

Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 13 February 2018

Attendance

Members of the Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Jonathan Yardley (Vice-Chair)

In Attendance

Cllr Arun Photay (Local Member – Tettenhall item)
Cllr John Reynolds (Cabinet Member – City Economy)
Cllr Wendy Thompson (Local Member – Tettenhall item and Leader of Opposition)

Officers

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer) (Minutes)
Colin Parr (Head of Governance)
Ian Culley (Lead Planning Manager – Regional Strategy)
Keren Jones (Service Director – City Economy)
Charlotte Johns (Head of Service Development – City Economy)
Isobel Woods (Head of Enterprise)
Heather Clark (Service Development Manager)

Witnesses

Mr Steve Robinson (Robinson's Butchers)
Mr Cyril Randles (Tettenhall Community Council)
Mr George Reiss (Tettenhall Wildlife Centre)
Helen Bratt-Wyton (House and Collections Manager – Wightwick Manor)
Mr Scott Bernard (Owner Mount Hotel)
Mr Brett Bernard (Owner Mount Hotel)
Dr Duncan Nimmo (Local Historian)
Mr Alec Brew (Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre)

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman, Cllr Payal Bedi-Chadha, Cllr Martin Waite, Cllr Daniel Warren and Cllr Val Evans.

2 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Philip Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the National Trust. He also declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the West Midlands Partnership.

Cllr Jonathan Yardley declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the National Trust.

3 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Tettenhall Local Economic Development and Growth**

The Chair welcomed the witnesses to the Scrutiny Panel meeting. He asked Mr Colin Parr (Head of Governance – City of Wolverhampton Council) how the new Market Contract was progressing. In response the Head of Governance stated that the current contract was reaching the end of its life. The contract presently covered three markets on Dudley Street. It included the delivery of the Sunday Market and other themed markets across the City including the Tettenhall “Make it or Bake it Market”, which had been very successful in the last few years. The Council would be going out to tender the following week.

The Head of Governance stated within the new contract there would be additional days built in for the prospective promoter to have more themed markets, festivals and fayres akin to the “Make it or Bake it event.” Pop up markets were a key component of the offer in a number of towns across the country and not just in the region. The new contract would have in-built flexibility not just for the standard themed market programme but a wider range of smaller themed markets, which was acting upon a specific request from community groups.

The Chair stated that the “Make it or Bake it event” was only held twice a year and questioned whether this was part of the tendering process. The Head of Governance confirmed that the “Make it or Bake it event” was part of the contract. The Chair stated that the event had been started by local people in the community with a focus on selling items that had been built in the home locally in Tettenhall, which gave it a unique special feel. He asked whether this would be subsumed into a greater contract with more events and therefore lose its originality. In response the Head of Governance said a promoter had supported the “Make it or Bake it event” under the

themed market contract. It would not be subsumed as part of the contract as it was already part of the themed markets programme delivered by an external promoter. He confirmed the status quo would be maintained.

The Chair asked the Head of Governance for his opinion on having more events, fayres and festivals in the Tettenhall area and whether he thought there would be good public support. In response, the Head of Governance stated that a few years ago there had been proposals to hold more events in Tettenhall. These had potentially not been sympathetic to the make-up of Tettenhall and the wants of the community, resulting in some negative feedback. He hoped, with the “Make it or Bake it event” and the events held in the City Centre recently, that perceptions had changed. If there was a will from community groups and Members in Tettenhall to have more themed markets, craft fayres and festivals, he believed he would be able to commercially find promoters to work with community groups willing to deliver. He believed he could find promoters for cheese festivals, farmers markets and craft fayres, should there be a desire to do so from groups in Tettenhall. Holding events in the Tettenhall area would be an attractive proposition to a promoter.

A Local Member stated that she thought there was a constraint on the use of the green, limited to six events a year but she was not aware where this limitation originated, but understood it could potentially have been an old by-law. She was also aware of wear and tear on the green after events taking place. She was not sure of how much pressure the green could take. She agreed that the events which were held were very popular.

Mr Steve Robinson (Robinsons Butchers) commented that it was important for local people in the village to have an opportunity to be part of the planning for events. Retailers in the village needed to have an opportunity to take part and have access to stalls to sell goods. In response the Head of Governance confirmed he was in agreement and the success of the “Make it or Bake it event” had been based on the proposition of involving local people and selling local produce and goods. The Council would be clear with the promoter that themed markets maintained the engagement with the local community.

The Chair asked if local engagement would be written into the new contract. In response, the Head of Governance stated that in the forthcoming contract there was already a clause which stated, where there was a request from a community group, the promoter would be required to meet with the community group and discuss the event. There would be circumstances where the promoter felt it would not be commercially viable. In those cases, there was still permissions which could potentially allow the market to go ahead. This might involve a different promoter or the community raising money themselves through initiatives such as crowd funding.

The Chair stated he was keen to avoid repetitive markets of burgers and hot dog stands. A Panel Member in reference to the “Make it or Bake it event” stated that promotion needed to be proactive and they wanted to see more promotion done by the Council using the channels it had available.

The Chair asked Mr Ian Culley (Lead Planning Manager – Regional Strategy) how things had progressed since the neighbourhood plan. The Lead Planning Manager in response stated the Tettenhall Plan had been adopted in September 2014. It was recognised as one of the best examples of a neighbourhood plan in England. There

had been a number of requests from other community groups and local authorities on best practice in developing the plan. The plan has been used primarily for the determination of planning applications. It was also used by the planning inspectorate in the case of any planning appeals in the Tettenhall area. The Council also used it corporately as a transport authority and within leisure and cultural services to determine what the priorities were in the Tettenhall area. There were twenty-one priorities contained within the Neighbourhood Plan and it had a lengthy timescale up until 2026.

The Chair called Mr Cyril Randles (Tettenhall Community Council) and Mr George Reiss (Tettenhall Wildlife Centre) to answer questions on the Tettenhall Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Reiss stated that when developing the plan they had to decide if it was going to be a document to help sort out planning applications or a plan with community objectives. It had been ultimately determined that it was to be primarily a planning document. Due to the enormous amount of work and consultation that took place developing the document, the process had also contributed to local community development.

Mr Reiss said that the people of Tettenhall in response to the consultation had said they liked the way Tettenhall was and wanted to preserve it as far as possible. A character study had been completed on the nature of the area to use as a document to be referred to when planning applications were made. The people of Tettenhall did not want the area to be over developed. Whether they had been successful in a planning context was a different matter as since its adoption there had been a number of development schemes with local objections that had lost on Planning Appeal.

Mr Reiss stated he believed developments were being constructed that were effecting the character of the area so in one sense the plan had not worked but in other senses it had been successful. As an example, he cited the construction of a crossing by the Claregate pub following the construction of a convenience store. The crossing had been stipulated as necessary for safety reasons in the neighbourhood plan should development take place by the pub. He wanted the Tettenhall area to be preserved but to allow for economic development and to encourage small developments and small businesses to flourish in the area.

A Panel Member asked if the Neighbourhood Plan was at the point where objectives needed to be reviewed. He believed the plan should be evaluated where it had been successful and the areas where it had not been successful could be itemised. He also asked about the role of volunteers in the implementation of the plan. In response Mr Randles said there was nothing in the plan which addressed the particular issue of volunteers. He was in agreement that it would be advisable to measure against the plans objectives how successful it had been. The plan had taken four years to develop and had been an exhausting process for the volunteers. There had been a series of disappointing planning appeal results, which had resulted in a negative impact on the enthusiasm of the volunteers.

Mr Reiss said there had been notable successes for example they had fought hard against the Claregate pub being turned into a care home for old people. The brewery had consequently changed its mind and the pub had undergone over £1 million of investment. The people of Tettenhall did not want it to become purely

residential, there had been a strong sense of wanting businesses to exist and to maintain a mixed economy in the area.

Mr Reiss stated the local Community Council had rejected a report from Chartered Surveyors on the industrial estate as they felt it was inadequate and had concerns about change of use to residential. This had been opposed by the Neighbourhood Plan group as the local community wanted businesses to remain in the area. A Panel Member asked if there was any opportunity to find enough space to develop a second industrial estate like Macrome Road. In response Mr Reiss stated that this would not be possible due to the green belt on the west side and there weren't any large spaces available for industrial estates, although they were not against the principle.

Mr George Reiss stated one of the specific proposals in the neighbourhood plan was to put a pedestrian phase on the lights at the Mermaid due to the high number of people visiting Wightwick Manor each year. It was currently a dangerous place to cross the road. A pedestrian phase would encourage more people to use public transport in the area. It would also make it safer for people walking to school. There was a vision statement in the Neighbourhood Plan for the whole area which referred to enabling local businesses to invest in new opportunities, action to alleviate traffic problems, and housing and community buildings being upgraded over time.

Mr Randles stated that businesses often started as home based and then gradually grew bigger. For example, there were small businesses at the back of the High Street doing computer design. There was land where Severn Trent were located, which used to be an old man's working club, which he believed was unused. If future use of the land could support a serviced office building, it would be working towards what the Neighbourhood Plan hoped to achieve. A Panel Member asked if there was a possibility of having a smaller set of buildings run by the community as a hub or the local authority, available to facilitate people working in smaller units. Mr Randles said he understood that the Police Station in Tettenhall was likely to be closed in the future, which he thought would be ideal for a small pub, particularly as parking was available.

The Chair asked if there were any plans to update the Neighbourhood Plan in the future, particularly because of the developments by McCarthy and Stone. The Lead Planning Manager – Regional Strategy stated that there had been positive news from Central Government, which had made it easier to review Neighbourhood Plans and even start them afresh. If the Tettenhall community were minded to review the Neighbourhood Plan, then it was more straightforward to do so as a consequence of Government reform. The Council would be able to provide support revising the plan.

The Lead Planning Manager remarked that generally, plans were reviewed for two reasons. The first being that it did not work and was therefore not fit for purpose. The second, that the plan had been overtaken by events and needed to be updated to take those events into account. The strategic policies in the City were broadly the same as they were when the Tettenhall Neighbourhood Plan had been adopted. The Council were however currently undergoing a review of the Core Strategy. The Council would welcome a discussion with the community on aspects of the plan that had not been as successful as had been hoped.

A Panel Member asked about tourism, leisure and the economy in the Tettenhall area. In response, the Service Director for City Economy, stated Tettenhall had some valuable assets such as Wightwick Manor and the canals. She was keen to explore with witnesses how Tettenhall made best use of the assets without the area being overwhelmed.

Mr Steve Robinson (Robinsons Butchers) stated he did not want any changes to the two main car parks in the village which offered free parking for three hours. There had been a rumour that the long stay car park by the Tettenhall pool was going to be changed from a long stay to a short stay. When the Tettenhall pool was open there was an obvious problem with the demand for spaces, but if a short stay car park was put in place on the existing car park, the people that used the village would block the side streets. He did not want a change in status on the car park. The Chair stated he had raised the point with the appropriate Officer and the proposal wouldn't go ahead.

Mr Randles stated Tettenhall Wood Institute had a car park which had no enforceable time limit. It was beginning to be used as an area which people parked before proceeding into town on the bus. The Tettenhall Wood economy needed the stimulus of the turnover and short stay in the car park, as did the doctors practice. Making Tettenhall Wood car park into a shorter stay would be of use to the local economy, especially to the shops down School Road. The Chair confirmed that he had heard the same point. The Service Director – City Economy commented that this was valuable feedback. The information would be given to the appropriate service area within the Council following the meeting.

A Local Member stated there was pressure on Limes Road and also on Manor Street for residents. She was receiving comments from residents in Lime Road and Manor Street that they were finding parking extremely difficult.

The Chair introduced Helen Bratt-Wyton (House and Collections Manager) from the National Trust Property Wightwick Manor, Dr Duncan Nimmo (Local Historian), Mr Scott Bernard and his brother Mr Brett Bernard who were the owners of the Mount Hotel. The Chair asked them what their vision was for Tettenhall and what they considered to be their main objectives.

Mr Scott Bernard stated, Tettenhall was a vibrant place. He believed locally owned businesses should be well looked after. The community had changed significantly in the time he'd grown up in the area. More needed to be done to help family businesses. Mr Brett Bernard stated that he worked in social care and he was aware of a £5 million care home in Kent Road being built, a development supported by the Council.

Helen Bratt-Wyton stated the vision for the National Trust in Tettenhall was to first be a good neighbour. The objective for the future was to expand visitor enjoyment at Wightwick Manor and for visitors to potentially stay overnight in the area. A Panel Member stated that Tettenhall seemed light on volunteers. Helen Bratt-Wyton commented that Wightwick Manor had 300 volunteers most of which were local residents. A National Trust year went from the end of February to the following February each year. To date they had received 97,000 visitors for Feb 2017 – Feb 2018. They were expecting by the end of February to reach over 100,000 visitors for the year, for the first time in the Manor's history. The Panel Member responded that

they were stunning figures and helped demonstrate the impact the National Trust were having on the area. Helen Bratt-Wyton offered to provide a breakdown on how far people travelled to Wightwick Manor. The Panel Member responded that this breakdown would be very useful.

Helen Bratt-Wyton commented that volunteers were used within all roles at the National Trust from governance to cleaning. There were five million members of the National Trust. A Panel Member asked if there was any more publicity that could be done to promote Wightwick Manor. In response, she said that they were hoping to extend the car park because they had outgrown the current car park. They were intending to submit a planning application shortly to the Council which also proposed a linking footpath. Publicity on the antiques roadshow helped to increase numbers as did the website, app, Twitter and Facebook. They did have an issue with a smell outside Wightwick Manor on the bank. They had letters going back to the 1930s referencing the smell. Sometimes it was caused by a blockage on the bank. She invited the Panel Members and witnesses to visit Wightwick Manor.

A Local Member congratulated the Mount Hotel on achieving an extra star earlier in the year, making it a four-star hotel, which was wonderful for Wolverhampton. She was also delighted to see so many people carrying the bags of Robinsons butchers in the local area. Residents from Shropshire and Staffordshire were visiting Tettenhall to use the local shops, which was a credit to Tettenhall. Car parking was important in the area. She was concerned about landlords asking for very high rents in the area.

Mr Steve Robinson said he wanted to see a bright well-maintained village. Within the village there were five business properties which were owner operated of which he was one. He was lucky in that he owned his own property. In the current climate, in his view, if he did not own the property he would probably not be able to operate due to the high rental costs.

Mr Robinson stated he faced changes as a smaller retailer. Their rates had just increased by five thousand pounds, it was becoming increasingly harder to survive with just the traditional side of the business. They had just applied to re-instate the Bistro side of the business with about 24-30 seats in the downstairs area, which had received approval by the Council. This would give them another income stream and help cover the increased overheads. He expected it would bring more people into the village in the evening to eat, benefiting the economy of Tettenhall.

Mr Robinson stated he was in favour of the McCarthy and Stone Housing development from a footfall perspective. He wanted traditional shops like Bakers, Green Grocers and Butchers to be classified as having zero business rates or receiving a grant. He wanted an improvement in the quality of street sweeping that currently took place. He had found the planning department very efficient and was pleased with the service he had been provided. He also had a good working relationship with the Environmental Health Services.

A Local Member stated it was important for local people to use the shops on the High Street to keep the character of the village. The Service Director – City Economy stated Business Week and Visitor Week were key promotional events which the Council held in the Summer and early Autumn. She asked if there was an appetite for Tettenhall businesses to work together to showcase their businesses. If they

were interested in working together as a group she would ask the lead Council Officer to contact them.

Mr Randles stated the vision for Tettenhall should include the enhancement of the environment of Tettenhall. They had a wonderful rare asset in Smestow Valley Linear Park which was going to be increased in size. He wanted the Park to be used more. Access to the park had been made easier and work was continuing with attempts to make access easier at Castlecroft. There was also the possibility of access to the park via the Bridgnorth Road through the National Trust land. A walking plan could be encouraged in the area, making use of the railway, canal and the Linear Park.

The Chair asked if the Council could produce some new walking leaflets. A Local Member stated there used to be leaflets detailing a walk called the Tettenhall trail. The Cabinet Member for City Economy stated contact should be made with Public Health to progress the walking plan for Tettenhall idea as they had a walking for health scheme. Dr Nimmo said he liked the idea of the Village Trail. He understood there had been a series of trails across Wolverhampton produced by the Planning Department.

A Panel Member stated all the opportunities of visitor week needed to be taken. Mr Scott Bernard stated that Wolverhampton businesses needed to work collectively together to secure bigger contracts, as too many were currently going to Telford and Birmingham. He believed more conferences and events could be held in Wolverhampton. A Panel Member asked if the Mount Hotel was running at full capacity. In response Mr Bernard said it was running at 87%, with it doing well currently and £4 million had been spent on refurbishment. The refurbishment work had enabled them to get their star rating higher and their second rosette. They had 110 staff. The main occupancy Monday – Friday was predominately coming from Stafford Road. At weekends they had weddings but they needed more conferences.

The Service Director – City Economy stated a few years ago the Council had commissioned a consultant's report about attracting a niche conference market. The report had suggested the Council needed to improve in certain areas to attract more conferences. They had been working on those areas, which included how the City Centre was perceived and the understanding that the City was being developed. She asked if Mr Bernard thought there was an offer which was more localised and was very keen to hear his views about the subject. The Council were in contact with the West Midlands Growth Company to look at Wolverhampton as a Conference destination and what else the Council needed to do to properly market the area. They were looking at current market opportunities but also those for a few years' time. Some good work was taking place with the University around innovation.

Mr Bernard stated the Mount was reliant on Wolverhampton's wider economy. The visitors from overseas were attracted to the history of the Mount and Wightwick Manor. The Chair asked if there had been a drop-in business since the Civic Hall had been closed. In response, Mr Bernard stated that they had not noticed any change, this was to be expected as their customer base was different. However, he was enthusiastic about the new restoration scheme as he thought this would result in a better offer, from which his businesses would benefit.

The Chair introduced Mr Alec Brew (Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre) and Mr Richard Preston (Canal and River Trust). Mr Brew stated the Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre was entirely run by volunteers. The Linear Park was very important to them and they tried to encourage people to use the park. Since they had been there for the last three and a half years car park usage had increased tenfold. He believed there should be a forum in Tettenhall where charity and community groups could come together to help one another. He cited an example of working on overgrown vegetation around the car park by the station, which if done collectively could succeed in improving the nature of the area.

A Panel Member asked if the Transport Heritage Centre had any visitor numbers. In response Mr Brew stated they did not charge people to enter the Centre and thus had no visitor data. The Panel Member stated the Centre had been hugely successful which was attracting attention across the region. Mr Brew stated people from all over the country were visiting the centre due to the nature of their exhibits. A Panel Member stated Wednesfield had a group called Hands on Wednesfield which community groups could use to work together. He encouraged the volunteering sector in Tettenhall to form something similar. Helen Bratt-Wyton offered to provide the meeting space at Wightwick Manor, free of charge, for such a forum to meet.

The Cabinet Member for City Economy expressed surprise that the Tettenhall Wood Institute had declined to attend the meeting. He requested that the Council write to them and obtain a statement from them about how they could work collaboratively with the Council. The Local Member stated they were very much in demand. During the day their car park came under a lot of pressure. The Tettenhall Wood Institute had a number of rooms which could be booked for community groups.

Mr Richard Preston (Canal and River Trust) stated the Canal was important for the Tettenhall community. It was a clear characteristic in the area, which had no fewer than six listed structures. To protect the asset, it was important to make it relevant for modern day use, such as for cycling, walking and canoeing. All of these activities improved health and well-being. The Canal in Tettenhall was part of the Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve and an important green corridor and dark corridor between an otherwise fragmented habitat. The Canal was one of the forty-five Black Country geopark sites, making it an important geological feature. There were clear opportunities for visitor moorings to encourage people to stay in the Tettenhall area. Presently the Trust property could not be seen from the Canal. There were more boats using the Canal network than at any time during the industrial revolution.

The challenges the Canal and River Trust faced in the area included some of the structures being in poor condition, which they were constantly trying to repair on a 200-hundred-year-old network. The towpath was in a poor condition. Where towpaths had been repaired in other areas in the Black Country, up to a 60 per cent increase in use had been recorded, predominately in the Spring and in the Autumn. It was therefore a priority in the Tettenhall area to improve the towpath which would increase natural surveillance and help address issues surrounding graffiti on the structures. Most of the Trust's core funding went into maintaining the infrastructure of the Canal but they had worked successfully with Councils including City of Wolverhampton Council to attract Local Growth Funding for towpath improvement. He hoped there would be an opportunity for this in the Tettenhall area.

Mr Preston stated whilst it was not a big issue in Tettenhall there were incidents of fly tipping. The Trust was happy to work with the Council to identify offenders. There were many opportunities with the Council to promote the Canal and there was potential, in the future, for a Heritage Lottery Grant. Within the Black Country seventy percent population lived within one Kilometre of the Canal, which was a real opportunity to celebrate the Canal. Mr Reiss remarked, to obtain lottery funding it was important to undertake public consultation so the Heritage Lottery fund could see if it was wanted by the local community.

The Service Development Manager stated that there was more EDRF funding available and over a million pounds had been secured through the Blue-Green Network to improve a number of sites. One of those sites was in Smestow, which would open up several hectares not open to the public and in the Wednesfield Canal area. There were further opportunities to bid for resources but there was a need to identify fifty per cent match funding, which was the biggest challenge. If match funding could be identified, a new bid could be submitted. The Cabinet Member for City Economy stated a number of Canals had solar powered cats' eyes on each side of the towpath. This was important to encourage commuters to utilise the towpaths in all weathers and increase natural surveillance.

The Chair stated that he thought that a considerable amount of Section 106 money had been accumulated in Tettenhall but he was unaware where it was being spent. He asked for the Panel to be informed where this money was being spent.

RESOLVED: That an action plan be drawn up by Officers for the Tettenhall area, taking into account the information learnt from the meeting.

6 **Wolverhampton BID (Business Improvement District)**

Cherry Shine, Director of the BID and John Henn, Chairman of the BID and independent business owner gave a presentation on the Business Improvement District (BID). The Director of the BID stated that Wolverhampton BID was launched in April 2015 after a long period of public consultation with businesses in the wider City Centre area. The BID area was a defined location. There were 560 individual BID Businesses in the BID area, paying a levy between £150 per annum and £15,000 per annum. This collectively brought in nearly £504,000 per annum. There was a BID Board with representation from a variety of sources.

The Director of the Bid stated the whole BID development process had started with a feasibility assessment. A business plan was constructed after the consultation, developed by businesses for businesses. The objectives of the BID were to improve perceptions of the City, enhance accessibility, increase footfall and raise the City's profile as a destination. It was recognised that these objectives could be achieved under four themes, clean safe and welcoming, marketing, promotions and events, accessibility and parking and business support.

The Director of the BID said there was a team of City Ambassadors who were a welcoming team, branded with the Enjoy Wolverhampton logo on their uniforms. They were the eyes and ears for the City Centre and could guide people across the

City with useful information. They communicated via radio link into the BID Office. They were also the business engagement team, visiting businesses regularly. There were three Officers working for the BID including herself. A key priority was to keep the City Centre clean and so consequently the City Centre was jet and hot washed two nights a month in hot spot areas.

The Director of the BID remarked that public surveillance was provided via CCTV which linked to the team of 5 City Ambassadors, Police, PCSO's, transport interchanges, the Mander Centre and security staff. The City Radio link connected over 110 businesses, which had been proactively promoted by the City Ambassadors. These tools enabled the BID to have a good understanding of the movement of people, including anti-social behaviour within the City. It also enabled issues to be dealt with straight away before becoming a serious incident. Statements could be made to support evidence for legal action and criminal behaviour orders. Partnership working took place with the Police, and City Tasking and WBCRG (Wolverhampton Business Crime Group).

The Director of the BID said they ran the alternative giving campaign established because there was an element of homelessness and begging in the City. People could donate at 19 donation points across the City Centre. They were currently looking to develop the campaign with the Council to set up a business CSR Charity arm. The BID were members of the Tacking Rough Sleepers Task Force.

The Director of the BID said they paid for 32 additional Late Night Safe Haven nights. They also managed four promotional spaces to promote a vibrant High Street. They dressed vacant shop units, where possible, to make them more attractive. The BID arranged a series of Marketing events such as Easter parades, craftwork shops, Macmillan Coffee mornings and the Ice Palace/Grotto with the Mander Centre. These Seasonal events attracted over 9,000 people each year. Enjoy Wolverhampton Live attracted 6000 visitors on the day. They also arranged Seaside in the City which turned Queen's Square into a beach, which was planned to be over two days for the forthcoming year.

The Director of the BID stated, they partnered up with the Council to deliver the successful WIRE awards which launched in February 2017. Last year there had been 147 individual business entries. This was a useful tool to promote independent businesses and a platform for them to showcase their expertise. The BID was the main sponsor for Wolves in Wolves, which was the largest public art exhibition the city had seen. The project had really benefited footfall in the centre.

The Director of the Bid informed the Panel that the City was marketed on a West Midlands wide scale. The Christmas branding for 2017 was "A City Full of Joy." The City guide had been given to 25,000 people. The Bus Advert campaign ran across October – December and the reach was across Walsall, Telford, Shrewsbury and Cannock. They worked with Signal 107 at Christmas which brought them a platform to bring people back to Wolverhampton and to convey their key messages.

The Director of the BID stated the Enjoy Wolverhampton website was regularly updated and was a useful communication tool. They appreciated how important the Wolverhampton motto was "Out of darkness, cometh light." They had spent £37,000 of their budget on additional lighting over the Christmas season. They had enhanced old stock and refurbished lights. Their social media reached over 350,000 people on

Facebook and Twitter during November and December 2017. Over 17,000 people visited their website every month.

The Director of the BID said they worked very well in partnership with NCP on accessibility and car parking. The NCP had reduced shopper tariffs at the Wulfrun Centre Car Park. They had also worked with them on a BID business employee parking tariff at the Wulfrun Centre. They had worked with the Council to secure event parking and Christmas Parking and shared this information via marketing campaigns. They had promoted free event parking at the Wulfrun Centre in 2017. Thirteen maps had been installed in the City Centre to help people navigate around the City Centre. The BID had worked with City Centre businesses to help them save nearly £119,408 to date on utilities, telecoms and merchant fees. The NCP parking scheme gave reduced car parking fees to 298 employees at 57 City Centre businesses. This was an approximate saving of £450 each year per staff member. She stated she attended a number of meetings across the City to give businesses a voice.

The Director of the BID said they had applied to make environmental improvements on Woolpack Street, which included the installation of a gate to hide the unsightly bins. A Big City clean was planned for the Spring having first launched in October last year. She stated the following was planned for the future: -

- Wire Awards 2018 – Launch in March 2018
- Alternative Giving Scheme – Awareness Campaign
- Business Backing Big Change – Charity Arm Launch
- BID Accreditation with British BID's
- Enjoy Wolverhampton Live – Saturday, 2 June 2018
- Seaside in the City – 1st and 2nd September 2018
- Enhanced Retailer Forum (Monthly meetings)
- Reporting and Understanding Footfall
- Enjoy Wolverhampton Gift Card
- City Employee Loyalty Scheme
- Bigger Better and Brighter Christmas 2018

The Director of the BID commented that the Wolverhampton BID measured performance in a number of ways. These included the number of businesses engaging in promotions and assessing access to their website and social media pages. They also recorded the number of City Ambassador visits to City Centre business each year, which was currently over 3,500 per year. The City Ambassadors reported fly posting, dirty street furnishing and phone boxes. They supported the Council by managing the Busking spots in the City Centre, which reduced the number of complaints from businesses. Event attendance was also recorded.

The Director of the Bid informed the Panel they had 5502 social media followers and received at least eight additional positive press stories per year. They funded two footfall counters, one was on Queen's Street adjacent to the Wolverhampton Homes building and the second was in the Wolves Superstore, the second counter was currently out of action due to re-development. The change in footfall for Wolverhampton BID over the last 52 weeks was 2.1% down on the previous year.

Footfall for the year to date was 2% down on the previous year (compared to a figure of 2.3% down across the UK).

A Panel Member asked if they could have the total number of visitor figures as he believed the raw data was essential to understand how well the BID was performing. The Director of the BID stated she would do her best to respond with the information if they emailed her with the exact information required. The Head of Service Development – City Economy stated with the SMART City programme there could be improvements in the way footfall data was captured, so they would not just be reliant on footfall counters in certain positions. Mobile phone data could be used, which could be aggregated across partners to capture a much more sophisticated understanding of the whole footfall picture. The Director of the BID stated the bus station had some footfall information, as did the Wulfrun Centre. The Mander Centre would have information available in the future as they were installing a new system. She asked if the Council could help bring the data together.

The Director of the BID stated a feasibility study would start in early September 2018 on the BID Reballot. The proposed Ballot date would be October 2019, with potential establishment in April 2020. She referred to the last slide of her presentation which listed the opportunities of working collaboratively with the Council as being the following: -

- Continued partnership
- Recognition of the projects Wolverhampton BID deliver
- Supporting our continued opportunities for income generation via city centre operations
- Proactive use of planning enforcement to bring vacant buildings back into use
- Recognition of the collective importance of the independent businesses
- Communications to Non Levy payers – an additional Council funded Ambassador
- Acknowledgement of retail as a sector that needs support
- Retaining a City Centre events programme
- Supporting the enhancement of the city experience

The Director of the BID stated she wanted to better engage with half terms and families as an opportunity to attract more visitors. She was concerned about the vacancy rate on Queen's Square and some of the outer lying secondary retail areas. There had been considerable re-locating of businesses. For example, Nationwide had moved creating two void units on Queen's Street. They were hoping to decorate the windows and were approaching the agent. They also recognised that the rents were very high in Wolverhampton Arcade with a low occupancy rate. Agents were not as proactive as they would like them to be.

A Member stated there was concern regarding House of Fraser and an impatience to get the Westside development up and running. They had received remarks that there was too much empty space in the Mander centre despite the refurbishment. There was competition from Telford on the westside of the Town and Birmingham.

The Chairman of the BID Board stated more pressure was needed on landlords who owned derelict buildings in the City Centre. The BID did receive a number of

requests from independents for accommodation in the City which were being stifled by landlords who were waiting for better offers. If empty units could be cleaned up and occupied it would reduce some of the problems in the City Centre such as discarded needles. Lichfield Street was a third empty.

A Panel Member stated the Scrutiny Panel could look at how BID could help deliver their plans and proposals to fill empty properties in the City Centre and how best to work with landlords and agents. A Member stated Wolverhampton City Centre needed to develop its character to attract more visitors and the Council needed to look at what other authorities were doing to tackle rough sleeping and reduce the number of needles discarded across the City Centre.

The meeting closed at 9:05pm