



Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Thursday, 10 September 2020

Dear Councillor

STRONGER CITY ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL - THURSDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 10th September, 2020 meeting of the Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel, the following presentation that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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5	<u>Relighting Our City</u> (Pages 3 - 18)
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[To receive a presentation from the Director of Regeneration on the areas that fall within the remit of the Panel relating to, "Relighting Our City"].

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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Stronger City Economy Scrutiny

10th September 2020
Richard Lawrence – Director of Regeneration

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Agenda Item No: 5

Directorate Priorities in response to Covid

- Update on progress during Covid-19:-
 - Planning
 - Enterprise and Skills
 - Adult Education
 - City Development

Relighting our City:-

- Focus on Connected City and activity during Covid-19

Planning

- Overall rise in planning applications
- Service performance unaffected by Covid

Applications received July – August

- 2018 **269**
- 2019 **274**
- 2020 **287**

The increasing number of planning applications is positive as it is an indicator of future jobs, homes and investment. We are processing the applications effectively working from home and we receive many compliments comparing our service favourably to other local planning authorities.

Business and Employment

All engagement and delivery has moved online

- £44.9 million grants have been paid to 4,247 businesses
- Launched 'Wolves in Business' help reopening of the city
- Launched Business Support helpline 7120 calls (August)
- Award 10 grants for Aim for GOLD – ERDF SME support package, to businesses who have adapted to access new markets as a result of C-19
- Over 800 new jobs have been sourced since lock down
- Supported 84 residents into employment since March
- Average 8,000 views per week on W@W twitter for vacancies

Cultural / Libraries

In March all services moved online.

- 13,888 E-books / audio available. 3934 downloads.
- Online reading and story sessions delivered
- Home delivery service with CAB has restarted
- Reviewing the current reopening of the service in line with Covid-19 safety measure. Looking at a phased reopening
- Art Gallery created an online contents and downloadable family packs for school Easter / May and summer holidays
- Art Gallery, Bantock and Archives opened in July with Covid 19 measures in place
- Gallery improvement project paused due to Covid 19.

Adult Education

- Throughout lockdown continued to engage with enrolled students remotely using a wide variety of mechanisms: streamed classes; use of learning platforms such as Padlet and Zoom, telephone and postal.
- Developed an online course offer; introducing 9 new courses to support residents with mental health, employment and study skills development during lockdown
- Developed and introduced online enrolment, online open days and online advice and guidance for students.
- Following DfE guidance to re-open and re-start face to face learning from September. Have adapted delivery mode and facilities to achieve social distancing measures.
- Planning to capitalise on innovation and development achieved during lockdown and develop a digital transformation strategy which will be inclusive of professional development for teachers.

City Development

- **Business Development / Developer Interest** - Despite current challenges, there remains strong developer and investor interest in the City's.
- **The Interchange** Phase one of £150m state-of-the-art, multi-modal transport hub around which the city is developing its new commercial gateway is complete and opened in May 2020. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, phase two of the project is currently underway and will include the demolition of the remaining station building.
- **I9** Ion and the contractor Grahams are progressing well with delivery of construction. The building has been designed, cognisant and targeting a demand for new working office working environments with systems in place to address best practice in a post Covid 19 environment
- **Civic Halls** Contract agreed and signed. Site works recommenced following 12-week suspension due to Covid 19 with new social distancing strategy implemented. Piling works were completed in August 2020. Negotiations are progressing well with potential end users.
- The Council successfully submitted **Future High Street Fund (FHSF)** application of circa £23m. The immediate aim of FHSF is to transform physical connections and the quality of the public realm. In parallel, targeted investment is proposed in land assembly, demolition of old retail floorspace and site preparation works to regenerate, predominantly, council-owned development sites.
- **The Towns fund** Wolverhampton have successfully submitted a final bid for up to £48m of Government cash to transform the city centre, Bilston and Wednesfield. The bid aims to support education and skills and bolster enterprise culture through the City Learning Quarter, National Brownfield Institute, 5G application accelerator, and Wolves at Work employment programme.

Relighting our City

- Support people who need us most
- Create more opportunities for young people
- Support our vital local businesses
- Generate more jobs and learning opportunities
- Stimulate vibrant high streets and communities.

Cross cutting themes:-

- Climate focused
- Driven by digital – Connected City
- Fair and Inclusive

Connected City

- Cross cutting theme agreed by Scrutiny Board at the meeting held on Tuesday 14 July 2020.
- Connectivity and digital considerations to be considered as part of all items added to the work programme.
- Outcomes and recommendations from all panels will then be fed back to Scrutiny Board to unify into one comprehensive report based on the connected city theme.
- This report and any recommendations made can then be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

Why Connected City?

- **Digital Revolution in Wolverhampton underway:**

- Increasing productivity, sparking innovation and driving economic growth by creating new jobs, attracting start-ups and enticing further inward investment.
- Enabling those in education, health and social care sectors to adopt the latest technologies.
- Enabling e-learning techniques in schools, college and universities.
- Providing the foundation for crucial health and social care solutions such as remote monitoring and remote consultations.

- **Roll out of 5G:**

- The Digital divide: Covid-19 has highlighted more issues than previously realised and if not addressed the identified gap will grow - its not just older people who are being left behind:
- 59,000 citizens do not have access to basic digital skills & 35,000 citizens have not been online in the last three months
- Many of those who have not been online are under 60 and often the more vulnerable citizens
- Only 52% of the workforce have the necessary digital skills for work

- **Change is happening faster than we think – it continues to evolve and adapt as the needs of the end user evolve and change. How do we keep up with this to support our citizens?**

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Stronger City Economy

How do we use and engage connectivity and digital means to help:

- Generate more jobs and learning opportunities
- Help people into work
- Future proof the economy
- Build skills for the future
- Grow vital local businesses
- Stimulate vibrant high streets & communities
- Drive investment in communities
- Reimagine our highstreets
- Enhance the cultural offer of the city to connect with a wider audience

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Connected City – Adult Education

- Increased digital skills learning opportunities by 52% from 109 ICT qualifications in 2019 to 168 in 2020
- Over 60% of all students will have a digital literacy assessment leading to an appropriate educational response to improve and develop their digital skills
- At enrolment, a digital capacity assessment will be undertaken. A hardware and/or data loan will follow for those in need and where resources permit
- Increased blended learning opportunities are planned across the curriculum to support and enhance face to face learning
- The impact of the measures will be assessed using student voice/surveys

Connected City – Business and Employment

- All engagement has moved on-line
- Wolves in Business – website with advice and guidance has enabled the council to reach a wider audience
- Webinars, presented by businesses in the city on recovery, adapting and coping during Covid-19
- Grants application all managed online
- Preparing a CRM system to assist business relationships
- Engagement with residents has moved online, this has highlighted challenges with digital access
- Lets Talk Jobs - an online discussion with employers, talking about new ways of working and current vacancies

Connected City – Arts and Libraries

Arts

- Website engagement increased from April-July 2020 by 35% from 14,586 (in April) to 19,817 (in July)
- Q1 total Facebook likes 17,030 (up 11% on Q1 last year) and Twitter Followers 80,533 (up by 0.6% on Q1 last year)
- Online offer to schools for autumn 2020 being produced.

Library Service

- Virtual Librarian service – 184 signed up in the four weeks since it was launched
- Digital story time has over 800 views and 1600 engaged with the contents
- Launched 'We select, you collect' service that has received over 1500 enquiries
- Customers keen to access the facilities to use the PC, Opportunity to look at how community assets can support and serve the community

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Connected City - City Development

- Wired score Gold accreditation for i9. This is a commercial real estate rating scheme that empowers landlords to understand, improve, and promote their buildings' digital infrastructure and connectivity.
- Virtual meetings with prospective developers and investors.
- Progress of Memorandum of Understanding with developers
- Profile raising events such as Business Breakfast
- Virtual acquisition of Qualcast Road a part of Canalside South

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