

Stronger City Economy Scrutiny

21 November 2017

Report title	Wednesfield - Local Economic Development and Growth	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Cabinet Member for City Economy	
Corporate Plan outcome	An environment where new and existing businesses thrive	
Wards affected	Wednesfield North; Wednesfield South;	
Accountable Director	Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy	
Originating service		
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Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider how can the Council help to support the development and strengthening of the local economy in Wednesfield?

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the local economy in Wednesfield and ask the Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel and witnesses to consider how the Council can help to support the development and strengthening of the local economy in Wednesfield:
- What is the vision for Wednesfield?
 - How can the Council work best in collaboration with partners and what information do Councillors hold to help with this process?
 - What do the witnesses invited, who work in partnership with the Council, believe can be done to improve collaborative working?
 - How can the Council's existing approach help with external partners plans and what is missing to achieve the vision for Wednesfield?

2.0 Background – local economic development

- 2.1 Local Economic Development (LED) is an approach towards economic development which allows and encourages local people to work together to achieve sustainable economic growth and development thereby bringing economic benefits and improved quality of life for all residents in a local municipal area.
- 2.2 The Centre for Local Economic Strategy (CLES) resilience model examined the importance of all parts of the economy: the social; commercial; and public economies to ensure an economy is resilient to external forces or change. The commercial economy is often seen as the priority for economic development, but the resilience model demonstrates that the public sector can have considerable influence on a locality through procurement spend, planning and employment opportunities. Likewise, the social economy does not regularly feature in economic development strategies but plays a crucial role in providing the foundations for any healthy and effective economy both directly through local employment, local supply chains, volunteering and social enterprise, but also indirectly through development of social capital and promotion of civil engagement and participative democracy.
- 2.3 Wednesfield is made up of two wards Wednesfield South and Wednesfield North. Both wards have a population of 22,646 (census 2011). Outlined below are the key statistics for Wednesfield. Economically active residents are those residents who are employed or actively seeking employment. Economically inactive residents are not available for work and include retired people, students, those looking after home or family and residents who are long-term sick or disabled. Unemployed residents are those without a job but who are available for work.
- **Economically Active:** 75.9% of Wednesfield South population are economically active, higher than Wolverhampton but lower than England and Wales. Unemployment is also lower than Wolverhampton but higher than England and Wales. 77.2% of Wednesfield North population are economically active above both Wolverhampton and England and Wales. See Graph 1 Appendix 1. Unemployment is also lower than Wolverhampton but higher than England and Wales.

- **Economically Inactive:** 24.1% of Wednesfield South population are economically inactive, lower than Wolverhampton but higher than England and Wales. Wednesfield South has a lower proportion of students but higher proportion of long-term sick or disabled. 22.8% of Wednesfield North's population are economically inactive, lower than Wolverhampton and England and Wales. See Graph 2 Appendix 1. Wednesfield North has a lower proportion of students but higher proportion of long-term sick or disabled.
- **In employment:** Wednesfield has 9441 residents in employment, 943 of which are self-employed. Wednesfield South has a higher proportion of residents in full time employment than both Wolverhampton and England and Wales but a lower proportion in part-time employment. In contrast, Wednesfield North has a lower proportion of residents in full time employment than both Wolverhampton and England and Wales but a higher proportion in part-time employment. See Graph 3 Appendix 1.
- **Employment tends to be concentrated in lower level occupations:** the highest proportion of Wednesfield South residents are in elementary occupations (15.6%) followed by skilled trades at 14.1% and administrative & secretarial at 12.9%. These proportions are higher than for Wolverhampton and England and Wales. Wednesfield North has the highest proportion of residents working in skilled trades at 15.2% followed by elementary occupations at 14.7% and administrative & secretarial at 12.5%.
- **Educational:** Wednesfield High School is a specialist engineering academy and hub school for Jaguar Landover through Business in the Community.
- **Low skills profile:** Wednesfield South and North have a relatively low skills profile with 24% and 23.8% respectively having no qualifications above Wolverhampton (22.1%) and England and Wales (15%) and only 16.4% and 15.6% respectively having Level 4 qualifications below Wolverhampton (21.7%) and England and Wales (29.7%).
- **Claimant count** in Wednesfield South and North at 3.4% and 3.1% respectively is less than Wolverhampton and Black Country average (4.2%) but above GB average (1.9%)
(Source: NOMIS 2011 ward labour market profile)
- **Sources of employment:** Health is a very important employer in Wednesfield North employing 47.8% of employees whereas in Wednesfield South, manufacturing is the most important source of employment employing 20% of employees, followed by retail at 14.6% and wholesale at 10.2%
- **Sector strengths:** Wednesfield has 490 businesses, the majority (360) of which are micro businesses (0-9) with the largest number of businesses in retail (55) followed by construction (45), business and administration (45) and manufacturing (40). Wednesfield has 110 small businesses (10-49), majority of which are manufacturing (25), retail (20) followed by wholesale (15). Wednesfield has 20 medium sized businesses, majority in manufacturing (10) followed by motor trade and transportation & storage.

(Business Register and Employment Survey NOMIS 2017)

3.0 **Wednesfield Local Economic Development**

- 3.1 **Wednesfield's economy** is concentrated around Bentley Bridge, Wednesfield village centre and the employment area to the south of the village which contains a number of development opportunities including Pantheon Park and Bowmans Harbour. In addition, New Cross Hospital on the boundary of Wednesfield is an important local employer. Wednesfield has a self-contained village centre including a supermarket and post office. The High Street hosts a High Street market organised by the Council and charity markets where charity organisations are invited to have a stall to promote their charities. Bentley Bridge Retail Park has undergone major expansion, which has attracted many national retailers including Argos, TK Maxx, Costa Coffee, Boots and Next. The site also houses many restaurants and leisure facilities which include a cinema, bowling alley, gym and swimming pool.
- 3.2 **Business Support:** Businesses across Wolverhampton are supported through the Growth Hub. Business navigators, funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), undertake reviews to identify business needs and broker support that will help businesses grow. Navigators are currently working with a few companies in Wednesfield, mainly in the Neachells Lane area, including Total Construction Supplies, Pemberton Engineering, NDT Ltd.
- 3.3 **City Development:** the employment area to the south of the village centre is one of the largest and better quality employment areas in the City and there are a number of development opportunities available including Pantheon Park and Bowmans Harbour. The City Development Team are progressing an Industrial Sites Strategy which seeks to bring forward a portfolio of sites across the City including Wednesfield. Recently £3.7 million has been awarded from the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) Collective Investment Fund to construct six units on the Steelpark Trading Estate worth £6.2 million aimed at providing dozens of new jobs once construction is complete at the end of 2017. Recent investments include GTG Training Academy (part of the Arnold Clark Group) invested £10 million into a new West Midlands Regional Training Academy in Wednesfield.
- 3.4 **Skills and Employment:** a range of support is available to local residents to get into employment, education and training including Wolves at Work and European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative funded Impact programme. Wolves@Work, a partnership between the Council and DWP, provide support for Wednesfield residents including a drop in at the Hope Centre. To date, 15 Wednesfield residents have been supported by the Council's work coaches. Impact, which supports young people between 15 and 29 into education, employment and training deliver support from Wednesfield Strengthening Families hub and a dedicated Impact Key Worker works with Wolverhampton Homes tenants. Impact has supported 52 Wednesfield young people.
- 3.5 **Local and Cultural Economy:** Wednesfield have a strong network of community voluntary organisations who are very proactive at organising events and activities that

add vibrancy to Wednesfield. They aim to improve the economy by putting Wednesfield on the map and increasing footfall of high street through events such as the Christmas Lights switch on and Bentley Bridge via the canal festival. Wednesfield in Bloom also aims to attract people to the village.

- 3.6 Hands On Wednesfield is a volunteer community group formed from the former Wednesfield & Fallings Park Local Neighbourhood Partnership. The group organise local community events and fundraise to improve the community cohesion and lives of the local area. Events include:
1. Summer events
 2. Christmas Lights event and Christmas Charity Market
 3. Annual Christmas carol service
 4. Wednesfield Canal Festival
 5. Lich Avenue community garden project
- The group also support all local initiatives such as the Wednesfield in Bloom entry, and promote all the local organisations within the area via promoting and supporting their events through social media and website links.
- 3.7 Wednesfield In Bloom Volunteer Committee bring together various organisations from around Wednesfield to enter the England in Bloom initiative. They work together to raise funds to support groups to put their project ideas into action. In September, Wednesfield scooped a Gold Award in the Urban Community Category of the Heart of England in Bloom awards. They receive lots of support from local organisations such as Wolverhampton Homes and the Council. The Council's involvement is through improving the landscape and street furniture it is responsible for and removing graffiti to keep a vibrant feel. The Council also contributed six four-tiered planters, and help with grass cutting, street cleaning and painting street furniture. Their ambition for 2018 is to get best in category.
- 3.8 The Christmas lights switch on are run by the Council's events team who organise activities such as Signal 107 and the Fairground. The local community organises a charity market event and Christmas carol service which incorporates all the local school children. Hands on Wednesfield are raising additional money for new lights on lampposts, storage and installation. They are keen to work with Council to buy more lights and columns and get businesses involved.
- 3.9 Wednesfield Canal Festival held at Bentley Bridge Moorings by the Nickelodeon pub is in its third year. The festival sees a number of canal boats trading at the pop up market, an extended live music line up and children's activities and entertainment. The festival resulted in an uplift in sales at Bentley Bridge from customers attending the canal festival with footfall up 9.38% vs the same week in 2016 attribute approximately 4,300 visited the site for the canal festival. Going forward, additional support is requested to publicise the event through for example what's on events.
- 3.10 The Council has recently secured European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) on resources on behalf of a broader Black Country partnership to improve Wednesfield canal as part of the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The LNR will cover the length of the Wyrley and Essington canal, and adjoining land owned by the Council. The

City Council is to enter into a collaboration agreement with the Canal and River Trust and Walsall MBC to manage the LNR for at least 21 Years and to designate the LNR in Wolverhampton as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

- 3.11 Wednesfield History Society was founded to keep history of Wednesfield alive including celebrating the historic battle of Wodensfield. The group is chaired by local historian Ray Fellows who has written several books on the history of Wednesfield. The founders of the group have been involved in visiting Schools to deliver sessions on the history of Wednesfield and held several events to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II visit to Wednesfield and the Lancaster Bomber Crash. The group also hold historical day trips to various locations linked to the history of Wednesfield. Recently the Group have been involved in the renaming of Albion public house on Lichfield Road to The Lancaster in remembrance of the Aircrew killed in the Lancaster Bomber crash of 1945, the group are currently working towards a permanent memorial for the Aircrew.
- 3.12 Wednesfield have a range of other local statutory and community resources including:
- Ashmore Park Hub is run by volunteers and supports the local community in holding fund raising events and local family fun days for the local community. Volunteers manage the community café which is a great asset to the local community. The Hub is managed by a group of volunteers and hold regular committee meetings consisting of the Hub users and groups who hire the rooms. This group is chaired by Anne Wood. The Hub have recently won the 2017 Queens award for voluntary service.
 - Wednesfield Community Hub, run by a committee of volunteers, holds many community fun days annually and hire out the community rooms to many local groups. They hold regular committee meetings consisting off the Centre users and community groups/organisations.
 - Long Knowle Community Hub, run by volunteers, hire out their rooms to many community groups and hold annual community fun days for families. They hold regular committee meetings consisting of Hub Users and community groups.
 - Wednesfield Rotary Group fund raise throughout the year and support local groups in giving donations to improve their organisations. They also hold an annual Christmas sleigh route around the Wednesfield Area and donate Christmas gifts to Children within the area.
 - The GEM centre, situated in Neachells Lane, offers a set of specialist services for young people of all abilities to support with mental health, emotional and psychological difficulties
 - Wolverhampton Homes Office, Alfred Squire Road houses both the Housing Office and the Head Start team.

- Police Station, Alfred Squire Road houses the Local Neighbourhood Police Team which support the local community at local community days and hold regular PACT meetings and visit local schools to deliver safety messages.
 - The Children Centre on Graiseley Lane have a nursery and family support teams working from the Centre and offer a variety of support services.
- 3.13 In the past, the partnership developed the Wednesfield Art Trail, a community led public art project encapsulating what the area means to local people. The trail comprises four figures in cast iron, produced at a local foundry in Willenhall, on granite plinths distributed around the green space in front of Wednesfield Community Hub - the Readers, the Shoppers, the Bus Stop and the Market Stall. The fifth piece is a striking stainless steel signpost with decorative arms called The Wayfinder which points out key locations in Wednesfield including the community hub, canal and the Bentley Bridge retail park. The Wednesfield Art Trail was delivered by the City of Wolverhampton Council and local community group Hands On Wednesfield thanks to a grant of £35,000 from the owners of the Bentley Bridge.
- 3.14 Challenges emerging from this report include:
- Supporting Wednesfield businesses to grow and thrive;
 - Ensuring Wednesfield residents benefit from local jobs and opportunities;
 - Supporting Wednesfield key local employment areas including the High Street to prosper and grow;
 - Supporting local groups to increase vibrancy of Wednesfield including promoting events and encouraging local spend.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The report provides an update on the current Wednesfield economy, as yet there are no further proposals and current financial obligations are stated, therefore there are no financial implications arising directly from this report. [HM/26102017/X]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 As there are no actual proposal yet, there are no specific legal implications arising from this report. When proposals have been formulated, a new reflection as to legal implications will be required. LW/26102017/A

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Risk implications

9.1 There are no risk implications.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1

Appendix 1: Key Partners and Stakeholders

Local businesses and employers

Bentley Bridge

High Street Retailers

Local businesses and developers - GTG

Employment and opportunity sites – Pantheon Park, Bowmans Harbour, Steelpark Trading Estate etc

New Cross Hospital (as local employer)

Local community and voluntary organisations

Hands On Wednesfield

Wednesfield in Bloom

Wednesfield History Society

Support Agencies

Black Country Growth Hub and Chamber of Commerce

Wolverhampton Homes

City of Wolverhampton Council

- City Economy – Enterprise, Wolves@work, Impact, City Development
- Markets
- Events
- Environmental Services

Canal and River Trust

West Midlands Combined Authority Collective Investment Fund

Local community assets and facilities

- Ashmore Park Hub
- Wednesfield Community Hub
- Long Knowle Community Hub
- Wednesfield Rotary Group
- GEM Centre
- Wolverhampton Homes office including Headstart
- Police station including Local Neighbourhood Police Team
- Children Centre
- Local schools

Appendix2: Wednesfield Statistics



