

# Briefing Note

**Title:** Update on key emerging work within Culture, Creative and Visitor Economy

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**Job Title:** Director of Regeneration

**Intended Audience:** Internal  Partner organisation  Public  Confidential

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## 1.0 Purpose

To provide an overview of the key work emerging within Culture, Creative and Visitor Economy incorporated within the themes of ***Play, Live and Work***.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2016 BOP were commissioned to carry out a rapid piece of strategic planning for culture and the creative industries in Wolverhampton. The aim was to support the case for economic investment in culture and the creative industries in Wolverhampton and to understand the overall pattern for development of culture in the city.
- 2.2 At the time, the report noted the strengths that the city has in terms of physical cultural assets and potential to convert former industrial spaces for creative use, geographical position and the City of Wolverhampton Council's coordinated approach to regeneration, emphasising public realm and cultural vibrancy. It also highlighted that the city suffers from the lack of recognition of this cultural offer, weak hospitality and night-time economy offer, as well as loss of retail spending to Birmingham, Telford and other neighbouring cities. It was noted that a number of key regeneration programmes were underway including the railway station, which would help to address those issues.
- 2.3 The report recommended 5 priorities for development:
1. Investment in cultural venues to improve the customer experience
  2. Developing the skills and learning offer including the Grand Post House Creative Industries Hub and the City Learning Quarter. This should be done in partnership with education providers.
  3. Effective placemaking, including a bold, imaginative public realm particularly around the cultural quarter and Lichfield St.

4. Supporting creative businesses to flourish by offering creative workspace and working closely with the Black Country Growth Hub to facilitate business networks and signpost entrepreneurs to appropriate skills support and business development opportunities
5. Play a leading role in joining up efforts to ensure a strategic approach and partnerships to help unlock funding for the city.

### **3.0 Play**

3.1 Since the BOP report the City of Wolverhampton Council has been active in progressing a number of cultural projects for the city. In 2018, the city submitted an ambitious package of cultural activities and projects to the Arts Council Cultural Development Fund (CDF), totalling £6m. Although not successful, a second round of funding was announced earlier this year and city has submitted a revised expression of interest.

3.2 Some of the projects identified in the CDF proposal have successfully gone on to secure funds from alternative programmes such as Future High Streets and Towns Deal. Under the theme, 'Changing Perceptions' on the Towns Deal, the city has secured:

- Phase 1 City Arts Park has received a £1.5 m funding allocation from Towns Deal funding to deliver Grand Theatre Studio extension, a 200-seat flexible theatre /event space. It is hoped that this will be further supported and complemented through additional funding, sourced through the Cultural Development Fund, with an Expression of Interest (E.O.I) having been lodged successfully and preceding into the next funding rounds with a full application for funding to follow.
- Events City, a 5-year programme that will build on key events such as the British Art Show, supporting fringe events to showcase local talent and moving visitors across the city to help wards benefit from visitor spend. This has secured £0.5m from Towns Deal.

3.3 The Towns Fund Programme is currently scheduled for delivery to the end of 2026. The top three main projects within the "accelerated category" and already in progress include:

- Brewers Yard/Culwell depot, facilitates a depot relocation, additional jobs and transitions the council to renewable energy and supports the wider strategy to carbon reduction, the scheme also enables the development of the wider Brewers yard scheme, and new homes
- WM5G is the UK's first commercial 5G accelerator centre, enabling SME's to learn about 5G Technologies to grow and develop new products/services with suitable technical and business support the project will also upgrade masts to 5G across the West Midlands 9 of which will be in Wolverhampton. Question

handling any changes to Masts be subject to full planning permission. Huawei components are being actively phased out of the network

- The Events Programme will improve footfall significantly over a three-year period through 16 additional events, leading to increased local expenditure of circa £10m

- 3.4 In 2020 it was announced that the city had secured £15.5m Future High Streets fund. Wolverhampton Council successfully secured one of the largest funding awards in the country and – although the offer in principle is less than the original bid submitted –the council have adjusted plans accordingly in order to maximise the impact of the funding to deliver impactful schemes to help fulfil its ambitious city centre vision.
- 3.5 Preliminary works are underway which will see exemplar pedestrian routes and public realm interfaces paving the way for enabling further planned regeneration activities in our city centre, with the Civic Halls public realm scheduled for completion during 2022 and Victoria street public during the 2023/24 period. Innovative and contemporary projects, such as the Box Park initiative will be located on the existing Cleveland parade, bringing events space and a new eating / street food area that will support new and existing businesses to locate and create a destination for food, music and fashion. Works are due to commence during the period 2022/23.
- 3.6 In 2017 with Arts Council England (ACE) grant, the city’s iconic Art Gallery received capital funds to invest in its exhibition space and broaden its offer to attract more visitors and be more accessible and inclusive. Phase One completed in 2017 which created new exhibition space that successful attracted the World Wildlife Photography exhibition in 2018.
- 3.7 In early 2021 with support from council borrowing alongside grants from the ACE, Phase Two of this project started. The purpose, to give the gallery a fully accessible entrance for visitors via St Peters entrance. It was also agreed to relocate the café to the ground floor, creating a new affordable, exciting destination for the city. The venue will be able to cater for up to 80 covers with natural light coming from the stunning ground floor windows. The café and entrance are scheduled to be ready by December 2021, ahead of the British Art Show 9 which comes to the city January 2022.
- 3.8 Along with those which the council is leading / involved in there are also a number of private ventures in the city. The success of the football club in 2018 propelled the city’s profile and brought significant investment to the club. The club has ambitious plans which are more than just football matches. The club has launched an e-games team which has received global success and they recently announced their own record label, fitting in with their new moto ‘Wolves is Always On’. They are also looking at investment into the Stadium, creating a complementary conference offer for the city.
- 3.9 The city is, like many others, recovering from the impact of Covid 19. At the peak of Lockdown, Wolverhampton was facing significant challenges for those in the hospitality, arts and culture sector. Through strong partnership and collaboration with others in the West

Midlands region, officers across the council worked hard to ensure maximum support was secured for venues, businesses and those working in this sector. Many of our venues were able to secure Covid grants from the Arts Council, DCMS Cultural Recovery fund, furlough scheme as well as grants from the councils Covid response.

- 3.10 The city has built on the partnerships formed as a result of our response to Covid to secure future opportunities with Arts Council England, highlighted point 3.12
- 3.11 As the city and UK begins to reopen, we are seeing signs of recovery. Several new restaurants and eating venues have announced their opening in Wolverhampton, the latest is the Medicine café, which is to be based at the Lighthouse.
- 3.12 In summer 2021 Arts Council England launched their delivery plan underpinning how they will achieve the ambitions set out in Let's Create. Arts Council England published 'Let's Create' a 10- year strategy in March 2020, its focus is on three outcomes, Creative People, Cultural Communities and A Creative & Cultural Country.
- 3.13 As part of this national delivery plan Arts Council has recognised the opportunities and potential of Wolverhampton's arts and culture sector, by naming it as one of 50 priority places in the UK to further develop cultural engagement and investment, and increase engagement with local communities. Within this plan, one of the five themes are 'strengthening the place-based approach and supporting Levelling Up'. Arts Council will work with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to improve investment in priority places.

#### **4.0 Developing the Culture Offer**

- 4.1 Is it key that the city has a strong coordinated approach in place to maximise opportunities emerging at a national level and ensure local communities and residents are engaged and benefit from programmes and activities.
- 4.2 The city has begun work on a new Cultural Strategy based around the 5 strategic Ps (Partnerships, Productivity, Place-making, Participation, Pride). Each strand will form the basis of a key workstream, aligned to current cross-cutting city priorities and provide contents and direction for future funding bids. Future Prosperity and Levelling- up funds being amongst those which the City is looking to maximise benefit for the cultural sector.
- 4.3 The work around the strategy and those emerging with the city's Cultural Action Zones (identified locations across Wolverhampton), will be brought together with that which is underway through the city's Covid recovery strategy, Relighting Our City.
- 4.4 Aware that arts and culture has many touch points across economy, community, environment and place shaping, the city with funding from the Art Council established in 2020 Wolverhampton's first Cultural Compact, a board of key

stakeholders from cultural and non-cultural backgrounds. Through this board and a wider Cultural Stakeholder Group, officers have been developing the Arts and Culture offer for the city, connecting with regional and national programmes such as the Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme and Creative & Cultural Skills WM. The board also assisted with the city's recent bid to be City of Culture 2025.

- 4.5 Locally, opportunities are being developed to bring greater community participation and inclusion. The service is running a cultural programme aligned to Commonwealth Games, funded through Arts Council England. The main focus of this will be 'Black Country Beats' a music exhibition that will tie into the opening of the Civic Halls. We are also hosting one of the open-call commissions, focusing on the Black Art Group.
- 4.6 Engaging young people from the city is also an important area, and the service works closely with colleagues in Children and Young People and was an active partner over the summer months with the city's summer squad and #YES campaign, and is leading on the work with the Cultural Education Partnership.
- 4.7 Officers are working to bring all these strands together into a comprehensive strategy that will influence the shape of the city's offer going forward. Engaging and working with our partners (WMCA, Commonwealth Games, West Midlands Growth Company, Arts Council and Culture Central) is key to ensuring we maximise the approach and opportunities for our city. The outcome of this will be shared with members, communities and stakeholders later this year.
- 4.8 In 2021 the council announced that AEG Presents – part of the AEG global sports, entertainment and venue operator family – have secured a long-term deal to run the city's iconic Civic Halls. Through the AEG group the civic halls will offer a first-class customer experience for events and shows, along with food & beverage and other services.
- 4.9 AEG are now preparing their exciting and ambitious plans for the Civic Halls which include how local business can benefit, the creation of new jobs whilst also raising the city's national and international profile.

## **5.0 Live and Work**

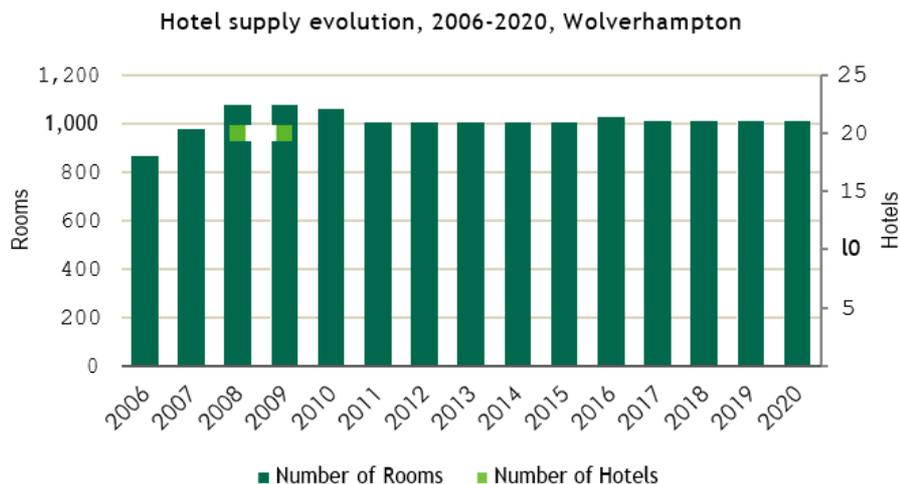
- 5.1 Key to the regeneration programme of the City is to address the undersupply of good quality hotel provision within the City Centre, which will help support the business and leisure economy post COVID. The delivery of good quality hotel space has been part of the regeneration plans for the City for a significant period of time, dating back to 2011/2012 when the City Centre Prospectus was launched which included various regeneration opportunities, including hotel use. The principle is also enshrined in

planning policy (AAP) and hotel proposals have emerged for various sites across the City but have unfortunately not come to fruition.

## 5.2 Some key facts:

- There are currently 16 hotels, accounting for 1,101 bedrooms in the Wolverhampton market.
- In the last 14 years, only 2 hotels have opened (209 bedrooms), the Redwings Lodge Wolverhampton Central (opened 2008 and rebranded from Travelodge in 2015) and the Premier Inn Wolverhampton City Centre Bluebricks (opened in 2007).
- In the last 10 years, total room supply has declined by 4.5% due to the closure of 4 small independent hotels. By comparison, over the last decade, hotel room supply has increased by 10.5% and 11.2% in the UK and West Midlands respectively.

5.3 The Council understands that it will have to intervene in order to ensure a new supply of quality hotel and offer is provided in the city, as hotel brands do not tend to fund and develop their own hotels developments and brands such as Marriot, Hilton, Ramada now operating predominantly on a franchise model basis.

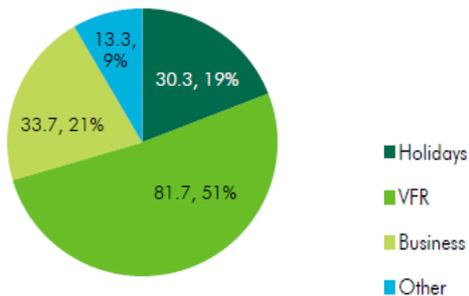




5.4 There are a number of examples both regionally and nationally where local authorities have made possible the supply of new quality hotel provision to support wider objectives such as supporting the visitor economy (e.g. Stockton, Coventry, Stockport, Rochdale, Liverpool). These projects have been implemented through the development of robust business cases that demonstrates good returns on investments and in doing so enabling wider regeneration, often through the establishment of Special Purpose Vehicles.

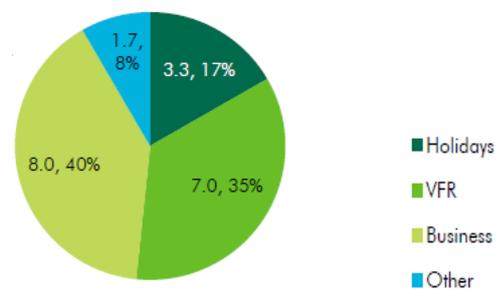
5.5 The below statistics demonstrate the lack of supply of hotel provision but also the opportunity that a quality provision will support.

**Domestic Overnight Tourism Visits (000's)  
2017-19 annual average Wolverhampton  
Wolverhampton**



GB Tourism Survey 2021

**Domestic Overnight Tourism Spend (£GBP m) 2017-19 annual average  
Wolverhampton**



5.6 According to the GB Tourism Survey, there was an average of 159,000 overnight visits per annum to Wolverhampton by domestic travellers in the period 2017-2019. This compares to 62,200 in bound overnight visits per annum, meaning that international travel accounts for c.28.1% of total overnight visits to the city – across

the wider West Midlands region, overseas demand only accounts for c. 14.5% of total overnight tourism demand.

- 5.7 Wolverhampton's high exposure to domestic travel demand will support the recovery of the market following the pandemic, assuming that the recovery of domestic demand is relatively rapid.
- 5.8 However, in a regional context, the city's material and increasing appeal to the lucrative inbound travel market presents an opportunity on which it can capitalise and grow tourism receipts and wider expenditure across the city.
- 5.9 The Council has completed its soft marketing exercise via the e-tender portal, with national and international hotel brands and operators keen to have a presence in the city. Further due diligence is being concluded on business cases, investments scenarios, procurement routes and vehicles with a report to Cabinet detailing the preferred delivery route towards the end of the year.

#### **5.10 Canalside South**

- 5.11 The Council through its delivery partnership with Canal & River Trust has assembled the site, which is being marketed as Canalside South for the development of a residential community that will see hundreds of new homes along one of the most historic stretches of canal in the country.
- 5.12 The 17-acre waterfront development opportunity – which equates to the size of approximately 30 football pitches - sits on the eastern edge of the city centre and is made up of the former Crane Foundry site, former British Steel site and land off Qualcast Road.
- 5.13 The vision for Canalside South is the delivery of around 1,000 homes to meet both the city and wider region's housing needs. It will also see the provision of a mix of complementary retail, leisure and commercial uses as part of the comprehensive development of the site.
- 5.14 Located minutes away from the city centre and the award-winning £150million transport Interchange, it provides easy access to the tram, road, rail and canal network. Commercial partners Avison Young are supporting the marketing of the site.

#### **5.15 Business engagement**

- 5.16 For over 18 months, officers across the council have been heavily involved in the distribution of a number of grants and interventions schemes to support businesses across the city, during Covid restrictive measures.
- 5.17 Over the summer the city has seen businesses and organisation begin to reopen as Covid measures relax. It is still key for businesses in the city to have protection against infection of Covid, however the city can now start to focus its attention both on the immediate and longer-term recovery of the city's economy.

5.18 The aim, to rebuild and become even more ambitious for the city, and to perform above the national average on a number of key metric economic performance. To help achieve this it is important that the council has clear oversight of our businesses, their issues and requirement, market sectors, our role and what impact this has.

5.19 As a result of the city's response to supporting businesses during the pandemic the council has a rich set of data and intelligence on business across the city, of difference size and sector. Officers are drawing on this intelligence and reviewing actions delivered during the past 18 months to shape a targeted approach to business engagement, one which is intelligence led.

## **5.20 Business support**

5.21 Alongside a number of targeted business support programmes, officers are frequently approached by businesses for varying requests of support and assistance. Aware that our current programmes which are funded by EU conclude in March 2022, officers have started to review and assess the future of business support for the city.

5.22 To help undertake this work the council has appointed an external company who are working with businesses and intermediaries across the city, to understand needs and ambitions of companies in Wolverhampton. Their work will give the city an evidence-based approach to business support that responds to the needs/ wants of business and that delivers key priorities for the city. This is due to conclude later this year and will be shared with members for consideration.

5.23 The past year has highlighted the demands for businesses to be more digitalised. Businesses are having to respond to changes in consumer behaviour in the way they buy and their demands for goods and service, alongside a more agile flexible way of working. Scrutiny have received a number of presentations around this agenda and how the pandemic has highlighted the challenges and opportunities with digital.

5.24 In 2018 the city council became the first UK local authority to partner with the global online platform eBay, on their retail revival scheme. The scheme offered over 60 businesses in the city dedicated support and training to trade on eBays platform and saw the first ever pop-up eBay shop, giving businesses on the programme an opportunity to meet with customers, in person.

5.25 The city continued discussions with eBay after the programme had closed to identify further opportunities for joint working. Ebay were very complimentary of the partnership working and even though they viewed the scheme as being a success the company chose to take a different direction. The focus shifted to the wellbeing benefits individuals saw from selling on the platform rather than the economic

benefits which had been the key metrics in the Wolverhampton scheme. The company also stepped away from having a place based identity and focused on national campaigns.

- 5.26 **City Investment** despite the challenges caused by the pandemic the city has been able to secure a number of key inward investments to the city. Among which has been the well published i9 scheme which has fully let the office space. The new office part of the city's Interchange and Commercial district will be home to the West Midlands Pension company, LGPS Central Ltd and the new headquarters of Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formally MHCLG, who are bringing over 300 new jobs to the city).
- 5.27 The National Centre for Sustainable Construction and Circular Economy (NCSCCE), which incorporates the National Brownfield Institute (NBI) is located at the University of Wolverhampton's Springfield Campus. The centre presents a unique opportunity for a place-based strategy for the city, with the Springfield Campus at its core acting an Innovation District where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators and accelerators and linkages with assets in the wider Black Country and West Midlands
- 5.28 Sustainable construction and the circular economy is a crucial element in the built environment sectors efforts to address carbon pollution and climate control. The NCSCCE alongside the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities £10m MMC taskforce (Modern Methods of Construction) which is located at their HQ at i9 and the potential for modular housing production facility within Wolverhampton means that the city could be the national leaders in promoting and developing this sector.

## 6.0 Summary

- 6.1 The report gives a brief overview of some of the many regeneration programmes and projects, happening or coming to the city. It also highlights the approach we have to move forward, as we continue to build and grow the city's economy.
- 6.2 it is vital that all regeneration activities generate opportunities for local people and local businesses. Wolves@work has been active throughout the pandemic and has identified over 600 jobs in the past 6 months. Funding has been secured for a further 5 years and officers and partners including DWP are continuing to identify and support recruitment and importantly working with sectors to help prepare people with training and skills. It is key that we engage and help prepare people and young residents of the city, linked with our Adult Education Service and other local providers, to be ready to access opportunities that these projects and the businesses in the city are creating.

- 6.3 The work which is underway looking at the future of business support will help give the city its direction and focus on how, and what we need in place to enable businesses to access and benefit from regeneration and recovery of the city.
- 6.4 Throughout all of this it is important that members note we continue to be ambitious in our plans, however we face incredibly competitive funding programmes. It is key that we build on the partnerships we have developed to demonstrate that projects and programmes have strong collaboration in place, that our stakeholders, local communities, private sectors, and regional partners WMCA are on board.