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CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
C O U N C I L

# Scrutiny Board Meeting

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Dear Councillor

## SCRUTINY BOARD - TUESDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 2023

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Tuesday, 12th December, 2023 meeting of the Scrutiny Board, the following report that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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| 4 | <b><u>West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Report on work with Wolverhampton Council (Pages 3 - 14)</u></b> |
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[To consider a report from the West Midlands Combined Authority on their working interactions with Wolverhampton Council].

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Scrutiny Team:

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# City of Wolverhampton Council Scrutiny Board

<b>Date</b>	Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> December
<b>Report title</b>	WMCA Activity – City of Wolverhampton Council
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	N/A
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf – Chief Executive, WMCA.
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	James Hughes - Member Relationship Manager, WMCA.
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Executive Board, WMCA.

## Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

### The City of Wolverhampton Council Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note the report which details the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out in the Local Authority Area.
- (2) Make any recommendations to City of Wolverhampton Council or West Midlands Combined Authority Officers on matters in this report for consideration.
- (3) Set out the frequency of updates from the West Midlands Combined Authority to both the Scrutiny Board and Full Council within Wolverhampton Council.

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report seeks to set out the work that the West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out within the City of Wolverhampton Council Area.
- 1.2. The report covers key directorates activity including skills, economy, strategy, transport, net zero, housing and health and communities.
- 1.3. The West Midlands Combined Authority recognises the role that the City of plays in supporting the Combined Authority to deliver for the West Midlands Region.
- 1.4. The West Midlands Combined Authority is seeking to improve the engagement with the Constituent Authorities, and this report will be the first update in a series, of which the frequency is to be determined by the Board.
- 1.5. To date the West Midlands Combined Authority has either facilitated or influenced £375 million worth of investments in the City of Wolverhampton area. This equates to £1,444 per head.

## **2. Transport**

### **2.1. Overreaching Priorities**

- 2.1.1. Priorities are improving the reliability of public transport services, ensuring the continuation of bus routes in light of funding pressures, completing rail and metro infrastructure delivery, improving walking and cycling infrastructure for the region and ensuring the road network operates efficiently.
- 2.1.2. Supporting the delivery of innovative transport solutions across the West Midlands.
- 2.1.3. The emerging programme of investment through CRSTS and long-term planning through the LTP and other policies will help to deliver a better connected, greener West Midlands.

### **2.2. Strategic Update**

#### **2.2.1. HS2 Update**

2.2.1.1. Government announced the cancellation of HS2 north of the West Midlands with immediate effect. The key points from the announcement were:

- HS2 Phase1 will be completed in full from: -
  - Both Euston (Central London) and Old Oak Common (Elizabeth Line connections) to the West Midlands stations at Interchange (NEC/Airport/Arden Cross) and Curzon St as well as to the junction with the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre (north of Lichfield)
- The other proposed sections of HS2 will be scrapped with immediate effect
  - HS2 Phase 2a (Handsacre to Crewe), HS2 Phase 2b (Crewe to Manchester), HS2 East (West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway and Midland Main Line)
- Detailed work is underway to understand the impact of this decision on service patterns and frequencies on both the Phase 1 HS2 network and the existing conventional network. There are concerns that will be no post HS2 service improvements between Birmingham – Wolverhampton and no/limited improvements to existing services between the West Midlands and Manchester.

#### **2.2.2. Midlands Rail Hub (MRH)**

2.2.2.1. The Network North proposals include building MRH in full and has £1.75bn allocated. The project will be subject to full business case, planning and Transport & Works Act Order approvals. The listed figures do not include the delivery of new local stations.

2.2.2.2. Due to the cancellation of HS2 East, it is expected that the West to East Midlands part of MRH will revert to delivering service enhancements to Tamworth, Derby and Nottingham as well as to Nuneaton and Leicester.

#### **2.2.3. Local Transport Plan Update**

2.2.3.1. Developing the LTP is a statutory requirement and the responsibility for the WMCA.

2.2.3.2. The new LTP is called Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands and will be comprised of multiple parts; a Core Strategy, 6 Big Moves, 4 Area Strategies, and an Implementation Plan.

2.2.3.3. It sets out a high ambition for change in the transport system, with an emphasis on increasing public transport, walking and cycling. It also embraces many positive changes which provide benefits for car users, including supporting zero emissions.

2.2.3.4. *Big Move* strategies have also been developed and agreed by the CA Board for consultation. These set out more detailed policies: *Behaviour Change, Accessible & Inclusive Places, Walk, Wheel, Cycle and Scoot, Public Transport*

*& Shared Mobility, A Safe, Efficient and Reliable Network, A Green Transport Revolution.*

2.2.3.5. The four *LTP Area Strategies* (for Birmingham, Black Country, Coventry and Solihull) will set out and assess the impact of local proposals across the West Midlands. Our starting point for this has been existing local priorities including projects currently funded for development through funds such as CRSTS, Active Travel Funds, and Towns Fund.

2.2.3.6. The single *Implementation Plan* will detail local proposals across the West Midlands as well as cross-cutting regional proposals. Details such as funding estimates, funding allocations, development stage and proposal timelines will be set out in the Implementation Plan.

#### 2.2.4. Funding

2.2.4.1. A review of WMCA's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was undertaken over the summer and reported to WMCA Board in November. Funding uncertainty and cost pressure are impacting all LA and WMCA.

2.2.4.2. Efforts are ongoing to reduce the transport funding gap of £28.7m for 2024/25. The Network North announcement allocates a further Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) top up grant of £16.60m to WMCA for 2024/25.

2.2.4.3. TfWM has secured protection for existing bus network services until December 2024. Approximately £40m of the transformational BSIP will be repurposed to support the network. TfWM has secured formal agreements with operators to ensure value for money.

2.2.4.4. TfWM has also reported several cost and inflationary pressures to WMCA Board throughout 2023. DfT has permitted a one-off CRSTS re-baselining exercise for all MCA area. A TfWM Change Control and Rebasing request was submitted to DfT in late September, and we are now awaiting approval. A further report will be submitted to Board in early 2024.

2.2.4.5. WMCA are providing CoWC with additional pothole funding for 2023/34 of £0.5m, this is additional to highway maintenance and LNIP funding.

2.2.4.6. WMCA Single Settlement with the government may provide opportunities from 2025/26 onwards.

#### 2.2.5. Network Performance and Reliability

2.2.5.1. Following the opening of the Wolverhampton city centre extension in September 2023, Midland Metro Limited (MML) plan to introduce additional peak time services during the morning and evening peak to improve frequency. Following the re-opening of Wolverhampton St. Georges, MML have implemented a new service providing a 15- minute service from Wolverhampton St. Georges and Wolverhampton station.

2.2.5.2. Bus services accommodate more than 4 million passenger journeys each week but we have seen the region lose 12% of bus services between 2020 and October 2023.

2.2.5.3. Performance has seen improvements but does remain challenging for passengers. There have been driver shortages and, earlier in the year, services were severely impacted by strikes within National Express, with network performance being impacted in the run-up to this action. Operators have also experienced reduced patronage, reduced revenue and a significant increase in costs.

2.2.5.4. Rail industrial action continues to feature. It has impacted performance and slowed the roll out of planned improvements. Progress in resolving the dispute is unclear.

2.2.5.5. Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC) continues to liaise closely with CoWC and the Black Country UTC to make them aware of incidents that

occur on the network and will likely have an impact on network operations and performance.

#### **2.2.6. Bus Policy Delivery Options and Enhanced Partnership**

2.2.6.1. TfWM has commissioned an independent assessment for future bus policy delivery options. This commission includes detailed options including a full franchise assessment. Work is ongoing and is scheduled to report to WMCA Board in summer 2024.

2.2.6.2. TfWM have worked closely with operators and local districts to create the 2nd Enhanced Partnership (EP) in the country. The EP covers the vehicle types, branding, payment options, on-board facilities and technology, journey time performance and which stops the bus service uses.

2.2.6.3. Variation 003 was made in September 2023 and expanded to include BSIP delivery. The areas covered by the Solihull AQPS and Wolverhampton AQPS were absorbed into the EP Scheme.

#### **2.2.7. Road Safety**

2.2.7.1. An updated regional road safety strategy has been approved and an updated action plan is being developed. Formal consultation on the strategy will occur in February/March 2024.

2.2.7.2. The main themes of this refreshed strategy are to adopt a “Safe Systems approach” for: Safe road users, Safe vehicles, Safe speeds, Safe roads and mobility, Post-crash response.

2.2.7.3. The draft revised strategy includes a new target of a 50% reduction in the number of people Killed and Seriously Injured (KSIs) by 2030.

2.2.7.4. The refreshed strategy has been informed by valuable contributions of Wolverhampton officers through attendance at the face-to-face road safety away days and receipt of written feedback.

#### **2.2.8. Net Zero**

2.2.8.1. WMCA was awarded £30.4m from DfT to deliver 124 hydrogen powered buses and associated infrastructure, including 24 articulated vehicles for Sprint BRT routes. The project will now deliver 100 hydrogen fuel cell buses and refuelling infrastructure as well as 24 battery electric articulated buses and charging infrastructure, subject to a business case review by the main partner National Express which is nearing completion.

2.2.8.2. Significant work is underway on developing an EV charging strategy for the West Midlands as well as delivering various types of EV infrastructure through the CRSTS programme, government grants and collaboration with the private sector. WMCA is working closely with BC Transport team.

### **3. Skills, Health and Communities**

#### **3.1. Skills - UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

##### **3.1.1. City of Wolverhampton Council Allocation**

3.1.1.1. UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Total allocation over 3 years 22-25 - £6,528,661.98

3.1.1.2. Year 2 allocation - £1,920,420 (includes £110,000 mgt fee)

3.1.1.3. Year 2 Capital allocation – £515,105 Revenue Allocation - £1,405,315

#### **3.2. Business Support Pillar Projects - £897,968**

3.2.1. Centrally designed within the Hub & Spoke Business Growth West Midlands model.

3.2.2. WMCA manage grants programmes to provide a feed in of businesses to access the locally managed grants programmes.

3.2.3. SME Grants: £287,091 - WM SME Grants Programme aims to improve economic prosperity by stimulating business and enterprise activity, improving business

confidence, encouraging investment, upskilling, and creating local jobs. Grant funding of £2,500 to £100k with up to 50:50 match should be offered to businesses.

3.2.4. NZ Grants: £150,077 - Net Zero Grants aims at removing financial barriers and enable SMEs to make carbon savings through increased energy and resource efficiency. Up to 50:50 matched grant funding of £2.5k - £7.5k for new business start-ups and £5k to £100k for established SMEs.

3.2.5. Business Advisors: £460,800.00 - Business Growth West Midlands work closely with the locally funded Business Advisors to offer local business advice and support, with the main objective to reduce fragmentation and offer a consistent, unified and standardised business support offer in the region in coordination with the local partners.

### **3.3. Communities & Place Pillar Projects - £702,452**

3.3.1. Project 1 – £462,452 – Community Grants programme focused on place-based activities that support local priorities including financial wellbeing, digital inclusion and employment and skills. Target groups will be residents who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, digital exclusion and/or unemployed or economically inactive targeting residents in our most deprived areas.

3.3.2. Project 2 – £240,000 – Develop activities to improve the city centre and high streets: improve physical spaces and create a sense of local pride through improved public realm, local identity installations and new visitor attractors creating a high quality, flexible environment and infrastructure required to deliver a successful programme of activity; support local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

### **3.4. Locally Designed Business Support Pillar Projects - £210,000**

3.4.1. Local Business Project 1 - £150,000 - Start Up Support - Grow and sustain businesses / start up support targeting areas of high deprivation and unemployment (noted that discussions around this being regional allocation are ongoing to be confirmed)

3.4.2. Local Business Project 2 - £60,000 - iGNITE – Establishment and ongoing running costs of enterprise hub supporting local businesses to start up and grow.

### **3.5. Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund - £801,714**

3.5.1. The total amount that will be awarded to each Local Authority for the full 2-year period is £801,714.28 which will be split over the 2 years, providing an annual award for financial years 2023/24 of £400,857.14 and 2024/25 of £400,857.15.

3.5.2. Wolves at Work Project - End to end employment support for unemployed, under-employed, at risk of redundancy. Preparing them for work; securing work; staying in work; progressing in work. Target cohorts include 18 to 24; 50+. Geographic spread across the city, with focus on specific communities. Data on cohort demographics will be monitored and reviewed throughout programme, and activity adjusted accordingly. Delivered via Youth Employment Hub in city centre.

3.5.3. NEET Prevention and Support – Matching CEC funding to identify areas for intervention within schools and college to meet and embed Gatsby benchmarks in line with the Careers Enterprise contract.

3.5.4. Mentoring for young people - 121 and group mentoring, focusing on mental health and well-being (confidence, motivation, aspiration). Targeted at 16 to 24 year olds and this will link in with both employment support programme and careers programme.

### **3.6. Skills - Multiply – City of Wolverhampton Council**

#### **3.6.1. Financial Investment**

3.6.1.1. Multiply – total allocation over 3 years 22 – 25, £316,251.00

3.6.1.2. Broken down by years as follows:

- Y1 – £101,101.00
- Y2 - £107,575.00

- Y3 - £107,575.00

### 3.7. Project Delivery

#### 3.7.1. Multiply Project – Better Off in Wolves – beating the cost-of-living crisis together

- 3.7.1.1. Adult Education Wolverhampton are delivering 2 Multiply courses to the employed residents of Wolverhampton.
- 3.7.1.2. Multiply provision is targeting working adults needing support to balance their income and expenditure, not generally interacting within community settings. These adults work full or part-time and are mostly on a low wage, and are targeted in their places of work in addition to community spaces. The target groups are from faith groups, single parent groups, families on low incomes, LGBTQ+ groups, women’s groups, older adults (50+) and other community groups.
- 3.7.1.3. A city-wide engagement opportunity supports residents to learn budgeting tips and gain information and advice on managing finances whilst developing a basic numeracy skill.
- 3.7.1.4. Following the engagement sessions, residents are encouraged to progress and enrol onto household budgeting and financial literacy programme delivered face to face in the community, supported with independent advice and guidance. Residents are supported through the learning programme to gain confidence with maths skills delivered in a range of venues and developing relationships with employers.
- 3.7.1.5. In addition to the face-to-face offer, the alternative programme is a flexible online maths programme based on navigating the cost-of-living crisis that focuses on developing a sound understanding of household budgeting whilst developing confidence with maths skills. For those without access to devices and/or connectivity, this will be provided through Wolves Online device and connectivity lending scheme wherever this is feasible.

### 3.8. Skills - Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) Programme

3.8.1. City of Wolverhampton Council are delivery partners for the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) Programme

#### 3.8.2. Programme Delivery Schedule & Grant Allocation CEC Funding

3.8.2.1. Total funding allocation £67,813 – Academic Year Sept 2023 - August 2024

Funding Area	Funding Allocation Max	LA match Req	Phased Release
Coordinator Posts 1.5	£40,633	£40,633	Paid in arrears by claim over 4 periods
Local Hub Fund (based on £500 per institution with a signed MOU)	£15,000	£0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend
Disadvantage (FSM) Uplift	£7,200	£0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend
Teacher Encounters Fund	£4,980	£0	Paid on termly profile subject to Delivery Plan approval and evidence of spend

3.8.3. The Local Hub Fund will enable all Hubs to improve careers provision in schools and colleges and as such allocation of spend and reflected in the LA Delivery Plan is:

- c30 % of fund to: Provide more high-quality experiences of the world of work for students



- c30% of fund to: Amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes
- c30% of fund to: Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people, those who face barriers, under-represented groups and those at risk of becoming NEET
- c10% of fund to: Local Priorities

3.8.4. Programme Project Areas are as follows:

<b>CEC Project Areas 23/24</b>		
<b>City of Wolverhampton Projects</b>		
	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Project</b>
<b>1</b>	Priority 2 - Provide more high quality experiences for students and teachers - with a focus on current areas of need	Inspiring Black Country Skills Show for 800+ vulnerable young people to experience hands on activities 40+ employers collaborative event involving LA's
<b>2</b>	Priority 2 - Provide more high quality experiences for students and teachers - with a focus on current areas of need and Priority 4 - Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (FSM) and those who face barriers	Work based visit for up to 8 FSM schools to participate in with 6-8 employers. This will be followed up with an in school project around the employer to inform the wider year group of the opportunities available with their given employer.
<b>3</b>	Priority 2 - Provide more high quality experiences for students and teachers - with a focus on current areas of need. Priority 5 - Connect Careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies (as articulated through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)	Priority 2 - Event and pupil focused programme of work to be organised with City of Wolverhampton College to demonstrate apprenticeships on offer and pathways into priority sectors. Priority 5 - 1 Future industry direct support activity. To link with Construction, rail transport, EV and green skills.
<b>4</b>	Priority 4 - Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (FSM) and those who face barriers	SEND students will have a portfolio of experiences to support their employment options. Pop up shops and work experience will be set up for SEND/AP students at various locations across the city. Marketing of these shops will take place within the Council's communications teams.
<b>5</b>	Priority 4 - Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (FSM) and those who face barriers	SEND Careers Fair at Dunstall Race Course - 20 October. Colleges, training providers, Connexions and SET team attended and targeted SEND pupils and their parents to attend
<b>6</b>	Priority 4 - Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (FSM) and those who face barriers	Youth Employment Hub Careers Fair to focus on school leavers with routes into supported internships, apprenticeships, T Levels and employment opportunities

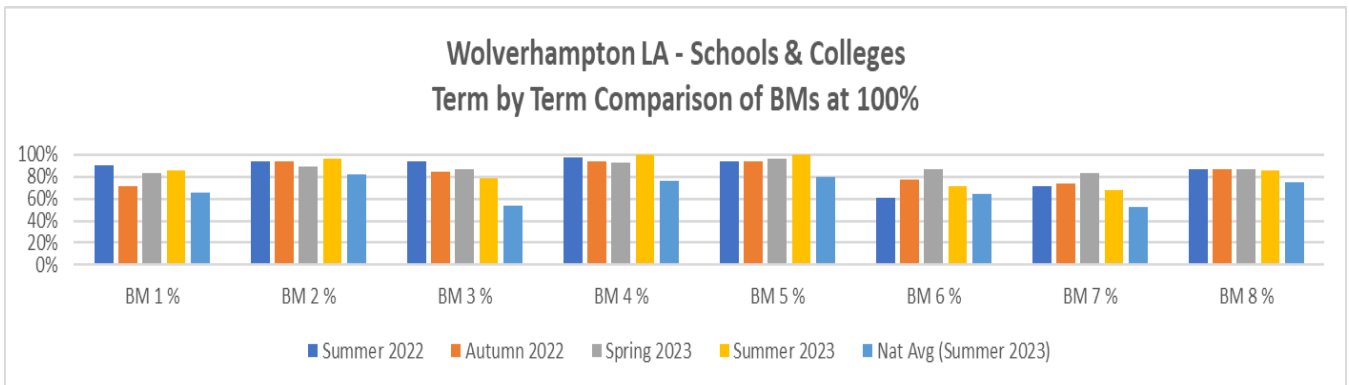
7	Priority 5 - Connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies (as articulated through the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs))	2 young people focused forums to be hosted outside of school - Youth Council and Wolves at Work Youth Employment Hub. EC's to host student forums in 25% of caseload schools - 7 mainstream secondary schools and 2 special schools
8	Priority 5 - Connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies (as articulated through the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs))	Careers Live and Around My Town resources to be linked to Workbox. SWBA Around My Town Toolkit to be completed.
9	Priority 5 - Connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies (as articulated through the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs))	Teacher encounters project - identify local employer to host teacher encounters project. Currently looking at links with Integrated Care Partnership and Creative Education Partnership.

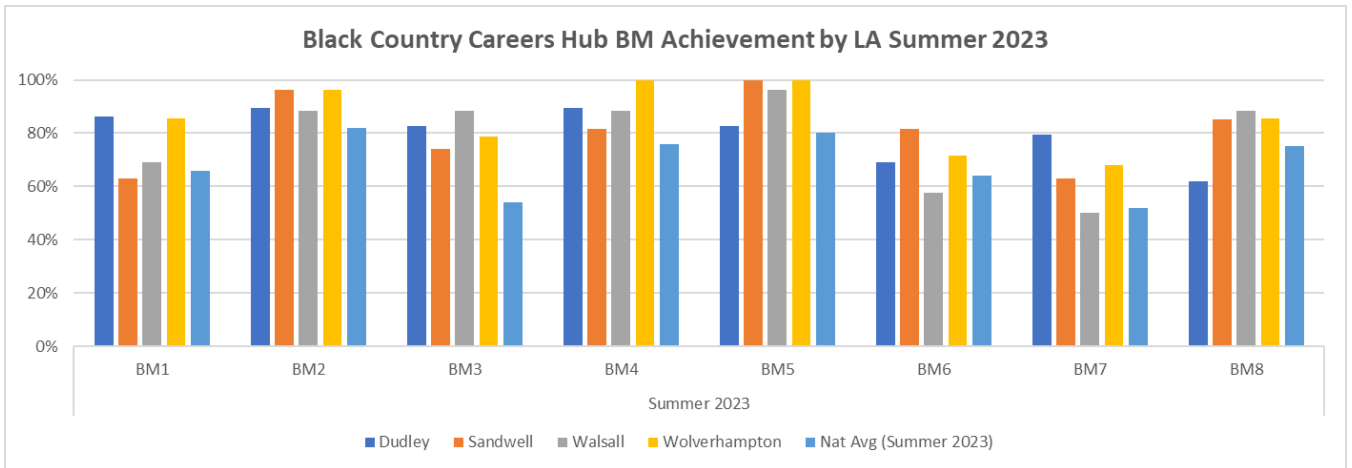
3.8.5. The tables below show what percentage of schools and colleges in Wolverhampton are meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks. All schools and colleges complete a compass audit to measure themselves against the Gatsby benchmarks.

3.8.5.1. The eight Gatsby Benchmarks serve as a framework for world-class careers provision and have been adopted as part of the Government's Careers Strategy, statutory guidance for schools and guidance for colleges. In addition, The Careers & Enterprise Company now supports the implementation of the Benchmarks in education with a national network of support, resources and targeted funding.

3.8.5.1..1. The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

- A stable career programme,
- Learning from career and labour market information,
- Addressing the needs of each pupil,
- Linking curriculum learning to careers,
- Encounters with employers and employees,
- Experiences of workplaces,
- Encounters with further and higher education,
- Personal guidance.





### 3.9. Skills - Adult Education Budget

#### 3.9.1. Labour Market & Residents Survey

3.9.1.1. When looking at residents with no basic qualifications (i.e. holding none or just at entry/L1), Wolverhampton sits at 30%, higher than the wider WM (28%) and higher than the UK (22%)

3.9.1.2. There are 12,325 claimants aged 16+. This represents 7.5% of residents and significantly higher than the England average of 3.7%

#### 3.9.2. Adult Education Budget Provision – 2022/2023

3.9.2.1. Wolverhampton receives £11.52m of the Adult Education Budget funding which equates for 11% of Combined Authority Region.

3.9.2.2. In total there are 5,880 learners across 13,240 courses/qualifications. These are delivered by 72 training providers, with the majority via Wolverhampton College and Wolverhampton AES.

3.9.2.3. There has been an increased focus of ‘into employment’ delivery and bootcamp courses, focusing on moving people into employment.

3.9.2.4. We have seen a small increase in higher level study at 4/5.

3.9.2.5. In 2021/22, 62% of learners had a positive destination. This increased to 72% in 2022/23 (44% employment, 28% education).

#### 3.9.3. Summary

3.9.3.1. 2022/23 has seen an increase in into employment programmes and skills bootcamps.

3.9.3.2. Most provision is ‘into employment’ and Level 2.

3.9.3.3. Most provision is within ‘preparation for life and work’ i.e. English, Maths, ESOL.

3.9.3.4. Delivery in construction and engineering is consistent with the delivery in 21/22.

3.9.3.5. Huge opportunities to flex and innovate delivery to meet the vacancy demands of Wolverhampton.

### 3.10. **Health and Communities**

3.10.1. The WMCA will continue with its investment into the ongoing delivery of Black Country Moving, which forms part of the regional and local CWG legacy. In 2020, the WMCA provided £150k to Active Black Country and the 4 Local Authorities to do the groundwork and initial community work which led to identifying and initial delivery in Bilston East, Bushberry South and Low Hill and East Park.

3.10.2. This initial funding contributed to developing these areas as Wolverhampton’s Commonwealth Active Communities leading to a near £1.44m

Sport England CWG legacy grant for the Black Country. The WMCA is now working on finalising a further £333k capacity funding for the next 3 years into the Black Country Moving project. It is the responsibility of Active Black Country and the 4 local Authorities to agree how this funding is allocated.

- 3.10.3. A further £130K has also awarded to Active Black Country to work with the 4 Local Authorities and health partners on social prescribing walking and cycling and contribute to the costs of rolling out the “Love Explore” app across Black Country parks including West Park in Wolverhampton.
- 3.10.4. The Health and Communities team has worked with the WMCA SENZ team to set the criteria for sport, physical activity and mental health reflective of local identified needs and wellbeing for the £9m Inclusive Communities Fund launched on 06 November 2023.
- 3.10.5. The team are now contacting VCSE organisations across WMCA, and have spoken at OneWolverhampton Adult Mental Health SWG, to encourage organisations to bid into and access over £5.5m in funds from the Inclusive Communities Community Grants scheme as part of the CWG Legacy Enhancement Fund.
- 3.10.6. WV Active Central and WV Active Bilston leisure centres were part of the WMCA pilot to improve confidence of disabled people to use public transport to get to places to be active and these 2 centres and Aldersley Leisure Village pledged their commitment to be more inclusive and accessible in their programming and provision for disabled people.

#### **4. Housing, Property and Regeneration**

- 4.1.1. The Directorate holds six weekly Local Authority meetings with Richard Lawrence (Director of City Development, CoWC) and his team to discuss property and grant cases. More recently, focused meetings with Richard have taken place to identify the City’s top priority projects and how these can be serviced through WMCA grant assistance.
- 4.1.2. We also work closely with Julia Nock (CWC Deputy Director of Assets) and her team in relation to bringing forward surplus Council owned sites to the market for residential development.
  - 4.1.2.1. Current work is ongoing in relation to projects at Loxdale, Stowheath and Oxley.
- 4.1.3. There are a number of projects that have WMCA funding in place through contracted funding agreements. These will deliver residential developments, for example, Brewer’s Yard – Culwell St & Hickman Avenue.
  - 4.1.3.1. Previous schemes include the National Brownfield Institute, Lovells’ Saints Quarter at Steelhouse Lane, The Marches Rent to Buy and a number of commercial loans including Spring Road and i54.
- 4.1.4. WMCA has previously acquired property at Dobbs St and Pipe Hall for residential development.
- 4.1.5. More details of current projects can be found in the private Appendix.

#### **5. Strategy, Economy and Net Zero**

##### **5.1. Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal**

- 5.1.1. The deal contains over 190 different commitments. The City of Wolverhampton Council will benefit from specific benefits to Wolverhampton and from the benefits that will be felt by the region as a whole.
- 5.1.2. The deal gives the City of Wolverhampton Council 10-year certainty over its ability to retain business rates growth. The current rolling 100% business rate retention pilot

could cease at any point. The deal therefore increases City of Wolverhampton Council's financial certainty.

5.1.3. The deal gives the region £100 million for town centre and estate regeneration and to support the delivery of complex housing sites, which is accessible to the City of Wolverhampton Council. This is additional to the commitment to give the region more control over the Affordable Housing Programme, working with Homes England.

5.1.4. The deal gives the region new partnerships with Government in policy areas that are a priority for Wolverhampton – skills and employment support services, housing, culture, digital infrastructure and economic development. They will bring policymaking closer to Wolverhampton and offer opportunities to tailor policy to its local circumstances.

5.1.5. The Single Settlement:

5.1.5.1. Will enable the City of Wolverhampton Council to contribute to the development of place-based strategies across the region. The strategies will bring together transport, housing, skills, net zero and local growth funding, to increase inclusive economic growth in targeted places across the region.

5.1.5.2. Will give the City of Wolverhampton Council more influence over funding decisions. Through their role on WMCA Board, the Leader of Wolverhampton will gain significantly more power over how funding devolved into the single settlement is prioritised across the region.

5.1.5.3. Will give the region significantly more flexibility over funding decisions. WMCA will be able to select and fund projects to address the challenges facing the region with respect to levelling up, working towards an outcomes framework that will be jointly agreed between WMCA and government.

5.1.5.4. Will increase certainty over the funding we receive through the single settlement. The settlement will offer a multi-year block grant, lasting for each Spending Review period, as opposed to the patchwork of 1- and 2-year grants we currently receive – strengthening our ability to do long-term economic planning across the region.

5.1.5.5. The deal gives the region more flexibility over Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and future adult skills funding than any other area of England. This skills funding, along with partnership agreements with DWP and DfE, will allow us to shape the adult skills and education offer to better serve the needs of Wolverhampton's residents and be more closely aligned with current and emerging needs within the local labour market.

5.1.5.6. People in Wolverhampton will face fewer barriers to using public transport as a result of the commitment from government to integrate different modes of transport. This will open up economic opportunities for people and businesses in Sandwell. The deal also provides the region with the opportunity to have greater oversight of funding support for bus operators with the devolution of the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

## **5.2. Investment Zone - Wolverhampton's Green Innovation Corridor ('GIC')**

5.2.1. Colleagues in CWC and WMCA are working closely together, along with partners at Wolverhampton University, to maximise the opportunities and benefits from recent Government programmes and the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal.

5.2.2. In March this year, Government launched its 'Investment Zone' programme for 8 Combined Authority areas across England. This scheme seeks to promote growth in a primary economic sector, identified by the region, through a combination of direct funding, tax incentives and enhanced business rate retention.

5.2.3. Since its launch, colleagues from local authorities across the region, universities and businesses, have been working with WMCA to identify the right economic sector and to develop the most beneficial package of finance and fiscal measures to

support that. Through common agreement, the sector has been identified as 'Advanced Manufacturing, as it also intersects with Green Industries, Digital, and Health-Tech'.

- 5.2.4. This creates a significant opportunity for Wolverhampton's Green Innovation Corridor ('GIC') which has been identified and agreed as a site within the Investment Zone, which will benefit from direct funding through the programme.
- 5.2.5. With its pioneering focus on green technologies, innovation and skills, the GIC is expected to benefit from direct capital funding and as part of the region-wide programme focusing on skills development, business spin-out and support and, potentially, investment funding.
- 5.2.6. Negotiations are ongoing with the Government around the Investment Zone, which is expected to commence in April 2024.
- 5.2.7. Alongside this work, partners have been developing the concept of 'Levelling Up Zones' - areas that have been identified by local authorities as a priority for levelling up based on both need and opportunity. This focus on a 'zone' or 'place' will enable informed decisions to be made to ensure benefits are maximised from the new funding levers secured for the region through the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal: from the 'Single Settlement' through to retrofit, housing and transport funding.

### **5.3. Energy**

- 5.3.1. Energy Capital works with the City of Wolverhampton Council on all of its primary work areas; energy infrastructure, energy policy and retrofit.
- 5.3.2. The region is currently gearing up to input to the new Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP) process which OfGEM announced on the 15 November 2023. Energy Capital has been shaping this work with OfGEM to enhance the voice of places in the energy planning process through a project funded by OfGEM's Strategic Innovation Fund, called Project PRIDE. The City of Wolverhampton is participating through a new energy governance structure established by Energy Capital to support RESPs.
- 5.3.3. The City of Wolverhampton Council is participating through a new energy governance structure established by Energy Capital to support RESPs. Wolverhampton are a member of the Local Area Energy Planning Co-ordination Group (LAEP-CG), which is a local authority group leading the delivery of local area energy planning across the West Midlands to inform RESP.
- 5.3.4. The Head of Green Cities and Circular Economy is Wolverhampton's representative who is also acting as the LAEP CG representative on the Net Zero Infrastructure Deliver Panel (NZIDP), a panel of energy infrastructure investors that will support the delivery of local area energy plans and feed into the new structures set up by OfGEM.
- 5.3.5. As part of Project PRIDE, Energy Capital is working with National Grid and Advanced Infrastructure, to develop a digital tool which will enhance West Midlands local authorities' ability to engage in the energy system planning process, by providing data, insights and a valuable engagement tool. Wolverhampton is currently in the process of onboarding onto this platform.
- 5.3.6. The Energy Capital team have also been inputting into Wolverhampton's Net Zero Strategy through their workshops.
- 5.3.7. To date, the City has not worked directly with WMCA on retrofit delivery, for example preferring to submit a separate bid for Wave 2.1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). However, WMCA is supporting retrofit activity in Wolverhampton by working with Bromford Group through SHDF. Wolverhampton are also an active part of the regional Net Zero Neighbourhoods cohort with a detailed plan for Graiseley which we are working with them to take forward.