

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 003437
Date 8 April 2019

Signage

Request:

In 2017 the council said about the then new 'Welcome to Wolverhampton signs' that 'In the medium-term, sponsorship offers the opportunity to cover the costs of the signage and indeed we have had many requests from local advertisers keen to progress this.'

Related to this can I ask the following questions:

- 1) How much has been raised in revenue by these signs per financial year?
[With reference to question 1,](#)

[Following careful consideration, I regret to inform you that we have decided not to disclose this information.](#)

[The information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which relates to Commercial interests \(third party interests\).](#)

[In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.](#)

[A key consideration in the application of this exemption is the fact that we have entered into a commercial sponsorship agreement with the University of Wolverhampton whose interests \(future similar commercial deals across the Black Country and region\) would be prejudiced by releasing the information.](#)

[It is therefore concluded on this occasion that the balance of public interest is against disclosure.](#)

- 2) If revenue has been raised from whom and how much was raised?
[University of Wolverhampton](#)

- 3) How many declaration of interests have you had from 'local advertisers' about using the signage?
A small number of unsolicited enquiries but the space has already been taken.
- 4) What are the councils projections for revenue raised by the signage?
Please see our response to question 1.
- 5) Emails from Oct 15-19 2017 about the signage to and from the press office?
See our response to question 6.
- 6) A) Any Q&As b) lines to take provided to councillors or staff about the signage from the above-mentioned time

Dear colleagues,

I wanted to take the opportunity to brief you on coverage this week in the Express and Star - and today in The Sun - on the new city boundary signs. In August, the Express and Star covered the new signs at the time they were being put up. The piece was largely balanced and feedback fairly balanced/positive.

More recently, following an FOI request from Paul Butters, a former press aide to former Lib Dem Leader Tim Farron, the Express and Star covered the story again leading with Mr Butter's line that the signs were a waste of money. They did not contact the media team here to get a comment. As a result of this, The Sun also picked up on the story. They did not contact us for comment; nor did they use the statement from Cllr Reynolds which we provided to News Team which included a supporting statement from the university (see below).

The journalist did contact the university for comment yesterday afternoon and was directed to the latest statement but neglected to include it. We might get some follow up locally today so we wanted to share a few key points with you and the statements we have issued:

- The signs replaced old, faded boundary signs which had been in place for over a decade. They were long overdue for replacement.
- The 26 new signs will last for five years, the cost is £180 per sign over that period.
- We can easily cover the costs of them through sponsorship, had offers as soon as they went up and have one, major sponsor interested in sponsoring them to cover the cost over the life-span of the signs.
- Initially though, the signs highlighted the city's assets and successes to raise the city's profile, supporting the push to increase the £3.7bn investment on site or planned in the city.

Here are the press statements we issued:

City of Wolverhampton Council Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor John Reynolds, said:

“It is disappointing that the Liberal Democrats do not feel we should be showing pride in our city and welcoming visitors to Wolverhampton.

“The signs promote the city’s attractions and the features that make it distinctive and unique, such as Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Banks’s Brewery, Civic and Wulfrun Halls, Grand Theatre, Molineux Stadium, Monmore Green Stadium, and Wolverhampton Racecourse.

“The commercial benefit to the city of these signs also outweighs the cost. They help drive further investment, which in turns leads to jobs – a point other opposition parties agree with.

“The signs will last at least five years, so the cost per sign is actually £180 per year.

“This is coupled with the many offers we have received to sponsor the signs – including a £4,000 proposal from one organisation to advertise on a small number of them.

“The messages on the signs come from research with local people about what makes them feel most proud of the city.”

Katharine Clough, Director of External Relations at the University of Wolverhampton, said: “The University was more than happy to appear on the new signs around Wolverhampton. We feel it is a great way to show people travelling into the city some of the world class organisations and businesses that are based here.

“We have been working closely with the council and other partners to showcase the city and help raise its profile as a place to live, work, learn, socialise and do business in.

“There is a lot fantastic work going on and lots of regeneration and investment and it’s time to be proud of what we can offer as a city and not be afraid to tell people that Wolverhampton is on the up.”

- 7) Have there been any further costs of the signage? Eg maintenance, replacement signs etc
No