

Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel

1 February 2024

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny
Venue Committee Room 3 - 3rd Floor - Civic Centre

Membership

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)
Vice-chair Cllr Sohail Khan (Con)

Labour

Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge
Cllr Lamina Lloyd
Cllr Alan Butt
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE

Conservative

Cllr Ellis Turrell

Independent

Cllr Celia Hibbert

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

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

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting.]

- 2 **Meeting procedures to be followed**
[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed, how questions are to be asked and any matters of meeting etiquette.]

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 3 **Apologies and Substitutions**

- 4 **Declarations of interest**

- 5 **Minutes of previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 10)
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 6 **Digital Wolves Strategy Update** (Pages 11 - 34)
[The Panel to receive a presentation]

- 7 **Strategic Asset Plan 2024-2029** (Pages 35 - 60)
[Deputy Director of Assets & the Head of Assets to present to the Panel]

Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 5

Minutes - 7 December 2023

Attendance

Members of the Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel

Cllr John Reynolds (Chair)
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lamina Lloyd
Cllr Alan Butt
Cllr Paul Singh

Attendees

Cllr Louise Miles – Cabinet Member for Resources

Employees

David Pattison – Chief Operating Officer
Claire Nye – Director of Finance
James Howse – Interim Director of Finance
Charlotte Johns – Director of Strategy
Luke Dabin-Williams – Finance Business Partner
Stephen Morgan – Corporate Analytics Manager
Lee Booker – Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies & Substitutions**
Apologies were received from Cllr Susan Roberts and Cllr Ellis Turrell. Cllr Paul Singh substituted for Cllr Ellis Turrell.
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest from the Panel or Officers.
- 3 **Minutes of previous meeting**
The minutes for the Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel which occurred on the 12th October 2023 were approved as a true and correct record.

4 **Budget Performance & Update**

The Director of Finance began the presentation (a copy is attached to the signed minutes) and informed the Panel that when Full Council approved the 2023-2024 budget on 1 March 2023 the Council had a forecasted budget deficit of £16.4 million in 2024-2025 rising to £23.1 million across 2025-2026. Work had been undertaken by the Council to reduce the deficit, with the budget update to Cabinet in October, projecting the deficit to be in the region of £2.6 million for 2024-2025, but that current MTFS efficiency targets and future efficiency assumptions to be identified for 2024-2025 meant the total gap was currently £9.4 million. Work was still being undertaken to further reduce the deficit and create a balanced budget for the future with the current budget deficit rising to over £20 million for 2025-2026. Economic uncertainties were: future funding, inflationary pressures, demand for services, future pay awards.

The Corporate Analytics Manager informed the Panel that sickness rates had increased to 3.23% in quarter 2, and that this did not include COVID sick absence. Mental health issues, musculoskeletal and operations were the top 3 recorded reasons for workplace absence. Employees had access to mental health support via the employee assistance programme. Staff turnover had increased, the Council were operating a post-job change interview scheme to find out more about the reasons why staff were leaving the City of Wolverhampton Council as an employer and would have data in the future. As of 2023/2024, customer service call waiting times were lower than historic trends.

The Director of Finance expanded on risks, citing key areas for the Panel to note. There was increasing demand for temporary and supported living accommodation, which was caused by a multitude of factors, most common being an impact of the cost of living contributing to people becoming homeless, or landlords evicting people in the private sector. The Council was responding by looking into preventative measures available, such as taking back into ownership more properties to allow for temporary accommodation allocation. The Council were mitigating inflationary pressures on planned and reactive building maintenance by reducing overall activity in this area. There were on going and increasing cyber security risks. The energy market was volatile and this was a risk for central Council services cost wise. Further risks were listed on the presentation document.

The Vice Chair wanted to know why COVID illness cases were not included in the sick leave statistics and wanted to understand how they impacted the figures.

The Corporate Analytics Manager stated that COVID was not recorded in Agresso anymore, he explained that people who were off with COVID were recorded as part of the overall sickness statistics, but not separated anymore as they had been in previous times.

The Chair and Vice Chair sought further clarification in reference to the wording within the slides.

The Chief Operating Officer stated that the wording of the slides would need to be changed going forward. He confirmed what the Corporate Analytics Manager said was correct.

The Chair stated it would be worthwhile looking at the stats and strategy for those suffering from long-covid.

A Panel member said the exit interviews were not very in depth and she felt they needed to have more challenging interviews to get a stronger sense of why staff leave. She wanted to know why people were not wanting to work in the local authority.

The Chief Operating Officer stated that the City of Wolverhampton's turn over and retention rates were good in comparison to other local authorities. He said studies done by the government showed that all local authorities were challenged by staff retention. He said in certain professional areas within local authorities, such as legal with lawyers, it was hard to employ those professionals directly. He said that the City of Wolverhampton was responding to this by taking a "growing our own" approach, where resources and time were being put into training and developing staff. He said the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy was also aimed at making the workplace better for employees and was considerably advanced compared to some Councils. He said exit interviews were showing that in most cases colleagues who were head hunted for work which offered a promotion on their current role, this showed that Wolverhampton had some challenges around progression points past certain levels.

The Councillor replied stating she believed an anonymous survey should be done to allow for more honest feedback from staff currently working in the Council. She also asked if more apprenticeships could be opened up further across the Council.

The Chief Operating Officer stated that the Council had apprenticeships across the board, with 48 currently on going. He said the Council had found thus far that most apprentices continued working within the City of Wolverhampton Council upon completion of their apprenticeship. He also stated that 45% of apprenticeships were from a non-white background which was contributing towards the increasing diversity of the employee make up at the Council. He stated that exit interviews were done in person to get the conversation flowing but they could be done anonymously throughout Human Resources services. He also said the those employees leaving could ask to do their exit interview with someone from a different service, which meant they'd be speaking to someone who did not know them and was not within the department they had been working for.

The Cabinet Member for Resources added that a number of the Council's apprentices had won regional and national awards.

A Panel member stated that he was pleased to hear the level of opportunities and

staff development within the Council. He also said that if staff were being head hunted by other Local Authorities or businesses, it showed the City of Wolverhampton Council produced excellent professionals. He stated he felt it was good the Council had looked at and prepared for further pay rises, however, he asked if they had modelled higher than 2 or 3% and if they had looked at 6% to ensure all eventualities were prepared for.

The Director of Finance stated that it wasn't possible at this stage to know what pay offer would be asked for and what would be negotiated nationally. She said the situation was under constant review and that they did look at various outcomes when doing economic forecasting.

A Councillor referred to the increase in demand for temporary and supported living accommodations. He said this was most sharply seen in the private sector as a driver for increased homelessness. He wanted to know if the Council was prepared for further increases in demand in this area.

The Director of Strategy replied that they were seeing increased demand, driven by a variety of reasons, from evictions through to family breakdown and that this was an issue being seen across the country. She said they were supporting people with the resources they had but that she would flag it with the Directors for further consideration. She said an item was coming to the Climate Change, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel in the future.

There was discussion between Panel members about reported rent increases from residents and financial support available.

A Panel member stated she saw support offered for Mental Health issues with the Employee Assistance scheme but wanted to know what support was available for the other major contributor to staff sickness; Musculoskeletal (MSK).

The Chief Operating Officer explained that the Council followed the requirements and guidance of Health and Safety law which included workplace risk assessments and the various equipment offered for this. He said the Council also provided and paid for physiotherapy for staff when medically required. He also stated that the new hybrid working format, with home based working, offered a great variety of options for staff and this had contributed to a reduction in the number of MSK in the workplace.

The Councillor thanked the Chief Operating Officer for his answer. She enquired about budget deficit forecasts. She wanted to know if there was comparative data available of what the previous year's forecast was compared to the reality of what the years actual deficit ending up being, to get an idea of accuracy.

The Director of Finance stated they had a robust approach which was often correct, however, with the limited information available they were not always able to predict everything and she cited pressures in children's services as an area which they had not foreseen. She stated that often they were fairly accurate.

The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that because Councils were only funded for a year at a time, it made it difficult for planning purposes, which was why they had become reliant on forecasting.

There was general discussion around 1 year settlements and the uncertainty they cause Local Authorities between the Panel and Officers.

The Vice Chair stated that reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RACC) was listed on the strategic risk register and wanted to know what impact this was having on budgets.

The Chief Operating Officer said this was an on national issue which was why they had ensured it was covered. However, he stated Wolverhampton was in a better position than the rest of the country, they had already began work prior to the 2023 RACC scandal and most of the RACC had been removed from City of Wolverhampton properties. Their schools were not impacted by it. There were a few areas with small amounts, but none of these had risks associated with them at this time.

The report was accepted by the Panel.

5

Reserves

The interim Director of Finance summarised the definition of what reserves were: resources which had been set aside by the Council in previous financial years. They Council held earmarked reserves and general fund reserves. As part of its reserves strategy, the Council's earmarked reserves were held for – managing risk, investment reserves, smoothing reserves, restricted reserves. On page 42 of the agenda pack, there were useable and unusable reserves. Useable funds were used to fund one off commitments, unusable reserves were designed to contribute to technical administrative funding. Capital reserves were for major repairs (Housing and Revenue Account specific), a capital receipts reserve was designed to ringfence between revenue and capital. This was to ensure capital assets sold were only allowed to fund capital purposes. The interim Director of Finance displayed a number of graphs displaying financial figures relating to the reserves strategy in the presentation (a copy of the presentation is attached to the signed minutes). The General Fund Balance Reserve was £15.3 million and was designed to maintain corporate contingency by cushioning the impact of unexpected events and emergencies. The interim Director of Finance thought the figure of £15.3 million should be considered a minimum level and not the target, he hoped the Council would continue to grow its General Fund Balance Reserve.

The Chair queried the graph and stated that the total useable earmarked reserves as of 1st April 2023 was £49,073,000, the approved commitments were £26,500,000, leaving a balance of £22,000,000. He believed according to the data provided that the Council was going to be spending around £23,000,000 which he wanted noting. He also noted with concern the smoothing reserve, which was designed to deal with costs and then smooth back out over time. This reserve was not indicating signs of returning to a reasonable level and was in a state of decline, he cited that across 2 years this fund had decreased from £18,000,000 to £1,000,000. He believed a

strategy was needed to get the smoothing fund back on track.

The interim Director of Finance cited page 52 of the agenda pack and highlighted the future years strategy reserve which was £11,000,000, he said some of the pressures from the previous year were built into this figure.

The Director of Finance stated that the previous year they had anticipated an underspend in the budget and that money was to be used to smooth out money for the current financial year and mitigate the on-going financial pressures the Council faces. The October report identified potentially £3.2 million left over to use the following financial year. She stated that the presentation of the graph was not clear enough when viewed with hindsight and stated that some of the money would be stretched across into the following financial year. She stated that there was no underspend predicted for the current financial year and stated that the Chair was correct in reference to the smoothing reserve fund; once the money was gone, it was gone.

A Councillor stated he could see the reserves were all being spent considerably and wanted to know what the Council could do to build its reserve funds back up. He also wanted to know how the City of Wolverhampton Council's reserve funds compared to other neighbouring Local Authority reserves.

The interim Director of Finance stated that rebuilding reserve funds was critical and fell to the Section 151 officer to deal with. He said it was the statutory duty of the role of the Section 151 to deal with the reserves and that when the budget was presented to Council, the Council had a statutory requirement to give a view and set the budget. He said that the legal framework inbuilt into the Council ensured that the reserves were under constant review and given attention so that they were maintained. He said maintaining a 5% reserve budget was a minimum and said Councillors faced tough decisions in the future budget setting to maintain that figure in reserves. He said part of his team's job was to advise the Councillors about the budget. He stated that data showed the City of Wolverhampton Council's reserves fared as low in comparison to neighbouring Local Authority areas. He stated that reserves were not to be considered as a means to avoid poor budgeting. He pointed to Nottingham City Council as an example of a Council who a few years ago had high reserves but who had still recently declared bankruptcy. He said the benefit of reserves was mitigating risks, especially unknown risks which may appear for a Council to deal with.

There was general discussion by Officers and the Cabinet Member for Resources about the house hold analogy for budgeting and savings with a consensus around the challenges all Councils were currently facing with their finances in the context of the national economic downturn and high inflation.

The Chair took the Panel through Appendix 2 and commented on the School Arts Service Reserve fund. He said as the figure was only £3000, it was unlikely anyone was ever going to apply to use it and unlikely the Council would do a campaign around it. He felt that The Council should consider spending it or re-allocating it to another part of the budget and recommended this course of action. The Chair also recommended an explanation as to what the entirety of the Future Years Budget Strategy Reserve fund was spent on. The Chair commented on the Building Reserve Fund and felt that £4000 would not cover much. He felt this money should be moved

elsewhere and combined with another fund. The Chair commented that the Education Notices (penalty enforcement) Regulations 2007 fund was pointless as parents who wanted to take children out on holiday during school terms would do it regardless of fines and wanted to know if this fund was frozen or if it could be utilised elsewhere.

The Director of Finance said these reserves were restricted in their use for the criteria set out.

The Chair commented that just over £1,000,000 of the Licensing Reserve fund had been spent this year and wanted to know if anyone knew what it had been spent on.

The Finance Business Partner stated that it had been deemed that the reserve level in that fund was too high. They had used the money to lower Licensing charges for the time being.

A Panel member stated that the fund had built up because the Council was very good at processing Licenses for drivers. He felt it was relevant to look at how they could better use the reserve fund money to further improve the service.

The Chief Operating Officer stated that they had to accept all license applications received, providing they were fit and proper. He stated they were currently reviewing the service and that their priority was protecting the public.

A Councillor stated that some of the Licensing Reserve fund had been spent on improving technology such as an upgrade to license plate recognition.

A member of the Panel asked if some of the fund could be spent or transferred elsewhere.

The Chief Operating Officer said the funds were legally very tight and therefore restricted to specific uses.

The Chair asked the Director of Strategy to provide a short briefing note on this topic to the Panel members. He also commented that he would like to know in the future what the forecast balance for the Highway Management Reserve was going to be spent on. The Chair also wanted it noting that he wanted the Art Fund looking at so it could be considered what the money could be used for rather than leaving it sitting dormant. He suggested donating it to a charity which would benefit the local arts. He said the extremely small fund of £127 for the Grand Theatre Loop should be used rather than it sit dormant and be repeatedly flagged in reports.

A Councillor referred to page 42 in Appendix 2 and specified the Capital Grants unapplied Account. She wanted to know how much money was in there and why it wasn't being used.

The interim Director of Finance said he would be able to email the precise number of the funds outside of the meeting to the Panel. He said the account was a product of timing issues and the money was built into future Capital Grants.

The interim Director of Finance stated that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the mid-year 2023-2024 Treasury Management activities for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). He summarised the definition of treasury management to the Panel. However, as these were regular reports the Panel received, he moved on to the newer and more relevant information. He informed the Panel that the Council had operated within its prudential and treasury indicators. No new borrowing had been undertaken since March 2019. The level of borrowing as of September 30 2023 was £703.2 million. During quarter 2 (July – September) no loans were repaid. He then discussed Lender Option Borrower Loans (LOBOs), of which the Council had taken out 9 as of March 2023. These were a specific type of loan wherein the lender can “call in” the loan at any time, which means they could change the conditions of the loan such as interest rates. In such a scenario, the Council had two options: Accept the new terms or pay the loan off in full with no penalties. In October 2023, one of these loans were called in by the lender, to which the Council chose to repay back in full. He displayed the out-turn position 2023 – 2024 General Fund and HRA, informing the Panel that the variance was in the positive relative to approved budget and the forecast budget.

The Chair asked the interim Director of Finance to circulate to the Panel (subject to legal sensitivity) the contents of the 8 remaining LOBOs so that they could look at the risk levels facing the Council should a number be called in closely together.

The Chair and the Panel extended their thanks and well wishes to the Director of Finance for her hard work in the Council over the years.



Resources and Equalities Scrutiny Panel

01/02/2024

Report title	Digital Wolverhampton Strategy Update	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Obaida Ahmed	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy	
Originating service	External Funding and Digital Projects	
Accountable employee(s)	Heather Clark Tel Email	Head of Digital Projects 01902 555614 Heather.Clark2@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Cabinet Member Briefing	1 February 2023

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the progress and approach to delivering priorities of the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide an update on progress in the delivery of the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy adopted in March 2022.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council adopted the Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy in January 2020 to support the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure including full fibre broadband and 5G. Futureproofed digital infrastructure is the backbone of a modern thriving economy driving productivity and spreading growth and in delivering effective and efficient public services.
- 2.2 The Council appointed a Cabinet Member for Digital City to drive forward this agenda supported by the Council's Digital Champion and Co-ordinator. The Digital Wolverhampton Partnership, comprising the key anchor institutions in the city the Council, University of Wolverhampton, City of Wolverhampton College, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Wolverhampton Homes, oversees the City's approach to digital.
- 2.3 The adoption of digital services is considered critical to level-up our economy to power economic and social recovery with the pandemic accelerating their adoption by between 2-5 years.
- 2.4 In light of the significant progress in delivering the aims of the Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy, the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy was adopted in March 2022 to deliver the following aims:
 - A. Wolverhampton is a Gigabit and Smart City with futureproofed digital infrastructure including full fibre broadband and 5G utilised to transform delivery of services and develop new applications to unlock its potential.
 - B. 100% digitally included Wolverhampton ensuring all residents have the access to devices, connectivity and skills to take advantage of what digital has to offer.
 - C. Growing the Digital Economy and talent pipeline building on our futureproofed infrastructure to start and grow businesses creating jobs for local residents meeting skills needs for the future.

3. Progress in delivering the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy

- 3.1 **Digital Infrastructure:** significant progress has been made in the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure since the adoption of the Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy in January 2020. Additional public buildings and assets are being connected to full fibre public sector network (PSN) building on the initial 170 public sector buildings funded by £4.9 million Local Full Fibre Network grant. Wolverhampton's gigabit coverage (300MB) increased from 2% in September 2020 to 94.61% end 2023. Full fibre

broadband coverage (1GB) has increased from 1% of properties in January 2020 to 68.45% of properties at the end 2023 (Think Broadband November 2023).

Wolverhampton now has the second highest proportion of full fibre in the WMCA area (from the lowest in 2020) and was named as a rising star having seen the second greatest proportional increase in the UK (2023 state of fibre report).

A report on the economic impact of full fibre rollout (Hatch March 2022) outlined key benefits from the rollout of full fibre including:

- A. Jobs created through the network build and associated productivity gains.
- B. Estimated 0.8% increase in house prices from full fibre connectivity as compared to superfast connectivity.
- C. 1.2% increase in business productivity as well as benefits arising from flexible working and a wider pool of labour.
- D. Direct benefits to the public sector estimated at 1.2% cost savings from efficiencies.
- E. Wider benefits in relation to supporting the rollout of 5G, enabling Smart City and Internet of Things, health care benefits and environmental benefits from carbon savings.

Full fibre will have enough capacity for multiple devices to be used simultaneously and supports future emerging technologies. Faster speeds will support businesses to sell goods online, access cloud services and increase their productivity and turnover. Broadband suppliers will attempt to use existing techniques to deploy the full fibre infrastructure which include using existing ducts, overhead cables and pole before digging up public highways.

All Mobile Network Operators are rolling out 5G in the City accelerated due to our proactive approach. Wolverhampton's coverage by all mobile network operators is currently 66%, the highest in the West Midlands Combined Authority area and one of the highest outside of London. Small cells have been installed on nine streetlights across the city facilitated through introduction of a toolkit and licence agreement to support the rollout. Over 20,000 streetlights have been upgraded to LED and installed with Smart City nodes as part of the European Regional Development Fund Smart Infrastructure project enabling installation of sensors contributing to our smart city ambitions.

- 3.2 Digital Inclusion:** in response to the scale of digital exclusion highlighted during the pandemic, the Council set up Wolves Online, a device and connectivity lending scheme, to support residents to get online. Overall working with a network of 75 trusted partners, our schemes have provided 3491 devices and 91,040 gigabit of data (equivalent of 3.64 million hours of data) supporting 7100 residents to get online and improve digital skills.
- 3.3 Wolves Online** has distributed 1450 devices, 19,040 gigabit of data and supporting over 3500 residents to improve their digital skills. To support our Trusted Partners, a

Digital Champion network is available which recruits volunteers to support the delivery of digital skills in the community working in partnership with Barclays Wings and Eagles digital skills offering. An online portal supports the development of digital skills, online live learning sessions and Digital Champions. Barclays train the trainer program works with organisations, charities and UK public to train people to become confident and have the skill set to support others with digital skills. The Council is also working closely with NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board Connected for a Healthier Future to distribute 496 devices to Wolverhampton residents through our trusted partner network.

- 3.4 Wolves Tech Aid**, Wolverhampton's local device recycling scheme, has to date recycled 558 devices and distributed to children across the city including 100 devices to one school alone. Additional comms campaigns to donate devices are anticipated January and March 2024 targeting residents and businesses alike to encourage donation of unused devices for recycling and distribution. The Council are donating 650 end of life devices to the scheme for recycling.
- 3.5 Connected Services Programme:** West Midlands Combined Authority secured £4 million to purchase devices across the WMCA area. Wolverhampton received over 1483 devices to be distributed to community organisations and eligible residents in nine wards. 527 devices have been distributed to community organisations and 956 to residents together with 72,000 GB of data supporting 3000 residents in just 6 months.
- 3.6 Digital Innovation:** supports the Our City: Our Plan driven by digital agenda and has the potential to improve efficiencies and contribute to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Building on the city's futureproofed digital infrastructure, the digital innovation priority explores how the use of technology, such as sensors and smart cameras, can transform service delivery driving digital innovation. The use of Gainshare monies was approved by Cabinet Resources Panel on 12 July 2023 as a proof-of-concept fund to support the digital innovation priority in order to become a smart city for the future and improve service delivery by embedding emerging technologies.

Gainshare monies are a result of a share of surplus from the former Building Digital UK (BDUK) funded Black Country superfast programme to increase the number of premises across the Black Country with superfast broadband. It was originally managed by Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which ceased to exist on 31 March 2023. Current and future Gainshare receipts will be split equally between the four Black Country local authorities. Each local authority received £250,273 with future Gainshare take-up assessments due to take place in December 2023. It is likely that a further payment will be distributed between the local authorities at a later date. Black Country LEP has requested that the Gainshare funding is spent on digital activities only. We've entered into a collaboration agreement with as the governing and accountable council.

A smart city is an urban area that uses different types of Internet of Things (IoT) sensors to collect data and then use this data to manage assets and resources efficiently. The Digital Wolverhampton Strategy's digital innovation priority outlined how the Council will

aim to use technology to improve services. By streamlining processes and removing some manual processes, the Council will make savings that will contribute to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Our aim is to explore how we can use technology to innovate services, address key challenges and contribute to savings. Initial use cases have been identified to utilise the proof-of-concept fund to provide evidence to support invest to save through evidencing service efficiencies and savings and inform external funding bids to scale up including:

- Home sensors supporting independent living, early intervention and prevention improving quality of life including damp & mould, heat & humidity and vulnerable residents
- Environmental sensors including bin and gulley sensors and fly tipping cameras
- Footfall counters monitor high street vitality & network management
- Air quality sensors assessing impact on public health

All data will be collated on an IoT Platform showing trend analysis, reports by areas, date and hour, enabling cross reference between data.

3.7 Environmental Sensors offer us an opportunity to improve service efficiency and save including:

- **Fly tipping** costs the council £300,000 per year and may contain hazardous chemicals and materials. The proof of concept to trial four Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled smart mobile cameras to support the 'shop a tipper' initiative and facilitate increased fly-tipping enforcement. Benefits demonstrated by other local authorities trialling this approach included the potential for significant reductions of incidents in monitored areas, increase in fixed penalty notices and prosecutions, reduction in complaints and positive impact on residents.
- **Smart bins:** there are currently significant costs associated with emptying public bins. The proof of concept will trial bin sensors and route planning. Benefits from other areas trialling the approach included a 53% reduction in collections (Derby), 50% of resources reallocated to other areas, 50% reduction in complaints and 49% reduction in carbon emissions (Newcastle).
- **Gulley Sensors:** although not funded by the proof-of-concept fund, the City is currently trialling gulley sensors to identify blocked gulleys to help prevent flooding.

3.8 Care Sensors: Tech can help support independent living, enable early intervention and prevention, improve quality of life, increasing independence and deliver better outcomes by supporting daily living activities and wellbeing. The data collected enables prevention, early intervention, customised care plans – data-led practice – families monitoring through apps reducing demand on services. Ultimately sensors can help reduce demand for care generating savings, prevent escalating needs, delay increasing needs with individual data targets care and avoid costs. Experience from elsewhere shows significant benefits, for example Suffolk installed 2600 devices in residents home saving £4.2m cost avoidance and cashable savings of £430,000, preventing admissions to hospital of 170 days and 118 ambulance callouts. Richmond and Wandsworth resulted in £900,000 savings on referrals on 153 cases.

- 3.9 Air Quality and Traffic Management:** Air quality sensors are already deployed on key routes throughout the city. There are further opportunities to utilise our upgraded Smart LED streetlamps to house air quality sensors. The data collected from air quality sensors helps to assess impacts caused by poor air quality on public health. The data collected will provide air quality and congestion levels at various locations, influencing policy and interventions such as closing roads near schools, reducing anti-social parking etc.
- 3.10** Wolverhampton is a partner in a successful West Midlands Combined Authority **5G innovation Region** bid aimed to drive innovative applications powered by 5G from proof of concept to widespread adoption. The successful bid focused on two sectors: Advanced Manufacturing and Smart Communities. The Council are partners in the Smart Communities element and will receive funding to establish an adoption hub exploring how technology could improve housing and adult social care.
- 3.11 Smart City Region:** WMCA successfully bid for £10m region funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The purpose of the funding is to scale up digital in health tech, future mobility and smart energy, aiming to address the following issues:
- Increased waiting times in health
 - public transport demand in decline
 - price fluctuations in the energy market and reaching Net Zero by 2041.

Embedding technologies that meet the needs of communities by improving service efficiencies using sensors, data and connectivity to optimise, transform, supply and demand.

Enabling remote monitoring and deployment of 5G technologies that underpins remote health diagnosis.

- 3.12 Digital Economy (business):** Wolverhampton is home to a number of digital companies employing 2327 with anticipated growth of 5.7% above national average. These include the School of Code, Learnplay, Stonestrow Media and Goldilock (winner of tech start-up of the year at Birmingham Tech Week). The Creative Chain network brings together leading digital agencies in Wolverhampton. There is significant scope for further growth building on full fibre broadband and 5G, the University of Wolverhampton's (Cyber University of the Year) strengths in digital and tech, 5prinG Accelerator and ambitions for the Green Innovation Corridor.
- 3.13 Digital Economy (skills and jobs):** Digital skills are crucial for the workplace. Nationally only 52% of workforce have the necessary digital skills for work. There are significant opportunities with tech vacancies making up a higher proportion of all vacancies in the UK with the average tech salary 50% higher than the average. 184 Wolverhampton residents have benefited from Digital Bootcamps that develop skills and support unemployed residents (58%) and career changers (42%) into digital jobs. This is an

increase in relation to the proportion of Wolverhampton residents benefiting from 6% in 2022 to 11% in 2023 reflecting joint work with the Wolves at Work team to raise awareness and promote the opportunities and locally delivered opportunities. Nearly one thirds of participants were women and two thirds from ethnic groups. The largest proportion of participants took bootcamps in games development/software development/ social media and content (37%) followed by cyber security (12%), data analytics (10%) and 15% in green industries. Digital Infrastructure bootcamps for Civils and Telecoms Engineers were held in November 2023 to fill address challenges in recruitment which is slowing down take up of full fibre.

The Council are also exploring the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in improving efficiency of service delivery and impact of AI on jobs. AI is not about machines replacing humans, rather that humans will increasingly work alongside machines and AI in the future workplace, driving productivity and freeing up time for workers to exercise their human skills, creativity, and expertise to deliver more value as technology increasingly helps people do their work. Although AI may displace some low skilled jobs, it will also augment others and create new ones. We are currently exploring the key areas that AI could improve efficiency and training and development requirements going forward.

The Digital Wolves website continues to be reviewed and improved with further access to key information for key stakeholders.

4 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations of the report. The existing approved delivery of the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy is as outlined below.
- 4.2 **Digital Infrastructure:** The ongoing rollout of digital infrastructure is commercially funded with the Council performing an enabler and facilitation role. Any surplus income from telecoms equipment is requested to transfer into the Digital Infrastructure reserve in line with financial procedure rules that is available to be used to address barriers to the rollout.
- 4.3 **Digital Inclusion:** Budgets have already been established to fund the digital inclusion programme, specifically £500,000 within the approved capital programme (Cabinet 23 February 2022) and £500,000 revenue from the Covid Emergency Grant Fund (Individual Executive Decision Notice March 2022). The Connected Services Programme devices were funded through WMCA. UK Shared Prosperity Fund has funded some digital inclusion activity through community grants and public WiFi. We also anticipate the WMCA will make available some adult community learning for voluntary community sector to deliver support to get residents online. We will continue to seek external funding to enhance our digital inclusion approach.

- 4.4 **Digital Innovation:** Gainshare resources have been approved to fund proof of concept use cases. The Council is a partner of a successful 5G Innovation Region bid led by WM5G which will enable us to develop an adoption hub in the city focusing on adult social care and building management. For technology enabled independent living, we will explore opportunities such as the use of disability facilities grant and personal budgets, as well as partner investment and external funding opportunities.
- 4.5 **Digital Economy:** is funded by national and regional business support and skills activities funding including UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Adult Education Budget.

[LD/15012024/K]

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 As an update on progress in delivering the strategy, there are no direct legal implications from this report. However, part of our enabling role for the rollout of digital infrastructure has involved standardised wayleaves, leases and licence agreements in line with Electronic Communication Code.

6 Equalities implications

- 6.1 Digital and smart technology could potentially have significant positive equalities implications, for example making it easier for people with health problems to live more independently through the provision of telecare and e-health solutions.

7 Climate change and environmental implications

- 7.1 Digital Infrastructure enabling Smart technology can have positive implications on the environment and climate change, for example enabling the Council to capture environmental information and improve service delivery.
- 7.2 Encouraging residents and businesses in the city to donate end of life devices to Wolves Tech Aid has a positive impact on climate change and the environment. E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream nationally.

8 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 8.1 There is regular review of the evidence base around risk of telecommunications. The Council regularly checks this with the national responsible agency, UK National Security Agency, and there is no peer review published high quality evidence of any association between 5G and harmful health. The UK National Security Agency advise that the current exposure of the general public to radio waves is well within the international health-related guideline levels that are used in the UK. Research into the safety of radio signals has been conducted for more than 50 years. The strong consensus of the public health agencies, such as the World Health Organisation, is that no health risks have

been established from exposure to the low-level radio signals used for mobile communications.

- 8.2 Digital can also offer health benefits arising from increased use of technology in the delivery of health and social care and technology enabled independent living. 5G is enabling the opportunity to pilot health use cases including remote diagnostics between GPs and care homes.

9 Human resources implications

- 9.1 The Council is currently developing a digital skills offer to improve digital skills of the workforce and ensuring all employees have access to digital. The potential impact of AI on the workforce is being reviewed.

10 Corporate landlord implications

- 10.1 Corporate Landlord were involved in developing standardised lease agreements to use Council assets for the location of telecoms infrastructure.

11 Schedule of background papers

- a. Cabinet - 22 January 2020 [Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy](#)
- b. Cabinet – 23 March 2022 [Digital Wolverhampton Strategy](#)
- c. Cabinet – 19 October 2022 [Digital Wolverhampton Strategy Update](#)
- d. Resources and Equalities Scrutiny 2 February 2022 [Digital Wolverhampton Strategy Update](#)
- e. Cabinet Resources Panel - 12 July 2023 [LEP Gainshare monies for Digital Innovation purposes](#)

12 Appendices

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Digital Wolverhampton Strategy – Two Years On

1 February 2024



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Importance of digital to Wolverhampton

- Futureproofed digital infrastructure, both fixed and mobile connectivity, is crucial for our residents, businesses and the delivery of services.
- Driven by Digital cuts across our City Priorities in Our City Our Plan reflecting its importance.
- Cabinet Member of Digital, Digital Champion and Digital Coordinator in place.
- As well as supporting the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure and digital transformation, we must ensure all our residents benefit by proactively supporting digital inclusion across the City.



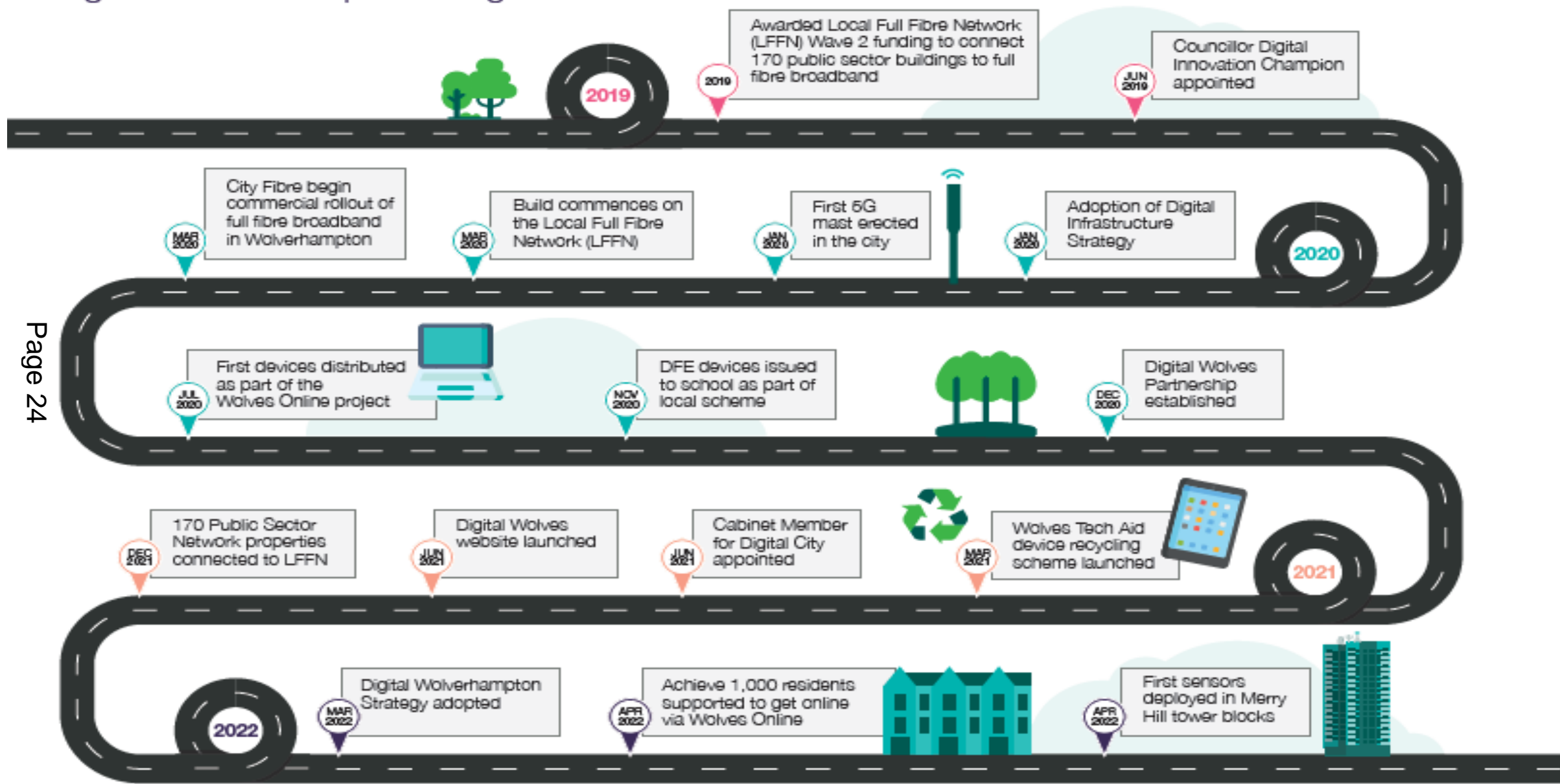
Wolverhampton Digital Strategy

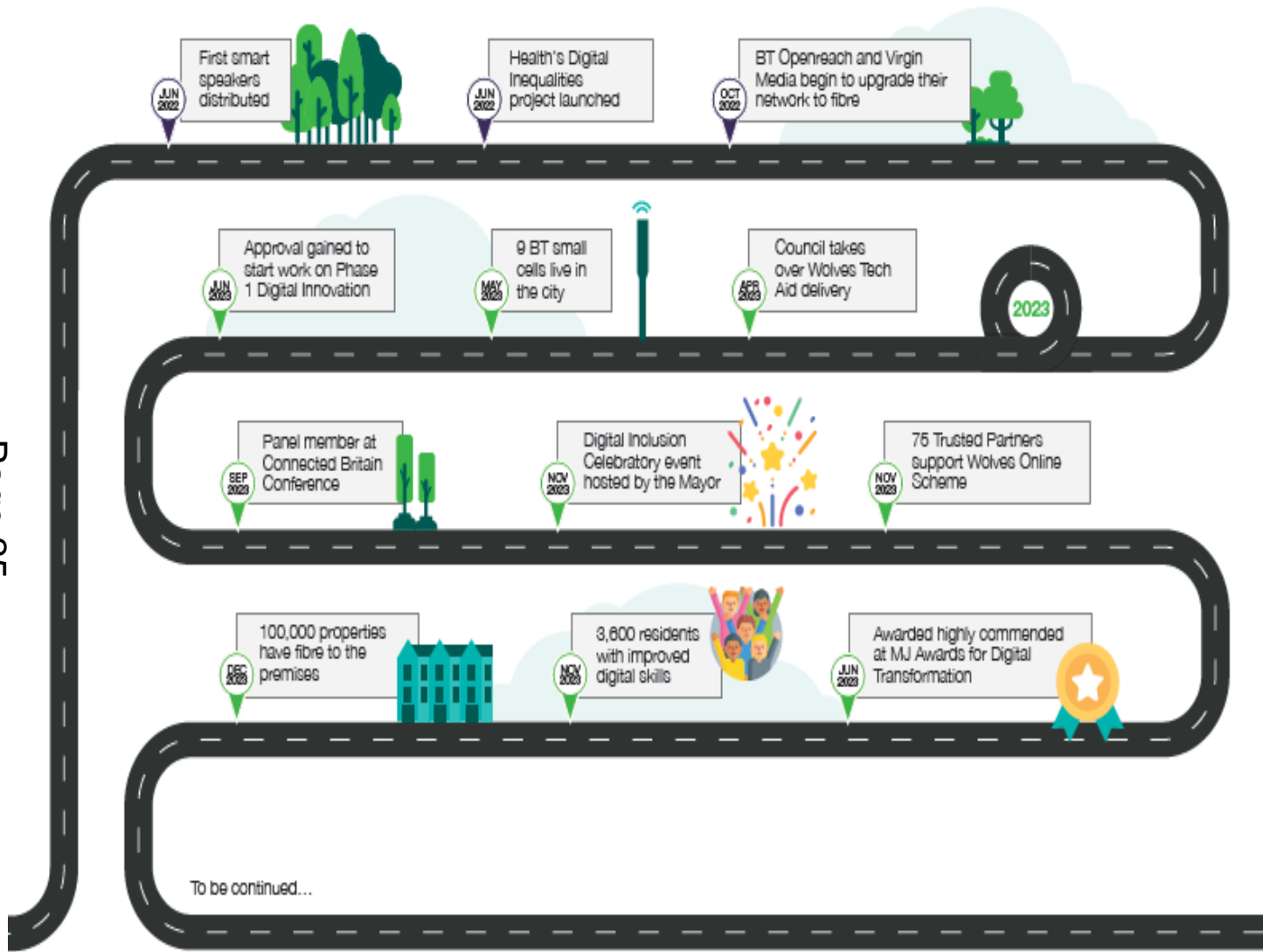
Revised Digital Strategy approved 23 March 2022 building on progress made on digital infrastructure with ambitions:

- **Wolverhampton is a Gigabit and Smart City** using futureproofed digital infrastructure to transform delivery of services & develop new applications to unlock the city's potential.
- **100% digitally included Wolverhampton** ensuring all residents have the access to devices, connectivity and skills to take advantage of what digital has to offer.
- **Growing the digital economy and talent pipeline** building on the city's futureproofed infrastructure to start and grow businesses, creating jobs for residents and meeting skills needs for the future.



Digital Wolverhampton Programme

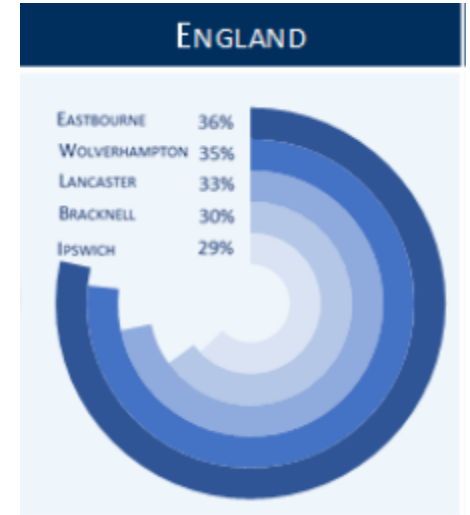




Sponsored by ORACLE

Fixed Digital Infrastructure

- Gigabit broadband connectivity has increased from 2% in 2020 to 94.61% in 2023.
- Full fibre broadband has increased from 1% to 2020 to 72% in 2023 (Connected Nations September 2023)
- Wolverhampton now has the second highest proportion of full fibre coverage in WMCA region from the lowest in 2020.
- New and incumbent operators are upgrading their infrastructure to full fibre across the city.
- Full fibre will have enough capacity for multiple devices to be used simultaneously and supports future emerging technologies. Broadband suppliers will use existing techniques to deploy the full fibre infrastructure which include using existing ducts, overhead cables and poles before digging up public highways.



Rising star (second greatest increase in full fibre coverage) 2023 State of Fibre report



Mobile Infrastructure

- Demand for mobile connectivity increasing year on year with 21% residents accessing the internet via a smart phone and essential for field workers and IoT.
- 60% of the city covered by 5G from all operators (Connected Nations Sept 2023), highest in WMCA area and one of the highest outside of London.
- 5G masts add capacity to 4G network but ultimately need more masts to meet demand so proactively working to fill gaps in mobile coverage.
- 9 Small cells live at various locations across the city

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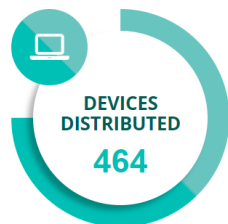
100% Digitally Included Wolves

Wolves Online



1,600 TB

Wolves Tech Aid



Connected Services Programme



*That's 2,880,000 hours worth of online browsing

- We have distributed over 3300 devices, supported over 7000 residents to get online through three schemes
- Device lending scheme for residents through a network of 75 trusted partners.
- Device recycling scheme providing donated recycled devices to children to help them get online including 100 devices to one school alone.
- Device gifting scheme for community organisations and eligible residents in 9 wards

All schemes provide connectivity for residents without WiFi at home.



100% Digital Wolves Celebration Event

- The role of trusted partners has been essential.
- To celebrate hitting this key milestone, the Mayor hosted a celebration event attended by 58 trusted partners, volunteers and beneficiaries.

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Smart City Use Cases

Developing **technology enabled service delivery** roadmaps setting out how we will use technology to innovate services, address key challenges and contribute to savings.

Initial use cases includes:

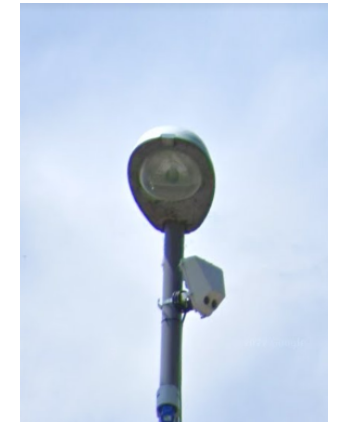
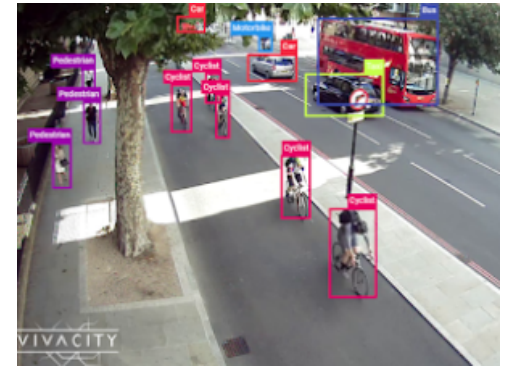
- Home sensors supporting independent living, early intervention and prevention improving quality of life including damp & mould, heat & humidity and vulnerable residents
- Environmental sensors including bin, fly tipping and gulleys
- Footfall counters monitor high street vitality & network management
- Air quality sensors assessing impact on public health

MS Azure to capture all data from sensors showing trend analysis, reports by areas, date and hour, enables cross reference between data



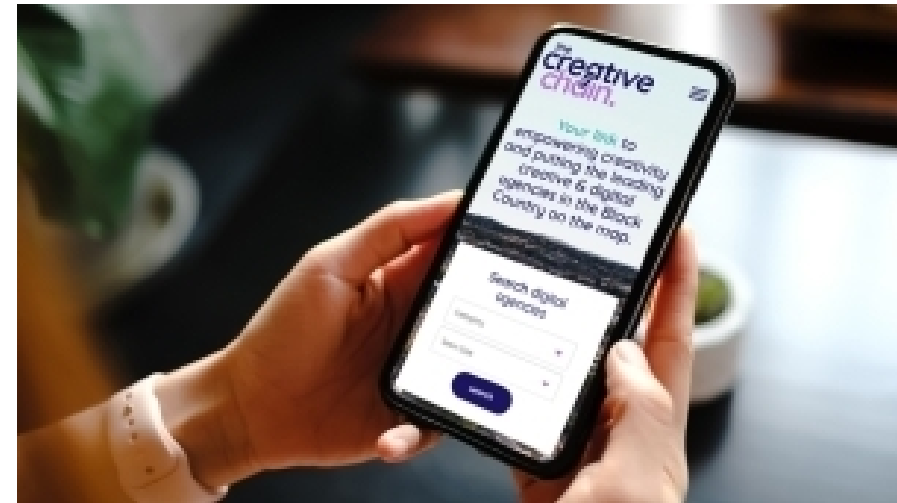
How are smart city use cases funded?

- A Proof-of-Concept fund will be used to fund transformational service delivery by adopting digital, starting initially with the environmental sensors
- WMCA successful bid for DSIT **5G Innovation Region** funding to implement a digital adoption hub trialling Housing and Social Care use cases in Wolverhampton.
- Benefits realised from the Proof-of-Concept use cases should provide services with evidence to invest to save
- The West Midlands Smart City Region Programme will scale-up digital opportunities across the region in health tech, future mobility and smart energy (WMCA)



Digital Economy (Business)

- Home to a number of digital companies employing 2327 with anticipated growth of 5.7% above national average.
- Including School of Code, Learnplay, Stonestrow Media and Goldilock (winner of tech start up of the year at Birmingham Tech Week).
- The Creative Chain network brings together leading digital agencies in Wolverhampton.
- Significant scope for further growth building on full fibre broadband and 5G, the University of Wolverhampton's (Cyber University of the Year) strengths in digital and tech, 5prinG Accelerator and ambitions for the Green Innovation Corridor.



Digital Economy (Skills and Learning)

- Digital skills are crucial for the workplace. Nationally only 52% of workforce have the necessary digital skills for work.
- There are significant opportunities with tech vacancies making up a higher proportion of all vacancies in the UK with the average tech salary 50% higher than the average.
- 223 Wolverhampton residents have benefited from Digital Bootcamps that develop skills and support unemployed residents (58%) and career changers (42%) into digital jobs. Nearly one thirds women and two thirds from ethnic groups.
- Largest proportion in games development/software development/social media and content (37%) followed by cyber security (12%) and data analytics (10%). 15% in green industries – EV charging/heat pumps.
- 2 Digital Infrastructure bootcamps for Civils and Telecoms Engineers (November 2023) to fill address challenges in recruitment.
- Exploring impact of AI on jobs with intention of upskilling staff affected to meet increasing demand in other areas.



Any questions?
#digitalwolves

Find out more about Wolverhampton's Digital Programme
at www.digitalwolves.co.uk



Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 7

Meeting date (1 February 2024)

Report title	Strategic Asset Plan (Asset Policy)		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Governance and Equalities		
Accountable director			
Originating service	City Assets		
Accountable employee(s)	Stuart Rutherford	Head of Assets	
	Tel	07988 739004	
	Email	stuart.rutherford@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Report to be/has been considered by	City Assets Leadership Team		24 January 2024
	Circulated to SEB		23 January 2024

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

1. Proceed with the Asset Policy with it to be used as the foundation for the subsequent Asset Strategy and Asset action plan resulting in a final Strategic Asset Plan.

Questions for Scrutiny to consider:

1. Does the separation of the Policy from the Strategy and Action Plan have any wider issues for the organisation?
2. Are the proposed timescales acceptable?
3. Are there any other principles that the Panel would wish to see within the Policy?

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The existing 2018-2023 Strategic Asset Plan is due to be reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's current and future asset portfolio and the associated management of such.
- 1.2 Given the majority of the existing Strategic Asset Plan still applies, the Council is able to continue to utilise this document whilst undertaking work to tailor a new strategy. This will be completed by the end of 2024.
- 1.3 An Asset Policy has been developed which will be used to guide the creation of the new Strategy and Action Plan that in totality will become the Strategic Asset Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Wolverhampton approach was to create a Strategic Asset Plan every five years comprising of an:
 - Asset Policy – Outlining the strategic areas assets will consider when managing the estate and the aims and aspirations of Asset service
 - Asset Strategy – A detailed breakdown of what are the areas of focus, what the data is telling us and what we are seeking to achieve
 - Action Plan that gives an overview of the elements of work and timeframe
- 2.2 City Assets are currently undertaking a large data review looking at all assets, considering their usefulness to deliver service outcomes, their running and maintenance costs, the building age and what opportunities the assets can provide for the organisation.
- 2.3 The work will enable a new Strategic Asset Plan to be created that allows us to understand and meet the future needs of the organisation and services whilst creating a Medium Term Financial Strategy Assets efficiency plan through the reduction of future running and maintenance costs and potentially generating capital receipts.
- 2.4 The Asset Policy is the first phase of producing a Strategic Asset Plan and has been created working initially with CIPFA who supported the Council to develop the previous Strategic Asset Plan. Engagement of service representatives has been undertaken and the document has been shared and discussed with Service Directors.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 The CIPFA methodology to the management of assets is adopted by the majority of Councils in the UK. CIPFA have concurred that a key element to producing the Strategic

Asset Plan is an Asset/Data review with a phased approach to producing the strategic documentation. The review will include:

- What areas are of particular concern or challenge?
The scale of data required will require a significant amount of work to assemble and will require a range of work around condition data and service demand. There will be both a financial and resource requirement to achieve this.
- What is the improvement plan for those areas and what resources are required?
This work will help the organisation hugely to understand what opportunities there are to make the estate more fit for purpose and to identify savings to support the future MTFs challenges in the organisation.
- The review will be broken down into the following areas:
 - Service Review (Demand)**
The Strategic Asset Manager will be working directly with services to build up profiles of services and teams mapping out their requirements to understand what demand looks like for the organisation.
 - Asset Review (Supply)**
A single data set is in the process of being built to facilitate the mapping of assets to understand the gaps, enabling more informed decisions around the future use of assets. Additionally, carbon generation levels will be considered within existing assets.
 - Asset action plan**
City Assets has a large amount of the required resource to deliver the Action Plan internally, however, project management resource will be required to help deliver the business cases. The extent of the required resource will be identified when the analysis work is complete and a programme of work is developed.
- **When can results be expected?**
The Strategic Asset Plan is targeted for completion by December 2024 and will result in a forward programme that will improve the overall position of the asset portfolio for delivering council services to the city's residents and wider communities.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 To seek agreement on the Asset Policy which is the first document of the wider Strategic Asset Plan.
- 4.2 Over the next few months to undertake a full data review, map organisational requirements and identify opportunities. These will align and enhance other service outcomes in addition to creating the mechanisms to deliver the work.
- 4.3 By the end of 2024 develop the Asset Strategy and Action Plan to reflect the findings of the work with the layout of the five year approach (of which year one will be completed)

4.4 To incorporate all three documents into a Strategic Asset Plan for the Council for approval.

4.5 The benefit of the above is we can be much more precise and focused creating a strategy that is tailored to dealing with specific requirements.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The work is intended to:

- Generate an efficiency programme for the organisation over the next few years
- Ensure that greater levels of cost avoidance are achieved across the asset portfolio
- Where buildings are retained, ensure they are affordable in terms of upkeep
- Enhance existing financial controls including financial modelling based upon age of the buildings and the expected future economic life

5.2 The above work will be undertaken working closely with Council services and capital and revenue leads from Finance.

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 All work will be completed in accordance with our legal service, including lease reviews, potential disposals and positions on future liabilities.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 All asset reviews will have Equality reviews and Impact Assessments built in to them to ensure full compliance with existing Council policies.

8.0 All other implications

8.1 The reviews will include a range of areas within the organisation including:

- Green City and Circular Economy
- Human Resources
- Organisational Development
- Health and Safety
- Unions

9.0 Schedule of background papers

9.1 Scrutiny Slide Pack

9.2 Strategic Asset Plan - [Policies and Procedures - Business | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 - Asset Policy

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Strategic Asset Plan (Asset Policy)

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Presenter:

Julia Nock
Deputy Director of Assets

Stuart Rutherford
Head of Assets

wolverhampton.gov.uk

Purpose and Background

Purpose

- The existing 2018-2023 Strategic Asset Plan is due to be reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's current and future asset portfolio and the associated management of such.
- Given the majority of the existing Strategic Asset Plan still applies, the Council is able to continue to utilise this document whilst undertaking work to tailor a new strategy. This will be completed by the end of 2024.
- An Asset Policy has been developed which will be used to guide the creation of the new Strategy and Action Plan that in totality will become the Strategic Asset Plan.

Background

- The Wolverhampton approach was to create a Strategic Asset Plan every five years comprising of an:
 - Asset Policy – Outlining the strategic areas assets will consider when managing the estate and the aims and aspirations of Asset service
 - Asset Strategy – A detailed breakdown of what are the areas of focus, what the data is telling us and what we are seeking to achieve
 - Action Plan that gives an overview of the elements of work and timeframe

City Assets are currently undertaking a large data review looking at all assets, considering their usefulness to deliver service outcomes, their running and maintenance costs, the building age and what opportunities the assets can provide for the organisation.

- The work will enable a new Strategic Asset Plan to be created that allows us to understand and meet the future needs of the organisation and services whilst creating a Medium Term Financial Strategy Assets efficiency plan through the reduction of future running and maintenance costs and potentially generating capital receipts.
- The Asset Policy is the first phase of producing a Strategic Asset Plan and has been created working initially with CIPFA who supported the Council to develop the previous Strategic Asset Plan. Engagement of service representatives has been undertaken and the document has been shared and discussed with Service Directors

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Is managed corporately to support the Council's six priorities

- To adopt a 'Corporate Landlord' approach and plan and manage property as a corporate resource

Ensures value for money

- To manage and maintain property effectively and efficiently together with optimising financial return where appropriate

Demonstrates our commitment in the drive to make the City of Wolverhampton Council's activities carbon-neutral by 2028

- To safeguard future generations and help them succeed

Provides the right assets, fit for purpose, in the right place both now and in the future

- To regularly challenge our estate to ensure our facilities are in the right place with good design, meeting current need and ready to support future service delivery

Supports a thriving economy in all parts of the city

- To use land and buildings in support of our vision to be an enterprising, working, inclusive, vibrant and future city

Promotes community empowerment and proactive working with partners for the benefit of our city

- To promote joint working with other public sector organisations, businesses and communities to 'co-produce' sustainable solutions to local issues, creating capacity, sustainability and resilience

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Is managed corporately to support the Council's six priorities

- To adopt a 'Corporate Landlord' approach and plan and manage property as a corporate resource

Behaviours

- We will challenge and make decisions on land and building asset matters at a corporate level in line with our Council's six priorities
- We will take account of service needs and balance these against our overall corporate priorities
- We will manage land and building asset budgets centrally to prioritise key investment needs and consider property alongside other resources
- We will work to ensure that land and building asset information is accurate, current and comprehensive so that we can make informed choices
- We will ensure land and building assets are integrated with other resource planning and is managed to support our vision for inclusion, equality and fairness within the city
- We will manage Capital Projects efficiently and effectively and prioritised to support the Council's priorities

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Ensures value for money

- To manage and maintain land and building assets effectively and efficiently together with optimising financial return where appropriate

Behaviours

- We will seek to deliver value for money by ensuring that land and building assets are suitably managed and maintained within budget constraints
- We will challenge the cost of land and building asset activities through effective contract management
- We will challenge our use of assets where appropriate including options for disposal, acquisition and optimising space for third party demand and income generation
- We will seek efficiencies in occupancy and utilisation and introduce new ways of working and alternative service delivery models where appropriate
- We will prioritise our capital expenditure to support our corporate objectives and manage our capital projects as efficiently and effectively as possible

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Demonstrates our commitment in the drive to make the City of Wolverhampton Council's activities carbon-neutral by 2028

- To safeguard future generations and help them succeed

Behaviours

- We will undertake full energy surveys across the council estate to inform the Asset Strategy and the energy efficiency retrofit programmes
- All future corporate schemes will, where possible, be delivered to maximum energy efficiency performance rating (EPC) with ambition to be Zero Carbon where practical
- We will reduce energy consumption and utilise renewable energy sources to power all council buildings
- We will encourage and monitor responsible environmental performance by our suppliers and contractors
- We will work with our partners to reach our common goals on climate change
- We will use our land and property assets where possible in supporting the development of an electric vehicle infrastructure across the city
- We will use our estate to support the council's development of key programmes that support the council's environmental ambitions such as the roll-out of smart technology across the city to reduce energy use and supporting community groups to deliver 'green' projects

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Provides the right assets, fit for purpose, in the right place both now and in the future

- To challenge, rationalise and invest in our estate to ensure our facilities are in the right place with good design, meeting current need and ready to support future service delivery

Behaviours

- We will regularly review our land and property assets to challenge, rationalise and invest in the estate
- We will work with service areas to understand their current and longer-term requirements responding to alternative service delivery models specifically utilising modern technology to maximise efficiencies and flexibility
- We will work to provide land and property assets that are flexible and resilient to respond to future service need, the customer, changes in the economy and social demand
- We will promote a high-quality physical environment, seeking to create and sustain high quality town centres and rural spaces, supporting and promoting independence and wellbeing within our communities
- We will prioritise expenditure to make our land and property assets suitable and sufficient for service delivery and to support our vision for inclusion, equality and fairness within the city
- We will adopt a locality-based approach to planning our service delivery and community shaping
- We will ensure our land and property assets are secure and safe to use fulfilling statutory requirements that supports the health and wellbeing of our employees

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Supports a thriving economy in all parts of the city

- To use land and buildings in support of our vision to be an enterprising, working, inclusive, vibrant and future city

Behaviours

- We will use our land and property assets to stimulate and support regeneration and attract investment
- We will identify potential sites which could be brought forward for increased housing supply and/or employment development
- We will utilise our land and property assets to provide infrastructure e.g. flexible workspaces to support new business start ups
- We will carefully manage our commercial portfolio effectively balancing regeneration needs, job creation and income generation
- We will support growth sectors including advanced manufacturing, building tech, business & professional services, creative tech and the knowledge economy

Our mission is to provide a land and property asset portfolio which....

Promotes community empowerment and proactive working with partners for the benefit of our city

- To promote joint working with other public sector organisations, businesses and communities to 'co-produce' sustainable solutions to local issues, creating capacity, sustainability and resilience

Behaviours

- We will work with other agencies/partners to promote co-location and joint service delivery through locality-based/community hubs
- We will engage with community organisations, third sector bodies and anchor institutions to optimise the use of assets providing opportunities and creating capacity for utilisation, occupation or purchase subject to robust business case development and suitable outcomes
- We are committed to working with the NHS and other partners in realising our ambition to improve the health and social care system within our area
- We will support the one public estate programme

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Strategic Asset Plan (Asset Policy)

Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel

1 February 2024

Presenter:

Julia Nock
Deputy Director of Assets

Stuart Rutherford
Head of Assets

Recommendations for action or decision

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Proceed with the Asset Policy with it to be used as the foundation for the subsequent Asset Strategy and Asset action plan resulting in a final Strategic Asset Plan.

Key Questions for Scrutiny to consider:

- Does the separation of the Policy from the Strategy and Action Plan have any wider issues for the organisation?
- Are the proposed timescales acceptable?
- Are there any other principles that the Panel would wish to see within the Policy?

Purpose

- The Wolverhampton approach was to create a Strategic Asset Plan every five years comprising of an:
 - Asset Policy – Outlining the strategic areas assets will consider when managing the estate and the aims and aspirations of Asset service
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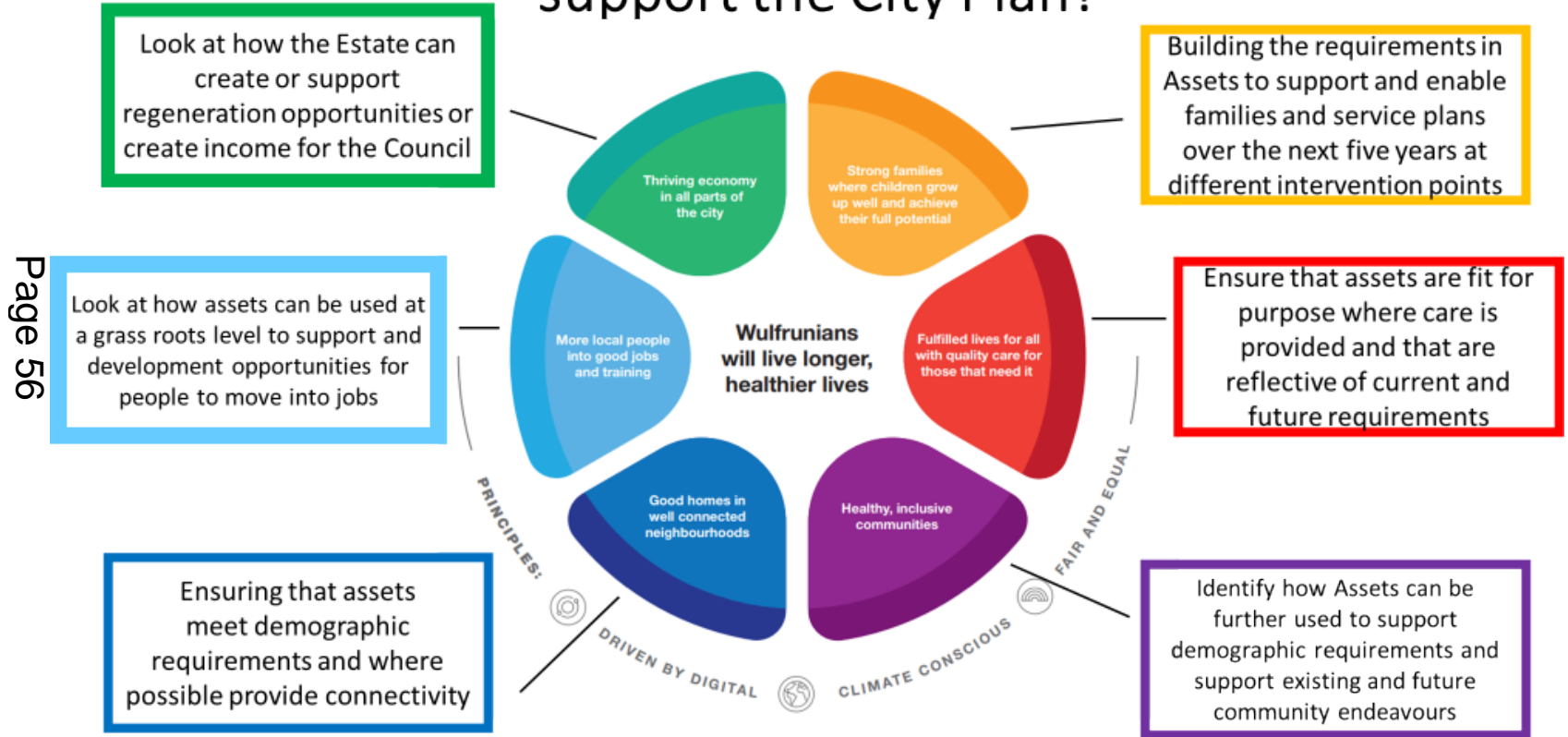
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- Given the majority of the existing Strategic Asset Plan still applies, the Council is able to continue to utilise this document whilst undertaking work to tailor a new strategy.
- An Asset Policy has been developed which will be used to guide the creation of the new Strategy and Action Plan that in totality will become the Strategic Asset Plan.

Background

- City Assets are currently undertaking a large data review looking at all assets, considering their usefulness to deliver service outcomes, their running and maintenance costs, the building age and what opportunities the assets can provide for the organisation.
- The work will enable a new Strategic Asset Plan to be created that allows us to understand and meet the future needs of the organisation and services whilst creating a Medium Term Financial Strategy Assets efficiency plan through the reduction of future running and maintenance costs and potentially generating capital receipts.
- The Asset Policy is the first phase of producing a Strategic Asset Plan and has been created working initially with CIPFA who supported the Council to develop the previous Strategic Asset Plan. Engagement of service representatives has been undertaken and the document has been shared and discussed with Service Directors

How will the Policy seek to support the City Plan?



Principles used by the Asset Policy to create the Strategy and Action Plan

Ensures value for money

- To manage and maintain property effectively and efficiently together with optimising financial return where appropriate

Demonstrates our commitment in the drive to make the City of Wolverhampton Council's activities carbon-neutral by 2028

- To safeguard future generations and help them succeed

Provides the right assets, fit for purpose, in the right place both now and in the future

- To regularly challenge our estate to ensure our facilities are in the right place with good design, meeting current need and ready to support future service delivery

Supports a thriving economy in all parts of the city

- To use land and buildings in support of our vision to be an enterprising, working, inclusive, vibrant and future city

Promotes community empowerment and proactive working with partners for the benefit of our city

- To promote joint working with other public sector organisations, businesses and communities to 'co-produce' sustainable solutions to local issues, creating capacity, sustainability and resilience

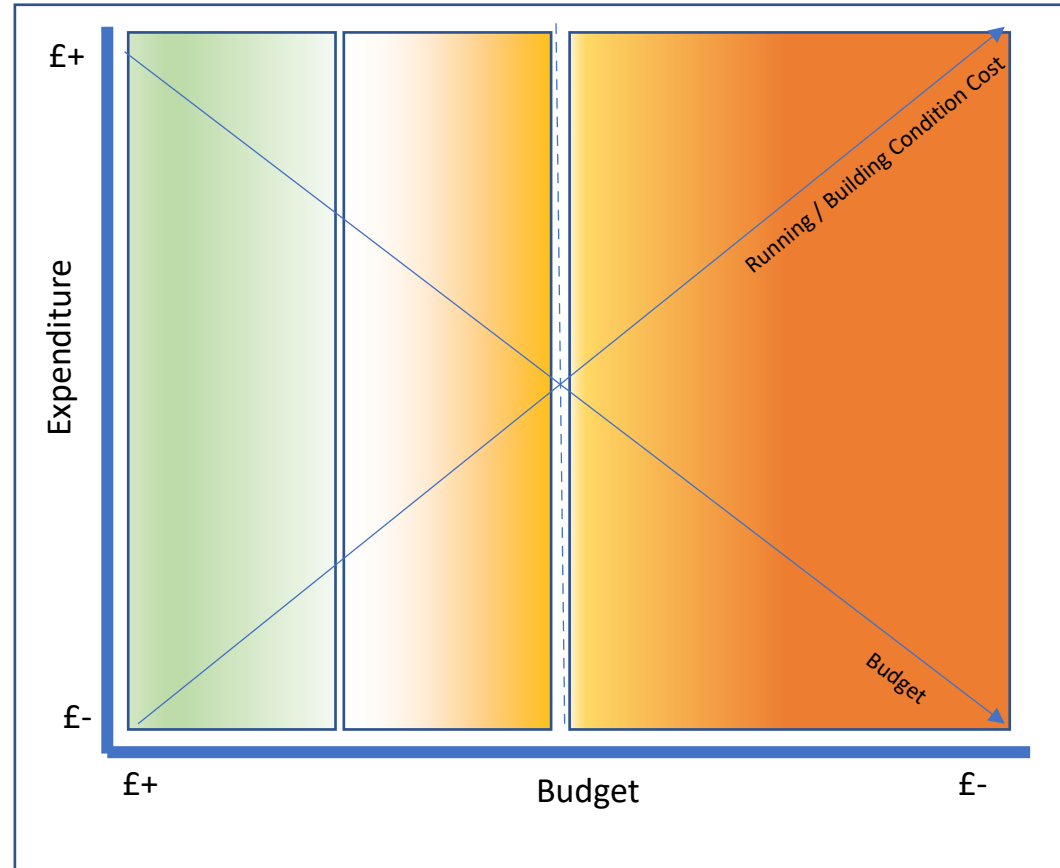
Financial horizon

This diagram is to show the potential issues of budget against cost of management of Assets.

If the organisation is to the right of where the lines intersect then the organisation is then

- Managing a declining estate
- Will be spending money on statutory requirements for assets that will not be of poor quality in the future

Once the data analysis is completed, we can identify where Wolverhampton is on this axis and then introduce an approach that will bring the Estate on to left hand side of the axis.



Key information for Scrutiny

Please respond to the big questions for Scrutiny as appropriate:

- How do we compare to other (similar councils)

The CIPFA methodology to the management of assets is adopted by the majority of Councils in the UK. CIPFA have concurred that a key element to producing the Strategic Asset Plan is an Asset/Data review with a phased approach to producing the strategic documentation.

- What areas are of particular concern of challenge?

The scale of data required will require a significant amount of work to assemble and will require a range of work around condition data and service demand. There will be both a financial and resource requirement to achieve this.

- What is the improvement plan for those areas and what resources are required?

This work will help the organisation hugely to understand what opportunities there are to make the estate more fit for purpose and to identify savings to support the future MTFS challenges in the organisation

- Is the improvement plan proportionate to the challenge?

The work will allow us to understand the extent of the challenge of bringing the sites either up to standard or disposal

- When can we expect to see results?

The Strategic Asset Plan is targeted for completion by December 2024 and will result in a forward programme that will improve the overall position of the asset portfolio for delivering council services to the city's residents and wider communities.

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