

Wolverhampton's City Conference Business Week 2014 - Business Week Evaluation

Introduction: This summer Wolverhampton Council established the City Board a collaboration between the City's public sector, strategic businesses, and small and medium enterprises, as well as the independent sector. The City Board has responsibility for the delivery of the city's ambitious long-term plan to encourage enterprise, empower people and re-invigorate the city – City Strategy 2011 - 2026.

To provide a platform for showcasing the city, its activities and ambitions the City Board decided to organise an **annual City Conference season**, consisting of three separate weeks of activity. This new approach started with Wolverhampton's Business Week which took place between Monday 29 September and Friday 3 October 2014.

To improve delivery of the conference season an **evaluation** of each week will take place. This report contains the analysis of the evaluation of **Business Week 2014** the first of its kind in Wolverhampton, outlines achievements and outputs, provides feedback from each event and makes improvement recommendations for Business Week 2015.

Evaluation process: A range of information informed the evaluation process from both internal and external sources. Internal information was predominately provided using formative methodology, with two facilitated sessions being held with the Task and Finish Team Group who supported the delivery of the programme. To help judge success a mixture of formal and informal feedback from various individuals was considered. These external aspects included feedback from attendees of events, the Economic Growth Board, the City Board, individual Business Champions and businesses, the external funder and the media.

This information was then analysed, the conclusion from which formulated improvement recommendations.

Appendix B at the end of this report provides details of contributors to the evaluation.

Driving Improvement: Implementation of internal improvements and accountability for follow up action is the responsibility of the Place Directorate Management Team, officers from which will support the Economic Growth Board to develop a proposition and drive Business Week 2015 on behalf of the City Board.

Learning from the evaluation will be used to help develop the rest of the City Conference Season.

Overall judgment: Having undertaken the evaluation process outlined on the previous page and looked at performance against the four objectives set by the City Board for the week - **evidence supports the judgment of Business Week 2014 as successful.**

Supporting evidence: Evidence to support the overall judgment of Business Week 2014 is set out over the following pages. Appendix A at the end of this report outlines detail of achievements and feedback per Business Week event.

Box 1 Summaries achievement per Business Week objective set by the City Board

Objective one: To develop a programme of focused activity to support growth and to help businesses compete regionally, nationally and internationally.

Achievement: A high quality programme of activities was delivered with each of the seven events targeting a particular audiences and focused on particular business and employment opportunities

Objective two: To provide a platform for showcasing Wolverhampton's achievements on those stages

Achievement: Two of the Business Week events included leaders and businesses from across the Black Country, some with national and international profiles. 12 Embassies hosted Wolverhampton and West Midlands exhibition weeks in the lead up to the Business Week.

Objective three: To bring people together to shape a better future and prosperity for all.

Achievement: Over 2400 people were directly engaged in Business Week; others accessed information and took part in the on-line seminars. The Week created a 'buzz' in the city, helped build businesses confidence in the city's ability to succeed and shift perceptions about Wolverhampton.

Objective four: To demonstrate that the city is 'open for business' and help to fulfill our ambition to become a 'niche business conference' city.

Achievement: The city demonstrated it is 'open for business', showcasing achievements to those attending the events, to the press both locally and nationally and gave information re future opportunities. The programme provided a platform for a number of external conferences and during the week the city pitched for and won a worldwide film premier and a new company relocated here.

- Around 2400 people took part in the Business Week activities
- Increased interest in regeneration sites
- Extensive press coverage
- 12 Embassies across the globe hosted Wolverhampton and West Midlands exhibition weeks
- Over 20 companies expressed interest in signing up to the Growth Pledge
- Created a platform for four external conferences/events
- New set of business support materials produced
- Published Wolverhampton's first Economic Review
- Secured Wiggle's relocation to the city
- Won a worldwide film premier
- Gave exposure to a new conference venue and increased their bookings
- 10 SME's received 12 hours business support
- 55 local people offered interviews – 12 successfully got jobs
- 1 local person was offered a job on the spot at the Jobs Fair
- 85 local people expressed interest in a armed forces career
- 300 local people applied for temporary Christmas jobs
- 50 local people signed up for traineeships
- 30 got pre-recruitment interviews
- 100 local people invited to signed up for an employment agency
- 50 young people signed up for specific support

Wolverhampton partners across the city working together to bring jobs, opportunity and prosperity to Wolverhampton

Box 3 Outlines key factors that influenced achievement of the objectives

Key Factors	Commentary
Way of working -Task and Finish Group (T&FGp)	A multi-disciplinary team led by a coordinator worked hard for each other over a six week period, they showed willingness to do any tasks and had a 'can do' attitude - people stepped up, they felt trusted. Members enjoyed this way of working and the experience, it built relationships. Despite working as hard as they ever had – group members felt a sense of achievement.
Organisational, project planning and management skills	There was an overall programme plan and a detailed workflow for each event – they covered every detail. Milestones with deadlines were set and monitored during weekly meetings - progress was rag-rated this kept workstreams on track and ensured efficient delivery of the programme. Building in a week's flexibility at the end of the project plan proved to be excellent foresight. "It appeared effortless"
Governance, leadership and decision-making	There was a clear line of sight to members of the City Board, day to day decision making lay with three members of the Board (who were regularly briefed). This reduced bureaucracy, so that the focus was firmly on delivery and responsibility was devolved giving confidence to the T&FGp
Finance and procurement	Business Week activities were financed by external funding: European Regional Development Fund through Marketing Birmingham (MB) with new business collateral funded by Wolverhampton City Council. All procurement was undertaken by MB and there framework agreements speeded up the process.
One direction and timeframe	There was a clear overall aim – people felt empowered and trusted to just 'give it a go' – 'do their best'. This may have been a reflection of the short timeframe in which to deliver and the need for speed. Whatever the rationale the approach was not risk adverse, there was freedom to get on with work.
Focus on 'opportunities'	The week focused on opportunities - creating a positive approach. Honest straightforward messages and conversations were had, with no spin or inward looking conversations
Buy-in and support	Businesses and partners supported the initiative
Quality of event offer	The overall event offer was excellent, venues, speakers, everything was branded, presentations in a new style

Box 4 a selection of feedback comments

“I was proud to be involved”
“Quality of the events and attention to detail was excellent”
“Brilliant way of bringing people together”
“Branding was excellent”
“It showed what can do – by just having a go”
“I’m genuinely amazed at what’s going on”
“It got the message out there”
“It created a buzz”
“Media coverage was excellent”
“Quality of information excellent”
“Didn’t know the council worked that late”

Wolverhampton is a place where businesses feel supported and are confident in the city's success

Overall Conclusion: Business Week 2014 proved highly successful. With its activities and outputs from the programme consistent with the overall goal; it attained its objectives and had the intended effect/s. Things can be improved however for 2015 programme.

Driving Improvement: To ensure this happens, information gathered during the evaluation process has been analysed and formulated into **improvement recommendations**. These will be considered by both the City Board and Economic Growth Board resulting in a clear direction and focus for Business Week 2015.

The table below contains improvement recommendations, where progress has been made, detail is provided.

Improvement Recommendation Area	Suggested Action	Progress
Build on momentum - improving profile and presence	Develop a monthly programme of activity starting from January 2015 – including taking ‘Wolverhampton out of Wolverhampton’	Draft programme been/being discussed and developed with City Board, Economic Growth Board and Business Champions
Increase believe and association	Support being proud and brand identification by using Making it Happen lapel badges	All Board members should wear a Making it Happen badge in the first instance and distribute to others as agreed
Build stronger links with media both regionally and nationally	Provide feedback to press locally of outcomes of programme Invite national press to 2015 programme	Several post media releases happened already and another one following December City Board proposed To be written into communications plan
Develop a City Database	Strengthen database developed during Business Week and process for keeping up to date	Requires process and lead assigned
Earlier communication and open invitation	Announce Business Week 2015 and ensure communications and marketing reaches more businesses	Business Opportunities Breakfast date set for Thursday 2 October 2015 and announced during Business Week 2014 ‘Making it Happen’ postcard reminder of second Business Week to be sent early in January (*Database will help)
Improve marketing and collateral materials	System for overseeing marketing materials developed internally within council and proposals re City Marketing to City Board	Collateral clear out and system about to start City Board to consider at December 2015 meeting
Increase capacity to support Business Week	Secure dedicated administration and marketing/communication support	To be discussed

Improvement Recommendation Area	Suggested Action	Progress
Establish Task and Finish Group membership earlier so build into work programmes	Identify Task and Finish Group Members by end of February 2015 – strengthen role College and University	To be agreed by Economic Growth Board
Increase business ownership, delivery and management of Business Week 2015	Provide opportunities for Business Champions, Business Forums and Chamber to deliver and manage events	First opportunity to influence programme session/s to be held in February 2015 Council to focus on organising the key event, with businesses organising the other individual events – possibly using a sector approach
Programme improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Programme key note event at end of the week -Focus on key events and others self organise, invitations for which should come from one source - Look at how design events to attract all types of businesses, involve SMEs and address gender issues and increase sector involvement possibly theming each day - Include more information on Bilston, Staffordshire and Willenhall Corridor and Action Plans 	<p>Key note event programmed for Thursday</p> <p>Quality of the key note speaker is critical</p> <p>Discuss with businesses</p> <p>To adopt Business Week communication via email and event notification.</p> <p>Spoken to MP Emma Reynolds about possible involvement and Access to Business re the women entrepreneurs programme</p>
Improve targeting	More developers and investors should be targeted, including Pension Funds	Relationship building – leads to be identified *(Database to help)
Production of annual Economic Report	Explore the option for writing report within the city	To be discussed at December 2014 City Board meeting
Secure financial support	Seek sponsorship for events/week by - encouraging businesses to promote themselves at the events and in-kind support from partners	To be discussed at Economic Growth Board

Improvement Recommendation Area	Suggested Action	Progress
Announce forthcoming City procurements opportunities	Share more detail about business opportunities/contracts being let across public sector action	Procurement to be discussed at City Board in December – possible schedule of contract could be prepared for September 2015
Improve Jobs Fair event	Look to incorporate suggested improvements to future Job Fairs	Look to widen number and variety of job opportunities on offer at Job Fair, include a section for further education. Improve signage and an refreshment area for participants
Increase publicity of the hospitality offer as part of Business Week programme	Include the city's hospitality and business conferencing offer in the business week's promotional campaign.	To be built into key messages and communication plan.

Appendix A: Provides detail of achievements and feedback per Business Week event

Business Week Event	Detail of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event one: A City of Business Opportunities Breakfast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Event attendance exceeded targeted audience numbers and 92 apologies were received -Delegates told us the event improved their understanding of the business opportunities available in Wolverhampton, that the networking opportunities were useful with successful large and up and coming businesses in the city. Attendees also enjoyed the key note speaker. -Attendees also told us that they feel Wolverhampton is a place where business is supported and expressed confidence in the city's success -Delegates welcomed the support information, in particular the publication of the Wolverhampton Economic Report and the simple straightforward business support services leaflet -Looking forward to the second Business Week delegates expressed earlier notification, a preference for registering for events via email and for the second breakfast to be held mid-week and for the gender representation to be addressed. Furthermore earlier communication with Business Champions and Business Forums was requested. -In addition conference bookings at the venue have increased as a direct result of delegates attending the Opportunity Breakfast; discussions with a local events specialist company are likely to bring additional private events to the venue. Photographs from the event are being used on the venue's website to promote conferences at the venue.

Business Week Event	Detail of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event two: Fundraising Film Night</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -240 people attended a corporate social responsibility fundraising film night organised by Wolverhampton Partners in Progress Group. Raising funds to support Wolverhampton Music School and Creating Chances Trust - Officers supporting the Business Week were on hand to answer wider questions about business support and regeneration plans



Wolverhampton
Making it happen

Business Week Event	Detail of Achievement and Feedback
Event three: Global Trade Fair: Midlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- This external two day event saw 12 core seminars held, linking Wolverhampton and West Midland companies to UK Embassies across the globe. Via live video conferencing using the technology at Wolverhampton's Business Solutions Centre. It gave companies and businesses from the local region direct contact with UKTI and as well as importers and exporters from the principal trading partners of the Midlands.- In the lead up to this event, Embassies hosted Wolverhampton and West Midlands exhibition weeks.- Over 30 companies and businesses from Wolverhampton participated per seminar to improve or establish better trading links with markets



Business Week Event	Detail of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event four: A City of Investment Opportunities Conference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This City Council event attendance exceeded targeted audience numbers, enquires to attend following the City of Business Opportunities Breakfast meant delegate numbers doubled - Delegates told us the event improved their understanding of the wide range of opportunities available to invest in the City. They also were surprised by the amount of progress made/or being made in regeneration. - Potential investors present felt the opportunity to hear the experience of those that have already invested in the City and shape improvements to supporting investors was extremely useful - Networking and discussions re business opportunities and sites in detail proved popular – delegates stayed much longer than anticipated at the conference. - Looking forward those present felt the approach should be repeated although no one undertook the opportunity for site visits on the day - Follow up investor activity included in momentum plan and support improvement



Business Week Event	Detail of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event five: Business Improvement District (BID) Pre-Vote Event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This BID Company pre vote event, launched the BID Business Plan. It was well attended by city centre businesses and stakeholders including representatives from the Wolverhampton Wanderers, Mander Centre, House of Fraser, Manby Bowdler, Quicksilver and Rudells. - The profile of the BID benefited from being part of the Business Week programme, several attendees had attended other events - Delegates had the opportunity to learn all about the BID proposals in a well-equipped exhibition space within Wolverhampton's Art Gallery. It provided an intriguing venue, lending itself to different types of interaction with businesses - be it one to one, speeches and displaying materials. - Businesses received a copy of the BID Business Plan and were able to discuss how the BID works in Rugby - Rugby Rangers were on hand to talk to businesses about their role. - Feedback from businesses that attended the event was good, they felt that combining the range of events into a week long programme had the benefit of inspiring confidence that things are happening in Wolverhampton for the better. - Officers supporting the Business Week were on hand to answer wider questions about business support and regeneration plans



Wolverhampton
Making it happen

Business Week Event	Details of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event six: Wolverhampton Autumn Jobs Fair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This City Board event focused on showcasing opportunities to residents looking for work, providing access to over 44 companies (large and small with direct job opportunities. Promoting their current vacancies in engineering, hospitality, healthcare, sales, armed forces, retail, logistics, motor vehicle and others. - 10 training providers were also on hand to support local people to compete for these opportunities – to help them apply on for jobs; support their job search and be one step closer to securing employment. - A total of 1600 attended, 400 more than expected - including jobseekers, exhibitor staff and support staff - Nearly 75% of those people involved in Department of Work and Pension Snap-shot survey rated the Jobs Fair good/ok, summing up the event as useful , helpful and positive - As a result of the Jobs Fair - 25 people were offered interviews with McDonald's who employed 12 people; 50 young people signed up with KicFM opportunities; 300 people were interested and applied for Royal Mail vacancies; 50 people were invited to attend traineeships information session with Hlt training to work in the hospitality Industry; BHS increased their numbers by 300 for pre-recruitment training with interviews to follow; 30 people expressed interest in Royal Navy careers and Navy reservist opportunities; Angel Springs offered a job live at the event; Hays invited 80-100 candidates to register with them; Allied Health Care are looking to invite 30 candidates from the Jobs Fair to preliminary interviews; the Army Reservists were really impressed by level of interest and calibre of applicants and 55 people expressed interest in first stage recruitment. - 20 companies expressed interest in signed up to the Growth Pledge, all are being followed up and 8 SME's were given 12 hours of business support - All exhibitors completed evaluation forms and 100% would recommend and attend future Job Fairs - Looking forward attendees suggested a number of improvement for future Job Fairs

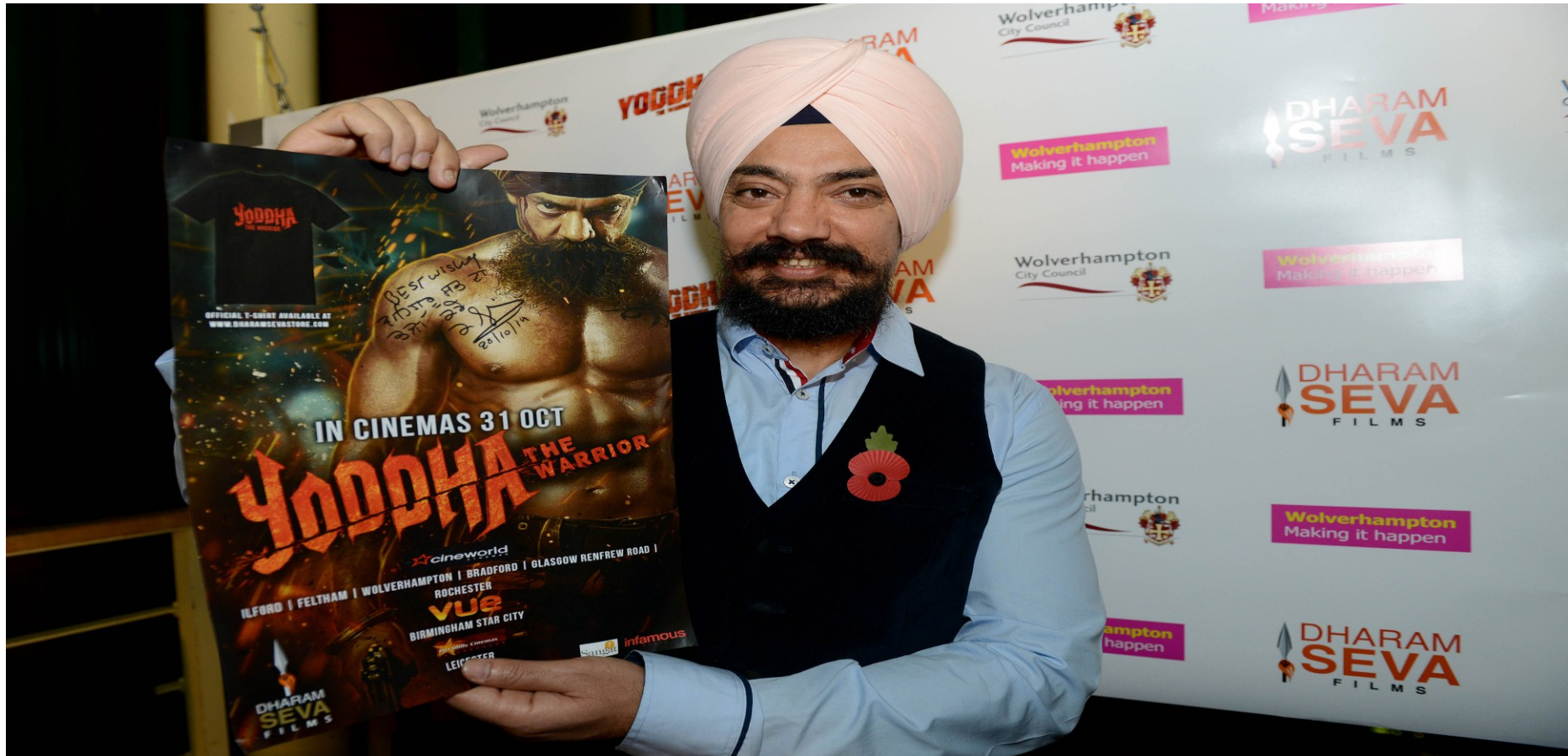


Wolverhampton
Making it happen

Business Week Event	Details of Achievement and Feedback
<p>Event seven: Green Revolution in the Black Country Event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) event brought together key players and project champions from a range of areas across the Black Country who have a role to play in developing and delivering a Green Growth Delivery Plan for the Black Country. - The session generated a wide-ranging discussion and identified potential partnerships and projects which can be developed into innovative plans to support the LEPs low carbon agenda and how to transform the Black Country into a leading center for manufacturing and environmental solutions.



Wolverhampton beat the competition to host the worldwide Punjabi film premier of Yoddah the Warrior during Business Week – the magnificent event for the city took place at the Light House Cinema on Tuesday 28 October 2015.



Wolverhampton
Making it happen

Appendix B: Details of contributors to the evaluation

Task and Finish Group members

City Board

Economic Growth Board

Business Champions

Business Forums

Delegates who attended:

- City of Business Opportunities Breakfast
- A City of Investment Opportunities Conference
- Business Improvement District (BID) Pre-Vote Event

Individual comments from people who couldn't attend the City of Business Opportunities Breakfast

Representatives from Partners in Progress

Manager House of Fraser

Chair and Manager of Bid Group

Councillors

MPs

Mayor

Express and Star

Marketing Birmingham

Wolverhampton Magazine

City of Wolverhampton Magazine

Source Wire Website

Jez Moxey

Dharam Seva Films

Wolverhampton University Marketing Staff and Students



Report prepared by Heather Ernstsons
For further information telephone 01902 551998 or email Heather.Ernstsons@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Notes