



Wigan Council

The Deal 2030



A special supplement produced by **IMJ**

Building back fairer



The Wigan Deal forged a new relationship between local government and communities. Now we are applying the same approach and ambition to our local economy.

We knew before the pandemic that our local economy, while growing, was not working for many people in our borough. COVID-19 has only made our economic inequalities worse.

We see community wealth building as the next chapter for The Deal and essential to us building back a fairer borough after the pandemic.

In this supplement, we share our community wealth building approach and our ambitions for the future.

We outline how we have galvanised our local public sector partners and private sector businesses as well as crucially all our staff.

Creating the right conditions and culture for change has been the hallmark of our success in Wigan and that is exactly the same approach we are taking now.

Through public, private and community sectors all working together we know we can achieve great things.

We have major regeneration plans in place for our town centres and housing and we are helping to accelerate the recovery for businesses and communities with a £7m recovery fund.

We aim to 'build back fairer' and we remain optimistic and ambitious for the future.

We hope you enjoy learning more about our journey in Wigan.

Cllr David Molyneux
Leader, Wigan Council



Sealing the Deal

Wigan borough's post-COVID recovery will be anything but business as usual. It's planning an altogether more inclusive future, discovers **Austin Macauley**

Wigan Council was just two days away from officially launching a pioneering and all-encompassing approach to tackling the borough's inequality when the country entered lockdown.

But far from derailing those plans, the pandemic has proven to be the ideal stress-test for community wealth building.

Back in 2013, the council launched 'The Deal' – a 'model for public service transformation which re-imagined the role of the council as a facilitator of ideas emerging from the local community'. It's about getting the most out of the borough's assets and reducing demands on frontline services by developing a new relationship between the council, residents and local employers.

Community wealth building represents a natural evolution of The Deal. Developed over a number of years in partnership with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), it frames the borough's future prosperity around an economy that works for everyone.

It's about maximising the impact of the £1bn spent by the public sector in the borough every year – for example by developing and linking to local supply chains – and recycling the 'Wigan pound'. It's also about growing 'economically generative' local businesses rooted in the borough, whether they be social enterprises or employee-owned firms.

When it comes to larger businesses and investors, it's about having a different conversation around how they can bring genuine added social value.

An early success story is adult social care where the council has raised standards and boosted the economy by

commissioning differently through an ethical homecare framework which has supported the growth of local suppliers.

Community wealth building isn't 'the council's approach', explains deputy leader Cllr Keith Cunliffe. It's a borough-wide social movement that in particular requires all anchor institutions – large non-profit organisations including the council, Wigan & Leigh College and the local NHS trust – to embrace and live by the same inclusive principles.

'We have strong political backing, businesses are on board and there's a shared sense of purpose to set a different course'
ALISON MCKENZIE-FOLAN

'We'd spent a long time working on community wealth building and everybody was enthused and motivated by it,' says Cllr Cunliffe. 'Then the pandemic came and so we went back to our anchor institutions to see if that enthusiasm was still there. It was. If anything, people were even more committed.'

A new path

Like many post-industrial areas, Wigan borough has struggled to carve out a path to prosperity over the last half century. A third of wages are below Living Wage and one in five of

people live in neighbourhoods that are among the 20% most deprived in the country.

A recent report commissioned by the Industrial Communities Alliance, of which Cllr Cunliffe is national chair, provided a stark picture of how places like Wigan have been worst hit by the pandemic. It estimated 10 years of progress had effectively been wiped out.

But community wealth building provides a new path for post-COVID economic recovery by uniting the public sector, businesses and communities around a common vision.

The pandemic has brought these different players together, says chief executive Alison McKenzie-Folan, and it's time to 'capture the moment'.

'We've been working on the foundations of this approach for a number of years by building relationships and investing in communities. We have strong political backing, businesses are on board and there's a shared sense of purpose to set a different course.'

While the council's role is that of an enabler, it also leads by example.

'We employ 4,000 ambassadors at the council,' explains Sonia Halliwell, lead officer on community wealth building. 'If we can help them to understand community wealth building and what it means to the borough then we're halfway there.'

With that in mind, the council has formed community wealth building groups made up of staff from a variety of grades and teams. They look at how the approach can be applied to areas such as workforce and organisational development (OD), the green economy and housing.

It builds on the Be Wigan programme, which helps staff

The road to a fairer economy

The community wealth building journey is well underway with dozens of public bodies, businesses and community and voluntary organisations already on board

Community wealth building is all about working together to reduce inequality and boost the local economy.

Since being launched in the borough last year, a wide variety of organisations have brought in simple but effective changes to the way they work to create growth that benefits more than just themselves.

Here are just a few examples of how the approach is taking root.

Investing in community wealth

The council is leading by example to ensure investment is married to community wealth building principles. It is recruiting 100 apprentices at the council, creating new employment pathways to make a local government career more accessible and investing in health and social care jobs and training opportunities.

During the pandemic it has used local

firms for PPE rather than larger suppliers – supporting the borough's economy while ensuring a constant flow of vital items such as face coverings, antibacterial products and disinfectant for those who need it.

Elsewhere, the multi-million pound regeneration of the Galleries shopping centre in Wigan town centre will create 475 construction jobs for local people with 25 apprentices recruited annually over the next five years and £52m to be invested in the local supply chain.

Some £50m is being invested by the council in building affordable council homes over the next three years for local residents with local business and supply chains being prioritised.

It has also established a £7m COVID recovery fund focused on helping local businesses re-establish income streams and open new markets, supporting new entrepreneurs and developing social enterprises and cooperatives.

Sofa so good

To help residents who are moving into supported living facilities, council officers have compiled a furniture brochure highlighting local suppliers.

Clients still have the choice and control on what they need, but the local brochure helps to promote borough-based products and firms.

'In the past these goods would have been purchased from larger nationwide companies,' says Kathryn Leigh, Wigan Council's lead officer for community and accommodation support services.

'This method cuts down on time for getting quotes on each individual item. And it helps clients view the products in their local shops.'

Time for a test

Public bodies working together with renewed focus is a vital part of the community wealth building approach.

With the council needing to staff an

The council alone spends

£350m

on goods and services, employs 4,500 people and owns 20% of the borough's land.

40%

of that is spent with Wigan based businesses. If we increase it by 11% that would mean an additional

£30m

spend on Wigan businesses.

These businesses in turn would spend approximately another

£13m

with their own suppliers and employees in the borough.

An increase of 12% in Wigan and neighbouring borough suppliers (from 53% to 65%) would equate to an approximate

£33m

additional spend with local businesses



to understand The Deal and embrace the core behaviours it focuses on – to be positive, accountable, courageous and kind. Sonia describes it as ‘rewiring council officers so they see things through a community wealth building lens’ such as how their work contributes to a fairer economy and makes the most of local assets.

There are two anchor practitioner groups – one for procurement that seeks to link up spending across partners and look for opportunities to share services and another for workforce and OD.

An overarching anchor partnership group brings together the council, anchors and voluntary and community sector on a regular basis to discuss how community wealth building is being embedded. A business consortium of around 20 firms

provides a forum to discuss ways for the private sector to contribute to the agenda.

‘It’s not about formal meetings, agendas and bureaucracy,’ says Sonia. ‘We just meet up – virtually at the moment – and find out what everyone is doing.’

While the borough’s economy is largely made up of small and mediums sized enterprises, it is also home to a number of major businesses. Many firms have risen to the challenges of the pandemic and lived up to community wealth building principles by supporting community hubs and health facilities.

Feedback from residents also shows local communities are fully on board. The conversation started back in 2018 with the Big Listening Project, which saw 6,000 people give their views

on the borough’s future. It helped to shape the community wealth building vision and the overriding strategy for this decade, The Deal 2030. Over the last few months local people – particularly community businesses – have played a key role in coming together to offer support during the pandemic.

A social movement is underway.

As Cllr Cunliffe explains in the community wealth building strategy: ‘The need to create a fairer and more equal local economy is even greater. That is why community wealth building is the central basis of our recovery plans... We want it to be the catalyst to put more economic control in the hands of local people and in so doing create an inclusive economy which nurtures and sustains all our citizens.’

increasing number of COVID-19 test centres in a short space of time, officers were able to team up with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Dozens of residents who had been laid off due to the pandemic were referred by DWP to public health teams and, after an interview process, were soon staffing the test facilities.

This effective example of working together has meant these individuals are back in work and helping to provide an important public service.

A chilled-out partnership

One private business has stepped in to help out a not-for-profit organisation in more ways than one.

Tim Hilton, director of Wigan company JJH Building Contractors, has been lending his team’s expertise to help social enterprise Fur Clemt, which has continued to provide food packages for the most vulnerable during lockdown.



In addition to organisational advice and support, the firm has also supplied a refrigerated chiller van to help Fur Clemt continue the vital role it provides within

the community. Led by director Shirley Southworth, Fur Clemt – local dialect for ‘very hungry’ – works to collect and share food that would otherwise be consigned

to landfill by making it available through its food sharing scheme.

Tim explains: ‘Our business is all about community and putting something back. I just love the passion and work ethic of Shirley and the team at Fur Clemt.’

Uni-forming the right approach

Caeryn Collins, owner of Impressions Uniforms, already ticks many community wealth building boxes. Her stock comes from 100% recycled materials, the eight-strong workforce all live locally and the shops provide work experience opportunities for people with special needs and disabilities.

And that’s not all, Caeryn has also formed Smart Futures, a community interest company that provides school uniforms to help support struggling families.

‘As an employer, I want to do everything I can to give back to the local community – that’s what drives me,’ she says.



Skilful partnership

Shared goals and greater collaboration are helping Wigan borough to match local education and training provision with employers' needs

When Wigan's new Centre for Advanced Technical Studies opens later this year it will serve as a powerful symbol of community wealth building in action.

The new facility – based in a landmark former food and grain warehouse within the town's Education Quarter – will focus on helping residents gain higher education qualifications linked to local skills needs.

It's a collaboration between Wigan & Leigh College and Wigan Council that's closely aligned to the borough's employment and skills strategy.

Within the centre, the college will focus on providing courses in areas such as health, care and medical, digital skills and teaching

and will offer the Government's new flagship T-Level qualifications.

Programmes are being developed by an education and skills partnership between the college, council, Edge Hill University and Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Backed by funding from the Department for Education, the centre will offer a T-Level course for health and care using state of the art clinical training facilities. It will pave the way for local people to take up opportunities in what's a priority area for Wigan and the wider Greater Manchester economy.

From the college's perspective, it's a

natural step in its journey as one of Wigan's anchor institutions. From The Deal to the evolution of community wealth building, the college has understood the huge impact it can have and has embraced the movement' explains Louise Brown, vice principal – corporate services.

With more than 6,000 students across five sites, the college is the biggest provider of apprenticeships in Greater Manchester and through its University Centre offers 13 existing graduate career pathways and a sector-leading nuclear degree apprenticeship programme with Sellafeld Ltd.

'The community wealth building movement is about a way of life,' says Louise. 'We are very much a community college

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LOUISE BROWN

and work very closely with the council. It's our council, our college. We believe that's what we are here to do – serve the people of Wigan borough and make a difference.

'As a college we're ideally positioned to help young people study here, get skills and qualifications that mean they can stay in the borough and have their careers here. It all goes towards making a more vibrant borough.'

The college has worked with the council to drive efficiencies and support local suppliers through joint procurement and shared services. But perhaps the biggest change in recent years is its collaboration with employers.

'A few years ago we were setting our own curriculum or being driven by the Government. Organisations were paddling their own canoes, with the best intentions.

'But now we're working closely with employers – they're driving skills needs and helping us to define the provision. We've got a strong employer engagement department within the college and we're working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to look at regional skills needs. Community wealth building is a great vehicle to achieve so many things.'

A match made in Wigan

Nurturing an enterprising culture is key to the borough's future success and one pioneering organisation is proving to be something of a catalyst

Situated on a housing estate roughly halfway between Wigan and Leigh, Abram Ward may seem like an unlikely place to find a hub for growing enterprises.

But inside a modern office building, local residents are being supported to turn their business ideas into reality.

The organisation behind the initiative is Abram Ward Community Cooperative. Set up in 2013, it took on the premises through an asset transfer from the council and turned it into a community business hub.

Success stories include Men's Sheds, dedicated to helping people gain wood and metal working skills, and Tastebuds, a café that not only serves as a place to meet up and enjoy great food but also where residents can find out how to set up their own businesses.

The co-op uses participatory budgeting to seed fund the



best ideas, whether it's a social enterprise or taking on vacant buildings for community use.

The business hub is also home to a nursery and a neighbourhood planning forum which gives the community a say in the future development of the area. It's now one of three wards in the borough with a neighbourhood plan in place and the team are supporting others to follow suit.

Abram is also one of just six places in England chosen by the charity Power to Change to be part of its Empowering Places programme. The co-op was awarded £1m over five years to help it tackle inequality through community businesses.

The organisation is led by Dave Baxter, a former council community worker born and bred in Abram who wants to inspire others to build a career within their neighbourhood and wider borough.

'It's grown and grown,' he says. 'We've now got councillors and local people on board, groups saying they want to do something and others coming to us and saying "can we learn from you?"'

The co-op has spread its wings beyond Abram and, through support from the council, now has premises in Wigan town centre that are the focal point of its Made in Wigan initiative.

'Made in Wigan is about the idea that everyone has a special skill or something to offer and that we can help them set up a business,' Dave explains. 'It links in with so many aspects of community wealth building – from growing a business here to developing skills and creating jobs for local people to encouraging everyone to buy local.'

The Deal 2030

Get in touch

To find out more about Wigan's community wealth building approach, email TheDeal@wigan.gov.uk or visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/The-Deal/Community-Wealth-Building.aspx