

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

A Winning Formula

How the newly crowned Local Authority of the Year built an award-winning team and is transforming the City of Wolverhampton



ACHIEVEMENT
AWARDS 2017

WINNERS **THE MJ**

- Local Authority of the Year • Most Improved Council
- Senior Leadership Team • Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny

Westside: £55m luxury leisure quarter



Top team: Local Authority of Year 2017



MD Keith Ireland with Cllr Roger Lawrence

The City of Wolverhampton is a place on the up and now the world is waking up to its success story. Last month the council scooped a record-breaking four MJ awards. In this special supplement we look at the council's transformation and the way in which it's ensuring residents benefit from the opportunities ahead

Look around the City of Wolverhampton and you'll find sure signs of economic recovery. There are brand new high quality offices outside the train station and promotional banners announcing major regeneration plans. But you don't have to dig too deep to discover something more fundamental unfolding.

Those developments are part of £3.7bn of carefully planned investment. The Grade A office space that greets commuters leaving the station – i10 – was developed by the council and reflects its broader approach to kick-starting the market and boosting investor confidence.

The council has the belief and nous to intervene because it took a long, hard look at itself as an organisation and created a council capable of driving the City of Wolverhampton forward.

When the council last appeared in an MJ supplement in 2015, it described its C3 programme – a pledge in the corporate plan to create a confident, capable council by strengthening leadership, transforming service delivery, engaging staff and putting in place robust financial management.

C3 laid the foundations for success and continues to drive progress.

The latest chapter in the City of Wolverhampton's incredible journey saw the council win an unprecedented four gongs at this year's MJ

Achievement Awards, including Local Authority of the Year and Most Improved Council.

Judges praised the council – which also won the awards for Senior Leadership Team and Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny – for delivering 'consistently excellent services across all key areas'. It was described as an 'outstanding example of modern local government where the resident is at the heart of sound commercial decision-making'.

Creating a confident, capable council

Asked what's changed over the last two years and Councillor Roger Lawrence, leader of the council, reels off a long list of projects.

There's the wider £132m interchange scheme that will bring, among other things, a new station and Metro link.

Investment in the science park, the opening of Europe's largest construction training centre as part of the University of Wolverhampton's multi-million pound plans to transform lives, the creation of a new neighbourhood and nature reserve on old industrial land at Bilston Urban Village, new homes via the council's own housing company WV Living, the 'good' rating from Ofsted following the transformation of children's services... all of which are explored in more detail elsewhere in this supplement.

'That's a lot,' says Cllr Lawrence. 'I'm tired out just talking about it!'

'I think we have demonstrated what we can do as an organisation with decreasing resources. That's not just about creating employment and strengthening the business base but showing that this is a city that's going places.'

No matter how confident you are of your own strategy, external validation is vital.

In May, the City of Wolverhampton was named the third best place in the UK to raise children by the Family Living Index. Last year's Family Hotspots report ranked it among the top ten cities to raise a family and it's also been named the fourth best city in the UK to start a business, a top-ten area for gross value added growth and the fifth 'hottest' retail location by Property Week. FDI magazine recently declared the city the best place in Western Europe for manufacturing job creation.

It's the same story for the council. An LGA corporate peer review this year praised its strong leadership and said there was clear evidence of innovation, underpinned by robust financial management.

Managing director Keith Ireland believes the key to success has been becoming a confident, capable council.

'We have transformed every one of our services,' he says. 'It's been underpinned by

The transforming city

investment in ICT and culture change that puts the customer at the heart of our approach.'

Creating a 'one council' culture in which employees take collective responsibility is no easy task. All senior management are located in an open plan office to improve teamwork and make them accessible.

Head of business management Laura Phillips, who joined the council 18 years ago as an apprentice, says these and many other changes have transformed the culture.

'Previously, we'd hear rumours about changes and then read about them in the local newspaper,' she says. 'Now the leadership team is easily accessible, we get regular briefings and we feel like we really have a voice.'

Transforming services

The council has made budget reductions of £200m over the past seven years and will cut a further £20.5m by 2020.

More efficient ways of working – for example through digital transformation in areas like customer services, a focus on income generation and strategies designed to manage demand are all helping to balance the books without compromising ambition.

Radical changes in children's services are proving that multi-agency working, early intervention and prevention can deliver better outcomes for local people and save money in the long run. The transformation of adult social care is seeing investment in areas like telecare and reablement help people remain independent and reduce care needs.

'I think we have taken tough decisions about stopping services but we are intervening and supporting communities in different ways,' says



80%
of residents satisfied
with our services
65% nationally
based on 600 local surveys
June 2016 - March 2017 and
LGA February 2017 survey

Keith. By preventing issues from developing, giving people the right support at the right time, creating the conditions for economic growth and ensuring local people are ready to take the opportunities on offer, the council is playing that all-important stewardship role.

It's also increasingly taking a regional role. For example, the transformation of children's services has placed the City of Wolverhampton among the top 20% nationally and it's now working with colleagues across the West Midlands to improve demand management, educational attainment, quality of practice and leadership.

Through the Midlands Engine and West Midlands Combined Authority, the council and local employers are working to ensure the City of Wolverhampton is seen as a major player.

The key now is to maintain the momentum, says Keith. He believes the true impact will be seen over the next five years as a jigsaw of regeneration schemes transforms the city and work with partners to boost skills enables more local people to secure employment.

'Despite having fewer resources, our reach is much greater now.'



Cllr Roger Lawrence
leader of the council

If you visit the City of Wolverhampton you'll discover a place that's very much on the move.

We are making good progress and within the next 12 to 18 months major regeneration projects will be delivered. They all fit into an ambitious vision that links back to many other areas of the council and the city.

For example, part of our focus is on improving the skills base of the city so local people can take advantage of the jobs created because historically they haven't tended to access those opportunities.

What I feel the City of Wolverhampton Council has demonstrated – despite the difficulties in local government – is that by focusing in on what needs to be done and having a lot of forward thinking, clear priorities and a strong team around you, you can still achieve substantial progress. There are still battles to be won and we can't always get across to people that capital investment now will protect services for the future. It's a difficult message to communicate.

There's lots of uncertainty and we don't know what the impact of Brexit will be on the local economy and national economy. There are a huge number of things that we can't predict.

But we are, as an organisation, well placed to meet new challenges as they come and to do that in a way that combines innovation with outcomes. At the end of the day, it's about making a difference to people's lives.



A good result all round

City of Wolverhampton Council is delivering on its pledge to transform support for vulnerable families with innovative approaches that provide help at the earliest opportunity

Setting out bold ambitions is one thing, it's quite another to deliver on them. Back in 2015, City of Wolverhampton Council described in The MJ how it would 'transform beyond recognition' how it supports children and young people.

Those plans centred around a multi-agency approach to preventing family breakdown and a huge shift towards early intervention as part of a child-centred strategy.

It's delivered in spades. In March of this year, children's services were rated 'good' by Ofsted, putting them among the top 20% nationally and top in the West Midlands.

To put that into context, it's been achieved in a city where demand for support is very high. The City of Wolverhampton is the 17th most deprived area in England.

The foundations of that success were already being put in place two years ago as the council got to grips with the number of looked after children coming into the system and overhauled the training and development of social workers and other frontline staff.

A seamless pathway of support has been created through the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and targeted intervention via its pioneering strengthening families hubs.

It's seen a dramatic reduction in the number of looked after children – just four years ago the second highest in the country – as agencies work together on common goals to deliver intensive support for more young people to keep them safely with their families.

Ofsted praised the way in which the council had made progress without compromising children's safety.

Linda Sanders, strategic director – people, believes

strong leadership and a clear vision have been key to success in terms of the council's delivery and collaboration with partners.

It's enshrined in the City of Wolverhampton Children's Trust's plan for 2015-25 and the council's corporate plan where 'family strength' is stated as a strategic priority – ensuring everyone is held to account on a range of outcomes.

Last year two early help services were merged into one 0-18 years service, delivered from eight Strengthening Families Hubs, and an early intervention desk was integrated into the MASH.

Family support on your doorstep

What the city has done, says Linda, is move away from a system that compartmentalises people according to their age towards a 'whole family' approach that gets to the root of problems in a rounded, joined up manner.

But crucially this universal approach is being complemented by targeted intervention via strengthening families hubs. Based in eight different localities, they bring together early intervention workers, social workers, health visitors, midwives and community police officers.

These joint teams offer help and advice on a range of issues, including parenting support, family mediation and relationship counselling, child development and play and behaviour management.

The support is designed to promote proactive independence and shift the balance away from dependency.

Meetings are held every week to enable practitioners



What Ofsted says

'With a clear sense of vision and purpose, and by focusing on key priorities, senior managers, leaders and elected members... deliver better outcomes for children across a range of different areas.'

'Care leavers receive a good, individualised service, which prepares them well for independence. They say that they feel valued and are listened to.'

to identify families needing help and how best to engage them. 'It ensures families receive coordinated and effective support from strengthening families workers, social workers and neighbourhood police units,' says Linda.

She adds: 'The overall aim is to work with families to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes, safely preventing family breakdown.'

It's already proving to be highly effective. Between April 2016 and May 2017, the service worked with 3,597 children, with 2,898 cases being closed within the same period as result of the outcomes of the plan being achieved.

Just 13% of early intervention cases are supporting plans held within social care. The other 87% are managed through an early help plan, tackling a range of issues but predominantly around behaviour support, housing and domestic violence as well as financial support.

It demonstrates how the targeted approach brought by the hubs is intervening at an earlier stage to avoid children coming into the social care system in the first place. Latest data suggests that, of



and the right time, to prevent families "bouncing" into more acute services,' Linda explains.

In addition, locality surgeries have been established at each hub where anyone with concerns about a child, for example from a school, can access experts on their doorstep. That's complemented by a parent champions programme that trains local people who are former service users to offer support to others.

Emma Bennett, director of children's services, says the roll out of restorative practice – which harnesses a family's strengths – across council staff is helping to embed consistent ways of working and partners are being encouraged to follow suit.

She's in no doubt how far the city has come.

'We are in a much better position, we have transformed the system and there are very clear pathways now. We've tightened up support using evidence-based approaches.'

'We've been really investing in the workforce – providing training and support to ensure we have the right people in the right jobs with the right skills. Staff morale is much better.'

The task now is to maintain momentum and aim for an 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted in the future.

Developments in the pipeline include a focus to reduce repeat removals of young people from their families. The transformation of mental health services, including CAMHS, is already underway – buoyed by the success of HeadStart (see box).

'I feel children's services is in a much healthier place but there can't be a moment of complacency,' says Linda.

'We have an effective range of strategic meetings and multi agency focus. There are now a number of ways of ensuring we are all on the same page, drilling down to different areas in order to continue to develop and improve the ways we support families.'

Giving young people a HeadStart

Pioneering work in the City of Wolverhampton is helping to tackle mental health issues among young people, raise awareness and build resilience for the future.

The HeadStart scheme typifies the council's focus on prevention and early intervention and on developing strong partnerships to tackle key challenges.

The local authority has so far secured £9.5m from the Big Lottery Fund to run the initiative until 2021. It involves supporting children aged 10-14 with low-level mental health issues and their peers using a variety of methods – predominantly in schools but also in other settings – to build resilience and prevent problems escalating further down the line.

The City of Wolverhampton has quickly established itself as a success story for the national HeadStart programme and brings together the council's children's services, public health and youth offending teams, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Wolverhampton CCG, voluntary sector organisations, West Midlands Police and schools.

It also involves a wider partnership with young people and parents along with numerous community groups. It has a main board and a shadow board made up of young people who have been involved in decision making from the outset.

An independent evaluation of the school element of HeadStart, published last year by the University of Wolverhampton, found pupils were more able to deal with challenges, behaviour had improved and children were better equipped to support each other.

Some 240 school staff and other professionals have received training to deliver resilience programmes, more than 2,300 young people have taken part in training and a number have become peer supporters and mentors.

Find out more:
www.headstart.fm



the cases worked at early intervention level, around 95% are closed and only 5% required escalation to social care. 'This indicates that support is being offered in the majority of cases at the right level

The City of Wolverhampton's schools are in better shape than ever and the council's investment in support aims to keep them on track

Improving attainment: giving children the right start



The City of Wolverhampton's future success is strongly linked with the educational attainment of its young people. That's why the council has made the improvement of school performance a key priority as part of its goal to nurture a 'city of learning'.

While many councils have cut back their education directorates, Wolverhampton continues to invest and is expanding its team of advisors.

The emphasis is very much on challenging and supporting schools to address weaknesses and poor performance. If action isn't taken, it intervenes. For example, a number of interim executive boards, chaired by senior council staff, have been set up and warning notices issued.

It signals a major shift by the council towards taking a more hands-on and proactive approach to school improvement to ensure one of the key objectives in its corporate plan – providing the best education for children and young people – is achieved.

Work by teachers, governors and students to improve performance – supported by the council's schools standards service – show this renewed drive is paying off.

There are now more schools in the city rated 'good' or 'outstanding' than ever before. Some 86% of primary, secondary, nursery and special schools hold one of the top two Ofsted inspection ratings – up from around two thirds just three years ago.

From having the worst primary schools in the country in 2013, it has moved up 17 places in league tables and the proportion of pupils attending good or outstanding primary schools leapt from 61% to 81% in 2016.

Boosting school performance

Planning for the future



The City of Wolverhampton is growing and over the next 20 years it's expecting to be home to an extra 20,000 people. Ensuring sufficient school places to accommodate that growth will be essential if it's to deliver its ambitions to give young people the best possible start in life.

The primary schools estate has expanded by a third – an extra 2,175 places at a cost of more than £30m – to accommodate recent growth. During the process of managing that expansion, the school organisation team began to think about what the challenges would be for the secondary phase.

What's emerged is a nationally acclaimed approach that could shape the way school provision is managed across the country.

The council's school organisation team has led work on a new way to help schools maximise existing facilities and plan for the future.

Working with schools and the company First Planner, it has developed a system that maps each school's capacity, identifies where space could be used more efficiently and predicts future demand to determine whether schools need to expand.

It has already created an extra 60 year seven spaces for 2017 – equating to £6m worth of extra capacity without any additional investment.

The team is working with colleagues in areas such as regeneration, education and housing to collate further data that can be fed into the system to give even greater insight.

Brighter futures: boosting hi-tech manufacturing jobs

Skilling up the workforce

The City of Wolverhampton has a long and proud industrial heritage. But it has also suffered the post-industrial legacy of low skill levels in the city's working age population. Faced with statistics that showed a fifth of adults had no qualifications, council leader Councillor Roger Lawrence tackled the issue head on in 2014 by launching a Skills and Employment Commission.

Led by Professor Tony Travers and a panel of experts, the commission set out a number of recommendations which formed the basis of an action plan that's now being implemented to great effect with a number of bold solutions delivered in partnership with businesses and other agencies:



Wolves@Work

Last December the council and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) agreed a partnership to invest £3m to help 3,000 people find employment over the next three years by doubling the number of practitioners within the city's Work Coach programme. A team of 30 coaches is now on hand to provide job seekers with intensive support and work directly with employers to open up new opportunities and enable staff to develop skills.

More than 500 local people were helped into employment, over 1,300 enrolled into the scheme and 290 were supported into the Sector Based Work Academy programme within the first three months.

So far 101 companies including National Express and Jaguar Land Rover have pledged their support in the shape of everything from work experience to apprenticeships to commitments to recruit local people and train workforce mentors.

Each has signed up to the Wolverhampton Work Pledge Card, which sets out a commitment to work experience for people out of work, apprenticeships, vacancies, business mentors and roundtable discussions.

A drive to boost skills is helping local people take advantage of the job opportunities being created as the City of Wolverhampton attracts unprecedented levels of investment



The Wolverhampton Workbox

The Wolverhampton Workbox is the council's new coproduced, online platform for jobseekers, employers and training and education providers.

It provides individual accounts for jobseekers with comprehensive and accessible interactive support. It also serves as a way to engage employers and help them to invest in training and apprenticeships and enable education and training providers to refine their offer.

For the first time, local people and employers in Wolverhampton have a 'one stop hub' with comprehensive flexible, tailored support and

information that links together with other public services such as youth offending and mental health services. The aim is to ensure the initiative reaches out to vulnerable residents.

The design of the website has been a joint effort involving employers, residents, Connexions, adult education, schools, City of Wolverhampton College, University of Wolverhampton, Community Learning Platform, DWP and training providers.



City Learning Quarter

As part of the council's vision for a 'learning city', a new £40m learning quarter is planned.

It will bring together adult education, an FE college and library onto one city centre site close to The Way – a £5.5m Youth Zone opened in 2016 – as part of an education-led approach to regeneration.

The City Learning Quarter will also see investment in the buildings and public realm around them as part of the City of Wolverhampton's wider programme of development.

Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for city economy, describes the plans as an opportunity to improve the learning, apprenticeship and employment offers and 'allow education and skills providers to flourish and grow together'.

Building bridges with industry

The City of Wolverhampton is now home to a ground breaking 'super campus'.

Opened in 2016, it takes in the West Midlands Construction University Technical College – offering a range of training and education for 14-19 year olds – an elite centre for manufacturing and the University of Wolverhampton's school of built environment.

Situated on the site of a former brewery, the £65m development exemplifies the City of Wolverhampton's commitment to develop closer links between education and training providers and industry.

As well as support from the council and the Construction Industry Training Board it has the backing of more than 60 construction firms.



CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON

Across the City of Wolverhampton, major regeneration schemes are transforming the city centre. The £3.7bn of investment either on site or in the pipeline will take the city into a whole new league over the coming years.

Together with CBRE, the City of Wolverhampton Council has launched a prospectus based on market intelligence that outlines an ambitious 10-year investment plan encompassing 60ha of development land and 10,000 new homes. But far from being an aspirational brochure, it's rooted in the reality that Wolverhampton is now a hot spot for investment.

Each development fits in with an overarching vision and strategy created and driven by the council based on its deep understanding of the market and the needs of the city. Bit by bit, the new-look city is taking shape...

'This is a city clearly committed to success, expressing confidence and credibility and being led with vision and dynamism by a hugely impressive city council.'

Peter Cornforth, director of retail, Benson Elliot Capital Management



Shaping the



Developing transport links



Iconic i9: in the new commercial quarter



A connected commercial quarter

In many ways Wolverhampton's interchange area sums up the council's overriding approach to regenerating the city.

It intervened in an under-developed market, invested in high quality office space and created a catalyst for private investment. Since developing the award-winning i10 office block, demand has risen to the extent that not only is the building fully let – at double the city's average office rent – but it's also led to privately financed office developments close by in the shape of i9 and Steam Mill.

Due to be completed next year as part of a wider design led by the architects behind the iconic Paradise Birmingham scheme, i9 will provide 50,000 sq ft of Grade A office space and will become a national or regional headquarters for a major business.

This growing commercial office quarter will sit next to the fast-changing integrated transport interchange as £132m of investment in the train station and surroundings take shape. Soon the City of Wolverhampton will have a modern, eye-catching gateway to match any regional city in the UK.

'It's that link between the vision for the city, the strategy and the action on the ground that I think is impressive and actually really strong in Wolverhampton and certainly from our perspective is something that we don't always see everywhere else.'

Adrian Fieldhouse, Director, KPMG

Westside: improving the city centre offer

Westside is a key strategic location in the city centre which, thanks to the council's intervention, is now the location of a privately financed £55m mixed use development including leisure, retail, restaurants, a hotel and homes.

Westside included some local authority-owned land but the council also proactively purchased further land and buildings to

package the area as a single investment opportunity.

Its intervention, site assembly, site clearance and preparation and strong relationship with private sector partners has led to a scheme that will deliver a return on investment and a major uplift in business rates. It not only typifies the council's joined up approach to regeneration but also reflects its wider strategy to be more financially robust.

Westside was widely marketed, including at Mipim UK, and a deal was secured with a major developer, Urban & Civic. Work is expected to get underway early in 2018 and once complete it will complement the ongoing £35m improvement and expansion of the adjacent Mander Shopping Centre.

The council has put in place a high quality public realm scheme to seamlessly link Westside with the rest of the city centre.

Canalside living

The Canalside area of Wolverhampton has long been recognised for its potential – a historic area next to the city centre that's ideal for creating a unique neighbourhood.

It's an asset that's now set to be brought to life via a new vision launched earlier this year at Mipim in Cannes.

The council is working with the Canal & River Trust, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Network Rail, and the West Midlands Combined Authority to bring city centre living and a leisure scheme around Canalside's many historic buildings.

The City of Wolverhampton's proactive, collaborative approach – linked to an overriding strategy and vision – and ability to work at scale

has led it to be regarded as a priority investment location by the HCA. 'It's about presenting the right opportunities in the right way,' says Tim Johnson, strategic director of place.

Work starts this summer and among the ideas being considered are a microbrewery, creative workspaces and a marina development.

As Cheryl Blount-Powell, senior development manager at the Canal & River Trust, puts it: 'Canalside certainly has a very exciting future ahead.'



New Canalside living

city

By developing state-of-the-art facilities and creating a supportive and welcoming environment, the City of Wolverhampton is fast becoming a magnet for leading edge companies



Encouraging enterprise: award-winning partnerships

Creating a world-class base for business



Helping businesses thrive

‘Relocating the business to i54 was a key strategic move for MOOG. We now have a first class facility which will allow us to support & build on our market leading position in Europe and globally.’ – Stuart McLachlan, business unit general manager, Wolverhampton Operations, Moog Aircraft Group

Home to everything from advanced manufacturing firms to global engineering brands, it’s not difficult to see why the City of Wolverhampton is a popular choice for a company headquarters.

For starters, it centrally located with great links by road, rail and air. But more importantly, through the work of the local authority and its partners it’s created a welcoming environment for businesses and investors.

As Keren Jones, service director for city economy, explains: ‘We are seen as receptive, flexible and keen to work in collaboration.’

‘We’ve worked hard to make sure our planning processes are responsive. When we go out to events regionally and nationally people are keen to talk to us because of our reputation and the fact that Wolverhampton is seen as a really good place to invest.’

One of the key locations is the i54 enterprise zone. Situated to the north of the city, the 97ha site has its own M6 junction and was set up by City of Wolverhampton Council in an award-winning partnership with neighbouring Staffordshire County and South Staffordshire councils to attract high quality jobs into the area. It’s home to Jaguar Land Rover’s new £500m engine manufacturing centre, which created 1,400 jobs alone, along with businesses

such as aerospace company Moog and leading international laboratory Eurofins.

One of the latest employers to locate at i54 is engineering firm Tentec, part of the Swedish group Atlas Copco, which invested £10m in a new manufacturing facility last year. It described the new facility as ‘a centre of excellence’ that ‘will be visited by customers and employees of Atlas Copco from all over the world’.

Security hardware and electronics business ERA made i54 its headquarters in 2016. When the move was announced, ERA’s chief executive Darren Waters described i54 as ‘an outstanding business location with excellent transport links’, adding, ‘it’s a great fit with our long-term business strategy and will help to differentiate our brand, both as a supplier and employer’.

The enterprise zone is at the tip of a northern corridor leading back to the city which through other sites such as Wolverhampton Science Park, a joint venture between the council and university, Wolverhampton Business Park and new developments in the fast-changing city centre, are creating something of a growth hub.

Between them they can offer a home for companies large and small – established firms looking for the flexibility to expand and a place for start ups to establish themselves via incubators.

Ticket to success

Investment in the council's key cultural assets is enhancing Wolverhampton's visitor and night-time economy and complementing the city centre's wider transformation

Grand success: new look theatre

Grand designs

The council has invested £400,000 as part of a £1m package designed to give the city's Grand Theatre a new look. A major redevelopment has seen the auditorium overhauled and the ground floor redesigned to improve access and allow the theatre to be open to the public during the day via a new café bar.

Other improvements include adapting the stalls bar to create a new space that can host intimate events – The Encore Lounge, pictured – and Arthur's Of The Grand, a new Art Deco style bar sponsored by West Midlands-based cutlery designers and manufacturers Arthur Price. The company, whose cutlery can be found at The Savoy and Claridges, has produced 1,000 pieces for the bar.

Adrian Jackson, the theatre's chief executive, says: 'Enhancing the theatre in this way will greatly improve the customer experience and will ensure the Grand not only continues as a celebrated theatre venue but also becomes a popular daytime and early evening destination for socialising within the heart of the city centre.'



Civic Halls: bigger and better entertainment



Celebrating culture: making art more accessible

Crowd pleaser

Last year the city was named among the top 10 places for live music and Wolverhampton Civic Halls is a major part of that success. Long established as a leading live entertainment venue, it has played host to some of the biggest names in music and comedy.

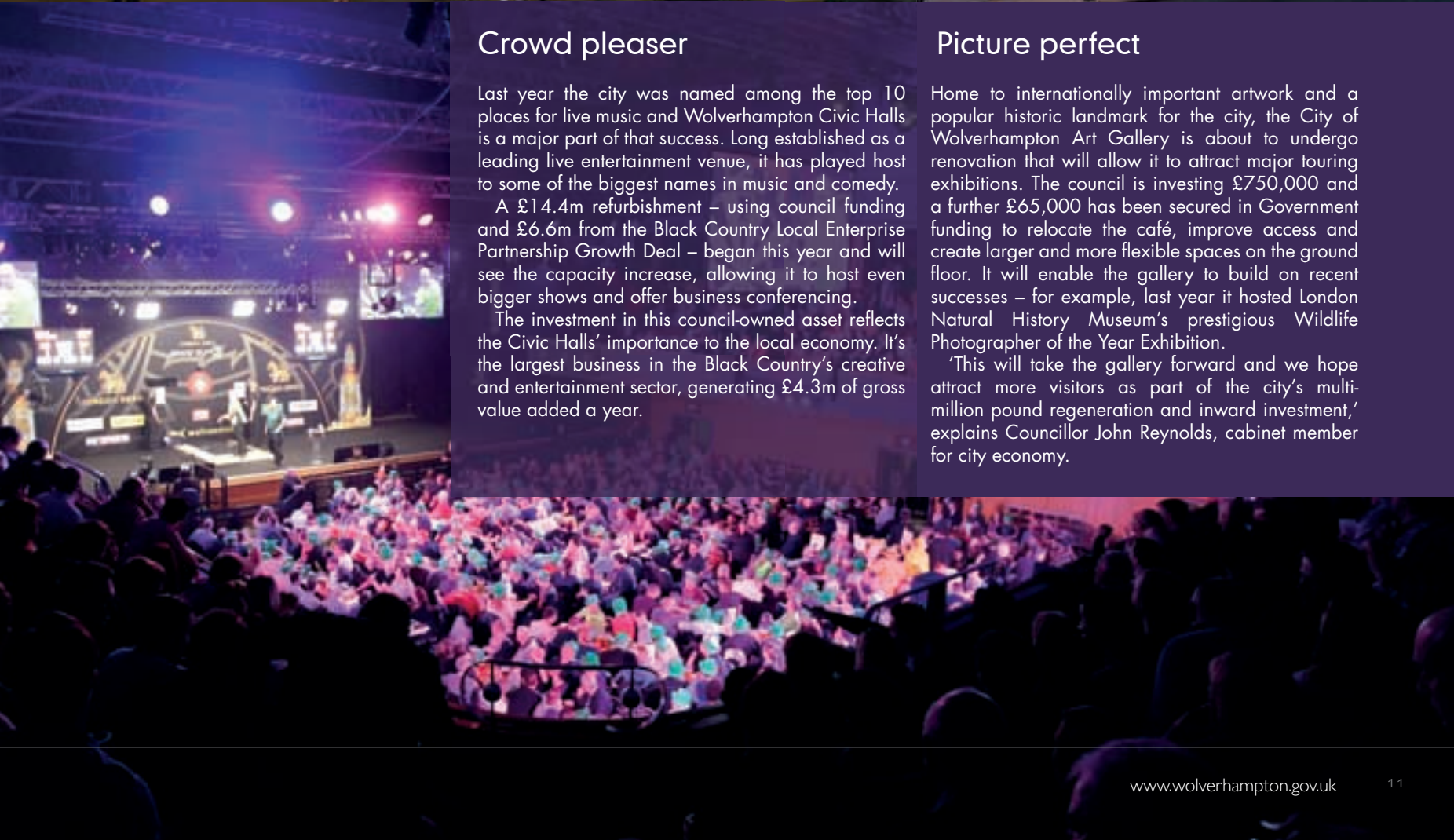
A £14.4m refurbishment – using council funding and £6.6m from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal – began this year and will see the capacity increase, allowing it to host even bigger shows and offer business conferencing.

The investment in this council-owned asset reflects the Civic Halls' importance to the local economy. It's the largest business in the Black Country's creative and entertainment sector, generating £4.3m of gross value added a year.

Picture perfect

Home to internationally important artwork and a popular historic landmark for the city, the City of Wolverhampton Art Gallery is about to undergo renovation that will allow it to attract major touring exhibitions. The council is investing £750,000 and a further £65,000 has been secured in Government funding to relocate the café, improve access and create larger and more flexible spaces on the ground floor. It will enable the gallery to build on recent successes – for example, last year it hosted London Natural History Museum's prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition.

'This will take the gallery forward and we hope attract more visitors as part of the city's multi-million pound regeneration and inward investment,' explains Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for city economy.



Living

@
S
U
N
B
E
A
M

Boosting housing choice

Sunbeam apartments: £11.5m investment includes supported living

By taking an active role in the housing market, City of Wolverhampton Council is ensuring local needs are met

Like many other growing towns and cities, the City of Wolverhampton has a pressing need for more housing. But what sets it apart is the way in which the council has sought to intervene to ensure homes of all kinds hit the market at the right time and in the right locations.

Housing connects with so many agendas – from regeneration to welfare to social care – and so the council views it as integral to its vision and strategy.

That's why it took the unusual step to appoint the chief executive of Wolverhampton Homes, its arm's length management organisation (ALMO), as strategic director of housing.

Lesley Roberts says the joint role enables her to have an operational focus through the ALMO and management of 22,000 homes while also having a strategic overview.

'It's ideal because the way we work is a "whole place" approach. Properly planned in a way that links with the city's regeneration and with an organisational kick for the delivery,' she explains.

That delivery side has been stepped up with the launch of WV Living, a council-owned company that is buying up sites and building a range of new homes for sale, including shared ownership, and private rent.

Although it was only launched in 2016, it has a



medium term plan for 1,200 properties and already has developments for 400 homes ready to start on site this year.

The company's first housing fair attracted 500 house hunters and the council believes its intervention in the market has boosted confidence among developers.

Far from competing with the private sector, WV Living is complementing the market and acting as a catalyst, says strategic director of place, Tim Johnson.

'WV Living has to be run as an enterprise but we're able to be flexible over return on investment – it could be immediate sale or rental income over time.

'That enables us to deal with sites that wouldn't be viable for commercial development. We're taking on challenging sites and regenerating them.'

Having an input into the housing market also gives the council greater control over the supply of homes for vulnerable residents, whether it's properties designed to support independent living or social housing for those on low incomes.

A sign of the growing confidence in the market is

Sunbeam, a former iconic, city factory that a small developer converted into apartments – some of which are now occupied by residents with learning disabilities receiving support for independent living.

'It's about stimulating the market and building confidence,' says Lesley.

Another example of the way in which the whole place approach brings together different agendas can be found in the council's approach to tackling aggressive begging.

A small number of individuals can have a disproportionate and negative effect on the local economy, particularly in a city that's undergoing major regeneration and actively attracting new investors.

'To tackle homelessness you have to deal with the whole person,' says Lesley.

Together with other agencies such as the police, the council offers tailored support to people to get them off the streets, into accommodation and on the path to a better life.

But the council has taken legal action as a last resort, successfully securing injunctions banning eight individuals from entering the city centre at certain times. The judge involved in the proceedings praised the efforts made by the council to provide support and avoid legal action.



Bilston Urban Village: a neighbourhood in the making

One of the City of Wolverhampton's biggest regeneration projects, Bilston Urban Village will deliver hundreds of new homes – but that's only half the story. The former mining town on the edge of the city has been the subject of a huge remediation project, completed in June, and brand new neighbourhood is beginning to take shape.

The first phase saw the building of the Bert Williams Leisure Centre and South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy and a well-connected commercial development plot has also been created.

The vast 14.5ha site will gradually be transformed with further new infrastructure, shops, green spaces, walkways and cycle paths.

Work on the first homes has begun and 17 have already been sold off plan. The first two plots of land made available by the council will deliver up to 450 homes.

Rent with Confidence: driving up standards

Launched at the end of 2016, Rent with Confidence is designed to reward great landlords, encourage investment in the private rented sector and give tenants peace of mind.

In the first six months of the council-run scheme, almost 650 properties and more than 200 landlords were star-rated.

The stringent five-star rating system used is similar to that applied by the Food Standards Agency for restaurants and takeaways.

But far from being a scheme imposed on the sector, landlords are very much a partner in the scheme and have taken part in meetings with the council to discuss ways to help raise living standards in the city.

Better living conditions will in turn help to improve the health and wellbeing of local people, she says.

Building community capacity



One of the ways the City of Wolverhampton has been ahead of the curve on the transformation of adult services is in its work to build up the capacity of community-based providers.

The shift away from council-led services to enable more people to live independently through support in their communities will only succeed if the support is available.

The council's approach has been to recognise the economic and social importance of the sector and look at ways to support it.

The City of Wolverhampton was the first local authority in England to work with Skills for Care to assess the economic value of adult social care to the local economy. It has a strong base of SMEs and together with the council's provision accounts for 6,400 jobs worth £250m a year.

The sector plays a prominent role in the annual Business Week and the council has worked hard



Independent thinking



By helping vulnerable residents to find their own solutions, City of Wolverhampton Council is enabling people to live healthier lives on their own terms

Adult social care is rarely out of the headlines nowadays as local authorities struggle to cope with rising demand and dwindling budgets.

It's clear that fundamental changes are needed to both manage demand better and prevent people from having to enter the health and care system in the first place.

The response in the City of Wolverhampton has been comprehensive and focused on embracing technology, transforming working practices and enabling communities to build on their strengths to support people.

One of the major breakthroughs for the city has been its approach to technology enabled care. Too often something that operates in a silo and is treated as an add-on, the local authority has made technology an integral part of transforming adult care services.

Its new telecare service, launched last year, offers a menu of options for older people to choose from depending on their needs. It has created an innovative partnership with West Midlands Fire Service, which provides a mobile

responder service for those in need of assistance.

The aim is to sign up 3,000 new users within three years and in its first year it reached almost the double the number targeted.

Over the last 12 months the promoting independence team has worked with more than 600 clients with support packages in place to make better use of technology and connect people back to their communities.

More than one in five now require reduced support as a result.

'The majority of people report improved outcomes, feel more socially connected and more in control of their care and support,' says David Watts, director of adult services.

'We don't want to increase the amount of services we have got but rather use resources and the strengths we have in our communities in different ways.'

The council is now looking to utilise technology more broadly, for example to support young people with mental health issues, learning disabilities and those with long-term conditions such as diabetes and asthma.

to engage SMEs in the commissioning of services.

'We have a pretty healthy mix of SMEs in the city so we're not reliant on a small number of large providers,' explains Linda Sanders, strategic director for people. 'We're working with them to ensure we have a sustainable, resilient market and it's paying dividends.'

'We've prioritised enhancing fee levels to ensure we are fair with the sector with fair wages that are competitive. It's important that we make these links between the people and place sides of the council.'

Equally important is the city's abundance of community organisations that are essential to

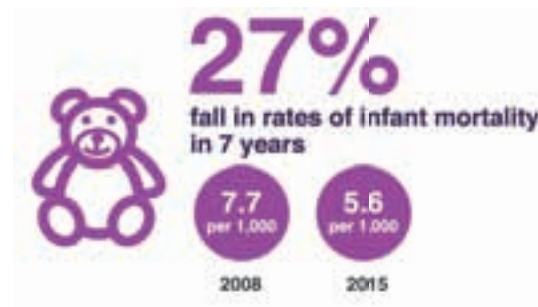
connecting vulnerable people back into their neighbourhoods.

The council recently staged an event, Small Good Things, designed to start a conversation with groups to develop new solutions. Hundreds of people from more than 30 organisations attended to discuss how they could make life better for others.

'It's about how we can facilitate community to step into that space,' says David Watts, director of adult services. 'We're aiming to map non-voluntary sector groups and connect people with what's already out there.'

'It's about tapping into the resilience of communities and building on their strengths.'

A highly focused and collaborative approach is tackling the City of Wolverhampton's health issues head on



Shaping up for a healthier city

When faced with a multitude of health issues it's tempting to try to tackle them all at once. The result? Resources spread too thinly and little tangible impact. That's why the mantra at City of Wolverhampton Council is to 'do a few things and do them well' – one of the key messages Sir Liam Donaldson espoused while serving as chief medical officer for England.

The city has high levels of deprivation and tough challenges across a wide range of health indicators including obesity, smoking and inactivity.

By taking an evidence-based approach – with the same focus on early intervention and prevention that's seen across its services – the council has worked with partners to change the behaviour of local residents so that they pursue healthier lifestyles.

It's a goal that's enshrined in its corporate plan, Our Vision, Our City 2030, which outlines an ambition for 'a city which is serious about health and wellbeing'.

Helping mums to quit

The city's approach is best summed up by pioneering work to reduce smoking among pregnant women. Back in 2014, it had the highest infant mortality rate in England. Research by the council's public health team showed smoking was



the most significant contributor to premature death and the biggest preventable factor in premature infant death.

It led to the setting up of a multi-agency infant mortality steering group and a partnership approach to addressing infant deaths driven by a three-year infant mortality action plan that's brought together everyone from Wolverhampton CCG, midwives and health visitors to healthy lifestyle teams and clinicians to work towards common goals.

It's transformed work practices. For example, the city's neonatal unit receives daily support from the healthy lifestyles team around smoking cessation for parents and all midwives and health visitors have carbon monoxide monitors to demonstrate the effects of smoking in pregnancy.

It means the same messages about the dangers

of smoking are reinforced by a wide range of professionals – and educational programmes across 33 primary and secondary schools are spreading the word even further.

In the first year alone, the proportion of pregnant women smoking fell from 18.7% to 16.3%. Infant mortality has dropped from 7.7 to 5.6 deaths per 1,000 births.

A charter for success

The council, the University of Wolverhampton and Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust have worked together to achieve the National Workplace Wellbeing Charter for England Award. The three organisations – which collectively employ more than 15,000 people in the city – support the health and wellbeing of employees, identify gaps in provision and plan improvements.

Examples include an improved healthy eating offer at the council's Civic Centre cafeteria and information by every stairwell to encourage staff to use stairs rather than lifts.

The council's three leisure centres were rebranded as WV Active two years ago to put them on a more commercial footing. It's seen significant new investment that's ensuring residents have competitively priced, top class facilities and a wide range of activities. Membership rocketed by 67% in the first year alone and continues to grow.



Beat the Street gathers pace

Earlier this year the council launched its Towards an Active City strategy – a wide-ranging plan designed to get more residents active. Inactivity is a major issue with more than a third of local people not taking part in any physical activity.

With an Active City board led by an independent chair and business representatives, the new strategy is very much owned and driven by the whole city.

Wolverhampton is already up and running thanks to the lottery funded Beat the Street initiative launched in 2016 and repeated in March this year, part-funded by Sport England.

It's a game in which participants earn points as

they walk, cycle and run around the city over the course of six weeks, tapping a card on one of 190 Beat Box walk tracking units to show how far they'd travelled and earning points to win prizes for local schools and groups.

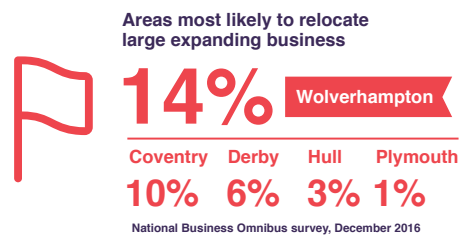
More than 28,000 people of all ages took part during this year's event, clocking up nearly 200,000 miles.

Research into the 2016 event showed the proportion of people taking part in recommended levels of exercise had risen from 36% before Beat the Street to 50% some six months after the initiative.

Others towns and cities across the UK are now looking at replicating Beat the Street.

City of Wolverhampton: transformation in numbers

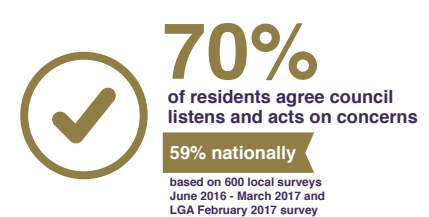
More investment



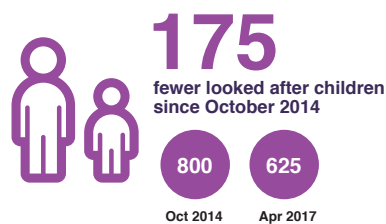
Money matters



Better services



Better outcomes



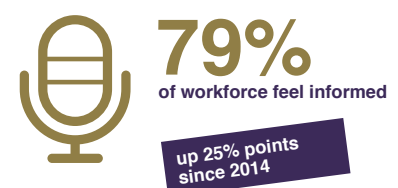
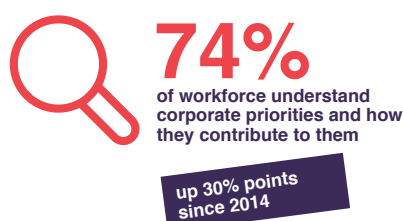
Digital transformation



WV Active



More engaged workforce



Delivering better health outcomes

