



City of Wolverhampton

Civic Office of the Year Award



MAYOR OF
WOLVERHAMPTON



Celebrating and promoting civic pride

City of Wolverhampton Council's submission for Civic Office of the Year

Introduction

Like many parts of the country, Wolverhampton has faced difficult challenges following the 2008 recession and subsequent austerity measures.

One of the ways the city has sought to deal with these setbacks is by nurturing a stronger sense of civic pride and identity - key ingredients for creating resilient and successful cities. The Mayor's Office has been at the forefront of these efforts and has worked hard to find new ways to engage people from all walks of life across Wolverhampton's richly diverse communities.

This submission will describe how the Mayor's Office has maximised the impact of resources at its disposal to help the council and the city as a whole to achieve our shared aim to make Wolverhampton a great place to live, work and play.

All change!

Over the last two years the Mayor's Office and Councillor Support Team have been combined as part of a restructure designed to get more out of their respective skills. The move will save £100,000 over five years and has already helped to build stronger relationships between the Mayor's Office and the rest of the council.

The team now comprises a Civic Support Manager, two Mayoral Support Officers and two Councillor Support Officers. They support the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the council's 58 elected members.

The changes have brought staff closer together and nurtured a real sense of team spirit. It's enabled the Councillor Support Officers to get an insight into the role of the Mayor and the civic office, particularly around events management.

Although the overall headcount is lower, by training staff to perform each other's roles there is actually greater capacity, flexibility and agility.

Critical to our success are our collaborative relationships with colleagues across the council. It's very much a two-way thing: we can provide them with support, particularly around event management, while we benefit from their expertise and knowledge.

Quality & Innovation

An inclusive approach - opening up the Mayoral Suite

The Mayoral Suite is well established as a venue hosting a wide range civic engagements and it's also home to civic regalia and artwork.

But despite hundreds of people passing through its doors every year, we felt both the Suite and its collection were being underused.

Over the last 12 months we have worked hard to make even more of this prized asset by making it more accessible and viewed by local people as a visitor attraction.

Displays have been reorganised so that every item has a local connection and a detailed description - much like you would find in a museum or gallery. The idea is to enable visitors to learn about local history and the role of the Mayor and his or her achievements over the years.

In order to make it accessible to all walks of life, the Mayoral Suite now hosts three annual open days with guided tours and talks. Adding to the overall visitor experience, Central Youth Theatre staged around 10 re-enactments over those three days in the Suite during Visitor Week in 2016.

But perhaps the most exciting innovation has been the launch of a programme of school visits. We now host a minimum of two per month, each with up to 60 children (plus any interested family members), delivering a fun itinerary designed to inform and inspire.

The idea is not only to give local children an insight into the role of the Mayor, the civic office, the council and democracy but also to pass on latest news to them about developments in their city - such as the myriad of regeneration projects that are springing up around the city centre.

Visits begin with a mock council meeting chaired by the Mayor where children can ask questions and talk about what they would do if they were a councillor or Mayor.

The programme has been set up in partnership with the nearby Wolverhampton Art Gallery with visits running in tandem with school excursions to the gallery.

That allows us to make the most of our combined resources and deliver an exciting and enriching experience for the children.

Every visitor receives a pack containing a welcome letter from the Mayor, a sticker to say they have visited the Mayor of Wolverhampton, and information from lots of local groups (such as the youth theatre and libraries) and news about the city. The pack will constantly be updated, for example we plan to use it to convey important safety messages and promote services/facilities that are for specifically for children of school age.

Overall, more than 1,000 children visited the Mayor during the course of 2016.

Running major events - and going the extra mile for Prince Albert's 150th

The Mayor's Office runs a busy programme of high profile events covering everything from major citywide occasions such as Remembrance Sunday and the Queen's 90th birthday to regular charity quiz nights at the Mayoral Suite.

As well as hosting our own events, the Suite is also used by other parts of the council for a variety of functions. A few years ago it was only for mayoral activities - the fact that it is now used on a daily basis (and sometimes several times a day) reflects a more efficient use of our assets and the drive to make them more inclusive.



Thanks to our experience and expertise in events management we are able to provide support to colleagues elsewhere in the local authority to ensure everyone delivers to a consistently high standard.

That experience came to the fore in 2016 when the Mayor's Office organised the city's biggest civic occasion of the year (perhaps even the century!).

It's a testament to the efficiency and collaborative ethos of the Mayor's Office - and passion to promote civic pride - that we were able to stage a complex and multi-faceted series of events despite having fewer resources.

The occasion? November 30th marked the 150th anniversary of the unveiling by Queen Victoria of a statue of Prince Albert in Wolverhampton city centre.

Over the years it has become far more than just a statue. It's a meeting place, a talking point and - in a city not blessed with an abundance of historical artefacts - a piece of heritage that's unique to Wolverhampton.

At the time it marked the first public engagement by Queen Victoria after five years in mourning following her husband's death. She was so pleased with the statue she knighted the Mayor on the spot!

Given the limited resources and rising workload, it would have been easy to let the anniversary go by with little fanfare. But we could see it represented a unique opportunity to celebrate the city and contribute to our goal to nurture a sense of civic pride.

The celebrations are captured on a dedicated website: <http://www.princealbert150.com>

They began with a re-dedication of the Prince Albert statue involving a re-enactment of the day by young local actors from Central Youth Theatre and a short ceremony on November 23rd attended by the Duke of Gloucester.

This was followed on the anniversary itself by three events: a parade by the Freedom Units RAF Cosford, 210 Battery, West Midland Fire Brigade, The Mercian Regiment along the route

taken by Queen Victoria. It was the first time that the Freedom Units had been on parade together in the city.

Together with residents from across the city they then toasted the city and its history at Queen's Square. The anniversary celebrations continued with a service of celebration at St Peter's Church involving a variety of the city's faith leaders and featuring a piece of music written especially for the day.

But perhaps the most important event of all during the celebrations was the final event held immediately after the church service, the Mayor's Prince Albert 150 Community Awards. The seven awards - including the Good Neighbour Award and Community Champion - were designed to make the occasion as inclusive as possible by recognising people from all walks of life who go 'above and beyond' in Wolverhampton.

The winners joined the Mayor at a celebratory dinner at the Mayoral Suite on the evening of the anniversary.

Supporting the Mayor

The Mayor and Mayoress for 2016-17 - Councillor Barry Findlay and Margaret Findlay - undertook more than 500 engagements during 2016. Managing such a hectic schedule requires the support of a highly efficient and well-organised team. The recent changes to the Mayor's Office team (outlined earlier) ensure the Mayor is able to attend as many engagements as possible and is fully prepared.

The team guides and advises the Mayor throughout their year in office and provides a comprehensive service to support the civic role. Staff respond to all items of correspondence, they manage the official diary, issue all invitations to functions and provide relevant briefings where requested. They advise on Civic and ceremonial protocol, provide transport and ensure that the appropriate chain or badge of office is always available.

As the Mayor (Councillor Findlay) says: "It takes some organising and preparation to ensure we are on time and up to speed. It is essential to have a good team around you to ensure the Mayor always looks his or her best and are able to act as true ambassadors for the city. We are privileged to have such a dedicated team who are not only fully committed to delivering their best but regularly go that extra mile which our residents and visitors always comment on. The team's commitment, hard work, attention to detail and great sense of humour all help make everything possible."

Promotion of the Office of Mayor/Chairman

Opening up the Mayoral Suite as a visitor attraction and organising a programme of school visits has made it a shop window for the work of the Mayor.

We know children take their visitor packs home and tell family members and friends about their experience and it's a powerful way to promote the Mayor's role.

The same goes for the many events either attended or hosted by the Mayor. By organising a wide variety of consistently high quality events, the Mayor's Office is able to demonstrate its value and raise awareness of its work and the causes it champions.

This is complemented by regular coverage in local and regional press, radio and television. The team send out press releases to highlight the Mayor's engagements and involvement in different projects and staff have built up strong relationships with the local media.

A new website - www.mayor.cityofwolverhamptoncouncil.co.uk (designed in-house by the council) - was launched in 2016 to not only keep people informed about the work of the current Mayor but also chronicle the history of the role and details of the treasures exhibited in the Mayor's Parlour.

As Martyn Sargeant, Head of Democratic Services explains: *"The website makes the role of Mayor as accessible as possible to everyone and shows that the office is modern and relevant to people's lives now. We have put something on there for everyone whether you want to know more about former Mayors or the wonderful artefacts we have on display in the Mayor's office."*

"The new site is all part of modernising what we do and compliments the Mayor's presence on social media well."



Social media is increasingly used to reach out to a wider audience - particularly younger people - and keep them informed about the Mayor's work. As well as our own Twitter account and Facebook page (which we regularly update with images from latest engagements) we liaise with colleagues in the council's communications department to make use of their social media accounts and benefit from the greater reach they bring.

Throughout the course of the year, Wolverhampton runs a number of themed weeks designed to showcase what the city has to offer to visitors, students, residents and investors. They include Visitor Week, Business Week and Enjoy Wolverhampton Week - each featuring input from the Mayor.

As an ambassador for the city, he hosts dignitaries as well as being a figurehead for celebrating Wolverhampton's past, present and future.

The Mayor's Office has worked hard to ensure the work of the Mayor is in tune with the council's core objectives to build a stronger economy and stronger communities. This is reflected in the strong focus on raising awareness of regeneration across the city within the school visits programme and Mayoral Suite open days.

The Office of Mayor is further promoted through our involvement in the National Graduate Programme. Undergraduates regularly take part in placements in the Mayor's Office where they can gain a deeper understanding of the role of mayoral/civic office function as well as hands on experience of events management.

Value

The reorganisation of the Mayor's Office (outlined in our introduction) has delivered substantial savings. We have gone paperless and through the new set up have built greater flexibility and capacity with fewer resources.

But we are continually looking for new ways to go the extra mile to improve efficiency. The team has looked at every aspect of its work to find ways to make the most of our budget and add value wherever possible by supporting the local economy.

Here are a few examples:

Making every penny count through procurement

Our approach to procurement is an ideal example. We take a 'local first' approach and use suppliers in the city whenever possible. For example, for our many events we use to use a local catering company that sources ingredients from local suppliers. There aren't many farms in Wolverhampton but we use one on the outskirts of the city.

We recently started to book a photographer from a local co-operative who provides training opportunities to people who have experienced mental health issues. The photographer attends with a trainee and provides experience at an official engagement for the trainee.

The same approach has been taken with the Mayor's long service awards.

Up to 200 council staff a year are honoured for 25+ years' service and each receives a certificate and a £150 voucher. We estimated this amounts to around £20,000 a year - a significant sum - and so we reviewed the gifts and introduced a gift voucher that can be redeemed at a range of local independent traders (as well as two department stores).

Similarly, we have changed our approach to purchasing corporate gifts for visiting dignitaries and international guests. Whereas previously they were mass-produced off the shelf items, they are now sourced from local artists and designers, many of which studied at the University of Wolverhampton. It not only ensures money is spent in the local economy, supporting the city's creative sector, but also means guests leave with a unique reminder of their visit to Wolverhampton.

Keeping the diary focused



In the past, the Mayor has travelled far and wide to attend engagements. In 2016 a total of 97% of engagements were within the borough's boundaries and each potential commitment is assessed by the Mayor and the team according to what impact it will have for the city.

The idea is to maximise the Mayor's impact on building civic pride in Wolverhampton and contributing to the city's success.

Providing a route into civic office work

As mentioned earlier, the Mayor's Office provides regular placements for undergraduates under the National Graduate Programme and this gives them valuable insight into the workings of a civic office and council protocol as well as experience of events management. In October we took on our first ever apprentice. Rogue Hawthorn, 18, is from Wolverhampton and during her apprenticeship she will get hands on experience of every aspect of our work - from organising major events to assisting the Mayor. At the end of her 12 months she will have received a qualification of Customer Service Level 2.

Supporting the Royal British Legion

Wolverhampton has a very active Royal British Legion and many of their events are closely aligned with those run by the Mayor's Office. We therefore provide support in the form of organising invitations, preparing venues, providing PA systems and issuing press releases on the Legion's behalf.

It's an important relationship - it makes the most of our expertise and boosts the impact of the Legion by giving them access to our know-how and capacity.

Conclusion

We hope our entry for the Civic Office of the Year award has given you an insight into how Wolverhampton is working creatively to achieve more with fewer resources.

The work of the Mayor's Office is very much in tune with the council's aspiration to create a city that enables everyone to be successful. Our success is also built on working together with colleagues across the local authority to make the most of our combined skills and resources. By celebrating the city's achievements and nurturing a sense of civic pride, the team is enabling the Mayor to be the figurehead of a city that's on the up and has a bright future ahead of it.

But don't take our word for it:

"Thank you so much for inviting me to the Legion d'honneur presentations on Tuesday. It was a most uplifting event and extremely well staged by Wolverhampton. It was great to talk to the recipients and to hear their memories of service in the Liberation of France. Please pass on my thanks to Anita [civic support manager] for the excellent arrangements."

Colonel George Marsh TD Vice Lord-Lieutenant of West Midlands

"Since 2010 I have had, in my role as Deputy Lieutenant, an excellent relationship with Wolverhampton City Council and the Mayoral Office. Being an Ambassador of the Lieutenancy for Wolverhampton means I am engaged with the Mayors and Chief Executives Office of the City on a frequent basis. This ensures that the Lieutenancy and the City are working together on many initiatives, ceremonies and events, so reducing any duplication of effort."

The relationship between The Mayors Office and the Lieutenancy is key to identifying and exploiting opportunities, especially on the Honours, Queens Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) and City Community Awards, alongside all Military, Justices and Memorial Events. In my experience this is exceptionally good in Wolverhampton."

A recent example was the visit of The Duke of Gloucester to unveil a Blue Plaque on a statue first unveiled 150 years ago by Queen Victoria. The Mayoral team, as ever, were polite, efficient and went out of their way to ensure everything ran smoothly. They have 'style' and 'substance'. All protocols are adhered to and they ensure nothing goes amiss. This is all done with great professionalism, friendliness and an inclusive manner. I cannot praise them enough."

Major Sylvia Parkin MBE TD JP DL Deputy Lieutenant of West Midlands

"As we come to terms with what has been an exhausting 2016 engagement season, I want to take the time to formally thank the Wolverhampton Mayor's Office staff for coordinating a multitude of complex events that have undoubtedly raised the profile of Wolverhampton City both within the West Midlands region and also nationally. Through a number of key events that I have personally attended, both as a guest or in a formal capacity: Legion d'honneur, Prince Consort 150 and Remembrance Parade to name but a few, the precision, communication and attention to detail by all members of the Wolverhampton Mayor's Office has greatly impressed. I wish you every success for a 2017 calendar of events and I know that with the experience and professionalism of the current members of staff the local engagements will be in good hands."

WO Michael Stokes, Station Warrant Officer, RAF Cosford

"I think you do a great job and provide great support not only to the Mayor's Office but also are so friendly and supportive to those taking part in such ceremonies."

Simon Hyde, Chief Superintendent, West Midlands Police

"The staff of the Mayor's Parlour have been excellent in taking note of our opinions and have always been forthcoming in asking for our advice. Many people are involved and so far the organisation has been such that the events have been excellent. I have nothing but praise for the assistance I have received during my terms in office."

Fred Bunce, Parade Marshal for the veterans at commemorative events and Chairman of the United Ex-Service Council Wolverhampton

"This has been a huge year for the Wolverhampton team in the Mayoral office as they have put education and community outreach at the heart of their year. Our youth theatre has really enjoyed working alongside all the staff on projects that have gone above and beyond their normal remit. It is great to see the Mayoral team being innovative and breaking new ground in terms of setting up large scale heritage celebrations for the local community. As an organisation that has been involved in a number of projects in 2016 Central Youth Theatre has nothing but praise for the team."

Jane Ward MBE, Director, Central Youth Theatre

"The website looks fantastic, one of the best I've seen. The whole thing is clear, quick and interesting. I particularly love the children's sections – great idea."

Denise Lewis, Deputy Clerk to the West Midlands Lieutenancy

"My experience with the Mayoral Team is very fulfilling. I was lucky enough to start before the celebrations of 150 years since the visit of Queen Victoria to Wolverhampton, which meant I was able to help with lovely events. At the end of my 12 months here I hope to stay in the council to work with this team again, as they are such a dedicated team."

Rogue Hawthorn, Apprentice in the Councillor Support Team



FOCUS ON

2016

MAYORAL



6,700
VISITORS IN
THE SUITE
INCLUSIVE OF
1 0 0 0
SCHOOLCHILDREN



70
EVENTS
HOSTED IN THE
MAYORAL SUITE



THE MAYOR AND
DEPUTY MAYOR
TRAVELLED OVER
7,000
MILES



236
EVENTS
TOOK PLACE IN THE
MAYORAL SUITE

2012

385

OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENTS

357 INSIDE
THE CITY
28 OUTSIDE
THE CITY



2016

500

485 INSIDE
THE CITY
15 OUTSIDE
THE CITY



3,000
CUPS OF
TEA/COFFEE
HAVE BEEN SERVED



2015

5

2016

80

MAYORAL SUITE
ROOM
BOOKINGS