



Building Future Performance – Today



Robert Baldwin,
Lead lawyer in
Legal Services in
Wolverhampton
CC dealing with
responsibility for
planning property
and contract
matters. Been with
LN for 3 years with
several LN products.

Who are Wolverhampton CC legal services?

Wolverhampton CC (WCC) is a unitary authority covering more than a quarter of a million citizens. As one of the largest administrative areas in the West Midlands region, the Wolverhampton CC legal services (WCC-LS) team for Planning, Property and Contract Matters is made up of some 20 staff members who manage a highly complex array of legal and administrative subjects. The typical team member has to perform as legal counsellor, trusted advisor, business consultant and sometimes fee earner.

The team is predominantly responsible for property matters including dealing with licenses, 'right to buy', small land plot sales, compulsory purchase orders (CPOs), regeneration, development agreements, PFI, and collaboration agreements. In addition, they manage contracts providing procurement or bespoke contracts advice as well as support on section 106 planning agreements.

Their work supports project budgets and commercial arrangements that range well into seven figures especially active regeneration projects where £40m+ budgets are the norm.

They also manage and advise on the pension fund which runs into hundreds of millions of pounds.

In many ways, the legal services team support comparable levels of legal complexity, diversity

and financial impact to those found in private law firms. Maintaining that level of performance and quality is an ongoing task and source of pride for the WCC legal team.

“ The work we do is on a scale and impact that rivals and in some instances surpasses that of some of the larger private law firms. We play a significant role in making sure that the City Council delivers the value, ambitions and efficiencies that the citizens expect. ”

- Robert Baldwin,
Lead lawyer in Legal Services in
Wolverhampton CC dealing with responsibility
for Planning, Property and Contract Matters

More with less – environmental impact

As part of a continuous search for operational improvements, WCC launched an initiative to reduce the environmental impact of using paper. For the legal team this meant reducing the reliance on books, paper forms and precedents. Key for Robert and his team was that the reduction in paper did not reduce or affect access to the right legal information. When they reviewed the market, they prioritised the breadth and depth of content as well as the ability to support their way of working. LexisNexis provided the most comprehensive and extensive legal solutions for their needs.

The legal service team also took the initiative as an opportunity to further improve business efficiency. Robert's team wanted to make more effective use of real estate, desk space and time. The shift from paper to an online system provided clear benefits not least the reduction in storage and desk space and the ability to have multiple people simultaneously accessing resources.

WCC decided to invest in LexisLibrary, LexisPSL, LexisSmart and LexisDraft to ensure consistent access to comprehensive content and advice at every stage of their legal advisory processes.

Changing Landscape – More clients, more expectations

Alongside the paper use reduction, Robert's team has also been undergoing changes in the nature and breadth of their "client departments". Direct access to client departments is increasingly the norm. Client departments have more complex requirements and less understanding of the legal process that govern them. They expect and need the legal team to close that gap and provide advice that understands the objective as well as the legal path to achieving that.

“ We have to be able to cover legal areas as diverse as litigation and child care and we need to be expert in them all. ”

- Robert Baldwin

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www.lexisnexis.co.uk/WeLikeLexisPSL

“ Comprehensive content has to mean more than large quantity of text and documents. We need integration and contextual insight at our finger tips. ”

Robert and his team needed to project confidence in all disciplines whenever their clients needed legal support. The ability to rely on a truly integrated view of different legal areas whether they were speaking or drafting advice was a critical part of service delivery. Avoiding the need for time-consuming iterations without introducing risk was a key objective for the team. Robert’s team rolled out a renewed program of standardised forms, guidance, and instructions across the varied legal process to reduce the “back and forth” conversations. They took advantage of LexisSmart and LexisPSL to create and maintain “always up to date” forms and documents across multiple practice areas, in less time, without increasing the risk of propagating mistakes or administrative overheads. Furthermore, they used LexisDraft and its integration with the rest of the LexisNexis ecosystem to refine their ability to create and review ad hoc documents reducing the time typically needed to create and review legislative citations, references and definitions throughout the drafting and review process. The people and resources behind the LexisNexis solutions became a reliable partner dedicated to maximising the value and confidence Robert’s team were able to extract and project for their client departments.

Prepared for Change

The complex mix of legal coverage also hampered the ability to develop and use process workflows to help team induction or smooth out the potential bumps when engaging with colleagues.

“ We understood the importance of process workflow but our working environment made their development and maintenance complicated and prohibitively resource intensive. We needed to be more agile, just as accurate, without introducing risk to how we worked. ”

- Robert Baldwin

WCC needed to find ways to help staff accelerate to the point where they could offer advice quickly, accurately and help move the practical process along more efficiently with the provision of the right documents at the right time.

Deploying the LexisNexis solutions offered additional low risk ways to extend flexibility, self-determination, and more autonomous work management.

Supported by the LexisNexis software ecosystem, Robert’s team were able to rely on a consistent set of legislative research, guidance, precedents, rules and tools which has created a more agile working environment with greater levels of work management independence, without compromising quality or taking on more risk.

The future is change and the breadth of subjects that Robert and his team will need to support is only set to increase.

“We have to become more agile as our clients’ expectations and requirements change. The only thing we know is that tomorrow is going to be different and we must be prepared. With LexisNexis, I feel more confident of that we’re ready every time.”

- Robert Baldwin,
Lead Lawyer in Legal Services

Interested in how we could support your unique challenges?
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We’d love to chat.