

Briefing Note

Title: Business Support Activities within the City Council Wards

Date: 9/02/2023

Prepared by: Isobel Woods

Job Title: Head of Enterprise

Intended Audience:

Internal

Partner organisation

Public

Confidential

Purpose

Ahead of the new business support system, this paper provides an update to members on externally funded business support activity at ward level.

Background

The delivery of the business support services has primarily been through public funded programmes including AIM for GOLD (EU funded) and the Relight Business Programme. This funding supports a small core team to support the businesses. Wolves@Work provides the employment support through a citywide programme.

EU programmes are now coming to an end and the Council has been working with the WMCA and the other met authorities to develop a new approach to business support, utilising the UK Shared Prosperity fund (UKSPF). As this work progresses over the coming weeks, it will be brought back to this Scrutiny panel.

The existing business support activity has been plotted on a map of the wards within the city (Table 2). The data shown is taken from the various programmes as follows:

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| • Aim for GOLD Programme - 4 year programme | 2019 to current. |
| • Relight Business Programme - 18 month programme | 2020 to 2022. |
| • Relight, Low Carbon and Retail grant schemes - 12 month programme | 2021 to 2022. |
| • Wolves@Work activity; strategic company engagement. 1 year activity | 2022. |

Business Support Provided

- The AIM for GOLD, Relight Business Programme and Relight, Low Carbon and Retail grants schemes are structured with key business support measures which include the following:
 - Business Review – this is a diagnostic designed to understand the key aspects of the business to tailor the support required, typically takes at least 3 hours
 - Light Touch support – this is typically no more than a couple of different interventions and totalling less than 12 hours of support
 - Intensive support – this is typically more than 4 interventions and totalling more than 12 hours of support
 - Financial Intervention – this a grant to support investment in new equipment - and for AIM for GOLD grant would involve numerous interactions and support to each business

2. The Wolves@Work Programme business support activity offered to employers includes the support of a dedicated Employer Work Coach providing a tailored recruitment and workforce development service to support their business growth. Support available includes:
 - Let's Talk Jobs online events - An opportunity for employers to promote their organisation and vacancies to a wide and diverse network of career advisers and work coaches.
 - Help in sourcing apprenticeship standards and training providers
 - Opportunities to promote vacancies at local Job Fairs
 - Opportunity to promote vacancies on Wolves Workbox
 - Liaising with DWP regarding the Sector Based Academy Programme offer
 - Facilitating introductions with the University, College, and Training Providers as appropriate
 - Invitations to attend business networking events e.g. meet the buyer
 - Raising awareness of and utilising national programmes and local initiatives e.g. Kickstart and 18 – 24 initiative
 - Raising awareness of Council priorities and events (e.g. Armed Forces, Care Leavers, Public Health)

3. The Strategic Companies are account managed by the business support team. Each member of the team meets with their allocated companies every 6 months. These meetings help develop a relationship with the senior management of the company. The information that is gathered includes:
 - company performance and current trading issues
 - details of any key expansion projects,
 - employment, training and recruitment,
 - supply chains issues and any local issues

Ward Activity

Table1 shows the breakdown of the 496 businesses supported across the city. A concentration within 4 areas/wards are due to the location of businesses hubs:

- Wolverhampton Science Park – many creative and digital companies who joined the AIM for GOLD Programme secured medium sized grants to support capital investment
- Wolverhampton City Centre – many retail businesses joined the Relight Business Programme and accessed small relight or retail grants, and we were therefore able to support a group of businesses that were not eligible for our EU grant programme
- Neachells Lane Industrial Estates (manufacturing businesses who joined AIM for Gold for growth support and secured large capital grants to underpin capital investment resulting in jobs and increased sales. The grant intervention rate was between 30 and 40% so generated significant private sector investment)
- Bilston Industrial Estates (manufacturing businesses who joined AIM for Gold for growth support and secured large capital grants to secure capital investment)

Table 1

Business Support



No. Businesses Supported

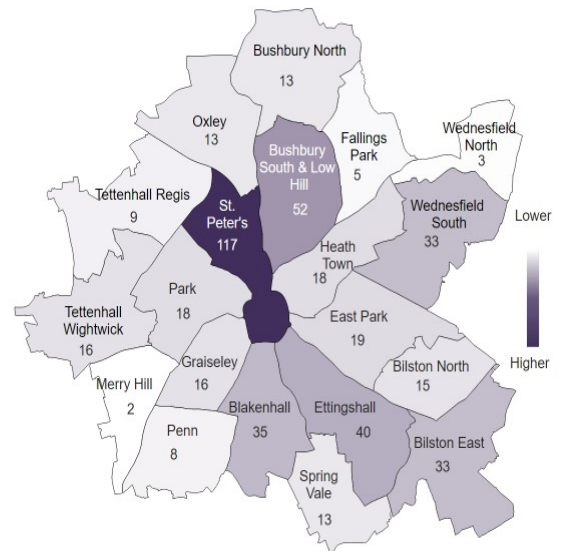
496

No. Interventions

1066

Ward	Total No. Businesses Supported
St Peter's	117
Bushbury South and Low Hill	52
Ettingshall	40
Blakenhall	35
Bilston East	33
Wednesfield South	33
Outside of Wolverhampton	24
East Park	19
Heath Town	18
Park	18
Graiseley	16
Tettenhall Wightwick	16
Bilston North	15
Bushbury North	13
Oxley	13
Spring Vale	13
Tettenhall Regis	9
Penn	8
Fallings Park	5
Wednesfield North	3
Merry Hill	2
Total	496

No. Businesses Supported by Ward



*24 businesses supported outside of the Wolverhampton boundary.

Business Interventions at Ward Level

There have been a total of 1066 business interventions across the City, supporting 496 businesses over the last 4 years (2019-current). Some businesses have more than one intervention. These are plotted on table 2.

The team undertake a business review to identify needs and opportunities. These include:

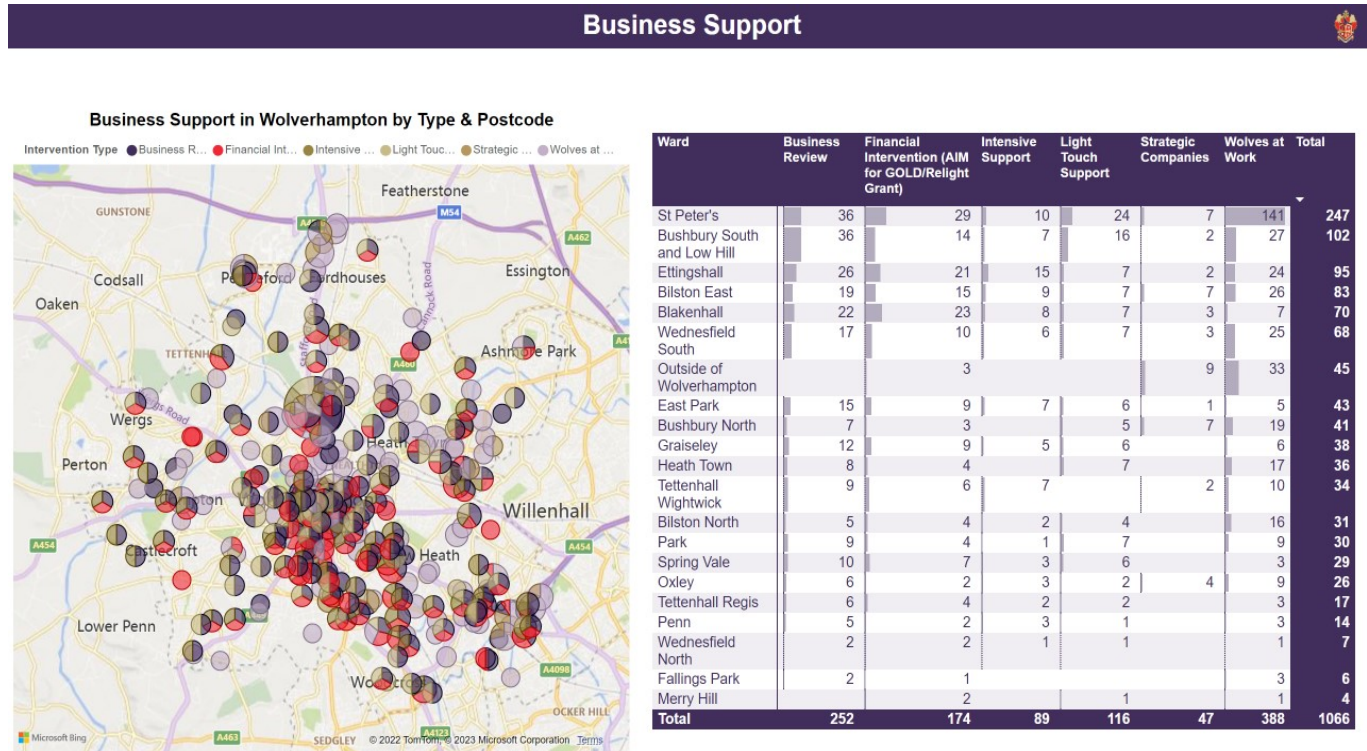
- 1:2:1 advice sessions/ Growth Planning sessions
- Enterprise Service Webinars/ Workshops
- Digital Review
- Financial Review
- One year's Chamber of Commerce membership/ FSB membership

The workshops on digital marketing were the most popular by far, followed by growth planning. Workshops were also held on financial management, workforce development, innovation, and leadership.

- The retail, relight, and low carbon grants, capped at £5,000, supported over 50 sole traders, micro and small businesses to make small capital purchases. The schemes were very popular and were oversubscribed.
- The Aim for GOLD programme showed that even after covid there was still an appetite amongst SMEs to make significant capital equipment purchases creating jobs and underpinning increased sales. However, a challenge for a number was the supply chain particularly when equipment was being purchased from overseas. Another issue for SMEs was the ability to recruit and retain skilled and semi-skilled workers.

- The Digital Reviews carried out in the Relight Programme showed limited use and knowledge of the application of digital technology. The consultants we used were able to share advice and guidance to businesses as part of the reviews, and the relight grant supported some investment in new computer equipment and software

Table 2



Wolves@Work

Dedicated Employer Work Coaches maintain the employer relationships and offers the solutions available in response to the employers immediate and ongoing workforce needs. There are various actions that contribute to interventions with employers, they include:

- 1 to 1 Meetings – apprenticeships, new business enquiry
- Ongoing business reviews
- Let's Talk Jobs online events
- Workbox promotion/ Kickstart delivery
- 18-24 Wolves at Work activity – Youth Summits
- Jobs Fairs – 18-24 Wolves at Work
- Meet the buyer events
- DWP activity - SWAPs

Some support is highly concentrated in certain wards, this reflects the enquiries made by the employers through a range of sources including the ongoing relationship with their Employer Work Coach. The last 12 months of activity is shown on table 3.

The council continue to promote across a number of channels the Wolves@work support, to raise awareness and invite businesses to come forward.

Table 3

Wolves at Work - Business Support



No. Businesses Supported

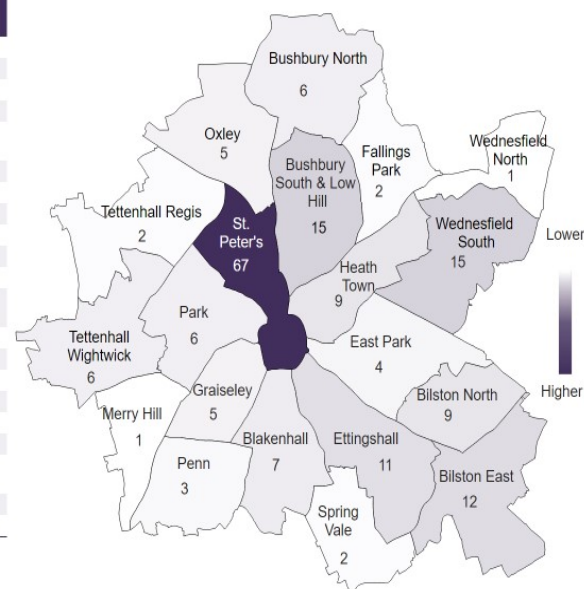
206

No. Interventions

388

Ward	No. Businesses	No. Postcodes	18-24	Jobs Fair	Kick start	Let's Talk Jobs	Meet the Supplier	New Enquiries	SWAP	Towns Fund
Bilston East	12	10	5		6	2	1	2		1
Bilston North	9	7	2	1	1		3	3		
Blakenhall	7	6						2		
Bushbury North	6	5	9		3		1	1		
Bushbury South and Low Hill	15	11	2	1				3		
East Park	4	4	1	1						1
Ettingshall	11	11	9		1	3	1	1		2
Fallings Park	2	2						1		
Graiseley	5	4	1					1		
Heath Town	9	9	7	2		1		1		
Merry Hill	1	1					1			
Outside Wolverhampton	20	18	11	4		4		3	2	1
Oxley	5	4	2			2			1	
Park	6	6			2			1		
Penn	3	3						2		
Spring Vale	2	2			2					
St Peter's	67	43	25	9	9	3	6	7	3	5
Tettenhall Regis	2	2								
Tettenhall Wightwick	6	6			2					
Wednesfield North	1	1			1					
Wednesfield South	15	11	2		2					2
Total	206	166	76	18	29	15	13	28	6	12

No. Businesses Supported by WAW by Ward



Business Support Campaigns - Let's Talk Jobs Events

Large scale recruitment campaigns with key employers (national and local) have been undertaken. These companies are working in the city and target Wolverhampton to recruit their workforce, see table 4.

The postcode reflects the employer's location/ward however the opportunities are open to all residents across the city. Advisors from key stakeholders (such as Wolves at Work, Black Country Impact, Connexions, Care Leavers Team, Wolverhampton YOT, DWP, Adult Education, Wolverhampton College, University of Wolverhampton) and city partners (City Learning Platform, organisations and providers and Black Country authorities) are invited to attend the online events. Following the event, advisors cascade the recruitment information to residents across all wards.

The number of attendees (advisors) for each event varies between 30 to 80. An example of advisors attending from the following organisations: Colleges, University of Wolverhampton – Careers and The Workplace, DWP staff, other Local Authorities in the Black Country, WMCA, Steps to Work, Job change, Learning Platform, Agencies, Skills Training, Shaw Trust, National Careers Service, Princes Trust, Serco, Refugee and Migrant Centre, Access to Business, Aspiring Futures and TLC.

There are several key employers to the north of the city (e.g. Eurofins, JLR), located at the i54 who recruit from Wolverhampton and neighbouring areas. Working in Partnership with Staffordshire and South Staffordshire Councils, Wolverhampton takes the lead with Employer Engagement, involving colleagues as appropriate in delivering recruitment and workforce development support.

Magna is another key employer whose recruitment strategy involves targeting Wolverhampton residents and providing transport from a few Wolverhampton pick up points. The Employer Work Coaches have a longstanding relationship with this employer.

283 vacancies have been secured by Wolverhampton residents but due to employer recruitment practices, not all employers are able to identify and provide this information.

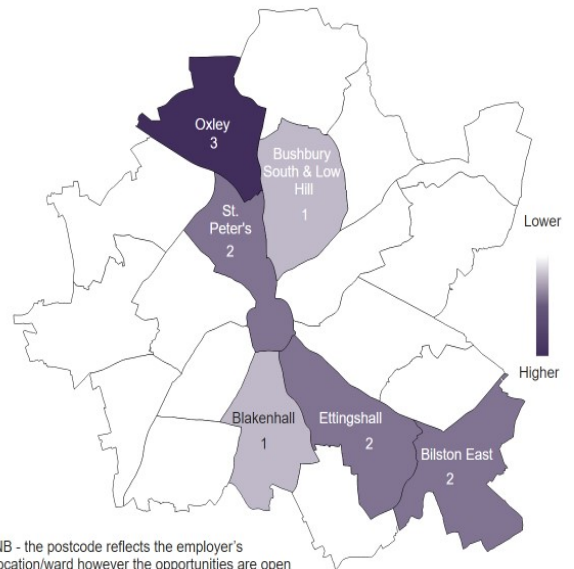
Table 4

Business Support - Let's Talk Jobs (Wolves at Work) 2022					
No. Let's Talk Jobs Events	No. Businesses Attended	No. Advisors Attended	No. Organisations/Depts Attended	Jobs Identified/Created	No. Vacancies Secured by W'ton Residents*
15	16	332	198	623	283

Ward	No. LTJ Events	No. advisors attended
Bilston East	2	61
Blakenhall	1	39
Bushbury South and Low Hill	1	15
Ettingshall	2	53
Outside of Wolverhampton	4	90
Oxley	3	47
St Peter's	2	27
Total	15	332

No. Events by Ward

*due to employer recruitment practices, not all employers are able to identify and report to pathway of the individual.



Title	Ward	No. advisors attended
Salisbury Poultry	Bilston East	29
Wiggle	Bilston East	32
Aldi	Blakenhall	39
National Express	Bushbury South and Low Hill	15
Progress Care	Ettingshall	30
Select Lifestyles	Ettingshall	23
Empowering U Care Ltd	Outside of Wolverhampton	20
Eurofins	Outside of Wolverhampton	24
Magna Specialist Confectioners Ltd	Outside of Wolverhampton	22
Randstad and Jaguar Land Rover	Outside of Wolverhampton	24
Bailey Employment Services (Lloyds Banking Group, Pendeford)	Oxley	32
Premium Choice	Oxley	15
Eurovia UK	St Peter's	11
Lloyd James Media Group	St Peter's	16
Total		332

NB - the postcode reflects the employer's location/ward however the opportunities are open to all residents across the city.