



● **Tim Johnson** <tim.johnson@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

To: des duggal

Cc: Labour Leaders Office, Richard Lawrence, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), Councillor Steve Evans, John Roseblade, Isobel Woods, Councillor Paul Sweet, Councillor Ellis Turrell, Councillor Simon Bennett, Councillor Lynne Moran, cherry, jane.stevenson.mp@parliament.uk, mcfaddenp@parliament.uk, Councillor Wendy Thompson, Stuart Anderson, Councillor Sohail Khan, Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman, Martin Stevens Hide

Thu, 13 Apr at 15:30 ☆

Sensitivity: RESTRICTED

Dear WSTG

Thank you for your message that was received at 23.41 on the 6 April.

I want to reiterate the intention behind the relaunch grant scheme is to offer eligible businesses a one-off amount to relaunch their trading activities and seize upon the opportunities presented by the multi-million-pound investment in improved public realm and public spaces. It is not intended to recompense for loss or hardship.

It has been developed following consideration at Scrutiny Board on the 14 March and unanimous support from the traders to pursue the option of a one off payment. The Urgent Cabinet decision supporting the scheme was approved following due process which included the consultation of the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Board.

The scheme involves the substantial investment of £350,000 of taxpayers money into the direct support of the businesses in question, despite there being no legal obligation for the council to do so.

As has been mentioned local businesses can also apply for a form of Business Rate relief and support that could include hardship relief, and a wider package of business support is underway as officers begin to visit businesses to look at other programmes of business support.

With all of this in mind it is considered that the offer is fair and constitutes justifiable use of public funds.

This is the councils final position so I would encourage all businesses that are eligible to apply for the funding before the scheme closes on 12 May.

Regards

Tim Johnson
Chief Executive
City of Wolverhampton Council



● **Tim Johnson** Sensitivity: RESTRICTED Good afternoon Des Thank you for the emai Wed, 22 Mar at 13:31 ☆



● **des duggal** <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Cc: Ian Fegan (he/him), Richard Lawrence, Stephen Simkins, Tim Johnson, Councillor Steve Evans and 1 more...



Wed, 22 Mar at 16:59 ☆

No problem Tim,

I have resent as word documents as well.

Regards

Billy

> [Show original message](#)

[Download all attachments as a zip file](#)



Response t... .docx
25kB



WSTG Mee... .docx
20.2kB

Below are documents attached



Date: 20th March 2023

To Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

CC: Tim Johnson
Ian Brookfield
Richard Lawrence
Stephen Simkins
Ian Fegan
Steve Evans

Following the meeting held 13th March 2023, where findings of RSM and options of way forward were presented to the Westside Traders Subgroup to discuss and review with the Westside Traders Group (WSTG).

We were informed that the presentation above was to be made public at the Scrutiny Meeting to be held 14th March 2023 and we were welcome to attend in person or online.

As mentioned in the email 20th March a number of businesses watched the Scrutiny Meeting and were not in agreement of how the council has misrepresented the information to deflect their own failings in regard to the whole situation. This has been further reinforced by the earlier meeting held on 15th February as part of the Economic Growth, which Westside were unaware of.

Westside Subgroup held a meeting 20th March with WSTG to discuss and review the 2 options presented. Please find attached minutes of the meeting and a list of businesses that were in attendance and those that were unavailable to attend but communicated their preferred choice of option.

Of the 48 businesses listed 23 attended and 17 apologised but gave their vote in a text giving us an overall majority of businesses choosing **Option 2**. 8 businesses did not attend with no reason given and we can only assume that they will communicate, liaise directly with council as the deadline is short.

We have updated the list of businesses as supplied by Isobel. Both options were presented for discussion and concerns, issues raised were documented below and **it is the request of the WSTG that due attention be paid to it**. WSTG have maintained full transparency for all businesses. We cannot be held accountable for how the information shared on WSTG will be used.

CONCERNS ARISING FROM SCRUTINY-

1. We were disappointed with the misrepresentation of facts at the aforementioned meetings above i.e., Scrutiny (March) and Economic growth (February). We state for the record again that **NO CONSULTATION** took place with Westside businesses prior to the commencement of pedestrianisation works November 2021.
2. It was the traders that came together as WSTG and brought to the attention of the Council, the concerns over the impact that the roadworks were and still having on business where it was highlighted about the significant drop in footfall and sales turnover for businesses.



3. WSTG demonstrated to the Council and delegates of both parties, the failings of the council in its duty of care and lack of diligence to the livelihoods of businesses and the **FINANCIAL HARDSHIP** they caused as a result of the lack of consultation. By their own admission Council undertaking 5 years of development in approximately 15 months which is now looking to be 17-18 months and counting.
4. Council instructed what we were told were independent management accountants to undertake a financial review to ascertain losses incurred as a result of impact of roadworks. SCA Management accountants were employed by Council to Conduct financial review. The work undertaken by SCA revealed significant concerns and flaws which WSTG highlighted. All data was provided to financial review by WSTG. Suggestions made to council by WSTG to consider 2018/2019 accounts, which was rejected by Council together with other options not too dissimilar to that of RSM's findings. Isobel admitted that **no auditing/validation was carried out of SCA work** which revealed issues which were communicated to Council. Therefore, it was not a rejection by WSTG of SCA's work but the conduct and quality of work that was carried out by them which produced anomalies and incorrect representation of data of WSTG. Hence as it was flagged up to Council with possible solution of window change – Council suggested appointing RSM to review process etc at no doubt great expense. Is this not a waste of taxpayers monies? First through employment of SCA and then RSM.
5. **Westside businesses were literally cut off with barriers** and construction site that was created with poor signage and barriers which a great number of customers could not manoeuvre around.
6. **Contractor Eurovia not being held to account on their delays and slowness of the project** due to materials delays and other poor management during the course of the works. We have sufficient documentary evidence that has been shared with council.
7. For the record at the scrutiny meeting, it was evident that Council alluded to WSTG were responsible for delays when that was clearly not the case. I.e. When the meeting was held 5th Dec 2022 (moved from 27th Nov) Council had failed Westside in having promised a event to drum up business for Xmas period for westside and furthermore it was WSTG that highlighted the lack of inclusion with the rest of the city. No Xmas lights, the barriers still blocking any Xmas footfall as Victoria St appeared to all as a closed construction site. It was Cllr Simkins who stated that their were approximately less than 2 weeks where businesses could at least get some Xmas lights and possibly gain some Xmas trade. So, Council responding to WSTG and removing barriers was not the real delay as it was the materials and Eurovia's own delays.
8. Council are requested to consider the fact that they have slowed the whole process, during which several businesses have closed. **There is no "at pace"** as the Council keeps alluding. They have insulted the intelligence of WSTG as we have come a further 8 months down the line with no financial hardship payment of the **SIGNIFICANT** losses that businesses have incurred because of the poor management decisions made. The one-off payment should certainly bear this in mind as we were promised by Cllr Simkins in front of over 8 Councillors, Opposition members including MP Stuart Anderson that businesses would not suffer. **Council NEED TO MAKE GOOD ON THIS** as even more negative press demonstrates to the general public the lack of confidence in the current Council in its decision-making process.

confidence in the current Council in its decision-making process.

9. Unlike new businesses that have opened up knowing the risks, those very businesses that have had to suffer on their account and not through their own choices. **No time was given for long standing businesses to plan.** The Council need to mitigate losses of businesses through their(council) failings not viabilities of the business. Council need to be held accountable for this and rectify what general public also sees.
10. **Option 2 needs to bear consideration of fairness to businesses** considering the losses of long standing existing who have been present for the duration of the works and those who have just recently opened. A fair way to approach this would be to consider the number of months of impact as opposed to it being generic across the board, or even a tiered approach.
11. If **Option 1** was taken up by businesses, this would be extremely expensive exercise for council to employ and administer. We have no choice but to agree with the directed choice with the caveat that it is not to be misleading as WSTG have been misled to date. Council should not treat this as a gesture of goodwill but realistic of losses pertaining to the roadworks, hence should be reflective of losses incurred.
12. To avoid further negative press at this crucial time, it is in the interest of the Council to be just in requesting a financial hardship package where possibly a tiered approach be considered as part of the relaunch grant application.
13. We would like to Council to reveal RSM recommendations in the final report.
14. Scrutiny board were not happy with receiving information at the 11th hour. Neither are WSTG. We have been forced to make a directed choice led by the council to accept without any knowledge or insight of what the financial pot might be. In this case a simple pot of money in a relaunch should not downplay the losses incurred by businesses and this would be an insult to injury, particularly as it has been dragged out by the Council and not WSTG.
15. **Clarity of the TIMELINE together with what data will be required from businesses etc.** - this to be done prior to the recommendations being presented on 27th March to the leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Cllr Simkins. WSTG request visibility to preview recommendations to ensure that points raised here have been taken into consideration.
16. Any Businesses who chose to invest in the area mid-way during roadworks of after the initial SCA financial health check should be excluded from any grants. It should also bear consideration to businesses who have not been operational by their own choice i.e. not actively trading as it may be viable for them to just pay minimal overheads whilst remaining closed.
17. Whatever level of taxpayer's money has been wasted by Council on the inadequate assessment of SCA and subsequent evaluations by RSM should not impact or come out of the pot that Westside should receive.

Scrutiny ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that the people taking decisions are held accountable for those decisions. Good scrutiny also ensures that there are opportunities for the public to influence and improve the services they receive.



● **des duggal** <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>



Mon, 6 Mar at 10:36 ☆

To: John Roseblade

Cc: Isobel Woods, Councillor Stephen Simkins,
Councillor Steve Evans, Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor and 5 more...

Dear John,

Thank you for your prompt response.

We will be attending and look forward to what the findings revealed and how we can move forward in a congruent timely manner.

Kind regards

Billy on behalf of Des & WSTG

> Show original message



● **John Roseblade** <john.roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk>



Fri, 3 Mar at 17:57 ☆

To: des duggal

Cc: Isobel Woods, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Councillor Steve Evans, Marianne Page,
Ruth Taylor, Ian Fegan (he/him), Crissie Rushton, Richard Lawrence, Tim Johnson,
Mark Taylor Hide

Hello Des

I am sorry to hear the traders feel that way. Cllr Evans comments echo what we have said as a council on the public record and I know he is really keen to ensure that we resolve this situation and support businesses, not only where there is clear evidence of loss as a direct result of the public realm work, but also with investment in events and marketing support.

To that end, as you know, we commissioned RSM to review the previous business support review approach and advise on how the council can move forward to ensure that any future use of taxpayers funds is underpinned by clear evidence and data which withholds public scrutiny.

I am pleased to say that we have received their final report, with recommendations, today (Friday 3 March).

I'm sure you will understand as business leaders that we will need to review their findings, clarify and/or challenge the methodology and recommendations and then determine a very clear timeline for the way forward. That will involve sharing the findings and recommendations with yourself, Billy and other colleagues on the WSTG.

With this in mind I will be in touch again next week. In the meantime, I would like to propose a meeting for the evening of the 13 March here at the Civic Centre. Please could you check to see if this is agreeable to WSTG.

I note your comments about Salop Street being closed and dug up again. I do need to point out that this is emergency works by Cadent – not the Council, in order to locate and fix a gas leak. This is obviously beyond our control however our street works team are involved in making sure the reinstatement of their excavations is up to specification.

Regards

John Roseblade
Director of Resident Services
Tel. Office: 01902 555755
Tel. Mobile: 07825 530368

[E-mail: John.Roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:John.Roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk)



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

Fri, 3 Mar at 10:53 ☆

To: John Roseblade

Cc: Isobel Woods, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Councillor Steve Evans, Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Ian Fegan (he/him), Crissie Rushton, Richard Lawrence, Tim Johnson, Mark Taylor Hide

Dear John

The recent Express & Star responses made by the Council via Cllr Evans over the last few days has created uproar amongst us traders. It is another blow by the council to deflect their lack of ownership of the problems they have created for businesses. More importantly it is an insult to businesses as it has the condemnation that the majority of businesses around the Westside area are incompetent when we have clearly demonstrated where that actually lies. We apologise for the harsh response but the blame and lack of support is deliberate through the obstacles created by the council and the poor choice of advisors and council not auditing the quality of their own briefs given to management accountants Council employed.

As a bench mark if several businesses have shown losses why would the others not have irrespective of what Councillor Evans is saying as "erroneous information".

It was a misleading statement:

- 1 - Councillor Evans failed to state a review (RSM) has been actioned in dispute to out come of the findings by Sam's team
- 2 - the £5k payment was highlighted as a initial start of what was yet TBA
- 3 - the fact that I asked them personally why can't they accept statements from individual businesses from our accounts to prove the damage done by these works .
- 4 - he also failed to mention the delays , and lack of communication from the contractors appointed etc .

We have been very respectful to this situation and resolving the plight of westside, however the council are clearly taking this as a weakness and any further delays in providing suitable financial hardship for the majority of businesses will have a severe detrimental effect on the Council as a vote of no confidence in them as they currently stand.

We urge a conducive outcome as the businesses have suffered enough. The failure of businesses is as a direct impact of Councils poor management. This is further demonstrated by Salop St being closed and dug up again. Who is auditing the council and its subconscious on their failings. The public see this.

Regards

Des & Billy on behalf of WSTG



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

Fri, 17 Feb at 22:33 ☆

To: Councillor Stephen Simkins, Isobel Woods, Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Ian Fegan (he/him), Crissie Rushton, Keepers, John Roseblade Hide
Cc: Richard Lawrence, Tim Johnson, Councillor Steve Evans

To:
Isobel Woods
John Roseblade

CC: Tim Johnson
Ian Brookfield
Richard Lawrence
Stephen Simkins
Ian Fegan
Steve Evans

Further to chaser email sent 12th January requesting an update, the WSTG are extremely disappointed with the poor response from Council. We like to iterate delaying tactics after council stipulated that the company RSM was deliberately chosen for the urgency and quick turnaround. Isobel had stated she was in communication on a "daily" basis as it was at the forefront of ensuring businesses were supported and council understood how imperative the activity was.

So please can you explain why from 5th Dec.2022 we are now 17th February and still businesses have been failed by:-

1. Delay in any form of response from council after setting RSM turnaround was 2-3 weeks. So by 3rd week of January the Council should have delivered its findings. It is now 10weeks from the last time we met.
2. Businesses have still not seen any further financial business support other than the token gesture which was made in December- which was clearly for making statements to press that they are supporting businesses when in fact they are failing on making good on their deliverables.
3. Delay of completion by over a month to March.
4. Why are the Council continuously being negligent towards Westside businesses.
5. Council by their delayed response, are ensuring more businesses close. Where is the fairness?
6. Councillor Simkins on 2nd February asked for our request for an update to be responded to following a chaser email from Westside asking for update 12th January. Still no response!
7. Can Council come clean and deal with Businesses honestly and respectfully. Cllr Evans stated that they have monthly meeting supporting businesses. How are the Council enacting this exactly? Businesses are being failed by the false statements being released to press. Westside see these as deliberate delaying tactics of the Council.
8. Westside businesses need clarity and a response now as to why the urgency of peoples livelihoods is not on top of their agenda and of paramount importance when it was their failings that brought us here.
9. It will be a year in March when the problem was first highlighted and only 7 businesses have had a miniscule amount of what they have lost, whilst others have not even had anything and some businesses have closed
10. Council hold businesses accountable for making good on their timescales yet they continuously fail on theirs.
11. Westside invite senior council delegates Council Leader Ian Brookfield, Tim Johnson, Stephen Lawrence to address these issues with the integrity Westside businesses deserve. It is not right that the Council are seeing to be effective but really are creating false illusions to all and sundry including the press. This is not acceptable. Who scrutinizes Councils decisions and failings?

We look forward to an immediate response to make good on their financial hardship support for Westside businesses. A major factor of businesses closing have been as a direct consequence of roadworks and failed consultation from outset.

On behalf of Westside Traders Group (WSTG)

Despite repeated requests no update provided.



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: Isobel Woods, Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Ian Fegan (he/him), Crissie Rushton and 3 more...
Cc: Richard Lawrence

Thu, 2 Feb at 19:59

Hi,

Please could you provide an update of when the next meeting will be as you specified that you were expecting RSM were scheduled to present back to council findings of their activity.

Also we have not received updated council presentation slides which John/Isobel was going to send out following 5th December meeting.

We cannot emphasise that businesses are needing responses as patience is wearing thin, especially as there seems to lots of negative press - most recent being Toni & Guy.

Kind regards

Billy

> Show original message



Councillor Stephen Simkins <stephen.simkins@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

To: des duggal, Isobel Woods, Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Ian Fegan (he/him) and 3 more...
Cc: Richard Lawrence

Thu, 2 Feb at 20:09

Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Hi All, can we please get this resolved?

Steve

This meeting referred to below in email 16.Jan.23 never took place with Traders group only sub-group 13th March was suppose to be end of Jan 23

Update on Westside Traders regarding the review with RSM 3

Yahoo/Inbox



Isobel Woods <isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

To: des duggal
Cc: Richard Lawrence, Ian Fegan (he/him), Councillor Stephen Simkins

Mon, 16 Jan at 08:36

Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for coming back to the team during December with permission to share your financial information collated during the summer, with RSM. RSM have been appointed to review the overall approach and the financial information submitted in regards to the improvement works underway in the city. They are planning to present their report at the end of January.

Once the council has received details from RSM when their report is to be received, a meeting will be arranged with representatives of the Westside Traders group.

Kr
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Tel. Office: 01902 551848
Tel. Mobile: 07866 564932

E-mail: Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk
City of Wolverhampton Council

The email below was sent to all businesses on personal email addresses that the council hold.

From a GDPR perspective as the council are a data controller, we would like to know how the data was going to be used by RSM. Also what data was passed to them. Can council confirm all additional information that businesses supplied to them was forwarded. No one in the West Traders Group were approached by RSM as we were led to believe. What did RSM do with WSTG data.

RSM - Permission for information to be shared 2 Yahoo/A-westsi... ★

B Bilvir Chander-Kumar <bilvirck@yahoo.com> Tue, 3 Jan at 15:06 ★
To: BusinessDevelopment@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Further to the letter received 22nd December 2022, firstly I apologise for delay in response as I have been quite poorly over the Xmas period.

This is to confirm permission to share information with RSM who have been recently appointed to review health check.

I have also included a pack of information which I would like to be passed on to RSM to ensure there is no omission of data. Please forward to them the 6 attachments below.

I look forward to hearing from them.

Kind Regards,

B Chander-Kumar

[Download all attachments as a zip file](#)

				
2-WestsideR....pdf 243.2kB	3-CWC-Sup... .pdf 426.2kB	4-CWC-Sup... .pdf 1005.9kB	5-Victoria R... .pdf 168.5kB	6-Complaint....pdf 125.9kB

The documents below would clearly demonstrate to RSM that there was just cause for financial hardship payment. As it demonstrated realistic losses and drop in footfall.

 1-Westside Healthcheck challenges template	Micr
 2-WestsideRetailerMeetingMinutes7Apr22	Micr
 3-CWC-SupportingDocFinal-Equinox	Micr
 4-CWC-SupportingDocFinal-Equinox-18Nov22Submission	Micr
 5-Victoria Road Improvement Letter to Businesses Healthcheck outcomeWestsideResponse1	Micr
 6-Complaint Wolv CC - 16th December 2022-1	Micr

“IMPORTANT/ACTION REQUIRED: RSM appointed to review financial health check approach”

Yahoo/A-westsi... ★



Business Development <business.development@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: Business Development

Tue, 3 Jan at 12:55 ★

Sensitivity: RESTRICTED

Dear Colleague

Further to your letter from Isobel Woods on 23rd December headed “**IMPORTANT/ACTION REQUIRED: RSM appointed to review financial health check approach**”

This requested your permission by today for the Council to share information you have already provided to SCA Management Consulting LTD with RSM.

If you are happy to do so, please Email BusinessDevelopment@wolverhampton.gov.uk or call 07971 837298 confirming that you are happy for your business details, financial information for trading periods and any comments made to SCA, to be passed on to RSM – by today (Tuesday 3rd January).

Thanks and regards

Business Development Team
City of Wolverhampton Council



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

Fri, 16 Dec 2022 at 09:15 ☆

To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade
Cc: Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), Tim Johnson, Richard Lawrence, steve.evans4@wolverhampton.gov.uk, labourleadersoffice@wolverhampton.gov.uk Hide

To Isobel Woods
John Roseblade

Hi

Further to the letter received dated 14th December to the 7 businesses who demonstrated financial losses from the health check. It should be duly noted that this is another prime example of where the council have changed the parameters from stating they would pay the 7 of the 11 businesses the amounts following the financial health check - now pending the review.

It is disappointing that the amount of £5k being paid out is not what was expected. Whilst it is appreciated as a gesture, this does not mitigate losses proven by the 7 businesses and others.

In light of the council delays and that we are at the 16th December, we expect that if the pending review is not concluded by 20th January, then the balance of the health check amount for the 7 businesses should be paid.

This for WSTG is a milestone date and condition that should be honored by the council whilst the finer details of the independent company is being fast tracked.

We look forward to a confirmation of the **next date in January** for the monthly meeting.

Kind regards

Westside Traders Group (WSTG)



● **Bilvir Chander-Kumar** <bilvirck@yahoo.com>

To: Isobel Woods

Cc: Des Duggal



Wed, 14 Dec 2022 at 23:15 ☆

To Isobel,

In response to correspondence received today.

Kind regards

Billy

On Wednesday, 14 December 2022 at 17:01:16 GMT, Isobel Woods <isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk> wrote:

Sensitivity: PROTECT

Dear Billy

Please find attached a letter in regards to a disturbance payment. Please review and do come back if you have any questions. The time set out in the letter is to ensure I meet the payment run in the council.

Kr
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Email: isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Mobile 07866 564932

City of Wolverhampton Council

The emailed letter below was sent to those 5 business of the 11 who demonstrated a loss. This letter clearly demonstrates that Council admitted that businesses demonstrated a works-related financial loss, hence the initial payment of £5000 was given. The balance was never paid.

Please note - Now it is referred to as a disturbance payment.

Email contact: BusinessDevelopment@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Address: Civic Centre, St Peters Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1RP

Contact number: 01902 556879

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Ms Kumar

Equinox Gifted

49 Victoria Street

14 December 2022

Dear Ms Kumar

URGENT AND IMPORTANT: Initial Victoria Street Work Disruption Payment

As confirmed in the meeting with Westside Trader's Group representatives on 5 December, the Council is currently prioritising urgent payments to those businesses who, through the financial health check carried out by independent business advisors, that have clearly demonstrated a works-related financial loss.

This offer is not a legal obligation of the Council and is made as a goodwill and entirely discretionary gesture and does not set any precedent for this or any similar situation. This initial payment will be £5,000.

So we can process this payment quickly, please can you:

- Confirm your acceptance of this offer in writing by email or letter by 12 noon, on Friday 16 December so payment can be made on Monday 19 December directly into your business trading [account](#)
- Provide your business trading account bank details including a) business trading account name b) sort code c) account [number](#)

You will also be aware that council is currently looking to swiftly engage, using a fast-track route, a firm of accountants with significant expertise and experience, to audit the current process and make recommendations to the council and the traders group.

Subject to progress on the current contract negotiations, the council aims to start this contract before Christmas with review work starting before the end of the year.

Given this ongoing review, we want to be clear that accepting this money will not affect your position should the council receive recommendations following the audit.

City of Wolverhampton Council

 wolverhampton.gov.uk

 @WolvesCouncil

 WolverhamptonToday

Sensitivity: PROTECT

Kind regards

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise

E-mail: Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk



● **des duggal** <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Cc: Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), Tim Johnson, Richard Lawrence, steve.evans4@wolverhampton.gov.uk and 1 more...



Tue, 13 Dec 2022 at 21:40 ☆

Good evening,

Apologies for the delay in responding to the meeting held 5th December at the Council Offices.

We request the attached document be looked at as a matter of urgency as the situation is becoming quite dire and requires intervention from decision makers. We have shared this with the Westside Traders Group (WSTG).

Kind Regards

Billy

> [Show original message](#)



5Dec-WSTG... .pdf

See attachment below - WSTG Response:

WSTG minutes to meeting 5th Dec 2022

Commercially Sensitive

Date: 5th December 2022

	Council Attendance	Westside Attendees	Company & Representing Westside Traders Group
Isobel Woods	Attended	Des	XBrand Furniture
John Roseblade	Attended	Billy	Equinox
		Esmea	Tunwells
CC: Tim Johnson	Abstained	Kimberley	Richard & Co Hairdressers
Ian Brookfield	Abstained	Wayne	Framers Gallery
Richard Lawrence	Abstained	Owen	George Wallis
Stephen Simkins	Attended	Andrew	Faith Hope & Charity
Ian Fegan	Attended	Vijay	Native Menswear
Steve Evans	Abstained	Nico (late)	Nimo's
		Bruce	Ill

Cllr Simkins, council members have stated that they want to pay 7 of the business that demonstrated a loss from the health check that was submitted, whilst independent company to review process is being procured. No Date Was Given by Council!

Cllr Simkins and members agreed that a caveat will be included to ensure and reflect any subsequent findings/changings for those of the businesses that will be paid.

WSTG Subgroup expressed **that they are not happy** with this as it means waiting longer for any financial hardship support, when businesses are already on the brink.

The meeting was scheduled to be held at Equinox on 5th Dec, however due to sensitivity of, what we now understand to be a BBC, Isobel suggested it be moved to Council Offices. Temperaments of traders are running high as they see nothing but delaying tactics by a council who is not showing care or concern.

Response to council

1. We are disappointed that a number of council senior representatives **chose not** to attend the meeting.
2. We are disappointed that it has taken Isobel 5 weeks to respond to the clear presentation on the 7th November of issues Westside have encountered with the Health Check. This was an action point that arose from Cllr Simkins meeting October, requesting Isobel, John, Billy, Des & Esmea to understand issues around the health check. Miscommunication and failings came to light.
3. Westside also demonstrated clearly an amicable solution that would resolve the failings of the health check. It was made clear by Cllr Simkins that the understanding of the health check required just the **sales turnover of 2 periods would demonstrate losses as a result of the** and not the full income and expenditure cash flow as businesses were required to provide. It had been raised at the time when Isobel was questioned over how the data collected from businesses would be used.

WSTG minutes to meeting 5th Dec 2022

Commercially Sensitive

4. Following email received from Isobel see below, Cllr Simkins had requested Ian Fagan be actioned to set team up to look at the sales turnover again. Ian has subsequently declined and referred it back to Isobel, to whom we have already demonstrated issues.

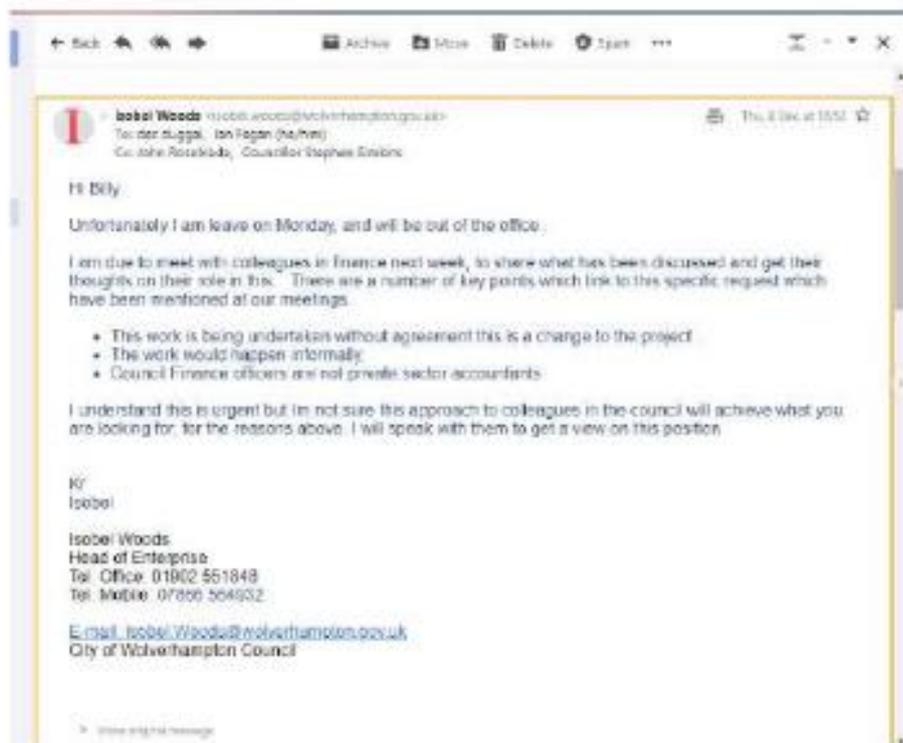
Over 20 businesses have submitted updated information based on new window.

Isobel stated that not all businesses submitted data to her using the same spreadsheet format. Some submitted management accounts showing profit and loss. Hence, she is not wanting to look at this, currently.

Isobel is insisting that the parameters have changed in terms of the window being moved by 3 months and deems it to be a new project, which WSTG disagrees with.

WSTG emphasised the **real data is more relevant** and that factoring still needs to be considered to help businesses and hospitality as covid restrictions were still in place.

Additionally, this easily demonstrates the real losses experienced businesses using the new window, which the council are in denial of.



5. **Cllr Simkins stated that the spreadsheet was never seen by him.** He commented that it should have been based on sales turnover and not income and expenditure cashflow. This clearly demonstrates that the remit of what Sam and his team were to undertake was not clearly specified from the outset, hence a lot of confusion could have been avoided.

Cllr Simkins realised that the turnover should have been kept separate, as merging it with the health check is what's caused the issues. It is the businesses that are bearing the brunt of the mistakes that council are making. They are the ones whose livelihoods are at stake whilst council can write it off as a learning at Westsides expense. This is not acceptable.



Cllr Simkins has asked for a council finance team to address see if there is a possibility to re-use of the spreadsheet template showing the new window as it is clear that there is a lack of understanding of the spreadsheet by senior members.

6. Isobel stated that an independent specialist company has been identified and is looking to be procured by council to review the processes, where failings, mismanagement, miscommunication etc has occurred between council and Westside businesses. Council have stated that they understand the urgency and John Roseblade confirmed it would be fast-tracked. **WSTG are concerned as unnecessary additional expenditure to prove their failings and negligence and further the delays in paying hardship relief.**
7. Isobel stated that Sam still needs to be given an opportunity to respond to issues and concerns raised by WSTG around the health checks. **Isobel needs all comments from Westside traders about the conduct of data collection by Sam and his team. This should be no later than Friday 9th Dec as council need to do an internal contract review. Any issues businesses found must be sent in via email.**

WSTG thanks those businesses that have already submitted comments.

8. **Westside have explained sheer disappointment on the failings of Eurovia/Council :**
1. Not sorting out delivery access for businesses when it should have been done over 2 months ago.
 2. The misuse of space at Bell Square wrt parking vehicles and making the whole space look like a Construction site.
 3. Reduce unnecessary barriers and create accessible walkways with Health and Safety in mind.
 4. Slowness of actually getting work done.
 5. Improved street lighting.
 6. No Xmas lights or lamp posts.
 7. No Christmas activity to generate/drum up trade for Westside.
 8. Westside suggested activities to coincide with an event to consider business trail.

Cllr Simkins stated he would like to meet with senior manager of Eurovia to challenge their lack of care or concern over businesses and urgency of work/ delays/failings and conduct in which works are being carried out.

WSTG requested a date of 19th Dec to get a review. This needs to be confirmed to be Confirmed with council.

9. THE RATIONALE

WSTG strongly suggest data using new window be adopted and payments made accordingly. This is the easiest option to help businesses.

The outcome of the meeting is not acceptable as WSTG see it as further delays. Yes, you have agreed to pay 7 of the businesses. The WSTG suggest council should invest in someone sitting and looking at the data that they already collected and give each business at a minimum, a payment for hardship relief with a freeze of the business rates. Until this inquiry into the failings has been looked at. You cannot expect people to survive on thin air. Why should the councils' failings compromise businesses livelihoods.



WSTG have given the council every opportunity to support businesses and they have not come back with any constructive conducive plan other than an independent company to prove where they went wrong and how to rectify it. Thus, is at the cost of businesses going under. Council accountability is for them to look at. We need someone who understands and can work with the information already supplied. I.e. a finance person.

As businesses we are within our rights to change parameters especially if the process is based on base information that is not totally conducive to the process. Unless you write exactly what has been agreed, you as the council will chose to say what you believe not what we understand and are forced to take on only later to be told we agreed with it.

It is clear right from the outset the remit for health check/data collection has been convoluted and not clearly defined. Council have been selective in how they used or in this cased misused the information.

Over 20 businesses have demonstrated the new window and are appealing. **You as the council have the power to endorse and look at the sales turnover which is what was originally agreed.** It was quite clear that a simple activity has been over complicated for the mere reason that council's opinion showed some flaws in how businesses functioned. E.g. lacking proper accounts, marketing strategies. Independent businesses are not limited companies, that does not mean they should be treated differently. The health check was mis-sold to the business traders another reason why all these problems occurred.

We have traceability of our records; a lot of the council traceability is verbal words.

Businesses have proved losses. The council needs to stop changing the goal post because they don't want to pay businesses.

WSTG stated - Some sort of interim gesture needs to be given this side of Christmas especially where established businesses can show losses through vat returns or other means as they all take into consideration sales turnover. It is the simplest and most efficient way of dealing with the catastrophe occurring in westside and blighting the city as a whole.

WSTG attended the Wolverhampton Business Forum 8th December at the "Meet the Mayor Andy Street" the question asked of Andy Street was...

"When capital programs are instigated by Councils, what consideration and accountability is there to ensure the correct necessary steps are taken to enable existing businesses to operate with minimal disruption. What consideration, contingency plans/ financial support is there for those businesses that are severely affected by the improvements such as roadworks"

Andy Street stated that there is an agreed PUBLIC POLICY where compensation is available in such circumstances. WHY HAS THE COUNCIL NOT MADE THIS AVAILABLE?

Furthermore, WSTG were unaware of the sheer support from other businesses around the city and neighbouring towns such as Wednesfield. Many issues were raised with respect to the Wolverhampton city centre works.



WSTG minutes to meeting 5th Dec 2022

Commercially Sensitive

We are appealing for immediate action on: -

1. Based on sales turnover use new comparative window and make payment to businesses who have demonstrated loss with appropriate caveat for review pending independent company review of whole process. This needs to be done by next week 20th with pay-outs before Christmas. I.e. 19th Dec.
2. Incorporate some level of factoring based on govt guidelines during covid recovery in respect to operation functionality of businesses.
3. The urgency for fast tracking the new window is at no additional expense to the council. Westside are available to clarify this.
4. Provide a hardship package or relief for those that haven't qualified but have suffered.
5. Freeze business rates and backdate from at a minimum Jan 22- Mar 23.
6. For transparency, we need to understand the brief that is going to be given to independent company. Again, learning from SCA management procurement.
7. Full disclosure of communication to business traders needs to come from council issuing statements of what they deem should be communicated to businesses from their perspective as Westside integrity is being questioned because of misconstruing/ misunderstanding information delivery.

Isobel stated that all communication to traders' group is to be copied to council to avoid misunderstandings of information. This is to minimise businesses directly contacting council outside of subgroup and to ensure there is no confusion with both parties being on the same page.



• **Isobel Woods** <isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

Thu, 1 Dec 2022 at 16:55 ☆

To: des duggal, John Roseblade
Cc: Councillor Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), Tim Johnson, Richard Lawrence, Councillor Steve Evans, Labour Leaders Office Hide

Dear Des and Billy

We were looking to come back on the points raised in your email 27 November, at the meeting which has been arranged for the 5 December.

In regards to meeting at Equinox, please leave this with me to speak to colleagues to confirm who will be attending and to share your invitation to host the meeting.

I will come back to you with details of who will be joining myself and John

Kr
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Tel. Office: 01902 551848
Tel. Mobile: 07866 564932

[E-mail: Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk)
City of Wolverhampton Council

• Re: Date Change to 5th December 2022 8

Yahoo/Inbox ☆



• **des duggal** <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

Sun, 27 Nov 2022 at 23:51 ☆

To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade
Cc: Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), Tim Johnson, Richard Lawrence, steve.evans4@wolverhampton.gov.uk, labourleadersoffice@wolverhampton.gov.uk Hide
Bcc: des duggal

Hi Isobel, John,

To maintain transparency, we have shared your recent emails with traders together with our responses thus far.

Following the above, Westside Businesses, have responded with anger on what they see as delays amongst other things.

We attach a response on behalf of the Westside Business which has been agreed by the traders of Westside businesses,

We look forward to a response on or before the 5th September

Regards.
Amardeep Kumar



Isobel-Date... .pdf
96 KiB

The attached document below:

Date: 24th November 2022

To Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Cc: Stephen Simkins, Steve Evans, Tim Johnson, Richard Lawrence, Ian Fegan, Ian Brookfield

Re: Date Change to 5th December

It was extremely disappointing that you asked for monthly meeting to be rescheduled to the end of month. This was to allow you more time to give Westside businesses an answer with respect to the review process based on the issues raised during the presentation Esme, Des and I gave on 7th November. You are now suggesting another week to 5th December, giving you a month, which traders are not happy about. Traders see the lack of the review process not being revealed as delaying tactics.

Some businesses now wish to take it to the opposition for existing/generating public support and press to demonstrate what Mr Evans said publicly on the news regarding support for businesses as not forthcoming.

Westside has been providing evidence since March 2022 when assurances and promises were made in front of 9 councillors, MP and BID team.

With the health check we have proven categorically there have been data errors/failures in the process. By your own admission this data was not audited.

Businesses have all agreed that now we have the real relevant data, with businesses showing additional 3 months-this gives the real picture of the losses incurred and how the growth has been stunted. If the council do not recognise the plight of the businesses now than they are clearly giving false impression to what they deem as "supporting businesses".

Westside are using the health check spreadsheet, with the new window of Apr21-Dec21 in comparison to realistic window of works Jan22-Sep22, which is real data/evidence. Pertaining to your deadline for businesses to appeal the outcome of the health check, business have exercised their right to appeal and evidence accordingly.

Businesses have already scrutinized the validity of the health check and its unfairness for all businesses. Hence suggestion of factoring especially in first 5 months during Apr21-Sep21 where businesses were not fully operational due to Covid restrictions.

Collectively, we are not prepared to waste any more time in discussion. We want clear answers and action.

ALL BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED HOW MUCH MORE TIME AND EVIDENCE IS NEEDED. 8 Months have lapsed, with no support or hardship relief.

ALL NON-ESSENTIAL & HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES HAVE AND ARE STILL BEING AFFECTED. They need to be given hardship relief for this now. Some businesses have already closed down! Others on the brink!

Westside were dangled the carrot that an Xmas event would be held in area as works were going positively, aim was to drum up business for Westside-that never happened. Instead, the last 2 weeks preceding and the Saturday of the light switch on were the worst trading days as Westside was cut off again!



Date: 24th November 2022

There is nothing to show there are businesses down Westside. Xmas lights end at the top of Victoria St. How can businesses survive on earning £3, £25 and less as a day's trading.

This now needs to escalate to Tim Johnson and Ian Brookfield for an audience with businesses for a decision.

Businesses are waiting to go to the press, social media and even address with Andy Street at the next Wolverhampton Business Forum & to Economic Growth team which is fully supported by Sham Sharma and Henry Carver.

As a subgroup we have communicated and have been trying to contain working with council in a positive way. We have been very patient.

IT IS TIME THAT THE COUNCIL LEVELS UP WITH WESTSIDE BUSINESSES.

This is for not only those who have clearly demonstrated losses in the realistic new window but all businesses who have **suffered inconvenience and stunted growth** for time period of Phase 1 i.e. Nov2021 - Feb2023. **THE IMPACT OF ROADWORKS DOES NOT END WITH ROADWORKS COMPLETING!**

Westside presented a possible factoring solution as not all businesses were fully operational and it represented a fairness and reality. The health check revealed 11 businesses demonstrated loss in initial window set, when in fact there were many more and the loss was not based on realistic window.

There is a final opportunity for the Council to make good of their failings for which businesses of Westside have suffered long enough and those that survive will continue to suffer until phase 1 completes Feb 2023.

The impact of subsequent phases will have to be assessed when that arises. Be under no illusion that there will be further evidenced losses.

We look forward to an urgent response/settlement.

At the last monthly meeting held in October, Mr Simkins made it clear that the "council are waiting to pay out." Westside businesses have demonstrated realistic window for continued losses being experienced. It is time for the Council to pay out.

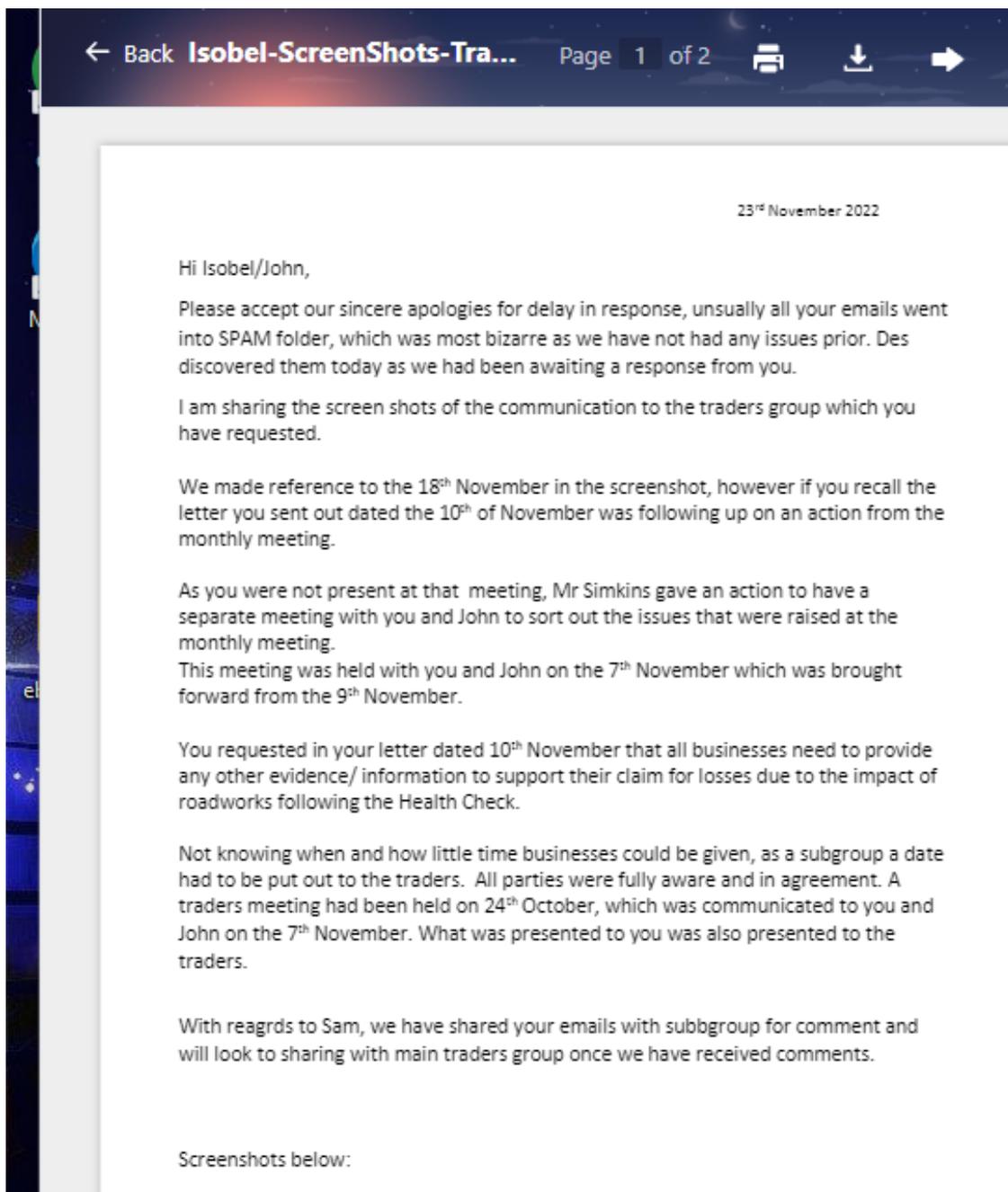
Apologies for the real honesty of the response. Westside have had enough of the area being continuously blighted for over 10 years. This last year could be the nail in the coffin for many businesses and the council. Please rectify the gross injustice to the businesses of Westside.

This response has been collated from the views of Westside businesses which have been shared as a true reflection of the situation that is being faced.

Kind regards

Billy & Des on behalf of Westside businesses

We were requested to copy Isobel into any communication we were sending out to traders to maintain transparency. Pity it wasn't both ways.



← Back **Isobel-ScreenShots-Tra...** Page 1 of 2 [Print] [Download] [Forward]

23rd November 2022

Hi Isobel/John,

Please accept our sincere apologies for delay in response, unusually all your emails went into SPAM folder, which was most bizarre as we have not had any issues prior. Des discovered them today as we had been awaiting a response from you.

I am sharing the screen shots of the communication to the traders group which you have requested.

We made reference to the 18th November in the screenshot, however if you recall the letter you sent out dated the 10th of November was following up on an action from the monthly meeting.

As you were not present at that meeting, Mr Simkins gave an action to have a separate meeting with you and John to sort out the issues that were raised at the monthly meeting.

This meeting was held with you and John on the 7th November which was brought forward from the 9th November.

You requested in your letter dated 10th November that all businesses need to provide any other evidence/ information to support their claim for losses due to the impact of roadworks following the Health Check.

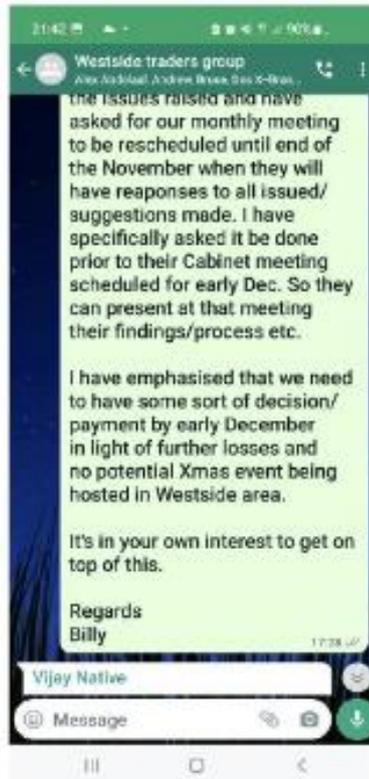
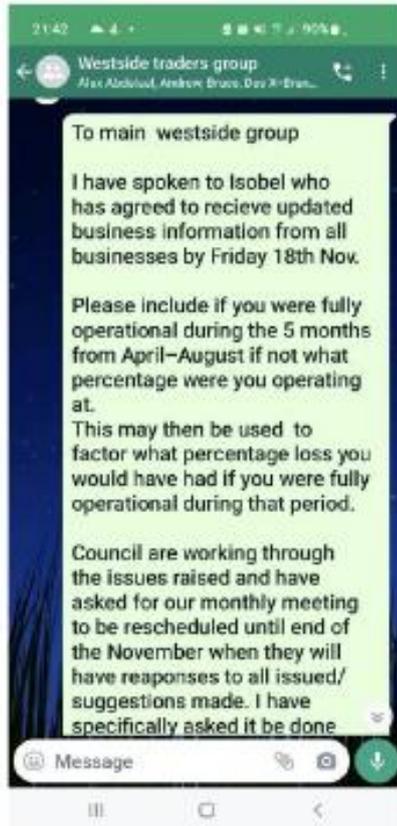
Not knowing when and how little time businesses could be given, as a subgroup a date had to be put out to the traders. All parties were fully aware and in agreement. A traders meeting had been held on 24th October, which was communicated to you and John on the 7th November. What was presented to you was also presented to the traders.

With reagrd to Sam, we have shared your emails with subbgrou for comment and will look to sharing with main traders group once we have received comments.

Screenshots below:



23rd November 2022



Kind Regards,

Des & Billy



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade



Tue, 15 Nov 2022 at 11:35 ☆

Hi Isobel,

Further to our conversation yesterday, information has been relayed to Westside Businesses.

Kind Regards

Billy

Isobel_MobConversation14Nov22.... Page 1 of 2



To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Date: 14th November 2022

Thank you for your message today and quick update that you and John have been reviewing the information and presentation we shared 7th November. I understand that you require more time to respond to the areas highlighted and concerns raised regarding the processes and quality of data collected by advisors.

This was put to the subgroup, and we concur that the monthly scheduled meeting for tomorrow 15th November can be rescheduled as per your request to end of this month as you have no further update for Westside as yet.

However, as per our conversation I wanted to reiterate that this delay does concern us and will not be received well by Westside businesses as you can appreciate, they are even more worried about further delays in resolving the hardship that businesses face. Especially as what was scheduled to drum up Xmas trade for businesses of Westside will not be happening. In fact, from last monthly meeting nothing really will be scheduled for the new event space until Spring/Summer 2023. Works are not expected to complete until February 2023. The updated financial figures are for losses experienced up and until September 2022 and do not cater for potential losses going forwards until February 2023 and impact of any other subsequent phases.

You have agreed to receive updated financial information with new window from businesses, who have been advised to send it to you directly. This is also to save time and also to give you additional 3 months figures demonstrating a more realistic view of losses. We would like the next meeting to be held before the Cabinet meeting, by which time you would have concluded your review with consideration to the updated information businesses have provided you. We do not want further delays. We entrust that you have understood the scale of the situation businesses face. We look forward to you confirming the date within the next few days.

On a separate note, following Councillor Steve Evans interview on Central News 9th November, this has raised even more concerns to Westside businesses. He stated that **"all businesses will be supported provided they can evidence it"**. We have provided so much evidence, yet still have no conclusion. Even businesses in North Street have been suffering. This clearly iterates the problems only gives more evidence to facts.

He suggested that **"contractor and council have been meeting with businesses and keeping regular contact"**. This is not strictly true as we had to approach council as a collective for them to take notice of the issues that Westside faced. The issues were first raised back in March, and it has been almost 8 months, and nothing has transpired in terms of reimbursement of losses suffered by businesses. He also made reference to **"grants being available to businesses through independent business manager"**. Please can you clarify this?

This is quite condemning as the conclusion and impression given was summed up as *short-term pain is paving the way for a prosperous future!*

Westside has been suffering for almost a year, with the loss of some businesses and others on the brink, Westside needs the council to act immediately and for Tim Johnson to support businesses as it's the consequence of their actions that has affected the livelihoods of businesses. There has been repeated failings from the council's perspective and we are asking for direct decisions to be made by the next meeting for a fair and just outcome.

I can only re-iterate that even though we have been working with the council team including yourselves, it is fair to say that we are under a lot of pressure from the press to comment on our predicament and the situation in relation to the council. Whilst we are trying to contain this, if we cannot reach conclusion on recognition and reimbursement of business losses, we cannot restrain beyond the next meeting businesses freedom to express themselves. This further negative press will not benefit the regeneration program which we are sure that Tim Johnson and the council will not want.

We are trying to work with the council. We need a positive outcome from all of this and time is off the essence literally.

Kind Regards

Billy on behalf Des and Westside Businesses



To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Date: 7th November 2022

Thank you for bringing forward meeting from 9th November to today.

Following presentation/discussion by myself, Des and Esme on behalf of Westside trader's groups concerns regarding the process and outcome of health check. We have shared the surveys and concerns which we feel have shown the failings/flaws of the lack of a cohesive process. We understand that you and John will come back after reviewing the information given as a matter of urgency.

You have asked me to email what has been communicated to traders to what we feel could be a good compromise to move forward for consideration.

We are requesting the current window be reviewed for comparable percentage losses/gains by businesses as we are now in a position to do this.

We suggest that the comparable time window reflected in the health check spreadsheet be reflective of the time window showing realistic time of roadworks. It was agreed with some preparatory work being done during November/December actual works commenced in earnest Jan 2022.

Following meeting of 18th October at council offices, a traders meeting was held 24th October where a general consensus to have a time period reflective of works was communicated to traders and agreed upon. 2 windows were considered, and you have stated today that the time window of Jan 2019 – Sep 2019 is unacceptable and not a viable option to consider.

We outline below what would pertain to giving businesses confidence in the council and restore trust in moving forward to other phases considering Phase 1 doesn't complete until February 2023.

1. Traders were asked to collect data for period **July, August, September 2022**. As we are now in a position to do this, and **it is a truer reflection of the situation**. We therefore request the windows for turnover comparison be :-

Apr 2021 - Dec 2021 compared to Jan 2022 - Sep 2022

2. Businesses can provide the additional 3 months (July-Sep22) via an updated spreadsheet.
3. As businesses were still not functioning at 100% capacity due to covid restrictions still in place. Restrictions lifted around July (see attached lockdown timeline) As customer confidence was not restored until August/ September which is 5 months of 2021 businesses reopening. **We are suggesting that a factoring exercise be proposed** – i.e. apply a factor to increase sales for period April-December 2021 by either:-



- a. Sector based using statistics for retail/ hospitality
 - b. Using the government timeline take an average - e.g. 30%-40% across the board and apply to all business turnover for April-December 2021 (inclusive of new businesses). Council are asking for "Invest in Wolverhampton", which also means business retention. That's why new businesses cannot be ignored.
 - c. Take an average of sales revenue of last 6 months of 2021 (i.e. July-December 2021) and multiply by 9 to give you what it should have been.
4. From applying the above 3 steps deducting Jan22-Sept22 figures will realise a truer percentage loss of turnover. This is fair and justifiable as: -
- a. This does not take into consideration potential losses expected until roadworks complete for Phase 1 – February 2023. It would be easy to take a statistical view to show continued projected losses that will be experienced by businesses because of the roadworks. The residual losses will linger outside of the period being considered here. How will this be reviewed?
 - b. The campaign to do events and activities to drive footfall to Westside are not expected to happen until possibly April/June 2023. Initially we were told event possibly commencing December 2022.

This would certainly be more representative of the real picture of the impact of roadworks and the council can use this data for potential impact that can be caused by Phase 2 and Phase 3, thus helping with planning.

This is about longevity of businesses of Westside going forward and also return of investment of council in providing and ensuring businesses are there to serve community.

Meeting held 7th Nov 22 with John Roseblade and Isobel Woods and Westside representatives : Des Duggal, Billy Kumar & Esme Stackhouse.

Westside provided yet again the solution to move forward with a window change which because of delays by council would use REALISTIC data and time frames.



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade



Mon, 7 Nov 2022 at 23:47 ☆

Hi John/Isobel

please find as agreed electronic version of information given out in printed form at this evenings meeting.

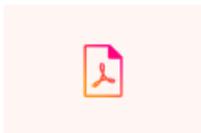
With regards to data included in Esme's data collection attached below. As it contains confidential information we won't be circulating this on the main traders. All other information will be.

I will send other points tomorrow.

thanks again for today.

Billy

[Download all attachments as a zip file](#)



Followup-B... .pdf
235.3kB



timeline-co... .png
1001.6kB



Presentation....pdf
1.1MB



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade



Tue, 1 Nov 2022 at 12:55 ☆

Hi Isobel, John

Des has had a short conversation with Mr Simkins who will be contacting you to arrange a meeting with yourself, John Roseblade, Des, myself and Esme. If we can arrange this urgently this week because of the timescales to clarify Westside situation in respect of the findings from the FINANCIAL HEALTH CHECK. Mr Simkins said that it has to be sorted out so payments can be made by end of November.

I have attached a short survey undertaken for you to peruse and also we will send you additional information later today as to the major concerns and findings.

We appreciate that this needs to be addressed and are happy to meet anytime Thursday.

Kind Regards

Billy



Westside Bu... .pdf
1.2MB

Westside: Financial Impact of Roadworks on Businesses Survey 2022

31 October 2022
Prepared by: Nico Chitsa

The above slideshow has been circulated to all Cabinet members and Scrutiny panel as enclosure

1st Nov 22

To Isobel / John Roseblade/ Steve Simkins

Following receipt of your letter dated 26th October.

Following traders meeting, businesses are extremely unhappy and whilst as a subgroup we are trying to reach an amicable compromise, we may not be able to contain this if businesses plight is not being recognised in a fair and just way. We have had opportunity with businesses to look at the how the calculations may have been derived for independent business and we are satisfied that it has raised alarm bells and could break the trust between council and Westside. We are still questioning independent business advisors who carried out a 'Health Checks' as **We are of the impression that Sam and his team were not independent. There has been no transparency on the selection of advisers and formulae used to ascertain health check result as we have been repeatedly requesting over the months. We have discovered major discrepancies!**

In reference to your 4th paragraph - the time window. At the time the council and advisors proposed a 9month window. Businesses were requested to complete a cashflow statement template for the period January – September 2021, and for October 2021 – June 2022. You state "(from when the works started until the business advisor visit)". The roadworks did not start until end of Nov 21 with Jan 2022 when disruptions started. **At the time the two periods were relevant and road works were in progress. Because of the delays, this window should be changed to make it more realistic of what the traders have been facing otherwise the integrity of the data is disputed wholly.**

In reference to your 5th paragraph. Businesses received a letter on 14 October with the outcome of the cashflow comparison between these periods. **Majority of businesses have rejected this as there was no explanation. Discrepancies and flaws in the data handling. Inclusion / exclusion of Covid grants. Inclusion of Web sales even though it is the high St sales only as stated by Mr Simkins at the last meeting – 18th Oct. We have evidence to show this.**

Some traders handed in manual sheets to Sam with no feedback or copy of them being returned.
No follow-ups on findings, therefore no business support given to assist businesses.
Time spent at each business ranged from 30 minutes to 2hrs. Budgeted time was up to 4hrs.
We have recorded the times.

In reference to your 6th paragraph. If a business has been able to demonstrate a reduction in the cashflow between the two periods, they would be able to access a council support payment.
We require the window to be shifted as the data DOES NOT reflect the true reality of the impact. Council have failed to understand or show any compassion to what they only see as black and white. This is a gross injustice for Westside again because of the council negligence of not involving businesses in the consultation process.

Concerns with the validity of the data collected were aired at meeting 18th October. The erroneous calculations have given rise to discrediting the outcome of some of the data. No consistent formula used. The fairness of all businesses being disrupted was discussed. Based on this it was proposed and agreed at the meeting by Mr Simkins that we would come back with what would be a compromise to move forward. The window currently used reflects a total disregard for businesses being affected.

Following traders meeting held 24th October, views were aired at the meeting which primarily agree that the window of comparison should be reviewed. There is very little work to be done for businesses to provide this as the spreadsheet Sam and his team have used can be reused.

Conclusion

The objective of the exercise was to ascertain businesses losses due to impact of roadworks and also the disruption caused by said works which has had major impact on business survivability.

Current window is not a true reflection and is unfair to the businesses.

Jan 2021 - Sep 2021 compared to Oct 2021 – Jun2022

- We strongly feel that roadworks have stunted growth of businesses at a time of Covid recovery
- Most businesses were not operating at 100% due to restrictions still in place. There is a need to have a factor for retail and for hospitality to show what their sales would be when functioning at 100 percent. Determining an agreed percentage amount across the board or by sector eg 25% for retail and 40% for hospitality. If this is going to be a true assessment then it should be added to sales figure for 2021. This would give the businesses the trust in the outcome of the exercise being fair. Yes, it would show more businesses potentially showing a loss particularly where they have shown to make a profit when clearly the majority of businesses haven't. See attached lockdown measure March 2020-December 2021
- Lack of fairness in assessment of loss Hospitality/Retail. Not clear what calculations were used as there are discrepancies shown across different businesses. Who validated Sam's figures?
- Relevant supporting information should be considered for new and existing businesses inclusive of projections etc.
- Business frontages were affected by roadworks since Jan 22 therefore the correct window should be used.
- Disruption will continue and expected until projected completion date of Feb 2023
- Further Phases will add to disruption
- Support via Business Rate Relief Jan 2022 – Mar 2023 for all affected businesses: -
 - Suggested 100% during Jan2022-Mar2023 to backdated and refunded.
 - Reduce by 25% Apr2023- Mar2024 to ensure business stability.

With all the concerns raised in particular to the use of the data collected we have considered a realistic true comparison window council should consider to be either:-

1. Jan 2019 - Sep 2019 compared to Jan 2022 - Sep 2022
2. Apr 2021 - Dec 2021 compared to Jan 2022 - Sep 2022

Currently, we have the data and businesses are able to provide the additional 3 months (July-Sep22) via an updated spreadsheet.

If using the above factoring exercise proposed - we then apply a factor to increase sales by either 25% retail 40% hospitality or we take an average of sales revenue of last 6 months of 2021 and x 9 to give what it should have been. This is because customer confidence was not restored until August September which is 5 months of 2021 businesses reopening.

Then deduct Jan22-Sept22 figures to arrive at a truer percentage loss.

This can be done easily based on figures already supplied with the addition of businesses supplying July, August & September 2022 figures. This would certainly be more representative of the real picture of the impact of roadworks and the council can use this data for potential impact that can be caused by Phase 2 and Phase 3, thus helping with planning.

At the last meeting held 18th October at council offices slide show reference Bilston works:-

Support package announced by the West Midlands Combined Authority for businesses affected by Metro works

The initiative will be specifically targeted towards businesses who have frontages directly affected by construction along the new routes. the scheme is designed to support businesses during periods of unavoidable disruption.

Alongside this sits a commitment for the Midland Metro Alliance to work with individual businesses and local business groups to boost 'business as usual' messages in defined local areas to minimise any disruption impacts and to support initiatives to increase business activity during the works.

WIDER SUPPORT:

There are several forms of rate relief available to businesses affected by the works including National Hardship Relief and other discretionary schemes.

- With reference to the above the council has not promoted business as usual or made reference to any National Hardship Relief or discretionary schemes.

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Email contact: BusinessDevelopment@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Address: Civic Centre, St Peters Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1RP

Contact number: 01902 556879

26 October 2022

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Kumar
Equinox Gifted Thoughts Ltd
49 Victoria Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 3PJ

Business Health Check

Dear Mr Kumar,

Following the meeting between the Council and the Traders group for Westside on 18 October, I am writing to make a final request for any additional financial information you would like to include in the 'Business Health Check' that took place earlier this year.

As you are aware, it was agreed at a meeting between the Council and Traders group for Westside on 9 May that an independent business advisor would be appointed to carry out a 'Health Check' for businesses, examining financial details to understand any impact had by the Public Realm works.

At the meeting between the Council and traders on 16 June, it was agreed that the independent business advisor would compare the cashflow of businesses between two periods to determine any financial impact.

It was agreed businesses would complete a cashflow statement template for the period January – September 2021, and for October 2021 – June 2022 (from when the works started until the business advisor visit).

Businesses received a letter on 14 October with the outcome of the cashflow comparison between these periods.

If a business has been able to demonstrate a reduction in the cashflow between the two periods, they would be able to access a council support payment.

Following the outcome of the assessment, we are giving businesses a final opportunity to add any further financial information that may impact the assessment. Please ensure this is verified financial information and includes details of your business and a short statement saying how the additional information relates to the financial records already shared.

City of Wolverhampton Council

 wolverhampton.gov.uk

 @WolvesCouncil

 WolverhamptonToday

Sensitivity: PROTECT

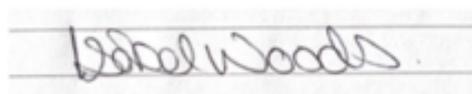
This information must be received by Thursday 10 November by 12:00pm. Any information received after this date cannot be considered.

This is the final opportunity to present to the council, verified financial information to be considered regarding the impact of the improvement works on and near to Victoria Street.

Please send the information to Isobel Woods, Head of Enterprise and **mark the email or envelope - Westside Traders, FOA Isobel Woods.**

The email address is: - Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Isobel Woods" is written over a horizontal line.

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise

E-mail: Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk
City of Wolverhampton Council

Letters received by businesses dated 14th October 2022 giving outcome of financial health check for the comparative windows.

Above letter sent to John and Isobel together with a powerpoint showing our own interviews.

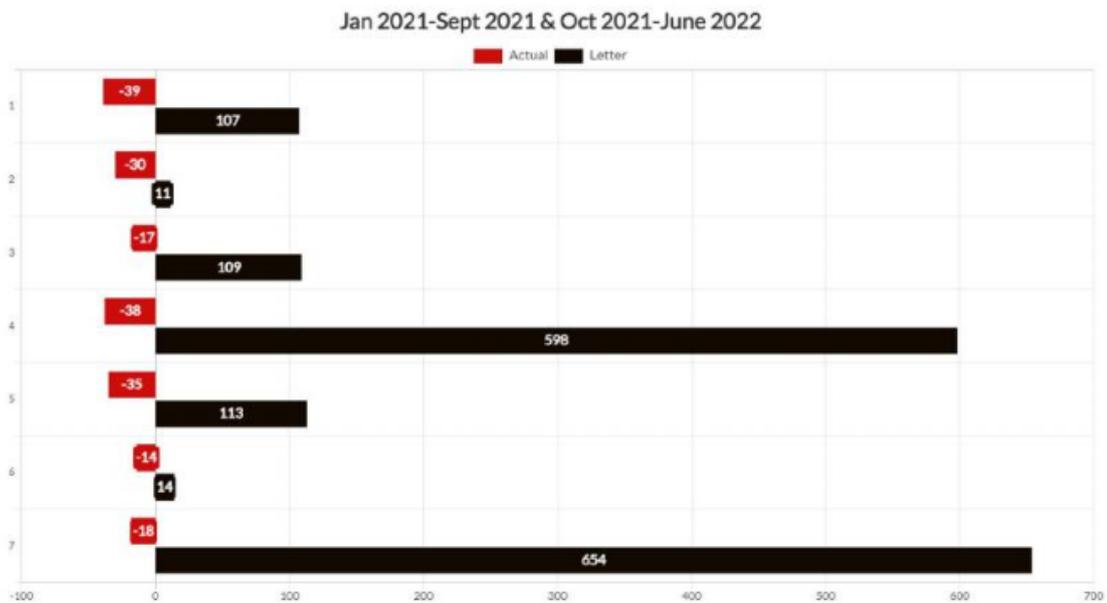
Please Note that we had suggested above similar thing to that what RSM have suggested. In addition we propped a solution which would demonstrate realistic losses of businesses based on actual data. It transpired that isobel admitted that the spreadsheet had not gone through their own auditing process, which is why Westside discovered errors which were corrected in the spreadsheet. It was agreed at the meeting that businesses who have used the new window have done so as a way to save time in further delays. You agreed to receive this whilst you review our findings and suggestions.

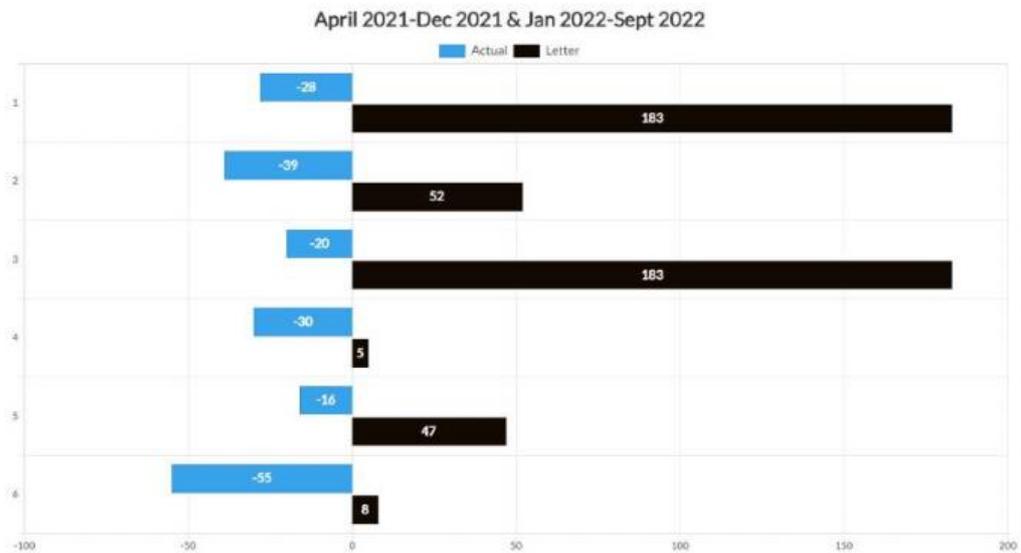
The information below was presented to John Roseblade and Isobel Woods at a council offices following a request by Councillor Simkins to listen and what the issues were regarding the spreadsheet template and the windows. WSTG also stated that because of the delays and the fact that we had REALISTIC data, this should be used and would show realistic view of the impact of works on businesses.

After receiving feedback from the council on 14th October 2022, many business owners were shocked and distressed at the findings. As a result, the subgroup carried out interviews with 46 businesses out of the 52 who took part in assessments.



Of the 20 businesses that showed a growth percentage, 13 calculated losses based on their accounts.
*Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole





Mr Simkins suggested a meeting with some of the subgroup members following 18th Oct meeting.

Meeting Request

Yahoo/Sent ☆



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: Stephen Simkins, John Roseblade, Isobel Woods

🖨️ Fri, 28 Oct 2022 at 19:27 ☆

Dear Councillor Simkins

I am email to request a meeting for Tuesday 2nd November 2022

This is from your suggestion of a meeting with me and Billy from the meeting we held on the 18th October 2022

I would like to include Owen and Esme at this meeting from the subgroup.

Purpose of this request would be to move forward in this process.

From your team we would appreciate if John Roseblade & Isobel Woods can be present.

Thank you

Kind Regards
Des & Billy
WestSide Traders Group.

Slides taken from 18th October 2022 council powerpoint presentation to traders.

Agenda and purpose of meeting...

1. Listen to concerns and develop solutions
2. Progress agreed actions and address the following issues set out by traders including:
 - Financial hardship/loss relief
 - Business rates relief / *ongoing business support possibilities*
 - Plans for all works
 - BID payments relief
 - Two-three-year plan for returning footfall to normal
 - Social media to boost presence
 - Regular monthly meetings for updates
4. Any other business?
- 5. Date and time of next meeting: Weds 15 November at 5.30pm

wolverhampton.gov.uk

Not Distinctly Marked

Financial hardship/loss relief/business rates relief...

- Outcome letters distributed to all businesses involved in the financial review
- 11 out of 52 businesses evidenced financial loss
- Business advisor recommissioned to support those businesses to claim financial hardship/loss payments
- Scheme will be based on precedent
- Bilston Rd: traders demonstrating loss received significant % of lost gross profit up to a capped amount
- Aim will be to work with businesses asap to complete review and secure payment
- Traders demonstrating loss will also be able to apply for Business Rates Relief and financial advisor will be able to support through process

wolverhampton.gov.uk

Even the 11 businesses that evidenced loss were never paid out the full amount. Only 5k was given to only 5 businesses. The balance of the evidenced loss was not paid and is still due.



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: John Roseblade

Sat, 15 Oct 2022 at 11:07 ☆

Hi John

I just wanted to point out that your email response dated 13th October was only received around 2.15 pm on 14th October. Both Des and I had repeatedly checked numerous times separately. It was only around 2.15pm on the 14th October, when your email had arrived, which was very strange, we can only assume a delay on councils own intra-system. This is why Des had tried to contact you wrt to what you had said quoted below

"Apologies – a letter is currently being drafted and a response will be with you tomorrow. If it helps in the interim I can give you a call to talk you through it."

Following this around 3pm is when Isobel walked into Equinox to hand deliver a letter, just one of many she had in her hand - personally delivering them to business traders.

Business traders are extremely distressed, angry and upset and have called a traders meeting for Monday 17th October at 7pm. We request that yourself and the council team attend and talk through the letter so all business traders can understand.

All that can be said is that there are a lot of mixed emotions.

Kind Regards

Billy

> [Show original message](#)

After 7 days the following email was sent.



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade
Cc: Marianne Page, Stephen Simkins, Richard Lawrence, Tim Johnson, Cherry Shine and 1 more...

Thu, 13 Oct 2022 at 12:12 ☆

Dear All,

Further to our email sent 4th October, we as a subgroup of Westside traders, are extremely disappointed that we **have not had any acknowledgement whatsoever of the email sent from any of the recipients on the list.**

We have been requested by the Westside traders that should a response not be received by Friday 14th October **all business traders request to be present at the next meeting on the 18th Oct to which you all will be expected to attend and address the Westside traders as Council representatives working for the community of Wolverhampton and Businesses.**

Kind Regards

Billy & Des on behalf of Westside subgroup & Westside Traders



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

Cc: Marianne Page, Stephen Simkins, Richard Lawrence, Tim Johnson, Cherry Shine, Ian Fegan (he/him) Hide

For Attn of

Isobel Woods, John Roseblade

CC: Steven Simkins,
Richard Lawrence
Tim Johnson
Ian Fegan
Cherry Shine

We have attached a response to Isobel's letter and request the points raised in the document be addressed by all relevant parties above as it expresses the disappointment & council failings impacting the Westside Businesses.

We kindly request that it be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Kind Regards

Billy on and behalf of Des & Westside
Find attached Response & Appendix 1

> [Show original message](#)

[Download all attachments as a zip file](#)



Victoria Roa... .pdf
168.5kB



Appendix 1-l....pdf
97.5kB

To Isobel / John Roseblade/ Steve Simkins

~~Victoria Road~~ Improvement works Business Health check: My Thai Plza Café

It is Victoria St.

Dear Mr/s..

I am writing to share with you the outcome of the recent Business Health Check that was carried out by a team of independent advisors during July and August 2022.

Working with the Westside Trader Business Group, the council commissioned a team of independent business advisors to visit your business to offer advice and support, and to seek to understand if there has been any financial impact from the current improvement works, underway on Victoria Street.

For the record, these advisors already work with the council in various capacities and are not totally independent as their bias would be towards the party who is employing them i.e. the council. The different approaches adopted by the accountants gave Westside businesses cause for concern. See earlier response sent to Isobel – attached Appendix 1

During the meeting with the advisor, you provided some financial information documents to show your trading position during a 9-month period from when the works started and the previous 9 months. This has been analysed to understand if there has been a loss to the business arising from the works. Consideration has also been given to the challenges businesses have faced throughout this period as a result of covid restrictions, and the business support grants that were available during this time. This has raised the following concerns :

1. How exactly has the consideration been factored into the financial information provided by the businesses. The context in which the information gleamed has been used needs to be clearly understood by businesses.
2. Businesses were made to believe that support grants given during covid periods would not be considered during the health check, yet this implies that businesses have already received grants which moves away from the issue of the impact of the roadworks.

This approach had been shaped and agreed with the Traders group, and Wolverhampton City Council. The outcome of this work would not be open to appeal.

We as the Westside Traders group, are in agreement that we cannot make decisions for individual businesses. Please see earlier response in Appendix 1

From the information provided, the position for your business for these periods is as follows

Business	Turnover for the period Jan - Sep 21	Turnover for the period Oct 21 - Jun 22	Percentage difference between the two period

Next Steps

For those businesses that have demonstrated 'evidence of loss', the council will fund the team of business advisors to do follow up visits to support them.

What is clear here is that the council are quite prepared to spend excessive amounts on the advisers. Points for consideration: -

1. This statement can be read as being quite demeaning, in that, those that demonstrated loss need help to run their businesses more efficiently, which is not the primary reason for the loss.
2. No clear findings have been identified, in which areas businesses could benefit from advisers help, should they wish to.

The council will also be looking to fund and extend the offer of tailored business support and advice to all those businesses in the area. This could help with current business practises and support business planning to prepare for activity arising from the events programme when the works are completed.

It seems the council are willing to fund and extend tailored business support without identifying areas where they feel businesses are currently lacking! As this is the implication here.

A new events programme, funded by the council, is also being prepared, working with the Traders group that will encourage footfall to this area of the city centre. This will kick off in November with a new Christmas event running along Victoria Street

Following on from monthly meetings Digbeth dining club has been mentioned, however, there has been no indication of exactly what is being suggested.

Thank you for your cooperation and for engaging with this process. Information on these next steps will be coming out soon.

Kind regards

Head of enterprise

URGENT

In addition to the annotated points above, we ask for your attention and response to:

Following a meeting with the Westside Subgroup last week, we are taking this opportunity to raise our disappointment with the letter sent by Isobel. Here are specific concerns that we feel the council need to take into account and address: -

1. Re-drafting the letter to give all 52 Westside businesses identified, the **reassurance** they need and deserve with the council acknowledging the potential disruption payment, following the hardship that has been faced by them on a daily basis since commencement of roadworks.

- a. The council should show some empathy to businesses in sharing the approach they are taking to assist and support businesses with respect to the disruption.
 - b. Clear guidelines on how this process will relate/interface to the business rates
 - c. Failure to readdress this will cause an uproar with the businesses as their patience is wearing thin as we head into the last business quarter of this year.
 - d. More businesses closing. i.e. The New Spice
 - e. Timely response is imperative, all stops should be pulled out.
2. Appeals must be allowed, as concerns raised by traders with SCA with respect to: -
- a. How the data was collected by the individuals – as different formats/interviewing techniques were used.
 - b. How the data was used to ascertain percentage loss.
 - c. Clarification/consideration of factors affecting the figures recorded. i.e., How was any supporting information used.
 - d. Many businesses would have adapted to the difficulties being faced - e.g., working longer hours thus making the data collected not be a true representation of the impact on the business.
3. Response time to conclude this needs to be clearly identified.
4. We have serious concerns regarding the Independent Advisors SCA Management Consulting and their approach and the manner in which they "conduct" their work.
- a. Will they be the Advisors for the 'business support'?
 - b. How many other projects has SCA successfully tendered with the council OR other projects that they have worked on with Wolverhampton City Council.
 - c. We need assurance that their work was independent and not showing bias now and going forwards.
5. Express & Star – the truth "the plan was always the plan" City Centre West.

Council know they have failed Westside again! - a reminder of Summer Row, this is damage limitation. The press article clearly demonstrates that, and we quote "the plan was always the plan". If this is the case, then the council have been covering up the deliberate lack of care for Westside businesses. The article has painted a negative impression to businesses and community.

There is no precedence being set here by Westside, in regard to business losses being redeemed through disruption payments. Council admission to failings differentiates it from other phases. As Mr. Simkins and John Roseblade have said that lessons have been learnt which means contingency plans being put in place together with better project planning and management will ensure subsequent development phases do not encounter what Westside are enduring.

Businesses are getting very restless as we need to resolve this.

Thus to conclude, we have to REITERATE our observations from Westside perspective in relation to the dire situation:

The letter infers that business traders are to accept what the council are proposing without even questioning or knowing what it is that they are accepting.

How can you expect businesses not to appeal if it has not been made clear how the data collected has been used. You are asking us to trust, yet we cannot, based on past history. Who scrutinizes council decisions?

The letter **does not pay any consideration to businesses receiving a disruption payment** on account of the impact that has been caused by the poor decisions made by the council.

This letter is a misrepresentation of where we thought we had arrived since having several monthly meetings to resolve the ongoing issues/impact of the roadworks on Westside businesses.

We had collectively agreed that the words "compensation" was not to be used, however "disruption payment(s)" was to be acceptable.

Over the past few months, we, as the subgroup, have been given verbal assurances that there will be disruption payments due to the roadworks for all businesses, yet there is no mention of this in this letter.

May we remind the council their acknowledgment of their failings by their own admission: -

1. Lack of consultation
2. The acknowledgement of the council undertaking 3 years' worth of work in 1 year
3. Not having a contingency plan – this is quite shocking and very poor management and decision making.
4. Reassurance that lessons have been learnt for future phases of the city development.
5. If it is so easy for the council to employ, at high costs, advisors to do health checks and subsequently business advisors, then why is it so difficult to present business losses and make good what can be perceived to be a failing situation if not rectified asap. Time is of the essence, and we can only repeat that livelihoods at stake.

Events – In the past, events have always been targeted around Queen Square. What are the plans for these events? If there are events planned, please share them? On several occasions this statement has been made and when questioned further we have been advised that either its confidential or we are asked as businesses what we would suggest or recommend?

6. Have external consultants been used/paid to also plan these events? Please provide further information on what we should expect in the 'New Area'. –
7. Please can we also get confirmation if LSD Promotions OR any other operator owns the rights to the street trading along Victoria Street. We are aware that Digbeth dining has been mentioned.
8. What restrictions, if any, may be placed on businesses in the area – especially on hospitality businesses.
9. Will there be daytime and night-time events as Mr Simkins has mentioned wanting to increase the night-time economy. We need to ensure that any potential footfall is maximised across the variety of independent and not just targeting specific businesses.

As it stands, it appears that lessons were not learnt from the failed Summer Row development some 10 years ago, the sentiment being echoed by the Express & Star - where thriving businesses were forced to close through compulsory purchase orders issued by the council to make way for extending the city centre. Only this time, the council's approach has been even more ignorant to the devastating affect their poor/divisive decisions on the area. **This broken TRUST has to be repaired, otherwise the consequential effect will not just be from the lack of support from businesses, but the community as a whole,** who already emphasise and are appalled at the works and their impact on businesses. Their confidence has to be gained, another reason why independent businesses are so key in the uniqueness of what they offer the city and how they serve the local community. You cannot have one without the other. This could be devastating for the plans that's have been laid out on 29th September, Wolverhampton being the City of Investment.

Do not recreate the legacy of the past as the impression portrayed at the meeting on the 29th was, "whatever it costs". We as Westside businesses, will not just go away and we certainly don't want to be ignored. The council should be fighting for us and prove to Westside that we are an intrinsic part of the growth and development of the area making it attractive to new business investors.

We have consistently been patient over the months to work with the council - not to have it turned into a red herring and be told that there will be no disruption payments. Please do not insult our intelligence or the sheer hard work of independents and the time the subgroup are giving to make this work. The Labour council is supposed to consider any support with honesty, fairness, integrity, and justice for exactly those people/business owners who tirelessly labour daily as a consequence of decisions made by the council.

Westside deserves more transparency with council decisions which impact their livelihoods and retribution for their negligence.

We look forward to your response as a matter of urgency within 7 days.

Kind Regards

Westside Subgroup

From: Isobel Woods
Sent: 20 September 2022 14:40
To: des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>; John Roseblade <John.Roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
Cc: Ian Fegan (he/him) <Ian.Fegan@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Marianne Page <Marianne.Page@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Ruth Taylor <Ruth.Taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Crissie Rushton <Crissie.Rushton@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Richard Lawrence <Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; cherry <cherry@wolverhamptonbid.co.uk>; Tracey Richards <Tracey.Richards@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Shelley Smith <Shelley.Smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Richard Wyatt <Richard.Wyatt@wolverhampton.gov.uk>; Councillor Stephen Simkins <Stephen.Simkins@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Westside Traders Sub-Group - Action Updates

Hi Des

Hope you are well.

I have drafted a letter which I propose to share with the businesses who received a visit from an advisor. This is to let them know the outcome of the comparison between the two periods in terms of turnover.

I have included in the letter reference to the joint approach taken with the Traders and the council in agreeing the approach and information. Can I confirm the position from the Traders that businesses will not be able to appeal the outcome of the health check. This was talked about in our meeting and I will need to make this clear in the letter.

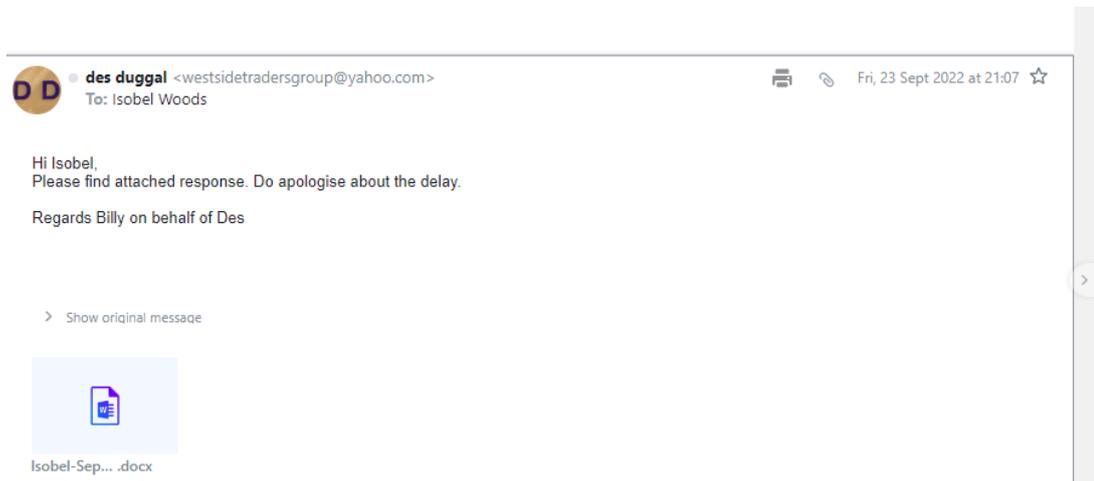
In regards to the financial support, as was mentioned at the last meeting the proposal needs to follow the councils formal process before a decision can be made. This work is currently underway and has not yet concluded. The feedback I have received so far has asked for additional information from the 11 businesses who showed a loss which I need to include in the letters when they go out .

Mt
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Tel. Office: 01902 551848
Tel. Mobile: 07866 564932

E-mail: Isobel.Woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk
City of Wolverhampton Council

In response to letter sent out by Isobel below is a subgroup response. 23rd September 2022



The response in the document stating that subgroup cannot make decisions for independents especially where she has requested that we cannot appeal decisions.

This is exactly the same tactic that was employed 13th March 2023 in respect of options being presented to Westside regarding RSM findings. We had stated our concerns and were told that the council will speak to all traders about the options before a decision can be taken by traders.

In response to your email dated 20th September

Hi Isobel,

Sincere apologies for the delay in response. Following a conversation with Des, he has asked me to respond as he is dealing with a few personal issues.

Without seeing the letter, we cannot comment on its content or its format. Whilst in principle we agreed to the Council employing independent accountants for businesses to go through Financial Health Checks to move forward in identifying business losses due to major disruptions caused by the roadworks.

You are asking us, from a Traders position, to confirm that the businesses will be unable to appeal their outcome. This **we cannot do** as they are all independents, and we are not privy to who and what has been submitted by them to Sam and his team and subsequently to the council. If you recall you could not reveal which businesses participated due to confidentiality, so how can we make a decision on their behalf?

In addition, the individual accountants had different approaches, and some independents were disgruntled with the omission of certain information from the exercise. So, we apologise but you are asking us to make a decision without the facts, individual circumstances of businesses and their individual outcome which you will convey in the letter you will be sending. This would be unfair of us as they are responsible for their own business decisions. We also don't know how the information gleaned has been used. **This would be better addressed by the council to all the Traders who have been identified by them as participants.**

Furthermore, the purpose of the health checks was to enable council to make a decision and now you are stating that **further information** will need to be provided by the 11 businesses who showed loss. This will not be well received as businesses agreed to the Health Check and would feel that this is another hurdle and delay in reaching a conclusion.

On a final note, there has been no mention regarding to where we are with the council process and how this exercise will relate/interface to the business rates. Traders have been patient and whilst John had previously alluded to things being resolved in a matter of a few weeks and that all businesses who have participated would receive a disruption payment. It seems this letter will not give Traders the reassurance that they need from the situation caused by the Councils' lack of consideration in regard to the impact the roadworks would have on Westside businesses, which may I remind you was done without consultation. It would be sad for the businesses to lose trust in their council going forwards.

As it stands, it can be seen that the council are not acting quick enough. It is approximately 10months since the works started, yet we still have no formal written commitment to the outcome for the businesses only verbal statements made at the meetings. Please note that the situation businesses find themselves is further exacerbated by the energy crisis. The very reasons why you wish to make a success of this whole development could end up having a negative effect – opposite to what is expected, with investors not looking to invest because of the negative legacy of the area which the council has created.

Sorry but this reflects how the traders feel, they need assurances.

Kind Regards

Billy on behalf of Des

Agenda and purpose of meeting...

1. Listen to concerns and develop solutions
2. Progress agreed actions and address the following issues set out by traders including:
 - Financial hardship relief
 - Business rates relief
 - BID payments relief
 - Two-three year plan for returning footfall to normal
 - Social media to boost presence
 - Plans for all works
 - Regular monthly meetings for updates ✓
4. Any other business?
 - 5. Date and time of next meeting: Monday 22 August at 5.30pm



Financial hardship relief update...

- Business Advisor and team have conducted 48 business visits during June and July. 5 business said they did not want to meet or did not respond.
- The analysis of the financial position is underway. The final report was due to be submitted 1 August however the team of Advisors are waiting to receive financial information from 14 businesses.
- The report will enable the council to see the information of businesses trading positions during the works, that will inform next steps.
- What date would Traders suggest is a suitable cut off ?

Above slides taken from July 26th council power point presentation to traders

I Isobel Woods <isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: des duggal
Cc: Sam Duru

Thu, 16 Jun 2022 at 16:50 ☆

Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Hi Des / Billie and Owen

Please find attached a map of the area with the phases we are looking at for the purpose of this work, a list of the business names and below are the names of those working with Sam.

Abraham Achiampong
Stanley Ugwueze
Vincent Ugboh

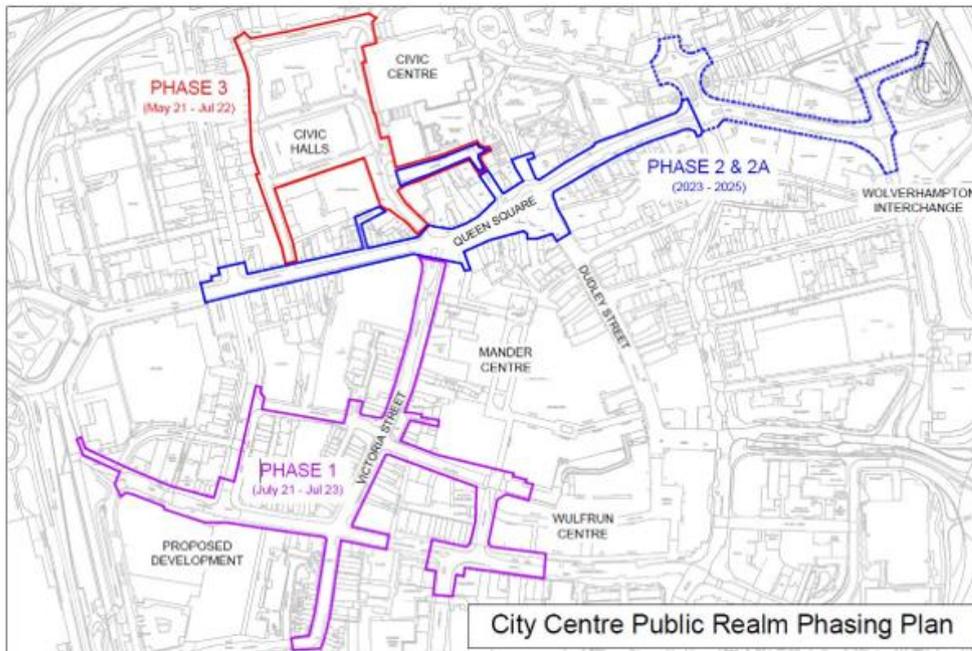
Please can I encourage you to update the other members of the sub group with the outcome of todays meeting and to seek your support to help with communication to those businesses in this area, to help Sam and the team to meet and move forward on this work.

Mt
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Tel. Office: 01902 551848
Tel. Mobile: 07464 981878

The list of businesses including in respect of Westside do not included North St. as subsequently mentioned.

Sensitivity: PROTECT



Phase 3 ,2 &2a



● **Isobel Woods** <isobel.woods@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: des duggal
Cc: 'Sam Duru', John Roseblade



Mon, 13 Jun 2022 at 21:42 ★

Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Dear Des, I hope you are well.

I am pleased to introduce Sam Duru who will lead a team of advisors to undertake the financial health check for businesses in the Westside area. Sam and I would like to come and meet with you on Thursday afternoon, around 2pm if this is ok, to talk through the financial information that will help understand the impact of the works, and the communication to businesses in the area so they are ready to receive the approach from Sam and his team.

Hope this is ok

Mt
Isobel

Isobel Woods
Head of Enterprise
Tel. Office: 01902 551848
Tel. Mobile: 07464 981878



● **Ian Fegan (he/him)** <ian.fegan@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: John Roseblade, des duggal, Isobel Woods, Ruth Taylor, Shelley Smith, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Ian Fegan (he/him), cherry Hide
Cc: Richard Lawrence



Fri, 10 Jun 2022 at 11:04 ☆

Good morning all,

Please find amended actions with details of those responsible at the bottom of the document. Thank you for your feedback.

Have a lovely weekend.

Kind Regards

Vanessa Mehmet
Executive Assistant – Central Resources
Executive Support Team
Tel. Office: 01902 551804

[E-mail: Vanessa.Mehmet@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:Vanessa.Mehmet@wolverhampton.gov.uk)
City of Wolverhampton Council

Westside Traders Sub-Group

Key	
	Complete
	Action on track/On hold
	On-going
	Major issue/Overdue

ACTION SHEET					
Date of Meeting	Item	Action	Owners of actions	Deadline Date	BRAG Status
06.06.22		Review the proposed comparison period of financial hardship calculations to ensure a fair and equitable approach. Working with the advisor once appointed to agree a reasonable set of financial documents	Isobel Woods	14 June	Action on track
06.06.22		Check the tender to ensure that comparison periods can be changed easily without retendering and check with legal. - checked and this is ok	Isobel Woods	completed	Action on track
		Traders to be informed of appointed Independent Financial Adviser	Isobel Woods	14 June	Action on track
06/06/22		Traders to help businesses in the area to be aware of the Financial Health check being undertaken by the Business Advisor, and the relevant financial paperwork	Traders		
06.06.22		Agree common understanding of what we are trying to achieve in terms of supporting increased footfall in the area.	ALL	28 June	Action on track
06.06.22		Review business rates hardship application process/form for rate relief and whether the current form is minimum requirement under law or can be streamlined.	Tracey Richards	14 June	Action on track

First point on the Council slide above clearly states period of financial hardship calculations....

2nd point - It was quite clear from above that Westside were within their rights to request a time period change as it would have no legal need to retender. THIS WAS IGNORED as it would have resolved the issue about demonstrating true losses.

• Westside Traders Meeting - 6 June - Action Points 5

Yahoo/Inbox ☆



• **John Roseblade** <john.roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

To: des duggal, Isobel Woods, Ruth Taylor, Shelley Smith, Councillor Stephen Simkins and 2 more...

Cc: Vanessa Mehmet, Richard Lawrence



Thu, 9 Jun 2022 at 11:06



Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you once again for attending the meeting at the Civic Centre on Monday. We hope you found it to be a productive and helpful session to further understand issues that you may have and talk about some of things we are doing to address them. Here are the actions from the meeting please can you check to ensure it was a fair and accurate record of discussions. We look forward to meeting with you on 28th June 5:30pm once you are able to confirm this.

Kind regards.

John Roseblade

Director of City Housing and Environment

Tel: Office: 01902 555755

Tel: Mobile: 07825 530368

See Below from the Council slideshow presentation dated 9th June 2022, the page relevant to where council state financial hardship relief (last point) where loss of income is clearly demonstrated. Why is this being retracted now?

Financial hardship relief update...

- Tender closes midnight tomorrow
- Assessment takes place on Wednesday and Thursday
- Appointed by end of the work
- Start date is 16 June (next week)
- Focus for the scheme is to provide SMEs who sign up a financial health check, business advice and guidance and help to connect to relevant support programmes
- Also free business advice for those that want it – build on success of Business Relight programme
- Work will be undertaken at pace and will be independent of the council's current business support programme
- Will be completed within 5 weeks.
- We will provide financial hardship relief where loss of income relative to the works is clearly demonstrated

Westside Traders Group 29

Yahoo/Inbox ☆



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.co> Wed, 25 May 2022 at 14:30 ☆

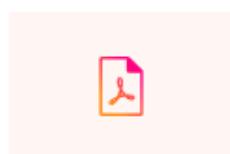
To: Stephen Simkins
Cc: Isobel Woods, John Roseblade,
tim.johnson@wolverhampton.gov.uk,
ruth.taylor@wolverhampton.gov.uk,
Stuart Anderson and 6 more...

Dear Mr Simkins

Please find the attached Statement in response to your request of concerns and issues.

Regards
Billy & Des

**Yahoo Mail**
Take a trip into an upgraded, more organized inbox with
Yahoo Mail. Login and start exploring all the free, orga...



doc0063682....pdf

Westside Traders Group – Statement of Fact

Dear Mr Simkins,

Date: 25th May 2022

You requested a summarisation of our grievances with the situation of Westside. Early March, the traders of Westside brought to your attention and other council representatives, in good faith, some serious issues affecting their businesses.

We are now feeling very dejected and disparaged by the absence of resolve to the issues raised. This has been further fuelled by Isobel's recent proposal '**the financial health check**', which was **not** asked for and does **not** solve **any** of the current issues, in fact it raises concerns to us that there is no coherency in resolving issues – we are not being heard. We are still awaiting the "**working document**" that was agreed 8th May that was going to be produced to work closely with the Westside traders.

To be clear on the chain of events. The negligence in not involving Westside during the consultation and planning processes has culminated in putting businesses and livelihoods at risk. By your own admission, not fully understanding and realising the sheer impact it would have on Westside businesses is not only a clear oversight but a gross failure in the project management and the vision going forwards. As direct consequences of this failure to confer, some businesses have lost their livelihoods and others are facing financial hardship. The mistakes made by both the contractors and council has left businesses in dire straits. Thus, the financial health check as it stands will not assist businesses but questions and implies business viability as opposed to addressing and rectifying the problem that has been created by the council and contractors. **Businesses are being asked to justify how and why are they being affected, their sustainable existence and viability. There is a need to provide immediate financial hardship relief to mitigate the losses that this has caused to allow businesses to stabilise and a sustainable plan to support businesses going forward.** Over time, Westside has been stripped of footfall, market relocation, buses and taxis and the last straw being the roadworks now almost completely cutting off accessibility to Westside which has directly impacted businesses and their ability to serve the greater community. **Time is a major factor in saving Westside from irrevocable loss and recovery through negligent and lack of timely responses.**

It seems apparent that there isn't much appetite or urgency from the council to deal with these matters; despite 5 businesses closing and 40 plus asking for help to get through this difficult time outside of our control. Frankly, not much is being resolved as verbal reassurances are not being followed or articulated and are open to misunderstanding.

To be clear how to go forward, we would like to **request a formal written response** to the main points listed below which are underpinned by the minutes of 7th April 2022, a copy of which you received. Please acknowledge receipt of document by 30th May 2022.

WESTSIDE TRADERS GROUP REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY.

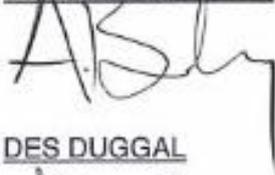
1. Financial hardship relief to counter the losses incurred due to the roadworks to be set in place within 2 weeks and we should have results and pay out within next 6 to 8 weeks for any eligible businesses.

2. All business rates payable should be exempt in the duration of the works and 12 months recovery period thereafter within catchment area on the map attached- this should be actioned within the next two weeks. We make reference to Section 49 of Local Government Finance Act 1988 allowing Council to grant rate relief where ratepayers are suffering hardship or severe difficulties. **In National Non-domestic Rates Explanatory Notes 2022/23 it clearly states "Local Discounts and Hardship Relief Local authorities have a general power to grant discretionary local discounts and to give hardship relief in specific circumstances. Full details can be obtained from the local authority"**.
3. All bid payer payments to be cancelled/exempt in the duration of the works and 12 months recovery period thereafter within catchment area on map- this should be actioned within the next two weeks.
4. A council strategic plan to reflect over the next 24-36 months how you will bring this side of towns footfall back and resume business back to normal. i.e. strategic plans for recovery for the area and the timely figures expected for the return of footfall and share a copy of this plan with us in the next 4 weeks.
5. Social media to boost presence whilst works are going on.
6. Plan of all works, phases in detail in writing over the duration of the works to be shared with us so this can be shared with all our members.
7. Regular monthly meeting with updates on everything on the list and any new concerns. The "working document" needs to be presented within 2 weeks as this was agreed 8th May and would provide a means to have regular meetings, share timescales, give opportunity to raise and address issues proactively in a conducive manner for beneficial of all parties.

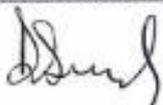
THE GROUP WOULD LIKE TO BRING IT TO YOUR ATTENTION THAT WE CONTACTED WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL AROUND EARLY MARCH 2022 AND NOW WE ARE ALMOST 3 MONTHS ON AND NOTHING OUT OF OUR REQUEST LIST HAS BEEN DONE.

SUB GROUP MEMBERS:

ANDREW BRADLEY



DES DUGGAL



OWEN LOWTHER

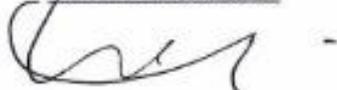
BILVIR CHANDER-KUMAR



KIMBERLEY SOUTHALL



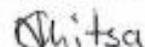
WAYNE HORTON



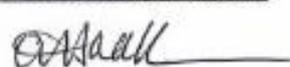
BRUCE NAGRA



NICO CHITSA



ESME STACKHOUSE



 **Bilvir Chander-Kumar** <bilvirck@yahoo.com>
To: lynne.moran@wolverhampton.gov.uk, Des Duggal

 Fri, 29 Apr 2022 at 13:56 ☆

Dear Lynne,

I have been working closely with Des and am part of the Westside subgroup. Having over the years, supported the BID and contributed time and effort to help and be part of the growth of Wolverhampton. I have a passion for the success of Wolverhampton. I felt the need to share my views below as we as Westside Group fall under your remit.

As the council representative for St Peters ward. Please can you show your support for the plight of the businesses of westside. The financial hardship that is being faced is down to the issues raised at the meeting held in April, where you were also present. The miscommunication and by their own admission, council members/executives not realising the impact of how the works etc are being carried out on the businesses. This gross lack of foresight has been incumbent in businesses facing financial hardship. Delays in providing financial assistance will have a detrimental effect on the westside development and economy. The impact for lack of financial support will have far reaching consequences for all parties concerned and more importantly for the livelihoods of the independents, who are the real victims of negligence in planning, management and communication.

Time is a key factor here which each of the independent businesses may not have without prompt intervention of financial hardship. We need some form of communication to give confidence to us businesses that we do matter and are part of the city centre economic development. At the moment businesses feel extremely isolated and vulnerable. They need assurance of financial hardship support.

Please can you advise and assist in the urgency of this matter.

We need preemptive action to avoid further losses of businesses that have been established for many years and those that are new to the area.

I have been born and bred in Wolverhampton and would like to see it thrive again so I have a vested interest in it as a business owner as well. Very slow progress has been made since the meeting in early April. We need your support urgently to push matters forward. Thank you for taking time to read this.

Kind Regards

Bilvir Chander-Kumar

Equinox



 **Councillor Lynne Moran** <lynne.moran@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: Bilvir Chander-Kumar, Des Duggal

 Fri, 29 Apr 2022 at 16:08 ☆

 **Councillor Lynne Moran** <lynne.moran@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
To: Bilvir Chander-Kumar, Des Duggal

 Fri, 29 Apr 2022 at 16:08 ☆

Sensitivity: PROTECT

Hi Bilvir,

Thank you very much indeed for writing to me and of course I understand your concerns and those of all the other traders who attended the meeting at Equinox.

I am sorry you have heard nothing since the meeting and the least I can do at the moment is to refer to the senior officers concerned expressing my support and asking for an update. Once I know more I shall of course share with you and you can pass on to those who would be interested.

Regards

Lynne (Moran)

Lynne Moran
Wolverhampton City Councillor,
St Peter's Ward
07469 410596 (please leave a message)



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: John Roseblade

Cc: Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Isobel Woods, Richard Lawrence, Vicky Moulding

Wed, 27 Apr 2022 at 14:04 ☆

Hi John,

Verbal promises were made to the traders by Councillor Simpkins that they would respond with what the council can support businesses on the financial Hardship currently facing westside traders group. Additionally, an action team headed by yourself was suppose to arrange what other additional changes, improvements need to happen to resolve issues raised in the minutes where you and other councillors attended at Equinox.

We need a formal address to be held as a matter of urgency as you are aware that livelihoods are critical for some traders. Please can we have the meeting this week at the time you specified around 5.30-6.30pm.

We do not wish for the situation to boil over into anything else.

Regards
Des

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

> Show original message



John Roseblade <john.roseblade@wolverhampton.gov.uk>

To: des duggal

Cc: Marianne Page, Ruth Taylor, Isobel Woods, Richard Lawrence, Vicky Moulding

Wed, 27 Apr 2022 at 16:06 ☆

Hi Des

Thanks for getting back to me and again assisting with the arrangements. I note the urgency here so will get back to you asap.

John Roseblade
Director City Housing and Environment
07825 500260

Westside Traders Group 2

Yahoo/Inbox ☆



des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>

To: Stephen Simkins

Thu, 14 Apr 2022 at 15:01 ☆

Good afternoon Mr Simkins

Please find the attached minutes/(updated agenda) from our meeting held on the 7th of April 2022.

Could you please provide us with up to date details of the actions you have taken so far with what you had taken onboard at the meeting.

On our side we have now arranged a sub-group with 8-10, who will be representing the westside traders group to keep all matters professional. We would like to arrange a meeting for around the 25th of April 2022 to go through the agenda in a more constructive manor. Please let me know your thoughts on this.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards
Des & Billy.



WestsideRet....pdf
243.2kB



This is the only response we ever got from our ward councillor Lynne Moran.

From: Councillor Lynne Moran <Lynne.Moran@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 April 2022 17:55
To: des duggal <westsidetradersgroup@yahoo.com>
Cc: Christopher Jellyman <Christopher.Jellyman@wolverhampton.gov.uk>
Subject: Impact of the West Side development upon Traders

Sensitivity: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Hello Des,

I thank you for your appreciation but I would say that the City Centre is part of St Peter's Ward so your local Councillors are very interested in any or all issues arising.

I have to say I am dismayed at the accounts I heard from traders at the meeting and I sincerely hope that the Council and the contractors can make amends in some ways. I have always worked effectively with the BID team and it is good to see you are all working closely together. Our communication strategy has clearly been sadly lacking.

Please include me in any further discussions you think I should know about/attend and I will do my very best to be there. I did note the worries expressed about anti social behaviours outside some businesses and I am including a Council officer in this message who will be very interested to know more. Chris Jellyman runs the PACT meetings in our area and he has in the past tried out City Centre meetings – if you are able to include traders in our next meeting notice, some of them might be able to attend.

I apologise for the treatment endured by you all as traders. You are a vital part of the City economy and it is clear that many of you are suffering considerable financial pressures as a consequence of the current works.

Regards,

Lynne (Moran)