

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel

29 November 2023

Report title	Good Growth Strategy	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Steve Simkins	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy and Growth	
Originating service	Policy and Strategy	
Accountable employee	Laura Collings Tel Email	Head of Policy and Strategy 01902550414 laura.collings@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	26 September 2023

Recommendation(s) for decision:

Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the Good Growth Strategy, at appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a new strategic economic plan for the city, Good Growth strategy ahead of formal consultation on the strategy between December 2023 and January 2024.

2.0 Background

2.1 We want all business, residents, families and communities to benefit from the growth and new opportunities in our city. This strategy sets out a new vision for economic growth in Wolverhampton, a vision which is focused on delivering good growth. It explains the main focus of our work, and actions we aim to deliver that can propel Wolverhampton's economic prospects and, fundamentally, the life chances and wellbeing of our residents so that 'All Wulfrunians live longer healthier lives'. There are many encouraging signs:

- Over the last 10 years the City of Wolverhampton has seen major successes, including the award-winning £1 billion i54 business park.
- World leading low carbon research and innovation at the new National Brownfield Institute at the University of Wolverhampton's Springfield Campus.
- Skills levels across the city have risen steadily over the last five years.
- 89% of the city's schools are rated good or outstanding by OFSTED above the national and regional average.
- We are delivering first class learning facilities with a seamless learner offer through the City Learning Quarter.
- There are growing sectors in digital, creative industries and professional services bringing new jobs as well as established clusters in advanced manufacturing and aerospace.
- Thousands of fantastic employment opportunities in our foundational sectors of health and social care, hospitality and retail, and logistics which provide vital services to local people.

2.2 The city, like many post-industrial places faces long term social and economic challenges. We believe our industrial heritage is an asset to our economy, but it has left a legacy of brownfield sites that present redevelopment challenges, and the restructuring of our economy has left pockets of low skills. Productivity levels, the amount of value created for every hour somebody works, have been poor for the UK since the financial crisis and Wolverhampton has also struggled.

3.0 Good Growth Strategy

3.1 We now face a new growing challenge to support our residents and businesses to decarbonise our economy and make our city net carbon neutral by 2041. The success of this strategy ultimately relies on delivering not just good growth, but good green growth.

3.2 To deliver on this the strategy we will focus on three themes supported by nine priorities.

- Place
 - Support delivery of sustainable communities and workplaces
 - Inclusive, low carbon transport network
 - Secure the potential of our city and town centres
- People
 - Education, skills and employment system that meets local needs
 - Improve health and wellbeing removing barriers to employment
 - Build community wealth through the Wolverhampton Pound
- Productivity
 - Help businesses and organisations increase their productivity
 - Collaborate with businesses and the university to stimulate innovation
 - Maximise the city's investment potential

3.3 The plan focuses on aligning strategic objectives with operational delivery and priorities includes. A policy position outlining the Council's key areas of focus, challenge, and opportunity under the priority. Key activity highlighting planned projects, investment and activity which will support delivery of the priority areas.

4.0 Consultation and Engagement

4.1 The strategy builds on already extensive engagement with residents and key stakeholders. Including:

- Education, Skills and Employment Strategy consultation process.
- Education and skills providers through our recently completed review of post 16 provision in the city.
- Employer perspective from the development of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Wider engagement with residents through our Cost Living support, Healthy Lifestyles survey and other citywide engagement.

4.2 A formal consultation process on the strategy will be held from December to January 2024 to gain further input on our proposed priorities. This will include focus groups and workshops with residents, partners and businesses. In addition, there will be a digital survey to give all residents and stakeholders opportunity to provide their views.

5.0 Performance Framework

- 5.1 The Council continues to use a variety of means in which to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of operations against organisational strategic priorities and statutory requirements. Using data and analysis across all areas of the business, the Council actively encourages a golden thread of performance monitoring throughout all parts of every service.
- 5.2 As part of the further development of the strategy an economic performance framework will be developed aligned to each of the priorities. Further work will be undertaken to refine these throughout the consultation period. The final framework will also be aligned to the Our City: Our Plan performance framework.
- 5.3 The framework will provide high-level city data on key priorities, benchmark city performance against national and regional data, highlight the impact of targeted interventions and inform strategic decision-making.

6.0 Delivery and Future Economic Governance

- 6.1 The delivery of this strategy will be a major priority for the Council working across all sectors, public, private, community and voluntary. The key to realising these opportunities in this strategy is collective leadership bring our partners, businesses and communities along on the journey to drive system change.
- 6.2 As part of our delivery plan for the strategy we will build on the many fantastic partnerships, boards and networks the Council and it's partners currently work within. Considering that the economic landscape of the city and region has changed significantly in recent years there may be opportunity to enhance these.
- 6.3 For example the folding in of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership to the West Midlands Combined Authority has meant a new regional approach to delivering business support. There are also new policy areas where we may, given economic shifts look to develop further partnerships to support delivery, particularly around our low carbon and green economy priorities.

7.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 7.1 Option 1 would be to not to develop an overarching economic framework for the Council which sets out key priorities. This could mean that local people are not able to access the existing and emerging opportunities in our city and local business do not have access to the right support to enable growth.
- 7.2 Option 2 and the chosen option is to develop a strategic economic plan for the Council which will provide a framework to maximise economic prosperity for local people and businesses.

8.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 8.1 The priorities and activity identified in the strategy have been developed through a robust evidence base and engagement with residents and city stakeholders.

9.0 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the strategy itself although the subsequent actions, projects and programmes will have financial implications. Any further budget approvals will be sought in line with the Financial Procure Rules.
- 9.2 All costs associated with engagement and the preparation of the plan will be accommodated within existing resources.

[LD/21112023/X]

10.0 Legal implications

- 10.1 Whilst there are no direct legal implications arising from this report, legal advice will be sought throughout the development of a new strategic economic plan, if and when required.

[RR/21112023/Q]

11.0 Equalities implications

- 11.1 An equalities analysis for the strategy will be undertaken and mitigations to any negative impacts identified. Fair and Equal is one of the three cross cutting principles of the refreshed plan. All activity noted in the plan will also be subject to individual equalities analysis.

12.0 All other Implications

- 12.1 The strategy has implications across the Council, including climate change, health, and wellbeing and digital which will continue to be considered and managed as part of the delivery of this plan.
- 12.2 Health and wellbeing is an important part of everyday life. It is integral to leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. There is an inextricable link between health and employment prospects. Through this strategy and Our City: Our Plan priorities we will ensure that our communities are stronger, healthier, and thriving places to live.
- 12.3 The plan is aligned to the Digital Wolves strategy setting out how as a city and as a council we can support local people to develop the digital skills they need to gain and sustain employment.
- 1.1 The performance framework for each thematic area of the plan will enable continued oversight of the indicators that underpin the central commitment to Wulfrunians living longer, healthier lives.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

- 13.1 N/A

14.0 Appendices

This report is PUBLIC
[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

Appendix 1: Good Growth Strategy