



On behalf of the West Midlands I want to use this session today, to share with you some of the successes of the councils of the West Midlands, to talk about what we are doing at West Midlands Councils and to consider how we want to work with the LGA in the future.

The West Midlands has a long history of Innovation for example...

This esteemed gentleman is Dr William Penny Brookes who in 1850 invented the Olympic Games. Obviously the concept has been more than popular since then and I'm pleased to say that the London 2012 Olympic Mascot 'Wenlock' is named after Much Wenlock in recognition of the towns' role in inspiring the modern Olympic Movement.

My region is well known for its long history of car manufacturing, this started with the manufacture of the Daimler Motor Carriage, pictured here, in Coventry in 1897 which saw the first ever series production run.

Ironbridge, on the River Severn, has an impressive history starting in 1709 when Abraham Darby founded the Coalbrookdale iron foundry there. Darby initiated major innovations in smelting which resulted in the production of better quality iron much faster than had ever before been possible. And which enabled the design and production of the first bridge in the world to be built of cast iron in 1776.

The Potteries of Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire have long been a hot bed of innovation and invention. The production of pottery dates back to at least the 17th century and saw the rise of one of the area's most famous sons, Josiah Wedgwood. Wedgwood worked at the time when pottery production was in the process of changing from a cottage-based to a factory-based industry, a transformation that placed the Potteries at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution.

In 1769 Wedgwood himself built one of Britain's first large factories, where he developed his world renowned, cutting edge pottery designs, supported the building of the, now, Trent and Mersey Canal and invented the pyrometer, a device to measure the extremely high temperatures that are found in kilns during the firing of pottery.

Staffordshire has also given rise to a term which represents one of the scourges of local authorities. Did you know that before 1700, potters were criticised for digging holes in the roads to obtain clay, a practice which gave rise to the term 'potholes'!

The West Midlands' local authorities have always, and continue to, build upon this tradition of innovation and invention. We have selected some key examples from a pool of many innovative projects and schemes to share with you.

Wyre Forest District Council



Stourport Facilities Project



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Stourport Facilities Project is about unlocking the potential for transferring assets into community ownership. The project has been managed and supported by a cross party, cross sectoral group which involves the local community.

Following initial mapping of all public facilities they are now exploring the viability of transferring Stourport Civic Centre into community ownership once Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) vacate the site in June 2012. They are also exploring the possibility of developing a multi use hub at this site.

“The Civic” group has recently been formed and has begun developing potential plans to manage the Civic Hall/Theatre with the aim of developing a programme of events and activities throughout the year to make the Civic Hall a focal point for local people and a thriving Wyre Forest venue for the arts.



Bigger Homes, Brighter Futures has been shortlisted for an LGC Innovation Award. It's a cross sector scheme to address a lack of larger family housing. A flexible partnering approach included increasing the size of houses under development, bringing empty properties back into use, and de-converting flats. As a result of this scheme, more than 300 residents were re-housed into permanent, affordable accommodation and so were offered a better quality of life.

Birmingham 4G. Birmingham is the first UK city to procure a 4G next generation wireless network for superfast mobile broadband across the city by 2014. The superfast network will:

- Provide greater flexible and agile working opportunities
- Support channel shift and digital by default
- Reduce digital exclusion
- Provide new opportunities for entrepreneurs and developers

Birmingham Energy Savers (BES) is a five year project with three phases to encourage Birmingham's people to adopt a different attitude to their properties focusing on actions to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.

The BES programme offers free energy makeovers, to homes installing energy efficiency measures, which can include the fitting of photovoltaic panels. To date 1200 solar installations have been completed.



Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Councils was formally agreed in February this year. The MOU is a statement of intent to allow the councils to work together to:

- Deliver efficiency savings and reduce costs whilst building resilience across the organisations;
- and thus improve the quality of services that customers and citizens experience.

The agreement builds upon a long history of joint working between the councils. The MOU will allow for the consideration of shared solutions to commissioning which may mean anything from jointly commissioning a service from the private sector to one of the partners delivering the service on behalf of all three.



Staffordshire Partnership Trust

In December 2011 Staffordshire County Council formalised plans to create the largest combined social care and health trust in the UK. The new Partnership Trust will deliver fully joined up community health and social care services.

This is seen as an opportunity for a step change improvement in patient and service user experience. County Council staff will be transferred to the NHS and Adult Social Care Functions will be delegated to the Partnership Trust.



Walsall Works

Walsall Works is a multi-million pound financial investment from the Council. It has been designed in consultation with key partner agencies and customers to develop sustainable employment growth within Walsall based businesses and to raise the ambition of young people and reduce the number of NEETS.

Walsall Works will:

- Subsidise 550 apprenticeships by offering an incentive payment of up to £3000 to employers who will commit to employing the apprentice for a duration of 1 to 4 years.
- Offer 190 young people, who do not meet the entry requirements of a full apprenticeship, access to an incentive based pre-apprenticeship course.



In Cab System for Refuse Vehicles

Solihull MBC scooped the best new idea/innovation category at the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee awards for the use of the in-cab system to reduce the number of missed collection visits for refuse vehicles.

The in-cab system is a real-time data management system which uses detailed electronic round schedules, to allow crews to immediately respond to customer input and can differentiate between properties where a reported missed bin collection is the result of incorrect or non presentation by residents as opposed to crew error. Critically, the introduction of the new service enabled Solihull to save £100,000 by not returning to collect missed collections.



Commissioning services to children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.

In October 2012, NHS Worcestershire and Worcestershire CC worked in partnership to review speech, language and communication (SLC) provision resulting in a jointly commissioned service which has won a national award from the Communications Trust and most importantly has already made a real difference to outcomes for children and young people.

A selection of the key outcomes has been:

- Consistent standards of service provision and delivery across the whole service area.
- Every Child a Talker success has meant that the number of children at risk of SLCN had reduced from 46% to 28%.
- The number of children requiring targeted intervention after reception year halved and those requiring referral on to specialist services reduced from 19.5% to 4.1%.
- Waiting times for speech and language therapy have decreased with below 5% waiting above the expected levels in comparison to over 25% in 2009/10.

The Worcester Diglis Riverside Renaissance.

Worcestershire County Council in partnership with Worcester City Council won the MJ Sustainable Infrastructure Achievement of 2010 Award for this project.

The project had four major phases of work; behavioural change, renovation of the West Bank, new walking and cycling links and finally the construction of the Diglis Bridge.

A selection of the key outcomes have been:

- Car use has decreased across the City of Worcester by 12%.
- A 19% increase in walking.
- 31% increase in cycling.
- Improvements to the local bus network have delivered a 13% increase in passenger transport usage.
- In terms of enhancing sustainability, this has meant that almost 20 million car kilometers were saved.

Worcestershire Highways.

Worcestershire CC worked with their highways maintenance service provider on an ambitious programme of service re-configuration and culture improvement designed to deliver improvements to road users with enhanced value and cost savings.

The partnership applied LEAN techniques to overcome challenges including; inherited methods of working, differing cultures and satellite operations across the County.

Some of the key outcomes have been:

- Defects fixed per gang per day up from 3.5 to 10.7.
- Reactive gangs reduced from 25 to 16 (£1 Million p.a. savings).
- Overdue jobs eliminated.
- Inspection service productivity improvements of 20%.
- Creation of the Motorcycle Liaison Officer positions.



Gusto.

Gusto is a self-help co-operative that encourages older people to meet others through activities in their local area. Shropshire has one of the highest per head populations of older people in Britain.

There is a clear need to change the way in which adult social care services are delivered and the new approach in Shropshire will pilot services which are designed to focus on how people want to live their lives and what they want to be able to do.

Gusto is going to be targeted at older people who are apathetic towards what happens next in their lives. It will:

- Provide a coach to work with individuals to unlock their potential.
- Facilitate a buddying system using older people who themselves are already well connected in the community.
- Bring together groups of older people in an environment of mutual support and encouragement.



Local Action Partnerships

Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) are made up of service providers, local Councillors and residents working together on issues that matter to local communities. They provide the opportunity to join up local services to meet the needs and priorities of the community and to reduce gaps in service delivery and outcomes. In the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, there are 11 Locality Action Partnerships established with the following key aims:

- Establish local priorities via intelligence and community led planning;
- Enable residents to influence, challenge and be involved in service delivery;
- Engage elected members with their communities and partners;
- Improve communications;
- Enable service providers to engage at a local level and to work together to meet local need;
- Give a voice in each locality to identify and fix issues;
- Strengthen community understanding and awareness; and
- Reduce inequalities, enabling funding and staff to be utilised more effectively and efficiently

An example of LAP activity in Butt Lane and Kidsgrove is the development of a teenage pregnancy DVD project aimed at tackling issues relating to teenage pregnancy and to reduce the numbers of teenage pregnancies across the two localities. A cross sector partnership is leading the work and funding and a location for filming have been secured to date.

So we know that our local authorities can and are meeting the challenges that they face through innovative and creative thinking and excellent partnership working with the public and private sectors and with each other.

In the West Midlands local authorities have a 50 year history of working together in areas of shared benefit on important cross boundary issues. 50 years ago this was under the umbrella of the West Midlands Forum but things do not stand still and that is why this body has modified and adapted to changes and demands through this time. The latest manifestation of this desire and need to work together is West Midlands Councils



West Midlands Councils is a Member led organisation comprising of all 33 local authorities within the West Midlands.

West Midlands Councils supports, represents and promotes the collective interests of councils and the communities they serve. As such it aims to provide:

- A resource to enable, facilitate and coordinate regional, sub regional and local activity, where collective working will add value.
- Value added services to member organisations in support of organisational development and improvement activities.
- A focus for local authority activity and engagement to deliver against priorities set by the councils in the West Midlands.

WMC supports local authorities in their daily jobs, to improve and become more efficient, to have space to think about innovation, to share what they are doing, to push the boundaries and to learn from each other.

As with every region the state of the West Midlands' economy is one of the key concerns for local government and the West Midlands has very significant challenges to overcome with respect to creating jobs in the private sector.

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The West Midlands Economy

- * 10 years to 2009 has seen the West Midlands as the only region to see a net loss of private sector jobs.
- * In addition for the 12 months from June 2010 the West Midlands lost 26,100 public sector jobs and a further 13,500 from the private sector.
- * GVA per hour worked in the West Midlands is the third lowest in the UK with only Wales and Northern Ireland's lower.
- * 2009 manufacturing accounted for £14bn or 15% of Region's GVA, compared to 12% for the UK as a whole.
- * Also in 2009 8.5% of the UK workforce was employed in manufacturing, the comparable figure for the West Midlands was 11%, down from 22% in 1996.



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Similarly increasing GVA is just as challenging. GVA per hour worked in the West Midlands is the third lowest in the UK. In 2009 manufacturing accounted for £14bn or 15% of Region's GVA, compared to 12% for the UK as a whole. Also in 2009 8.5% of the UK workforce was employed in manufacturing, the comparable figure for the West Midlands was 11%, down from 22% in 1996.

In the West Midlands, civic and business leaders are only too familiar with the economic challenges with higher unemployment rates overall (6.3% claimant count v 5% in UK) and in the 18-24 year bracket (10% in WM, 8% in UK) as well as competitiveness in terms of peoples skills levels (with 26% with NVQ level 4 or higher, compared to 31% in the UK).

These imbalances and local variations in economic performance and the inability of successive governments to let go of the micro-economic levers strongly suggests a new approach is needed, one that targets interventions much more effectively at local economic circumstances.

Local government has a strong track record in transforming the economic performance and potential of places, and WMC has been a long-standing champion of economic devolution.

But of course there are other key issues that pose challenges to local government in the West Midlands for example:

Other Key Issues

- * Ensuring that the new health and social care arrangements work for local authorities.
- * Understanding the implications of the Welfare Reform Bill.
- * Determining the new role for councils in education.
- * Influencing the 2014 round of European Funding programmes for the benefit of the West Midlands.
- * Ensuring effective arrangements are in place to support and enable sector-led improvement.
- * Helping authorities manage an increasingly challenging industrial relations environment.
- * Integrating work force planning, recruitment & resourcing into a single approach to talent management.



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- Helping authorities manage an increasingly challenging industrial relations environment. (Pay award, pensions etc).
- Integrating work force planning recruitment and resourcing into a single approach to talent management (Making sure in a declining workforce that we can retain and maximise the use of talent).

Here is a flavor of some of the activities which we are undertaking to assist our councils to meet the challenges which they face:



Produced a shared narrative on how councils can deliver economic growth. The shared narrative describes how local authorities will work together and with the LEPs on cross boundary issues especially in the context of economic growth.

Making the duty to cooperate work. Supporting the West Midlands Planning Officers Group to develop a bottom up approach which will assist councils in ensuring that they have taken reasonable steps to discharge the duty. WMC will commend the approach to local authorities.

Helping local authorities make the new health and social care arrangements work in their areas. Supporting lead members to prepare for the changes to the health and social care system and their new responsibilities. This has progressed from an early “heads-up” briefing session for leaders to a “leadership academy” supported by Department of Health and on to on-going work with LGA and DoH on Health and Well Being Board Leadership Development.

Helping Councils understand the implications of the Welfare Reform Bill. As well as holding an event for senior members and officers on the impact of the welfare reforms on councils and their communities, a bespoke briefing paper was produced putting the changes into the context of the West Midlands’ specific economic and social circumstances.

West Midlands wide Education Forum. For Lead Members and Chief Executives to discuss councils’ new roles in education focusing on championing educational excellence, parents and families, and vulnerable pupils as well as their role as champions of partnership. The Forum’s discussion will feed directly in to the work that SOLACE is undertaking.

Localism Act Part 2 Policy Statement on councils’ liability for EU fines. WMC is coordinating a West Midlands wide response.

LEP lead officer support. WMC facilitate LEP lead officers to meet informally to share issues and assist co-ordination. BIS also attends part of the meeting. WMC also maintain information about LEP membership, activities and other relevant data to assist LEP officers and others.

Keeping in Touch Newsletter. The Newsletter is produced approximately every two weeks and has a circulation of around 500 members and senior officers many of whom circulate it further within their organisations. The newsletter includes articles on news, reports affecting local authorities in the West Midlands, initiatives by member councils and listings of relevant events.

Redesigning our European Offer. To provide; an affordable presence in Brussels which provides capacity to influence European policy and future funding rounds; and a West Midlands base which focuses its work on ERDF and positioning the West Midlands to take full advantage of the new funding programme, 2014 -2020.

Events, Seminars and Knowledge Shots. Throughout the year we run a number of thematic, events, seminars and knowledge shots for elected members and officers to keep them up to date with latest developments and create space for discussion and debate.

EPay Check. The new epaycheck service will provide participating local authorities with access to 'real time' pay benchmarking data for hundreds of common roles that exist across the sector. Once authorities have deposited their data in epaycheck they will be able to generate user defined reports providing invaluable and specific benchmarking data.

Sector Led Improvement. WMC work in partnership with IEWM to ensure effective engagement with members and senior officers in this agenda. The arrangements and activities underway in the West Midlands were recently commended by the LGA Principal Advisor as being amongst the best in the country.

Future Working with the LGA.

- * Earlier engagement in policy development and responses to government activity;
- * Joint planning of activity in our area so that we can avoid duplication and be in a position to work with you on that activity.
- * A greater understanding of our region and of geographical variations to enable the LGA to take a more nuanced approach – we can help you with this!
- * Draw upon our local expertise and ability to engage directly with councils across all levels through our strong networks and excellent relationships.



The West Midlands is clear about the benefit of councils working together for mutual benefit and this is no different on the national scale. We welcome the closer working which has taken place with the national LGA in recent months in particular:

- The direct input into the LGA Executive.
- The co hosting of thematic events in our region.
- That the West Midlands' expertise in European issues will be drawn upon as our lead role in this respect develops.
- Sourcing speakers for the LGA conference and the plenary session on Driving Local Economic Growth and participating in our own WMC/IEWM fringe event.

But what could we do better:

- Earlier engagement in policy development and responses to government activity.
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