



Scrutiny Board

17 March 2015

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| Report title | First Impressions of the City | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Peter Bilson Economic Regeneration and Prosperity | |
| Wards affected | All | |
| Accountable director | Tim Johnson, Education and Enterprise | |
| Originating service | City Economy | |
| Accountable employee(s) | Keren Jones Tel Email | Service Director City Economy 01902 554739 Keren.jones@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| Report to be/has been considered by | SEB | 24 February 2015 |

Recommendation for action:

Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the progress made to implement recommendations from the First Impressions of the City Scrutiny Review, which concluded in autumn 2014.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to meet a number of key milestones in the action plan that was put in place to deliver the revised recommendations from the First Impressions of the City Scrutiny Review, which was completed in autumn 2014. It includes setting out how a joined up approach to marketing the city will be achieved. This includes work to be done with key partners improve to the visit, business and retail offer.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The First Impressions of the City Scrutiny review identified four key work streams:

| Work streams | Lead |
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| 1. Developing a joint marketing strategy and communications strategy for Wolverhampton | Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity Strategic Director Place (formerly Education and Enterprise) |
| 2. Improving the Wolverhampton Offer | Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity Cabinet Member for City Services Strategic Director Place (formerly Education and Enterprise) |
| 3. Managing and improving the reputation of Wolverhampton | Head of Transformation (formerly Policy) Head of Corporate Communications |
| 4. Harnessing the value of social media for Councillors | Head of Corporate Communications |

- 2.2 On 26 November 2014 Scrutiny Board received a marketing strategy for the Council, as part of an overall report on the C3 programme. The marketing strategy set out how the Council will identify, anticipate and satisfy customer requirements, as an integral part of the Council's transformational programme. It is structured around the following themes:

The Council's offer

- Services built around the needs of users
- Excellent customer services
- Consolidation of "digital by design" to meet the demand of an increasingly on-line and digitally connected society

- Revitalising the City Council’s branding – Wolverhampton City will be the City at the Heart of the Black Country

The overall Wolverhampton offer developed in partnership with the private, public, voluntary and community sectors:

- Increasing pride in the city and promoting it as a great place to live, visit and do business
- Building strong, strategic alliances – combining city-wide and regional resources to create a joined up and powerful “Marketing Wolverhampton” approach.

2.3 In respect of the marketing and communication of the Council’s offer, this will be embedded into everyday business.

2.4 The remainder of this report sets out the approach being taken to develop and market the City of Wolverhampton as a destination of choice, to a number of key audiences. This requires the Council to work with a wide range of partners, across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

3.0 Developing a joint marketing strategy and communications strategy for the City of Wolverhampton

3.1 There is considerable enthusiasm across the City Board and its supporting City Economic Growth and Inclusion Boards to work together in order to improve the perceptions of the city as a place to live, work, visit and do business in. The marketing approach that is being developed with partners aims not only to address the negative perceptions of the city, it is also concerned in changing attitudes and behaviours among our target audiences in order to benefit the city, its economy and its local residents. The approach will be co-ordinated with marketing approaches that are being developed around specific initiatives e.g. the Business Improvement District; the redevelopment of the Mander Centre; the Interchange Scheme; and all the individual development and inward investment opportunities across the city.

3.2 “Making it Happen” has been developed as an approach to branding with the business community. It can increasingly be seen on all marketing collateral and hoardings across the city centre. As part of the medium term city marketing strategy, the “Making it Happen” approach to branding, will be reviewed with partners and further strengthened if necessary.

3.3 The City Board and City Economic Growth Board have also developed a shared programme of activities for 2015/6 (see attached appendix 1) focused on four main marketing campaigns:

- **A city conference programme:** a local platform for showcasing and promoting opportunities to key audiences: local people (spring conference week), visitors (summer conference week) and business, developers and investors (autumn conference week).

- **Raising the city’s profile:** using major national and international events to target investors and developers.
- **A momentum programme:** focusing on key business sectors to reinforce the opportunities in the city.
- **Research and development:** identifying best practice and opportunities to improve.

3.4 An evaluation of the first city conference week has been completed, and the lessons learnt will inform future conference programmes (see attached appendix 2).

3.5 This programme has deliberately been quite tactical in order to make it sufficiently practical for a range of partners to participate in an active way. It is recognised that a more strategic approach is now required if there is to be a significant shift in the way in which the city is perceived. A medium to long-term marketing strategy is now being developed under the auspices of the Economic Growth Board, based on the following framework, which sets out the key audiences and the marketing objectives:

| Delivering a stronger City Economy Impressions of the City - marketing framework | |
|---|--|
| Audience | Objective and approach |
| Policy and decision makers | Influence policy and decision making so that it is beneficial to the city - by compiling and communicating a strong and persuasive case for the city, based on robust information and analysis. |
| External Funders | Increase confidence among external funders in order that the city increases its success rate in securing resources for projects and programmes - by demonstrating and communicating that the city and its partners are reliable and effective deliverers of economic and social outcomes. |
| Inward Investors | Attract new high growth businesses that bring new jobs and local supply chain opportunities - by promoting the benefits of the City’s strategic growth areas and corridors as a business location. |
| Developers | Support economic growth and a better quality of life offer for local residents - by building partnerships and collaborations attractive to developers so that they take forward strategic economic regeneration schemes. |
| Existing businesses | Create and safeguard jobs and increasing business survival rates - by effectively marketing the support available for entrepreneurs and local businesses through the Black Country Growth Hub, in order that more businesses take up that support. |

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| Visitors | Increase footfall and visitor spend in cultural, leisure, hospitality and retail venues - by marketing a diverse visitor offer and a joined up visitor information service, particularly for the city centre. |
| Residents | Increase the take up of pathways to employment, health, leisure and cultural activities - by marketing a joined up offer to residents that makes it easy for them to participate in the opportunities available. |
| Students, learners and volunteers | Increase the numbers of learners and volunteers in the city - by promoting the range of flexible and affordable, opportunities to learn and gain skills and qualifications that are relevant to the world of work and can contribute to local people's quality of life. |

- 3.6 The next step is to produce a single, shared narrative for the city, “the Wolverhampton Story”, which will form the basis of the marketing strategy, key marketing messages and a series of supporting action plans for each market segment. It is planned to complete this work by May 2015.
- 3.7 Work is underway, and is being facilitated by the Service Director City Economy and the Head of Corporate Communications. A more detailed report will be presented to Cabinet Resources in June 2015.

4.0 Improving the Wolverhampton Offer

- 4.1 The First Impressions of the City Scrutiny Review also identified the need to improve the city's offer, taking into account business and resident perception surveys and other evidence bases.
- 4.2 The “Wolverhampton Story” will also take into account not only the existing offer, but the plans for improving the offer across the council, public, private, voluntary and community sector partners. It will also take into account a number of strategic drivers such as:
- The move towards a Combined Authority in the West Midlands.
 - The evidence, findings and agreed actions from the Council's skills and employment review and the outcomes from the Skills and Employment Commission.
 - Ongoing work in the city's three major strategic growth areas: City Centre, Junction 2 and Bilston.
 - Ongoing investment in the city's and wider Black Country's infrastructure
 - Ongoing improvements in further and higher education being made by the university and college, as well as the Council's own success in achieving and outstanding Adult Education Service.
 - The successful vote to create a Business Improvement District for the City centre, which is retail led, and will have significant marketing resources.

5.0 Managing and improving the reputation of the city

- 5.1 Regarding managing and improving the reputation of the city, a number of actions were accepted by Cabinet and have now been actioned.
- 5.2 The LGA's communications approach, 'Building Trust' has been included in the developing communications approach for the organisation, which will go forward to Cabinet in Summer 2015.
- 5.3 Ensuring there is a robust evidence base for the perceptions of the city remains critical. When the next residents' opinion survey is commissioned, likely summer 2015, then the specific questions proposed by the review on what people think about the city and the current offer will be included.
- 5.4 To further support the evidence base for public perception, relevant survey responses are included on the '[Wolverhampton in Profile](#)' local information site to use as evidence for future plans.
- 5.5 Managing and improving the reputation of the city are also heavily connected to improving the city's core 'offer'. Part of the ongoing work of the council's corporate communications team is informing local people and raising their awareness of work to regenerate and improve the city. The team make use of a wide range of channels to deliver this with an increasing emphasis on digital and social media channels such as Wolverhampton Today (36,000 followers) and @wolvescouncil (9,000 followers). This increasingly means working in partnership with colleagues from other organisations - a fact supported by the recent formation of a communications sub-group to the City Board. The role of this group is to develop and implement the City Board's communication 'plan-on-a-page' for 2015/16.
- 5.6 Effective communication campaign management is another element to improve perceptions of the city for people who live, visit and work/invest here. The corporate communications team are developing and implementing a number of core, planned and sustained campaigns focused on:
- 'Making it Happen' – encouraging new investment, regeneration, growth and prosperity
 - 'Cleaner, greener better' – promoting the city as a great place to live and 'pride in place'
 - 'Better schools' – demonstrating the ongoing work to improve educational attainment and standards
 - 'Pride in the City' – focusing on the great people and places that make this city unique

6.0 Harnessing the value of social media for Councillors

- 6.1 The City Council already has well established corporate social media channels in place. These are vital to public relations and engagement activity. Increasing social media engagement by Councillors could help boost local participation in the day-to-day political and democratic life of the Council. Development sessions are being planned by the

Director of Governance - who has considerable expertise in this area - and the corporate communications team for interested Councillors. These will include the benefits and pitfalls of social media use and practical examples of how tools such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to engage local constituents in local democracy.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 There is a dedicated budget of £50,000 to support the City Marketing Strategy. Alongside this external funding and partner contributions are sought. The proposed report to Cabinet Resources in June 2015 will include outcomes from a mapping exercise of available resources across the city.

[MF/05032015/T]

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

[RB/05032015/Q]

9.0 Equalities implications

- 9.1 When developing the marketing strategy, plan, marketing channels and collateral the needs of all audiences will be taken into account, including those groups with protected characteristics.

10.0 Environmental implications

- 10.1 The quality of the environment has an important role to play in respect of people's first impressions of the city. The approach to the regeneration of the city, is to ensure all new developments contribute sympathetically and positively to the urban fabric. The new Wolverhampton BID has also prioritised the management of the public realm as a priority.

11.0 Human resources implications

- 11.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12.0 Corporate Landlord Implications

- 12.1 Management of the Council's own estate also has a key role to play in who the city looks and feels, as the council is responsible for a considerable number of landmark and prominent buildings.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

Appendix 1 City Board Marketing Comms Plan
Appendix 2 Business Week 2014 Evaluation