partners in the public and voluntary sectors. One practical way that has been achieved is in establishing an open plan working environment at the council's civic centre base where every member of the senior management team work at close quarters. On top of that, daily meetings are held to ensure any burning issues are resolved.

Linda Sanders, strategic director – people, admits she 'groaned' at the prospect of having to meet fellow directors every day. 'But I'm no longer a sceptic,' she

says. 'Things no longer fester or get left unsaid. A lot of cross-directorate issues that can build up and not get resolved are now dealt with head on.'

A matter of pride

In July the council rebranded to the City of Wolverhampton. It was partly to reflect its role and responsibilities as a civic leader but also about nurturing a greater sense of pride. Despite its industrial heritage and an impossibly long list of famous sons and daughters – particularly from the music and sports worlds – the area tends to be self-deprecating, says Keith.

'One of the things I say to employees is I want them to be ambassadors for the city, be proud of the city and positive about it,' he says. 'That raises the morale of the city. It's an important aspect of our work here – how can we make people feel pride in the city of Wolverhampton and raise the profile nationally?'

That profile is already rising, partly because of the city's prominent role within the emerging West Midlands Combined Authority. The foundations for that lie in strong relationships between the Black Country authorities and a shared recognition of both interdependence and huge opportunity brought by collaboration.

With 1,200 job losses and £134m cut from the budget, council leader Roger Lawrence admits it would be easy to be downbeat. But he believes a corner has been turned and Wolverhampton is 'a city which is confident in its ability to attract both investment and visitors from the surrounding area to take advantage of the increasing opportunities that will be there'.

He adds: 'It'll be a city that's prosperous and at times a little bit edgy. Look at Manchester and the Northern Quarter. It's not the finished product by any means. It's exciting and has different areas with different roles to play. I can see Wolverhampton becoming something similar.'

Phil Barnett, chair of Wolverhampton Business Champions and director at Marston's – the world's largest brewer of cask ale – believes the city is now truly open for business

Earlier this month we celebrated Wolverhampton Business Week – a series of events that showcases what the city has to offer and why it's a great place to invest. It's the kind of initiative that underlines how far Wolverhampton has come in recent years in terms of the relationship between local government and the private sector. It was organised by the City Board, a partnership of business and public sector representatives that was set up by the council.

The organisation I chair, Wolverhampton Business Champions, is another example. Set up by former mayor Phil Bateman, it brings together 10 strategically important businesses that collectively employ 7,000 people in Wolverhampton.

It's important to stress the scale of those employers – Caparo, Carvers, Carillion, Jaguar Land Rover, UTC Aerospace Systems, Moog, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, House of Fraser and my

own, Marston's. We have a combined global workforce of more than 90,000 and a UK turnover that in 2013 totalled £7bn.

Through the Business Champions, City Board and other strategic boards set up by the council, Wolverhampton is drawing on the wealth of business expertise it has on its doorstep to help shape a more prosperous future. It ensures the expertise and experience of senior business people in the city are utilised and it means businesses have the opportunity to look at a council strategy and offer advice and support on it.

There's now a lot more joined up thinking between the strategic decision makers. What's been important is businesses have strong working relationships with council officers and good dialogue with the politicians. Of course, things can change politically. In many ways that's irrelevant to businesses – we're apolitical. It doesn't matter who is in power, our objective is to make Wolverhampton



a better place to invest, work, live and visit. The relationships that have been built up have proved to be very helpful in this process.

There has been quite a lot of criticism of the council in the past in terms of planning issues and not being business friendly. But it's clear to see that things have come on leaps and bounds since those days.

It's work in progress as there is still a lot to do, but from a business perspective we feel a lot more engaged and positive about the future – working side by side with key stakeholders including the local authority.

Fast-track regeneration

With more than 50 developments already underway and plenty more in the pipeline, it's all change in Wolverhampton

Step outside Wolverhampton railway station and it becomes immediately obvious you are in a city that's changing. A brand new high quality office development, i10, is taking shape and beyond it can be seen the state of the art new bus station.

But it's nothing compared to what's in the pipeline.

This whole interchange area is being transformed via £120m of public and private investment with development partners Neptune that will create a modern gateway to the city centre with a new station, enhanced facilities for motorists and cyclists and the possibility of a Metro extension. It will essentially be a transport hub but one that is seamlessly integrated into the city centre and all it has to offer.

Wolverhampton already has enviable connectivity to the rest of the Black Country, the West Midlands and beyond and the railway station alone caters for 4.75 million passengers a year. Councillor Peter Bilson, cabinet member for transport infrastructure, says: 'We will soon have the facilities to complement those assets – and a further £3m investment over the next five years from the city centre's new business improvement district (BID), which was set up last year following a vote of confidence by businesses.'

Whichever direction you head out of the city centre – whether it's to the Westside, Southside, Canalside or the Molineux Quarter districts – plans are in place to develop new homes, shops, offices and leisure facilities (see pages 6-7, overleaf). Head north of the city and you'll find the i54 enterprise zone, a collaboration between the City of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire Council to attract high quality jobs to the area. It's where Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) recently announced a £600m investment in a new engine plant, creating 1,400 jobs, and it is already home to companies like Moog, Eurofins and ISP.

Overall, Wolverhampton has seen £120m of regeneration investment – much of it from the private sector – during the last year, a further £50m is currently on site and about £200m more is earmarked over the next 12 months. It's a far cry from the dark days of the recession, admits Tim Johnson, strategic director for place, and reflects growing confidence inside and outside the city.

He says Wolverhampton hadn't been capturing the levels of investment seen in comparable cities and that led the council to review its strategy three years ago.

'Investors are looking for that confident vision and a coherent and credible approach. So we have spent the last three years focusing on areas that will maximise investment so that we're not just glad of any investment but are able to focus it on our competitive strengths. Part

of that has been underpinned by public investment but latterly we have seen signs of private sector investment like i54 and in the city centre. We have a really significant portfolio coming through. Organisations have their moment in time: this is ours and we're ready to move forward.'

Last month the council submitted a city centre area action plan to the Government outlining a vision for what the area could be like by 2026. It was shaped by no less than three public consultations and brings further clarity to the city's direction; something that is vital to residents, business, investors and the Government alike.

'There is a really strong Wolverhampton offer that's been invisible in the past at times,' says Tim. 'But the more we get out and engage and outline that offer, the bigger the response. Investors and Government are





Artist's impressions of the new interchange and top right, the i10 development



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impressed by what they see here – there's substance to this.'

From the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) perspective, a booming Wolverhampton is crucial to its plans. That's why it is directing investment into areas like the interchange. With a combined population of 1.1 million people, the three Black Country boroughs and the City of Wolverhampton represent an urban area similar in size to Birmingham.

Stewart Towe, chairman of the LEP, believes perceptions of Wolverhampton and its council are changing.

'By investing in its business base and spending more time talking to firms, there is a major opportunity for both the local authority and businesses to get a more successful outcome. It's not just about rhetoric but the council finding innovative ways of supporting business.

'To get JLR hanging their hat on a brand new engine plant and commit so soon to a major expansion – that starts to generate interest in other areas. It brings supply chain development with it as well and those in the area start to realise they are in a good place to develop their business. There's a chain reaction that continues to develop.'

The investment now being seen in the city centre will build on that momentum, he believes, and create a renewed vibrancy when combined with investment from the University of Wolverhampton and the growing student population that brings.

Tim is excited by the prospect of Wolverhampton fulfilling its true potential.

'We now have over 50 development projects underway', he says. 'Fast forward three to four years down the line and the city centre will be radically different and performing the economic role it should. It adds up to a very compelling offer.'

Combined forces

Entering the combined authority era is a natural next step for Wolverhampton and its Black Country neighbours

Much has been made of the long standing collaboration between the local authorities of Greater Manchester and how it has enabled the area to lead the way on devolution.

Those same attributes can be found in the Black Country where Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall have been working closely together for the last 15 years. Indeed, it was the first place in the country to have a joint core strategy to guide future development and regeneration, launched back in 2006.

That closeness and recognition of the interdependence that exists across the Black Country is reflected in the four authorities sharing one local enterprise partnership (LEP). It has also given the boroughs the building blocks to not only drive growth on their own patch but to champion the wider region.

As Stewart Towe, chairman of the Black Country LEP, explains: 'Having proved that they can work together, it's given the Black Country the confidence to go to others like Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull and say "look, the four of us are working together, we think that can be expanded across a broader area".'

'It fits in with Government thinking – presenting the West Midlands as a functional economic area that brings with it efficiencies as an investment proposition.'

It has led to the Black Country authorities joining forces with Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull to develop plans for a West Midlands Combined Author-

ity. Those proposals were submitted to the Government last month and include the handing down of an £8bn investment fund to develop infrastructure and bringing forward developments across the region. The combined authority is expected to be launched by April next year and managing director Keith Ireland is now the programme director for the West Midlands.

Tim Johnson, Wolverhampton's strategic director for place, believes it heightens the need for the city to be ready for the opportunities ahead.

'With a combined authority in the pipeline, the need to understand our position within the regional economy has never been stronger,' he says. 'Regional economies are how things work now. We want a successful Birmingham and we can complement a successful Birmingham.'

'Global investment is about scale and the wider offer and that transcends local authority borders. We want to make sure our offer is very strongly positioned in that regional economic pitch.'

He adds: 'We go into a combined authority era with confidence. It still comes back to us having a strong investment proposition here. I'm quite enthused by that, particularly as we move into a different era in the city. Being able to do that with positive relationships with Birmingham and Coventry will be important – it's about our ability to capitalise on the reach cities like Birmingham can give us. It's a mature approach to partnership working.'

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

‘With over £868m of investment either planned or on site in the city centre, the City of Wolverhampton is turning a corner. Our time has come.’

Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for city economy



KEY DEVELOPMENTS: WESTSIDE

As opportunities for development in Wolverhampton city centre go, they don't get any bigger than Westside.

With a combined area of almost three hectares and the fact that the majority of sites and existing buildings are owned by the council – eliminating the need for time-consuming land assembly – the goal is to bring a balanced mix of high quality development into this area with homes, leisure facilities, shops and offices as well as the new £5.5m Youth Zone (see pages 12-13).

It's being dubbed 'the western gateway to the city's retail core' and sits next to a new Sainsbury's store, which opened last year. The Westside development area is split into three land parcels that sit within the inner ring road and local authority owned land is now being marketed to prospective investors.

The council has purchased a number of sites across Westside in recent years but arguably none has been more significant than the site of the former Fox Hotel. A notorious eyesore in one of the city's strategic gateways, it has since been demolished and the location made ready for a modern hotel development with offices and family homes likely to be built close by. So rather than being confronted by a dated, crumbling relic of the past, visitors will soon be greeted by eye-catching, contemporary design as they enter the city.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS: SOUTHSIDE

Like many parts of the country, Wolverhampton saw years of hard work on key regeneration projects derailed when the recession hit in 2008.

Nowhere bore the brunt more than Southside, a key area situated next to the city's main shopping district and covering an area of 1.75 hectares.

But now the area is bouncing back. In the intervening years the council has put in place the Southside Intervention Plan to soften the blow and offer support to local businesses by providing grants, demolishing run-down shops, purchasing under-used land and buildings, refurbishing properties, and sprucing the area up as part of a fresh approach to regeneration. It has also opened up a one-stop shop advice centre offering local firms a range of information and support and worked hard to ensure traders are kept up to date with latest developments.

This is a key strategic area for the city, sitting adjacent to the Mander Shopping Centre (pictured), where £35m is being invested in its refurbishment by leading developer Benson Elliot.

Southside is reaping the rewards of that approach with an influx of new businesses and a fall in the number of void premises. Bit by bit the area is performing the role the council had long hoped for – as a sustainable extension of the city centre's retail and leisure offer.

Piece by piece, the jigsaw of development around Wolverhampton's core is falling into place. Here we take a look at some of the key projects that will transform the city

A CHANGING CITY



KEY DEVELOPMENTS: MOLINEUX QUARTER

Many major cities are synonymous worldwide with their football clubs and the City of Wolverhampton is no different. Wolverhampton Wanderers FC's Molineux home was one of the first modern all-seater stadiums in the early 1990s and has undergone further redevelopment in recent years.

But this time round it's as much about creating a new destination for Wolverhampton as it is cutting edge football facilities. Working together with the University of Wolverhampton and Asda, the club has put together a vision for the Molineux Quarter to create a striking northern gateway to the city.

Sitting alongside the stadium will be a new £18m business school to complement the university's growing city campus while Asda is redeveloping and extending its existing store.

A football stadium, supermarket and university campus may seem like odd bedfellows but through collaboration and a shared goal they will create a high quality environment that will appeal to everyone. The hope is it will become a beacon for best practice in regeneration and provide residents and visitors – whether they are football fans, students or shoppers – with stunning public spaces and a natural gateway into the rest of the city.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS: CANALSIDE QUARTER

An area packed with history and a reminder of the city's industrial heritage, the canal basin to the north east of central Wolverhampton has been an untapped gem for many years.

But over the next few years it will be transformed into the Canalside Quarter, utilising its unique character to provide both desirable city living and a destination for visitors with shops, walkways, cycle paths and leisure facilities.

It will be home to the new multi-million pound West Midlands Construction University Technical College, which will open its doors in September 2016 on the site of the former Springfield Brewery (see pages 12-13). Last month saw work begin on preparing large tracts of land along the canalside to pave the way for around 100 homes. That all comes on top of around 900 homes and student accommodation that have been developed across three sites since 2008.

The council has long held ambitions for this corner of the city but both its complexity and the economic environment have held back progress in the past. But recent investment indicates things are now taking off.

In time, the Canalside Quarter is expected to grow to somewhere in the region of 1,700 homes as it establishes itself as a vibrant residential area for the city.



Rock legend Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin fame, who hails from Wolverhampton, performing at the Civic Hall

Taking centre stage

When you are working hard to promote your locality as a great place to live and work it always helps to get some independent endorsement.

Last month it came in the shape of the Family Hotspots study, which named Wolverhampton as one of the top 10 cities in the country to raise a family. Low crime rates, a cheaper cost of living than many parts of the country and a family-friendly city centre secured its sixth place, sandwiched between West Midlands neighbours Birmingham and Coventry.

While major developments are taking place across the city to draw in new employers and improve Wolverhampton's infrastructure, the broader strategy is to improve all those elements that make it a great place to live. That means good quality housing, investing in public spaces, improving schools and ensuring there's a vibrant nightlife on offer, says council leader Roger Lawrence.

The city has long been a draw for people across the Black Country and beyond thanks to legendary venues like the Civic Hall and Wulfrun Hall, now in their 77th year and about to undergo a major refurbishment. The council has invested £3m and a further £6.5m has been secured by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) via the Local Growth Fund.

But through a range of mixed-use development it is adding to the city centre's 600 shops, cafes, restaurants and bars to give it a more contemporary vibe.

Things are looking rosy for the wider cultural scene. The city's main art gallery has secured more than £100,000 from the Arts Council's museum resilience fund



Wolverhampton Racecourse is a major draw for horseracing fans

and Wolverhampton's Victorian theatre, the Grand, was last month awarded £800,000 – half of which is from the council – to pay for a major refurbishment.

The same goes for the city's retail offer. One of the main shopping malls, the Mander Centre, changed hands last year and is undergoing a £35m revamp in an effort to pull in more upmarket brands. Among them will be Debenhams, which will be opening a major, new department store, and the council is in discussions with other retailers to ensure shops in the city centre befit the size and stature of Wolverhampton.

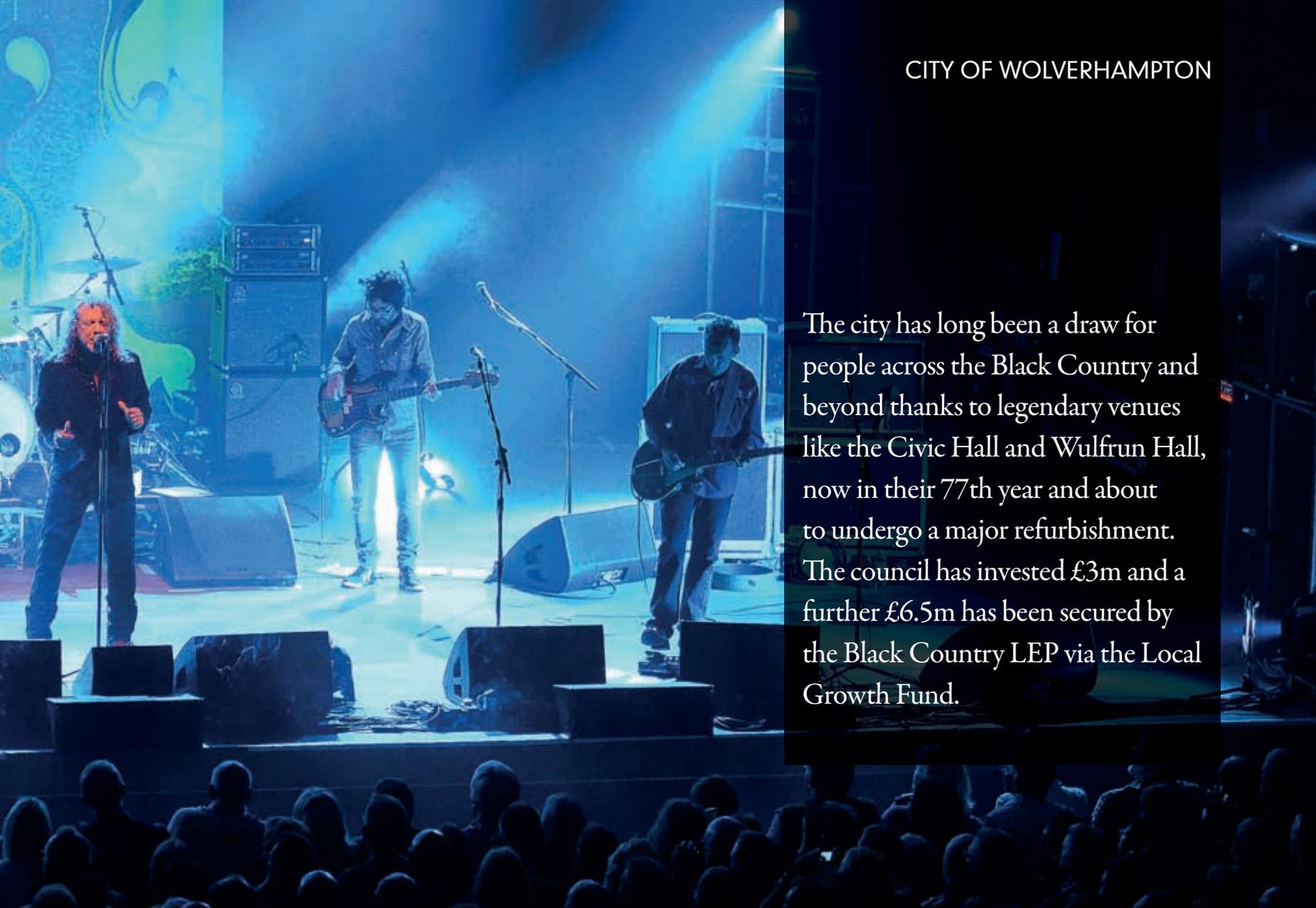
Tim Johnson, strategic director for place, says that the council's role in reshaping the city centre as a destination has been one of an enabler with a guiding principle that the city should never accept second best.

'Sometimes we have to be interventionist for a reason. You are almost raising the bar a bit. In a world where you are trying to stimulate demand you have to be realistic about what you can achieve. But now we are in a place where we shouldn't compromise.'

Meeting housing needs

Like many major cities, Wolverhampton has a growing population and increasing demand for new housing. Across the Black Country as a whole a total of 47,000 homes will be needed by 2033, according to the LEP's strategic economic plan.

To help tackle the issue head on, the council has taken the innovative step of handing the chief executive of Wolverhampton Homes – the arm's length management organisation responsible for managing the local authority's



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It's a top 10 hit with families and now Wolverhampton is going all out to become the place to work, rest and play

23,000 homes – a joint role as strategic director of housing. Lesley Roberts will work alongside Tim Johnson to ensure housing is an integral part of future regeneration plans.

'We have to make sure houses are being built to complement the regeneration work that's going on,' says managing director Keith Ireland. 'We also need to increase the build out rate. A key part of Lesley's role will be to look at how the council can build houses to meet the demand out there and achieve an income.'

'We want to raise our performance around housing and this feeds into our combined authority work and the need to operate more regionally to make sure housing

numbers are achieved.' One of the key areas for housing will be Bilston, a former industrial town south east of Wolverhampton. After a decade of stop-start plans, work is now progressing on creating more than 500 homes at Bilston Urban Village (pictured below).

Both the council and Homes and Communities Agency have invested in the 100-acre site to prepare it for development and over the next few years it will be transformed to create a new community complete with a primary school, shops and business premises.

Around £45m has already been invested in a leisure centre and a new home for the secondary school, South

Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy.

'This is an area where there are chronic issues around land contamination and a mismatch between residential and business areas,' says Tim. 'We're creating a new residential development at scale. It's illustrative of what we need to do across the Black Country. Creating sustainable communities.'

Councillor Peter Bilson, cabinet member for city assets, describes Wolverhampton and the Black Country as 'an area with strong industrial history and longstanding communities'. He adds: 'In terms of social infrastructure, a lot of it is already there.'



‘There is no doubt of the resolve of the key civic institutions to work together for the common good. This joint working is of great benefit to Wolverhampton.’

Professor Tony Travers, chair of Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission



© Courtesy of the Express & Star

The skills mission

No matter how successful Wolverhampton is in attracting investment and driving physical regeneration, it will mean little if the city fails to get to grips with deep-seated skills issues.

Last year council leader Roger Lawrence took the bold move to launch a Skills and Employment Commission to shape new solutions.

To put the challenges into context, a further 20,000 working age adults would need to obtain a qualification for Wolverhampton to reach the national average. Earlier this month the Commission, chaired by leading academic Professor Tony Travers, published its findings and set out recommendations for the way forward.

It found the city ‘needs to raise its game’ in a way that encompasses all involved – from residents, businesses and education and training providers to the council, local enterprise partnership and, in time, the West Midlands Combined Authority. Although the city has a large and increasingly successful economy, high skilled jobs tend to go to people from outside the area – highlighting the mismatch between the skills of the local workforce and employers’ needs.

Key actions include strengthening careers advice and guidance in schools; a stronger focus on local, tailored support for the long-term unemployed; a drive to encourage volunteering and launching a city-wide



Boosting the skills of local people will be central to the city’s future success. That’s why the council and its partners are tackling the issue head on

work experience programme; and better links between employers and higher education to further develop those with higher skills. Launching the findings, Professor Travers said ‘there is no doubt of the resolve of the key civic institutions to work together for the common good’ but added the council and its partners were often hampered by the complexity caused by short-term Government initiatives. One of his key messages was responsibility and budgets for skills and training programmes should be handed down to the city and the wider region to enable Wolverhampton to develop bespoke solutions.

So what are the next steps? The Wolverhampton City Board – made up of representatives from council, businesses and third sector – is now developing an action plan that focuses on a ‘whole system’ response. That will include providing a joined up approach to careers advice for people of all ages and clarifying the role of different institutions to make the most of the resources available.

The Commission confirmed the two big tasks facing the city, says Cllr Lawrence, in terms of improving basic skills and ensuring those who have skills can progress further and access high quality jobs. ‘We needed that external validation of the things we needed to do,’ he says. ‘Not just the council but the wider community.’

Progress is already being made on a number of the



Wednesfield High School students visit the most modern engine manufacturing plant in the UK following Jaguar Land Rover's £600m investment in the city



Aerospace firm Moog is based at the i54 site along with with Jaguar Land Rover



Commission's recommendations, such as the need for schools to be better at preparing young people for the world of work. The council has taken a more prominent role in boosting performance and has so far put in place interim executive boards at six schools where improvements are needed.

It reflects a wider move to 'get more directly involved

in education', says managing director Keith Ireland, who chairs two of the boards. 'We take a strategic role in the schools. We encourage them and have a role to challenge in terms of their achievement and delivery. We've seen dramatic change in terms of primary schools in the last two years and have just had fantastic A level results.

'We're now in discussion with the college and university about creating one education system so that we know who is going to be doing what and when. We're also setting up a city-wide education board which they'll all sit on.'

Making those all-important links between education and industry can be seen in developments like the new West Midlands Construction University Technical College (see pages 12-13). And those already of working age have one of the country's leading adult education services, run by the council, to draw on for support. It is one of just six rated 'outstanding' nationally. The City of Wolverhampton College is the fastest improving FE college in the country and in the top 15% nationally.

It all adds up to a strong platform to tackle skills challenges, says Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for city economy.

'Wolverhampton is self-aware. We know we have our challenges and skills is undoubtedly the biggest one we face. You can create all the opportunities in the world but if local people don't benefit from them you are not going to fundamentally change the nature of the city.'

He says the Commission's review has given the council a good grasp of the current situation and what needs to be done.

'We are in a good position because there's a constructive relationship with the university, the FE college and improving relationships with schools. There's an opportunity to genuinely influence the skills system. The sense of partnership working in the city is second to none. There's a real shared ownership to this. They all get the criticality of it.'

PROFILE



Parampreet Tamber

In the space of just two years Parampreet Tamber has gone from being a council apprentice to playing a big role transforming the way the local authority works.

The 18 year old, who is from Wolverhampton, recently moved into the council's ICT department

to develop new ways to use technology to streamline operations and drive efficiency.

His big break came after coming up with an online form that enables the senior management team to have an overview of the council's marketing and PR in terms of what's coming up, who it's assigned to, potential risks and opportunities.

He now plans to study for a marketing degree at the University of Wolverhampton on a part-time basis while working for the council.

'From the day I started here the one thing you find is the amount of learning you do is immense. You are learning a wide range of things, including the political side of the council and how it works.

'There's a strong relationship between the council and the local college and that has helped me quite a bit because a major part of the apprenticeship is your qualification. The flexibility of the college and my employer is great. Sometimes you need to extra time for studies. It's something that is helping many other apprentices here as well.'

The new South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy – part of the city's £248m Building Schools for the Future investment programme



Planning for the future

From cutting edge education facilities to an innovative youth zone, Wolverhampton is investing in future generations

The Way

More than three years in the making, The Way is a key example of how Wolverhampton is becoming a place for all-ages.

This 'youth zone' will open in January in the west of the city centre to give young people the chance to get involved in everything from amateur dramatics to computer technology to basketball and a host of other sports.

'The council was inspired to invest £3m by OnSide Youth Zones in other parts of the country and the initiative's goal to build a network of 21st century youth centres, giving young people quality, safe and affordable places to go in their leisure time,' explains Councillor Val Gibson, cabinet member for children and young people.

The £6m centre, which is also backed by entrepreneur Steve Morgan, is aimed at those aged eight to 19 – and up to 25 for those with a disability or learning difficulty – and it has already signed up 175 members. A young people's development group has been in place since day one to work with the council and business community representatives to ensure the facility is fit for purpose.





Our Vision, Your Opportunity

The University of Wolverhampton has long been a major employer and strong presence in the city. But through a £250m investment programme called Our Vision, Your Opportunity it is also cementing its place as a force for regeneration and economic growth in Wolverhampton, the Black Country and beyond.

Its new six-storey £18m business school, at the heart of its City Campus next to Molineux Stadium, home of Wolverhampton Wanderers, will be opening soon.

And next year will see one of the most exciting developments both the university and the region's education and training sector as a whole has seen in generations.

A £65m redevelopment of a former brewery site is taking shape to house the West Midlands Construction University Technical College – a 'super-campus' for students preparing for professional and technical careers in the construction industry. The plans include sympathetic repair and refurbishment of the existing

Grade II listed building on site, and the historically important entrance gates will be preserved.

The UTC – which will be the biggest centre of its kind in Europe – is already up and running at a temporary site and when it moves to the new facility in September 2016 it is expected to host 600 students, offering a range of training and education for 14-19 year olds along with core GCSE subjects.

It will also specialise in the application of IT in the built environment, a reflection of the close links between the UTC's curriculum and the needs of industry. As well as support from the council and the Construction Industry Training Board it has the backing of more than 60 construction firms.

With the university also planning to relocate its School of Architecture and the Built Environment to the site, it will be an international hub for construction education.

The University of Wolverhampton and the council are becoming a major force for regeneration, explains Geoff Layer

The roots of the University of Wolverhampton lie in the city's Mechanics' Institute that was established in 1827 to service the workforce development needs of the growing industrial economy.

Fast forward to the present day and we continue to play a key role in the local economy, not just of Wolverhampton but the wider area. We are, after all, the university of the Black Country. For example, we have 7,000 students at our campus in Walsall.

We see our role as being the agent for economic growth and regeneration across the Black Country. We do that through making sure students are able to come to us, by supporting them in their studies and getting them into jobs. But our role is not just as a provider of higher education, it's about being an integral part of the local economy and community. We encourage business start-ups, enterprise and entrepreneurship. Indeed, we currently have 140 tenant companies that we have helped to create.

The £250m of investment now being made by the university in Wolverhampton and the Black Country is very much done in partnership with – and with positive



backing from – local authorities, schools and the local enterprise partnership (LEP).

The development of the West Midlands Construction UTC has been helped enormously by the positive and proactive support of Wolverhampton Council.

That collaboration is essential if the university is to successfully use its position to achieve economic goals set

out by the LEP and enable local people to succeed.

We live in an area where there are relatively low levels of educational attainment; most of our students are first generation undergraduates and 60% come from lower income groups. So our contribution is very much about raising school performance, the development of skills and ensuring we have a higher education curriculum and research that focuses on economic growth and social change.

With a combined authority in the pipeline, we have an opportunity to bring greater and more holistic planning to the area. We have to make sure we don't fall into the trap of assuming that creating new infrastructure will cure all ills. It's not a panacea for success if we simply continue to do what we've always done.

For example, this area has more adults without formal qualifications than most parts of the UK. It's vital that we think about how we engage those people moving forward.

Geoff Layer is Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton.



Family values

It's fair to say that within the next couple of years the way vulnerable people in Wolverhampton are supported will be transformed beyond recognition.

The city is bringing together adult and children's services in a bid to create a seamless pathway of support that has prevention at its core. That means everything from working with families to ensure children don't have to be taken into care to enabling older and disabled people to live independently.

Linda Sanders, the council's strategic director – people, admits the shift is a challenging 'journey' for staff, members, service users and partners across the public, voluntary and private sectors. But with high levels of deprivation in the city, reducing dependency and nurturing more resilient communities are vitally important goals.

Like many areas, the need to reshape provision comes at a time of dwindling resources. Since joining the team at the start of this year, Linda has been tasked with saving £12m by next year. But in so many ways the two go hand in hand.

'It's our responsibility to help service users expand their horizons and to realise that our staff can do things differently for less and with better outcomes that are empowering for people,' she explains.

In-house services have gradually been decommissioned and a greater emphasis put on community-based support to promote 'proactive independence that shifts the balance away from a dependency culture.'

On a practical level it means adult and children's social care working closely with colleagues in public health to get to the heart of issues like higher than average levels of smoking, drug and alcohol misuse and obesity. As part of a Government pilot scheme called HeadStart, the council is working with 18 schools to enhance well-being and resilience and minimise the chances of young people

The City of
Wolverhampton
is reshaping
social care to
create a system
that promotes
independence
and strengthens
families

developing mental health issues. For older and disabled people it's also about investing in areas like reablement services, telecare and supported living to stop residential care being the default option.

At the other end of the scale, the focus has been on tackling family breakdown. Wolverhampton has the second highest number of looked after children in the country. Since Linda joined the authority that figure has fallen from more than 800 to 714 thanks to a two-pronged approach that it is hoped in the long run will be culture-changing for professionals and users alike.

The council has worked intensively over the last few months to both address those already in the system and stem the flow of children coming into care. Coming from a background in social work, Linda believes the key to managing demand more effectively 'is short, effective, targeted prevention to ensure that children come into care only when absolutely necessary.'

Every cohort has been examined case-by-case, including those in long-term care. The result has been more than 50 adoptions and an increasing number of children returning to their families. And that's the area of support where some of the most interesting developments are now taking place. It's by moving away from 'buildings based support' to an evidence-based supply of flexible and responsive intervention – increasingly in the community – that Wolverhampton aims to realise the full potential of a cradle-to-grave social care system.

'We want to strengthen family support and ensure improved outcomes are being achieved,' says Linda. 'We are changing what we are doing in early intervention and targeted intervention and instead of a compartmentalised system that breaks people into age stages – nought to five and so on – we are developing a truly 'whole family'



approach. People don't live in user groups, they live in families.

'For example, parents might be receiving help for drug or alcohol problems. We need to have adult and children's services working in a holistic way with partners. That's why we're redesigning our approach.'

The next step will be to take a report to cabinet next month outlining a fundamental shift to create services focused on preventing family breakdown. If approved, the plans will be put into practice next year. 'We are committed to doing all we can to ensure that children are able to grow up safely and happily with their families, and keep to a

minimum the number of children who ultimately have to be taken into care,' says Councillor Val Gibson, cabinet member for children and young people.

While teams within the council now work closer together, such a change will require much more collaboration with colleagues across the NHS, police and voluntary and community sector. Although that is gradually happening, says Linda, the launch in 2016 of a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) based at the council's civic centre offices will take joint working to a new level.

'A third of children were coming into our care via police protection orders. Why not co-locate all the key people who

often struggle to share information around a child to ensure timely conversations and better, joined-up planning?' Changes like this and the wider shake up taking place across social care can be difficult to adapt to. 'There's risk aversion within children's services and that's understandable,' says Linda. That's why the council brought in change management specialists Impower to ease the transition.

'We have done some careful work with employees across the system to ensure people feel supported and confident so that we can remodel what we are doing and redesign services so that they are confident in their role of strengthening families.'

A friendly voice

Wolverhampton has been inspired by Barcelona to launch 'proactive telecare'

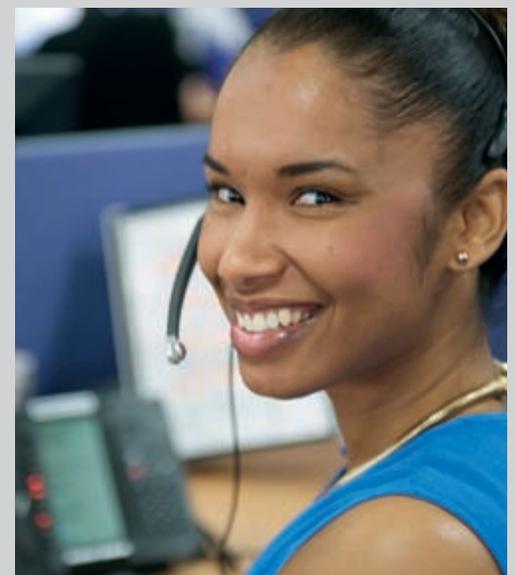
Telecare systems have long been used to provide fast and effective support for vulnerable people. If someone has a fall, for example, they can use technology installed in their home to alert a call centre and ensure help is at hand. But from next year Wolverhampton is planning to take telecare one step further, creating a proactive system that calls people regularly to find out how they are and to flag up any potential issues.

The idea is inspired by the example of Barcelona, which went out to its communities with five key issues and asked for solutions. One of them was isolation and loneliness among older people. The answer? A proactive telecare service that calls people, for example, when they've just been

discharged from hospital to make sure they are ok – or to warn them to take precautions when a hot or cold weather spell is on its way.

Working with the city's ALMO Wolverhampton Homes and telecare specialists Tunstall, which runs the Barcelona initiative, the council aims to support 3,000 people initially before rolling it out to around double that number.

'This is effective, proactive public health at work – a real opportunity to tailor the offer according to the needs of the individual,' says Councillor Elias Mattu, cabinet member for adults. 'It will be game changing in terms of reaching out. It's also about helping people to connect with their communities.'



Let's talk business

Six reasons why your business should choose the City of Wolverhampton

1 **Growth is our priority**

We are one of the top ten growing economies in the UK. We're building on existing strengths in high value manufacturing and construction as well as developing clusters in the creative industries.

2 **We're better connected**

Our excellent road, rail and air links put you at the heart of Britain and Europe.

3 **This is a city that works for people**

Strong cultural, entertainment, sport, leisure and housing offers underpin our economy.

4 **We'll introduce you to some powerful friends**

We work hand-in-hand with influential business leaders and networks.

5 **You'll be in good company**

Join sector-leading firms like Carillion, Jaguar Land Rover, Marston's, Moog, UTC Aerospace and Wiggle who already call Wolverhampton home.

6 **Wolverhampton is the right place, with the right people and the right attitude**

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Email: Tim.Johnson@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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