

# Good Growth Strategy City of Wolverhampton

Draft for Consultation

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## Foreword

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

## Our Story

Over the last 10 years the City of Wolverhampton has seen major successes, including the award-winning £1 billion i54 business park, the £150 million Interchange transport hub, the £17.5 million National Brownfield Institute at the University of Wolverhampton's Springfield Campus and the £16 million construction of the i9 office complex – now home to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities' second headquarters. We have innovative businesses across a range of sectors, hard-working employees, an expanding skills sector, world class connectivity and a growing arts and culture scene. All of this and much more has led to growth – driving forward our economy and building confidence. **Our city economy is now worth £4.7 billion pounds and supports over 100,000 jobs.**

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

We now face a new growing challenge to support our residents and businesses to decarbonise our economy and make our city net carbon neutral by 2041. Wolverhampton made history by becoming the first English city to sign the European Circular Cities Declaration a major environmental designed to accelerate the adoption of circular economies across the continent. The success of this strategy ultimately relies on delivering not just good growth, but good green growth.

The scale of the prize is significant – **up to 2040 the city's economy is projected to grow by £2 billion to £6.7 billion** an increase of 43%. We want to go further and faster. This strategy sets out targeted interventions and priorities which could see us eclipse our projected growth to deliver more jobs and higher incomes for local people.

## Our Role as a Partner, Enabler and Leader

The City of Wolverhampton Council is one piece of a complex economic system which operate across multiple footprints and actors. Delivering real economic change requires key partners to align around a shared vision. To make that happen, the Council commits to using it's role as a partner, enabler and leader to deliver change.

- We'll make it as easy as possible to work with us – streamline our processes, join up our services.
- Use our assets effectively to support and enable good development in our city.
- Lead the development of game changing investment through city and regional partnership including the Green Innovation Corridor, i54 western extension and Canalside.
- Be a lead partner and applicant for new public funding opportunities to support business investment, skills development, and employment support.
- Leading and co-ordinating Wolverhampton's response on how the city tackles challenges and opportunities associated with climate change and the necessary transition to a zero-carbon economy.

## Our Place in the Region

The City of Wolverhampton played a pivotal role in setting up the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), which was established through a Parliamentary Order in June 2016. Since then, the city alongside the six other constituent authorities of the WMCA have been at the forefront of devolution in England.

The Levelling Up White Paper published on the 2 February 2022 announced a 'Trailblazer Devolution Deal' for the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. It was the third devolution deal for the region. On the 15 March 2023 the Chancellor announced the conclusion of negotiations on a third deeper devolution deal for the region. Including:

- Levelling Up Zones (LUZ): Commitment from government to work with the WMCA and constituent authorities to designate of 'growth zones'.
- Housing and Regeneration: Local leadership of the Affordable Homes Programme for the first time outside of London worth at least £200 million and a £100 million brownfield land fund.
- Retrofit: Piloting the devolution of net zero funding, including for buildings' retrofit, through allocation rather than competition in the period from 2025 onwards.
- Adult Skills and Employment: Devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and grant funding, local flexibilities, over Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps. A commitment to a co-design approach to all future contracted employment support programmes with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Business Productivity: A new role for WMCA in the governance of the British Business Bank UK funds in the Midlands and stronger relationship with the UK Infrastructure Bank. Stronger partnership between the government and WMCA across a range of international trade activities.
- Innovation: Building on the Innovation Accelerator programme, a Strategic Innovation Partnership to give WMCA a new and influential role informing the national research and innovation ecosystem, a knowledge transfer programme focused on local strengths and a pilot to boost innovation adoption and diffusion by local businesses.
- Transport: The deal also includes the provision of essential infrastructure especially public transport connectivity to give communities access to essential services, facilities and opportunities.

## Our City: Our Plan

Our City: Our Plan is our strategic framework for levelling up, co-produced with over 4500 local people and stakeholders and approved at Full Council on 2 March 2022.

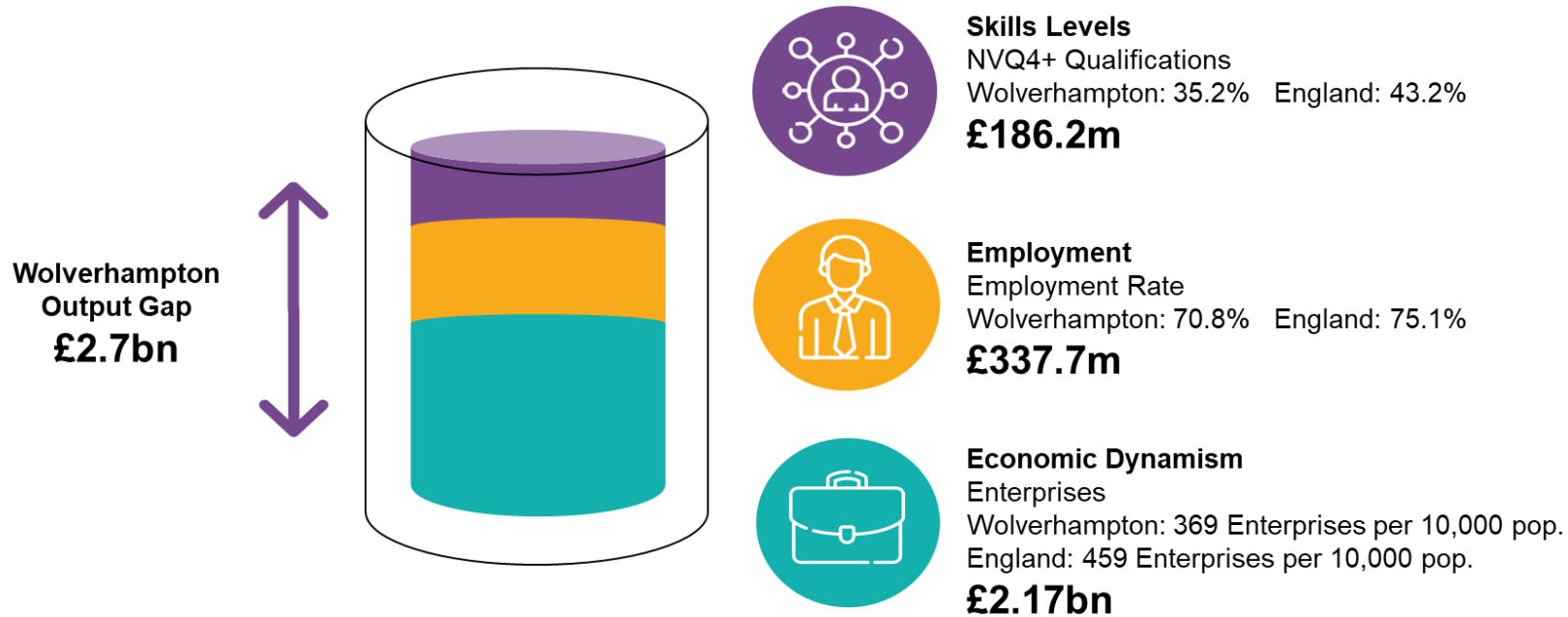
We have one plan for our 'place', derived bottom up and collectively owned with clear interface with Levelling Up missions. The plan outlines an overarching ambition that Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives, and outlines six priorities.



## Wolverhampton's Economy

A full profile of Wolverhampton's economy can be found in the strategic economic evidence base.

### Output Gap





## Sector Profile

Wolverhampton's economy is broken down between 'strategic' sectors focused on growth - and some more "foundational" (health & wellbeing, public sector including education and retail), critical to employment but with a more enabling role in the economy.

### Summary of GVA, jobs and enterprises by defined sector<sup>1</sup> for Wolverhampton (and percentage of total for England):

	GVA (£m)			Jobs			Enterprises (Snapshot)		
	2020	%	England %	2020	%	England %	2020	%	England %
Advanced Manufacturing	£816	15.9%	10.5%	13,150	12.8%	10.3%	785	10.2%	12.1%
Building Technologies	£304	5.9%	5.8%	4,350	4.2%	4.7%	1005	13.0%	13.1%
Business Services	£1,185	23.0%	42.5%	16,475	16.0%	25.4%	2,260	29.3%	38.6%
Environmental Technologies	£114	2.2%	3.2%	1,160	1.1%	1.1%	60	0.8%	0.5%
Health & Wellbeing	£772	15.0%	8.6%	22,500	21.8%	15.1%	435	5.3%	4.9%
Public Sector inc. Education	£917	17.8%	12.0%	16,250	15.8%	15.6%	185	2.4%	3.7%
Retail	£658	12.8%	10.5%	18,500	18.0%	15.0%	1,595	20.6%	14.8%
Transport Technologies	£195	3.8%	3.7%	5,655	5.5%	5.2%	840	10.9%	5.1%
Visitor Economy	£185	3.6%	3.1%	5,525	5.4%	7.7%	560	7.2%	7.0%
<b>Wolverhampton Total</b>	<b>£5,146</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>103,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,725</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

There are a number of sector specialisms present in Wolverhampton where the city holds a competitive advantage and where there is significant growth potential to support many firms, sectors and supply chains as well as the overall economy. The potential contribution of these

<sup>1</sup> Shaded boxes indicator Wolverhampton has a higher or same proportion that the national proportion for that sector

is different, varying in size and scale, and the rate at which productivity is projected to improve. Our two biggest sectors and drivers of productivity and growth are.

- **Business Services:** The city's largest sector generating £1.2 billion of GVA annually. Over 17,000 jobs concentrated in creative and digital, financial services, real estate and other sub sectors. Despite its considerable size in the city the density of business services sector remains lower than the England average.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** 16% of all the city's Gross Value Added (GVA) is generated by businesses delivering goods or services in the advanced manufacturing sector with the automotive and aerospace industries being dominant. There are strong sub sectors in the food and drink production and metals/materials. 10% of all jobs in the advanced manufacturing sector in England are in Wolverhampton. The sector is a crucial part of Wolverhampton's future growth but also faces challenges as we transition to new technologies and automation, manage the circular economy transition and ongoing energy crisis.

We have three sectors in our city which are smaller in size than our main specialisms but are demonstrating growth in GVA or jobs.

- **Building Technologies:** Wolverhampton has a higher proportion of building technologies GVA compared to the Black Country and national averages (6.5% of the local total GVA compared to 5.9% in the Black Country and 5.8% across the UK). Between 2017 and 2020, Building Technologies GVA in Wolverhampton increased by 1.7%, performing much better than the UK overall (-9.4%).
- **Transport Technologies:** While GVA returned by the transport technologies sector decreased between 2017 and 2020 we saw the number of jobs increase in Wolverhampton by over 20%. A positive trajectory for jobs growth in the sector but a limited number of high value jobs.
- **Environmental Technologies:** Productivity in Wolverhampton's environmental technologies sector stands at £98,276 GVA per employee. This is not only higher than economy-wide productivity in Wolverhampton but is the second highest environmental technologies productivity of all four Black Country local authority areas.

Underpinning our strategic sectors are those elements of the local economy which provide vital services to people who live, work and visit our city. Whilst they generally produce lower levels of productivity, they are large generators of jobs in critical occupations such as health care workers, teachers and those delivering high street amenities which support city and town centre's.

- Health and Wellbeing: The largest generator of jobs in the city is the health and wellbeing sector with 22,550 jobs which more than a fifth of all city jobs. Wolverhampton has a higher proportion of health & wellbeing businesses than both the Black Country and UK average (5.6% compared to 5.5% and 5.2% respectively).
- Retail: Traditionally important to our city's high streets retail equate to 20% of all enterprises in our city. A vital part of vibrant thriving places to but a sector which continues to face challenges on the back of the pandemic and the shift to online shopping. Increasing footfall levels is key to unlocking the future sustainability of a contracting retail offer in the city. Our wider plans for city and town centre revitalisation
- Public Sector: Predominantly driven by jobs and growth in the education sub sector.

# Our Approach to Good Growth

Our strategy is based on three interconnected themes and a central principle of 'good growth'.



### **Good Growth is Green Growth**

There are several ways that climate change could stimulate the Wolverhampton economy:

- **Renewable Energy:** Establishing renewable energy infrastructure and attracting green energy companies to set up operations in the area can lead to the creation of manufacturing jobs for wind turbines, solar panels, and energy storage systems, and in installation and maintenance.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Green infrastructure projects such as flood defences, green roofs, and urban parks which would create jobs and improve the quality of life for residents.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Promoting energy efficiency measures can reduce energy consumption and lower emissions, leading to cost savings for businesses and homeowners, stimulating economic activity.
- **Transport:** Investing in sustainable transport infrastructure can reduce carbon emissions and create jobs in construction, manufacturing, and transportation services.
- **Research & Innovation:** Encouraging research and development in green technologies can lead to new business opportunities.
- **Education & Training:** Investing in education and training programs in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and other related fields can ensure that the local workforce is equipped with the necessary skills for green jobs.
- **Waste Management:** Implementing sustainable waste management practices and waste-to-energy technologies can, not only reduce environmental impacts, but also create jobs.

## Place

This section sets out how we will make our places work, putting people first. Creating a city where you don't need a car, delivering jobs and homes in the right places, ensuring our city and local centres thrive, building in resilience and adapting for the future.

### Support the development of sustainable communities and workplaces

The [Wolverhampton Investment Prospectus](#) sets out an ambitious regeneration programme for the city which is informed by social-economic indicators, market intelligence and investment appetite and therefore realistic and deliverable. The Prospectus includes large residential schemes such as Brewers Yard and Canalside South, the office led Commercial District and leisure opportunities around the Molineux and City Centre West. Some of the transformational regeneration schemes that are included in the Prospectus are on the verge of being ready for delivery and just require a small amount of intervention to make that possible. There are many exciting opportunities with strong interest from a range of investors.

Housing schemes in our city centre will help to diversify the city offer, drive football and support local businesses but our ambitions for city housing are much wider. We want every family in our city to have access to a safe, affordable secure home. There are pockets of poor-quality housing in the city and challenges for many with affordability. Through our Council owned housing company WV Living and our Housing Development team we will continue to drive forward the delivery of new homes and spearhead neighbourhood redevelopment to drive up quality.

New business models are creating a shift in demand for new workspace with hybrid working models increasing demand in the city's flexible workspace market. We are creating new workspaces and start-up spaces in locations outside of the city centre through providing funding to businesses for collaboration, co-working space and business development within local communities. As well as strategic employment sites such as I54.

Wolverhampton is rapidly developing a city-wide approach to green infrastructure. Building on the city's first solar farm a joint project between the City of Wolverhampton Council and Wolverhampton NHS Trust, including net zero homes, electric vehicle charging points, enhancing our green space, district heating and flood alleviation.

## Inclusive, low carbon transport network

An effective and efficient transport network is critical to sustaining and growing the city's economic potential. Connecting local people to jobs, and businesses with their supply chains and markets. The city has seen significant investment in its transport infrastructure in recent years with a new city centre interchange, train station and tram network. We want to make Wolverhampton a city where no matter where you live you live you don't need to have a car, if you don't want one to access everything the city and region has to offer.

The city is predominantly car orientated with travel to work statistics showing that 54% of people drive a car or van to work which is greater than the national average of 45% (ONS 2021). Business trips in cars and light goods vehicles are responsible for the greatest proportion of emissions in the city. While car travel is a necessary element of residents travelling to work and moving around the city, if we are to meet our net zero target of 2041 a change in how we travel will need to happen.

The public transport system is the backbone of our whole sustainable transport network and will play a key role in delivering our Vision to address emissions and deliver a 45-minute region with connected 15-minute neighbourhoods. The [West Midlands Local Transport Plan](#) sets out a vision to deliver an integrated system, which is reliable, ticketing is easy and the services are efficient, accessible and comfortable. Shared services (such as car clubs and bike hire) are incorporated into the overall system so are seen as complementary to public transport.

Working with our partners we will lead a technology revolution. Exploiting our regional strengths in products such as public transport, connected and autonomous vehicles, 5G, Mobility as a Service and modern infrastructure construction techniques as well as battery technology to provide world-class transport services for residents and businesses.

## Secure the potential of our city and town centres

City and town centres are critical parts of our local economy providing a range of functions to local people. They are hubs for independent businesses and often provide much valued spaces where people can socialise, connect and celebrate local identity through events and festivals.

The way people use our city and town centres has changed. There is a move away from retail to more social, leisure and entertainment activities. This doesn't mean that retail and hospitality are not important parts of our local economy, they are a vital part of providing much needed services to local people. It does mean that we need to diversify our city and town centre offer to so that we can provide a more balanced offer which attracts people to come and spend time on our high streets.

A key focus of that future sense of place for our city is the prominence of our cultural and creative offer. Wolverhampton is a uniquely diverse and vibrant city, with many different voices which make up our population. Our arts, culture and creative sectors reflect this landscape. We aren't starting from scratch with nationally significant cultural assets like Wolverhampton Football Club, The Halls, Wolverhampton Art Galley and the Grand Theatre. We can already proudly call ourselves an 'Events City' with over 1,000 events held in the city every year.

Supporting the growth of our cultural and creative sector is only part of the answer. It is part of a wider integrated approach to city regeneration, development and enhancements. Including excellent public transport connectivity, effective city marketing and welcoming public spaces.

Ourcome	Objectives
Support development of sustainable communities and workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the Wolverhampton Local Plan to make sure we use our land and assets in the best possible way to meet our long-term housing and employment needs.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Government, the West Midlands Combined Authority and developers to remediate and bring forward brownfield land for new development.</li> <li>• Work with developers and through our council owned housing vehicle WV Living to create the new homes the city needs.</li> <li>• We will tackle pockets of poor-quality housing through transformation estate renewal programmes.</li> <li>• Decarbonise our city housing stock working with Wolverhampton Homes and our Tenant Management Organisation to retrofit social housing, encouraging residents to access net zero grant funding green their homes and pursue passivhaus standard for new homes.</li> <li>• Create more accessible, inclusive communities and workplaces which have sustainable transport and digital connectivity at their heart allowing people to access opportunities without needing a car.</li> <li>• Work with public and private partners to establish renewable energy infrastructure in our communities reducing energy costs to residents and businesses.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver our wider programme of key employment sites Industrial Sites to provide shovel read employment sites for development. Building our successful intervention in the Bilston Employment site.</li> </ul>
<p>Create an inclusive, low carbon transport network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Transport for West Midlands and other operators to deliver a consistently high quality, affordable public transport system.</li> <li>• Develop our walking and cycling network enabling people to move easily around the city and access a range of local destinations safely.</li> <li>• Encourage alternative modes of transport to reduce car usage and shift reliance on petrol and diesel as a means of moving around the city and region.</li> <li>• Support a technology revolution driving electric vehicle usage and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Work with partners to deliver major infrastructure projects to improve transport links in the city.</li> <li>• Provide safe and accessible roads, pavements and other public spaces for everyone, especially vulnerable users.</li> </ul>
<p>Secure the potential of our city and town centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead transformational regeneration to diversify city and town centre offer creatin a mix of residential, employment and leisure space.</li> <li>• Use our planning powers to prevent poor quality development.</li> <li>• Make our city and town centres more walkable by reducing traffic flow, increasing footfall and dwell time.</li> <li>• Support a sustainable future for historic buildings across the city, and in particular listed buildings.</li> <li>• Develop a world class visitor and night time economy offer supported by our 5 year events strategy.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen and promote arts, cultural and creative economy across Wolverhampton including a cultural and creative skills plan for the city, bespoke business support and establishing a cultural and creative partnership board.</li><li>• Work in collaboration with our business networks and forums including City Centre and Bilston BID to promote our city and town centres.</li><li>• Ensure our city and town centres are safe and accessible to all regardless of background.</li></ul>
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## Productivity

This theme sets out the ways in which we can improve productivity in Wolverhampton to enable businesses to innovate and grow. It also looks at how important it is to continue to build the profile of the city for the region and the UK.

Raising productivity is key to increasing wages and living standards, delivering growth and generating revenue that can be used to improve public services. Productivity is about businesses being able to adapt, pivot and survive through changes, driving efficiencies and 'working smarter not harder'.

### Help businesses and organisations to increase their productivity

SMEs are the backbone of our economy and with targeted support there is potential to generate significant business growth. Nationally there is a long tail of SMEs who are not reaching their full potential and we need to provide more support to SMEs particularly those in the city where the productivity gap with London and the South East is significant.

If we can start to close this gap then it will create well paid job opportunities and additional tax revenue for the UK. More than two-thirds of all inward investment jobs created in the UK each year are as a result of expansions from existing investors. While new arrivals are a valuable contribution to the Wolverhampton economy, the most significant source of jobs and investment in the next few years is likely to be from companies already located here.

That is why we are our Invest: Business Growth offer which will work in partnership with Business Growth West Midlands and other public and private business support providers to help businesses increase their productivity through investing in new technology, new products, processes and employee skills. Support is available to help businesses to invest to create growth and new jobs.

SMEs are locally owned and embedded in their communities hence they have a vested interest in trying to support local communities. Work is ongoing to help businesses to make a wider difference to their local communities, examples include improving skills and employment opportunities for local and disadvantaged people, paying staff the Real Living Wage, or paying small business suppliers in accordance with the Prompt Payment Code.

Annually our city generates hundreds of new start-ups. Many will begin at home or in locations close to where they live. Increasing the survivability and growth of start-ups and young businesses will create more employment opportunities in some of our more disadvantaged communities and we tailor our support packages to focus on these areas. IGNITE Wolverhampton provides an initial gateway to tailored business support with a range of support programmes available to help new businesses.

## Collaborate with business and academia to stimulate innovation

To us, innovation infrastructure means an environment for creating. We need spaces for creativity and collaboration where ideas can be nurtured, a testbed to accelerate the application of products and research, academic research that support the ecosystem and spin out the businesses of the future.

In Wolverhampton we are proud to be home to The National Brownfield Institute part of the city's Springfield Campus which brings together specialist researchers, consultants, and industry experts to advance research into brownfield land remediation and the circular economy. We are already seeing the benefits of being home to world class R&D facilities and have seen an increase in the sustainable construction sector in the city.

We are building an innovation hub of the future at the Green Innovation Corridor which will draw together innovation driven entrepreneurs, start-ups and business to share ideas and access capital to accelerate the development of new ideas. It will be underpinned by the University of Wolverhampton, one of our anchor institutions from across the city who share our values and goals.

We're also home to well established innovation site at i54. Home to our nationally significant advanced manufacturing cluster with MOOG, Collins Aerospace and JLR operating and exporting globally at the site.

We recognise that we are still at the start of our journey in comparison to other leading innovation cities, but this means that new companies can truly make their mark when they choose to invest in Wolverhampton. If we are to push forward with our vision we must also address the imbalance funding R&D funding. In 2016 direct government R&D expenditure per capita was £60 in London and the South East of England and £14 in the West Midlands. Working with the West Midlands Combined Authority and Innovate West Midlands we will set the case for increased innovation funding for Wolverhampton and the region.

## Maximise the city’s investment potential

Working in partnership to deliver major regeneration projects and new city jobs is now more important than ever as local authorities continue to work with challenging budget constraints. The Council’s unique position with a birds eye view of our city means we are ideally placed to co-ordinate major investment into our place. Ultimately, maximising the investment potential of our city is how we shape all of our assets and opportunities into a compelling package for potential investors.

Attracting inward investment can take many different forms. This includes new businesses setting up in the city, existing companies expanding and government and public sector relocations.

Reshoring presents a major opportunity for the city. Supply-chains are being rethought, with concerns over resilience, costs and carbon footprint. The pandemic has accelerated a trend which has been underway for several years. Shorter supply-chains are being implemented that offer resilience against global events. A study by the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS), 40% of organisations in the UK switched at least one international supplier to a domestic alternative in 2021.

There are increasing opportunities from government relocations as the public sector seeks solutions that help ‘level up’ opportunities outside of London. Government is committed to moving 22,000 civil service roles out of London by 2030 as part of its Place for Growth programme. Wolverhampton has been a major beneficiary of this trend with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities headquarters.

### We will...

Priority	Objective
Help businesses and organisations to increase their productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a new digital front door for city businesses and ensure we are the ‘easiest council in the country to do business with’ and wherever possible businesses can self-serve to get the support they need.</li> <li>• Ensure a consistently high level of core services to businesses including planning, commercial waste, procurement, and business rates.</li> <li>• Enhance our local growth offer by aligning it with the Business Growth West Midlands offer.</li> <li>• City Growth Offer to businesses delivered in partnership with public and private partners. Set across 6 priorities.</li> </ul>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finance and Business Support</li> <li>2. Leadership and Management</li> <li>3. Workforce Development</li> <li>4. Technology and Innovation</li> <li>5. Green Business Support</li> <li>6. Internationalisation</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake Decarbonisation and Green Grant programmes to support businesses to become more energy efficient and reduce their emissions.</li> <li>• Develop integrated sector action plans to support our strategic and foundational sectors to increase productivity and growth. These will include bespoke skills, business support, infrastructure and inward investment opportunities and challenges</li> </ul>
<p>Collaborate with business and academia to stimulate innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local businesses to identify innovation opportunities and connect them with funding and support through our Invest: Growth Offer.</li> <li>• IGNITE start up hub will provide wrap around support for spin outs.</li> <li>• Create the right environment and workspace for innovation to collaborate and thrive through established locations like I54 and our new Green Innovation Corridor.</li> <li>• Encouraging research and development in green technologies can lead to new business opportunities.</li> <li>• Work in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton and other research institutions to increase links between industry and research to create the right conditions for innovation.</li> </ul>
<p>Maximise the city's investment potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join up our city growth offer with our inward investment priorities to identify target sectors and functions for investment of existing businesses and to attract new businesses to the city.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with the West Midlands Growth Company to leverage our collective resource to identify international investment and export opportunities for the city.</li><li>• Work with partners and businesses to exploit our growing sector specialisms to attract new business investment.</li><li>• Champion the city's offer continuing to raise the profile of the city nationally and internationally as a great place to invest and do business.</li><li>• Building an even closer relationship with investors and strategic employers through effective account management to better understand their needs and how they can contribute to growth in our city.</li><li>• Deliver our soft landing platform for investors to make Wolverhampton the easiest Council in the country work with and invest with.</li></ul>
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## People

People are our city's greatest asset. There has never been greater demand for well skilled people with every sector and industry facing shortages and recruitment challenges. Causes include wage stagnation amid rising cost of living, job dissatisfaction, safety concerns relating to the pandemic, and the desire to work for companies with better remote-working policies.

### Education, skills and employment system that meets local need

Skill levels in the city have been steadily increasing with the numbers of local people securing higher level qualifications at record numbers. However, there remain areas for improvement and the current education, skills and employment system in the city faces a number of challenges arising from a legacy of deindustrialisation, low aspirations, pockets of entrenched worklessness, relatively low pay, low skill levels more recently the Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis.

The Council is committed to continuing to drive up skills outcomes for our residents and has set out its holistic whole life approach to [Education, Skills and Employment in a new Council led strategy](#) which seeks to bring together partners to improve employment outcomes for local people and increase local economic growth.

Through this strategy we want to enhance the city's talent pool so that local people can get good quality jobs, businesses can access the skills they need to grow and we can attract new enterprise to our city. The role of academic and business partnerships in developing skills for the future is vital. Connecting employers to education and skills providers and that courses are being developed that align with the ever-changing needs of companies.

A key opportunity for Wolverhampton is integrating our industry specialisms with our approach to talent. These will be focused across our strategic sectors both large and growing, as well as our critical foundational sectors. Through the development of sector focused action plans we will identify and align the skills needs of businesses to help them grow and residents. These sectors will be further supported through business support and spatial development and infrastructure investment.



## Work with our partners to support health and wellbeing

Research from [The Health Foundation](#) shows that a local areas employment rate is related to how long people are likely to live and how many years they can expect to live in good health. In places with higher economic inactivity people are more likely to have a lower healthy life expectancy.

As adults in employment spend a large proportion of their time in work, our jobs and our workplaces can have a big impact on our health and wellbeing. In fact, employment can impact both directly and indirectly on the individual, their families and communities. Therefore, work and health-related worklessness are important public health issues, both at local and national level.

There is clear evidence that good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives, not only from an economic standpoint but also in terms of quality of life. 'Good work' means having not only a work environment that is safe, but also having a sense of security, autonomy, good line management and communication within an organisation.

For many individuals, in particular those with long-term conditions such as mental health problems, musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions and disabilities, health issues can be a barrier to gaining and retaining employment.

Combined costs from worklessness and sickness absence amount to around £100 billion annually, so there is also a strong economic case for action. Addressing and removing health-related barriers requires collaborative work between partners from across the private, public and third sectors at both national and local level.

Enabling people with health issues to obtain or retain work, and be productive within the workplace, is a crucial part of the economic success and wellbeing of our city.

Therefore, it is important that people are supported to gain employment and maintain economic independence for themselves and their families, especially as they age. This is of particular importance for individuals with long-term conditions and disabilities, due to the barriers they face in gaining employment and retaining a job.

Collaborative work between partners from across the private, public and third sector is essential for creating pathways to good jobs. Local government plays an important role in bringing these partners together, as well as leading by example within their workforce. The call to action section below expands on the actions local authorities can take in the health and work agenda.

## Build community wealth through the Wolverhampton Pound

Community Wealth Building (CWB) seeks to engage with the local economy so that wealth; both economic and social, can be kept and recirculated within our City and our communities. The Wolverhampton Pound will put our citizens and communities at the heart of all that we do, to ensure that local businesses, service providers and individuals are provided with the opportunities they have a right to expect; opportunities that will help to improve not just the local economy but the health, wellbeing and quality of life that all of our citizens deserve.

At its core CWB is a place-based approach which uses the strengths and assets of a local place to drive economic change. While different areas have interpreted the approach differently, they all share a common objective of generating local wealth to benefit the most disadvantaged communities.

Our approach to community wealth building is centred around ensuring fair employment and just labour markets, making financial power work for our local place and growing local and community ownership of the economy. One of the main objectives of the Wolverhampton Pound is to embed social value in the City to help leverage local spend and employment and make the City the best it can be for our communities.

Although the Wolverhampton Pound presents a new overarching approach to economic development for the city many of the actions and priority areas associated with it are not. Organisations across the city, in particular those in our VCS have been leading initiatives to support the growth of community wealth.

Acting alone the Council will have limited impact. The Wolverhampton Pound approach has been developed collaboratively with five key city partners who have made a commitment to work together as the Wolverhampton Anchor Network to deliver the priorities.

Priority	Objectives
An education, skills and employment system that meets local needs	Working with partners to deliver our Education, Skills and Employment strategy, and Wolves at Work Transformation Programme, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure we have a range of higher-level skills and training support available in the city aligned to growth sectors to support productivity and higher wage jobs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to maximise the number of apprenticeship and training opportunities for young people and adults in the city.</li> <li>• Work with our partners including businesses, job centres, training providers, colleges and the University to develop flexible pathways for local people who are in work to retrain and progress.</li> <li>• Establish clear pathways and entry routes for unemployed adults, particularly those from underrepresented groups to access employment in growth sectors or where there are skills shortages.</li> <li>• Build on the city centre youth hub at The Way, using our community hubs to deliver co-located employment and skills support to young people in their local areas.</li> </ul>
<p>Tackle health and wellbeing barriers to work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners at DWP to deliver inclusive employment support opportunities for all raising awareness of support to create inclusive opportunities.</li> <li>• Work with employers and other city partners to champion inclusive employment practices to ensure there is a pathway to success for all residents in our city and healthy workspaces.</li> <li>• Work with partners from across the city to develop a new Public Mental Health Strategy for Wolverhampton outlining the actions we will take together to make sure local people can feel good and function well in our communities.</li> <li>• Through the Wolverhampton Deal encourage businesses develop 'Good Work', which is secure and inclusive.</li> </ul>
<p>Grow community wealth through the Wolverhampton Pound</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure public and private investment opportunities create good work opportunities for local people and support our businesses to grow.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake an annual spend analysis our five anchor institutions, understanding where we currently spend locally and where we could do more.</li><li>• Analyse anchor supply chains to develop a 10-year procurement and commissioning pipeline.</li><li>• Identify priority areas to direct more of our collective anchor network spend locally.</li><li>• Incorporate and monitor social value/local employment clauses through the council's supply chain.</li><li>• Leverage agreements with investors and partners to maximise benefits for local people, including by securing the delivery of S106 skills and training opportunities.</li></ul>
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## Delivering Good Growth

The delivery of this Strategy will be a major priority for the Council working across all sectors, public, private, community and voluntary. It must also engage local communities in the delivery effort and inspire a sense of confidence in Wolverhampton's economic potential and future. The key ingredient of this is collective leadership, delivering our growth ambition will require strong entrepreneurial, whole-place leadership, bringing together business, civil society and political leaders, formally and informally, to drive system change.

### **Anchor Institutions**

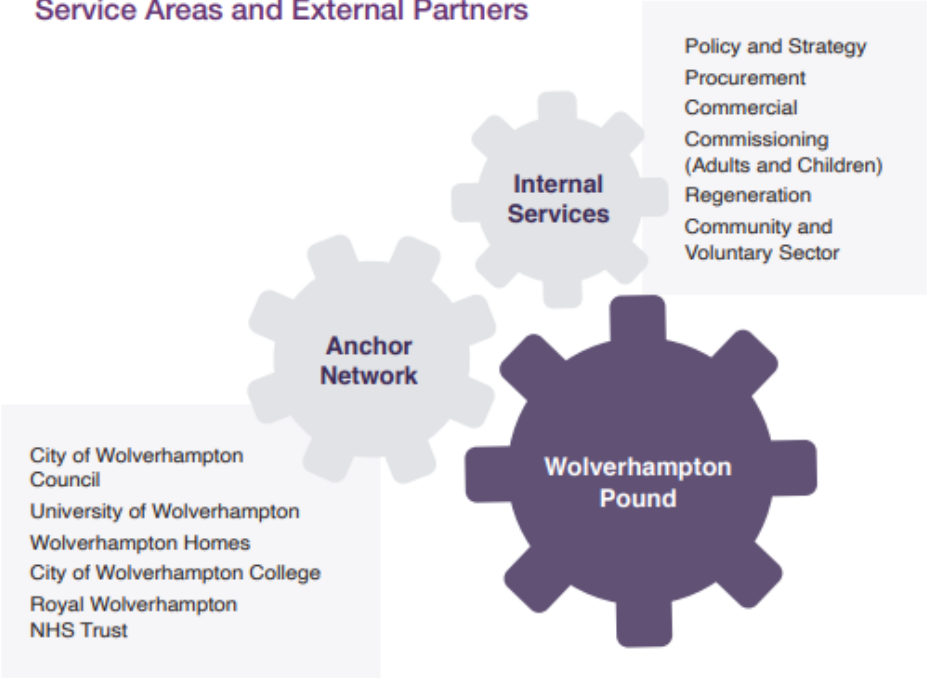
A key feature of the delivery of this strategy will be the role of Wolverhampton's Anchor Institutions. These are our large and influential private and public sector employers, sports and other institutions which can, in each of the key priorities, play a lead role in creating good growth. This could involve using their purchasing power to drive growth at a local level in Wolverhampton and providing employees with opportunities for in-work progression.

Anchor institutions share a number of key characteristics including:

- Spatial immobility: have strong ties to an area and are invested in it
- Size: tend to be large employers and have significant purchasing power
- Land and assets: occupy various sites across the city and have good community reach

### Wolverhampton Anchor Network

#### Service Areas and External Partners



### Economic Insight and Indicators

The Council already collects and monitors a number of indicators to understand how the local economy is performing. Those indicators included in the Our City Our Plan relating to the economy are below. As part of the consultation on the Good Growth we will continue to refine and add to our economic indicators.

Theme	Indicators
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new builds completed in the city</li> <li>• Net additional dwellings in the city</li> <li>• % of dwelling stock that is vacant in the city</li> <li>• Housing affordability ratio</li> <li>• Total crime recorded per 1000 population</li> </ul>
Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business that survive one year in city</li> <li>• Businesses that survive five years in the city</li> <li>• Public R&amp;D spend</li> <li>• Private R&amp;D spend</li> </ul>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of working age adults (16-64) claiming unemployment benefits</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of young adults (18-24) claiming unemployment benefits</li><li>• Levels of 16-17 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training</li><li>• % of population with no qualifications</li><li>• % of working age population qualified to level 3 and 4</li><li>• % of population in skilled occupations</li></ul>
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