

Wigan Council invest in award-winning business profiling solution to support economic development

Destin Solutions have been working with Wigan Council for a number of years focussing on revenue generation and data consolidation solutions. It was around five years ago that the idea of adapting this type of solution to provide a 'single view of business' (SVoB) for the Economic Development team was discussed.

Wigan's Economic Development team consists of 4 staff members led by Business Partnership Manager, Giles Lockyer. Giles' team focuses primarily on data analysis and communications and works alongside the Business Engagement team who proactively engage with businesses across the borough to understand their needs, identify opportunities and challenges, and connect them with the support required to start, sustain and grow. Using detailed business intelligence, the team monitors trends within the local economy, helping to target resources and interventions where they can deliver the greatest impact for businesses and communities.

Prior to the development of SVoB, data relating to local businesses was fragmented across different departments, became outdated quickly and could take days to collate. This made it challenging to provide proactive intervention to assist businesses, resulting in more reactive service delivery. Wigan wanted a solution that would help attract business growth, property investment and job creation by gaining access to real-time data and generating a direct link between business intelligence and economic growth.

Data automation driving real-time evidence-led action

Working closely with the Economic Development team, Destin Solutions developed a solution which automatically gathers and collates information from a number of different data sources, helping drive real-time, evidence-led action. Giles comments *"the idea was to bring all the different data we have about a local business spread across different departments and centralise it, so we can work more collaboratively within the council and stop missing opportunities to support companies."*

Consolidation of multiple internal and external data sources

SVoB works by consolidating real-time internal data taken from business rates, planning, environmental, leasing and licensing departments as well as external data from credit ratings



sources, the deprivation index and numerous other data feeds. Wigan have also categorised all 10,000+ local businesses by sector and type and the solution has mapped this data across these additional datasets. This has resulted in the creation of one of the most dynamic 'local business profiling' solutions currently available in the UK.

Wigan Council now have instant access to data such as business survival rates, broken down by area and business type, the number of new startups and closures occurring in the area and all empty properties that are available for leasing and purchasing. This ensures they can facilitate targeted, proactive and intelligence-led engagement with businesses by identifying sector trends and areas of decline and growth, enabling early intervention to protect local jobs, strengthen resilience and support business continuity.

Targeted local business support

Updated daily, the system helps Wigan proactively target and promote training, events and funding that is available within specific business sectors. Environmental data has also been added, categorising postcodes on flood plains, enabling officers to engage quickly with accurate, real time contact and business intelligence during emergency situations such as flooding.



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Early intervention with struggling businesses

Incorporating credit rating information, the solution alerts Wigan to changes that indicate a struggling business. Reports can identify and flag any changes in credit rating, giving the team an early warning mechanism for a company potentially facing financial distress. This enables active monitoring and early engagement with businesses to work with them, offering support to keep them trading.

Giles says: *"The solution has had a significant impact internally, giving us a more detailed understanding of our business base and how business needs vary across different parts of the borough. By identifying patterns such as higher business turnover, closure rates or property vacancies, we can pinpoint areas that require closer attention. This allows us to target funding, resources and support more effectively, ensuring interventions are focused where they can deliver the greatest benefit."*

Strengthening funding bids

SVoB has also fundamentally changed how quickly and effectively Wigan can respond to internal and external data requests related to business engagement activity and statistics. It has significantly strengthened funding bids for growth and regeneration projects, by providing granular, premises-level evidence that demonstrates need, opportunity and impact at neighbourhood-level, data not available through national datasets.

Automated mapping of business rates revaluations

Using SVoB, Wigan can also conduct analysis on the implications of revaluations of businesses in their area and has assisted in aligning rate multipliers following the recent NNDR Retail, Hospitality & Leisure regulation changes. Wigan required minimal resource to map their

businesses to the new multipliers. This data was already captured in the system, fully automating the process, an exercise that would have taken weeks, took just thirty minutes.

Optimisation of data and resources

The solution provides numerous cost savings in terms of the reduced amount of time and resource required to run reports. Giles notes *"in the past we have been asked what types of businesses have been operating in specific areas of Wigan and this has taken two people around 3 days to collate the information, we can now run this query in 5 minutes. The team has reduced data gathering and preparation time by approximately 96%, transforming tasks that once took days, into minutes."*

This has freed up significant officer capacity and so far, generated approximately 476 hours of time savings annually, through the automation and streamlining of business intelligence processes, saving thousands of pounds each year.

Multi-departmental reach and impact

SVoB has improved collaboration, providing a centralised intelligence platform, ensuring all services and departments work from consistent, up-to-date data. Reducing duplication of effort, it shares a trusted 'single-source-of-truth' across economic development, planning, public health, licensing, business rates and regeneration departments in Wigan.

Regular development meetings are held with Destin Solutions to ensure the solution continues to evolve, with a focus on identifying enhancement opportunities, responding to user feedback, and delivering ongoing innovation. Giles concludes *"About 90% of what Destin's Single View of Business solution does today could not have been done prior to the implementation of the solution."*

Looking forward, SVoB provides a strong foundation for future growth and innovation. Additional data sources will be integrated to further enrich insights, while advanced analytics and predictive modelling capabilities can be developed to enhance forecasting and planning. No other solution like this exists and it has been recently shortlisted for a number of awards, winning this years 'IRRV Excellence in Partnership Working, Service Delivery' award. It continues to evolve, reacting rapidly and intelligently to ongoing changes in business climate, government policy and regulation changes, helping safeguard and optimise revenue for Wigan.

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