

## Wiltshire Council - Where everybody matters Our first year plan 2009-10

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### Introduction – Our Vision and Goals

Welcome to our first year plan for the new Wiltshire Council. Local government in Wiltshire is changing – a new unitary council has been created to deliver services previously provided by the county council and four district councils.

The new Wiltshire Council comes into being on 1 April 2009, at a very challenging time for the country as a whole. Local government has a duty to respond to the environment in which we find ourselves. The key factors which will guide our actions from the outset of the new council, reflect the current economic downturn that is impacting on all our communities. By working with other organisations we can try to take positive action to assist and provide services where they are most needed. It is vital to us that our service delivery is focused on our customers' needs.

We will deliver better and more efficient services and make a fundamental change in our attitude and culture by talking to you and working with our partners in new and more innovative ways.

In establishing the new council, we will adopt a 'can-do' positive and motivational approach to everything we do. We value and recognise our elected members and staff and will equip them to carry out their roles. We believe *"It is going to be different!"*

**Our vision** for the new council is to;

#### **Create stronger and more resilient communities**

Our vision is founded on a sense of 'community spirit'. We seek to encourage and support communities to become involved and to work with us to strengthen their ability to deal with local challenges, making Wiltshire a good place in which to live and work

This plan sets out the actions we will deliver in our first year to ensure that we meet our key goals and make a real and tangible difference to our communities in Wiltshire.

**Our goals are to;**

**Deliver high quality, low cost, customer focused services,**

- **Ensure local, open, honest decision making,**
- **Work together to support Wiltshire's communities.**

For each of these goals we have committed to deliver a number of actions. These actions reflect what you consider to be priorities in your local area and where you have told us we need to improve. They also reflect what organisations, with whom we work, consider vital for our communities, and the actions we are required to do by central government.

**This year we will:**

- **Keep Council Tax increase under 4%,**
- **Make savings of £6 million – to reinvest in our frontline services,**
- **Make sure you are satisfied with the services we provide,**
- **Ask you what you think of our services and how we could do better,**
- **Ensure that our staff offer you a friendly smile and a can-do approach,**
- **Put you first by answering your queries, whatever they are, at first point of contact with us,**
- **Deliver services fairly,**
- **Be a progressive organisation and employer of choice.**

This first year plan and the actions we have published have been agreed by the Implementation Executive as a basis for putting the new Wiltshire Council on the right track for its first year.

Elections will be held on 4 June 2009 to choose the 98 councillors who will represent the communities of Wiltshire for the next four years.

The new council will be different and it will be local. We will strive to improve and deliver services that reflect your needs and help to create stronger and more resilient communities in Wiltshire that can adapt to the changing economic climate and pressures that we face.

## Actions we will deliver to meet our goals

The council's Implementation Executive - the body responsible for establishing the first year plan for the new council - has agreed the following actions to start to deliver the new Wiltshire Council's vision and goals.

The actions in the following pages are based on what you've told us needs to be improved and what is most important to you in making your community a good place in which to live and work.

**You told us** that these things were most important:

- The level of perceived crime
- Good health services
- Clean streets
- Access to nature

In the county overall, you told us that the three things that most need improving in your local area are:

- Road and pavement repairs
- Activities for teenagers
- The level of traffic congestion

## Did you know?

- The new council has a gross budget turnover of £845 million – just over £1,800 per resident.
- We have one number **0300 456 0112** where all your queries can be dealt with,
- 80% of you are satisfied with your local area as a place to live.
- Wiltshire has a population of around 456,000
- Wiltshire covers an area of 1,257 square miles
- The county has more than 190,000 households and 20,000 businesses
- Less than 6% of working age people are on out of work benefits in Wiltshire

## Creating Stronger more Resilient Communities

Our vision is founded on a sense of 'community spirit'. We seek to encourage and support communities to get involved and work with us to strengthen their ability to deal with local challenges, making Wiltshire a good place in which to live and work in.

### The challenge we face

Finding the best way to support our communities in the current economic climate.

### Action we will take

- Work with the Wiltshire Economic Partnership (that represents the business community in Wiltshire) to support local businesses by
  - Reducing start-up rates for new businesses,
  - Alerting businesses to the business rate relief available,
  - Agreeing that the new council will, wherever possible, purchase locally,
- Contribute funding to enable those in need to access high quality debt counselling advice,
- Lever in £2.5 million funding from outside sources,
- Process your housing benefit claims in less than 15 days - currently takes up to 30 days,
- Assess your housing benefit claims in 24 hours if we have all your customer information – currently takes up to 12 days,
- Increase the proportion of young people aged 16 and over in education, training or employment,
- Help young people who find themselves in need of housing for the first time,
- Introduce a new scheme to allow vulnerable households in private sector homes to use low interest loans, secured against the equity in their home, to carry out major repairs,
- Start building 400 new affordable Private Finance Initiative homes in Trowbridge,
- Reduce the regulatory burden on businesses by joining up our environmental health, trading standards and licensing services.

### Communities in Control

People in Malmesbury are working in partnership with the police to tackle the issue of speeding. Speed guns have been bought and members of the community will be trained by local police to carry out informal speed checking to gather data.

### We will also take the following actions to support local communities in dealing with local challenges;

- Continue to work closely with the police and other agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour and crime,
- In partnership with NHS Wiltshire, provide free swimming sessions for those aged 16 and under, or 60 and over,
- Work with local town and parish councils and landowners to seek local solutions to flooding problems,
- Work with partners to provide more activities for young people,

- Open ten new children's centres,
- Continue to support parenting programmes,
- Significantly improve primary school building,
- Continue to take opportunities to merge schools to strengthen the standards of education,
- Open the new Wellington Academy in Tidworth,
- Help children in care to choose where they wish to live and to achieve better results in school,
- Commission a new and improved child and adolescent mental health service through the Children and Young People's Trust Board,
- Extend the provision of short breaks for disabled children,
- Carry out a county-wide housing stock condition survey by September 2009 to provide a clear picture of the condition of Wiltshire's houses,
- Invest in Extra Care Housing and supported housing for elderly and vulnerable adults,
- Commence the modernisation of our care homes, and start to develop in partnership an Extra Care housing scheme in Trowbridge,
- Develop an action plan to reduce our carbon emissions.

#### **Working together to support Wiltshire's communities**

We work closely with communities, parish, and town councils to identify priorities and inform people of maintenance work in their area and to target problems such as graffiti, abandoned vehicles, litter and other maintenance issues. The Parish Steward scheme provides a local resource to deal with minor works and problems on the network. We run regular Community Action days where the community can become involved in improving their area and making it cleaner and safer.

## Delivering high quality, low cost, customer focused services

### The challenge we face

Less than half of you are currently satisfied with how council services are run

### We will:

- Ensure that our staff offer you a friendly smile and a can-do approach,
- Put you first by answering your queries, whatever they are, at first point of contact with us,
- Provide customer access points across the county so that you can contact us easily,
- Deliver services fairly,
- Ask you what you think of our services and how we could do better,
- Deliver an improved website to provide the local information you want,
- Provide the facility for you to pay your council bills on line,
- Provide access for you to submit and monitor planning applications on line,
- Achieve financial savings of £6.6 million in the first year to reinvest in front line services,
- Review our public transport needs and deliver a plan to meet these needs,
- Improve methods to deal with potholes and speed up response times to highway defects,
- Start to develop new libraries for Trowbridge, Pewsey and Ludgershall,
- Initiate a heritage education service at Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre,
- Continue with the transformation of Adult Care services, personalising support to match individual needs, giving more choice and control to our service users,
- Streamline access to Adult Care services through the development of more efficient and user friendly systems, putting the customer at the centre of the process,
- In Adult Care, work towards providing one dedicated member of staff to help a person from the time they contact us to receiving a service and beyond,
- Begin work with other organisations to improve access to universal services for older people and disabled people.

### Preventing injuries for older people

During 2008, we organised 9 'Slipper Exchange' events across Wiltshire. At these events, older people were able to swap their old, 'sloppy' footwear for better fitting, more sturdy slippers - aimed at preventing people from falling and fracturing hips and sustaining other injuries. We have fitted nearly 1,500 pairs of free slippers. We are planning further slipper exchanges in 2009, including reaching more isolated older people and people in care homes.

## Local, open, honest decision making

### The challenge we face

Approximately one third of you feel able to influence decisions affecting your local area. We want to increase this.

### We will:

- Hold local Area Boards to provide opportunities for you to decide what is best in your local area,
- Provide £750,000 of funding to be distributed through the Area Boards for local projects and facilities, rising to £1million in 2010/11,
- Create four area Planning Committees around the county,
- Ask for your views on decisions affecting your local community e.g. major planning applications,
- Provide an opportunity for you to talk directly to your local neighbourhood police team and NHS representative,
- Ensure that you have a say on how front line services are delivered in your community e.g. the opening hours for your library or leisure centre,
- Work closely with communities, parish and town councils to identify priorities and inform people of maintenance work in their area and to target problems such as graffiti, abandoned vehicles, litter and other maintenance issues,
- Ask the Area Boards to identify local highway maintenance priorities,
- Involve you in influencing the way public services are delivered which impact on community safety,
- Publish community area highways information listing the proposed road and bridgeworks to be carried out in 2009/10,
- Ask for your views through our three Citizen Panels – People's Voice (3,800 adult residents), Tomorrow's Voice (1,200 young people) and Carer's Voice (450 people who care for a friend or neighbour).

### Area Boards - Did you know?

The new Wiltshire Council is committed to:

- ensuring you have a voice within your local community,
- giving you a chance to influence decisions about the area where you live,
- ensuring action is taken,
- listening and responding to your local needs through the services we deliver to you.

To help deliver this commitment we are setting up Area Boards in every part of Wiltshire.

The boards will form a key part of the decision-making structure of the new Wiltshire Council ensuring local decisions about local issues are made by local people.

## Working together to support Wiltshire's communities

### The challenge we face

- Despite being the second safest county nationally, the fear of crime is still high.

### We will;

- Work with the police and other criminal justice agencies to help you feel safer;
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to provide support services for victims of domestic violence and activities for young people.

### Did you know?

- Nearly all reported anti-social behaviour in Wiltshire is dealt with successfully at a local level with one or more partner agencies; very few cases need to be resolved in court
- A local alcohol project reduced alcohol related re-offending by 13% whilst nationally the rate increased
- 31 police information points have been established in local libraries to improve public access to information

### Working together for safer communities

We work closely with local communities, community safety groups and area partnerships to reduce substance misuse; crime and disorder; anti-social behaviour and domestic violence. These issues affect everyone and the team's work covers children, young people, adults and all communities in Wiltshire.

**FACT** Due to agencies working closely together in Wiltshire, the repeat victim rate for domestic violence has fallen from 46% to 30% as of December 2008.

### The challenges we face

- There are more than 16,000 thousand people on the waiting list for affordable housing in Wiltshire,
- Despite the credit crunch, the average house price in Wiltshire is nearly eight times the average income,
- There is currently a need for 3,000 affordable homes per year,
- Providing for Government housing targets for Wiltshire while achieving sustainable growth and meeting the needs of local communities.

### We will;

- Seek to provide 2,229 additional homes in Wiltshire and ensure 554 new affordable homes are built



- Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation to less than 242
- Undertake public consultation on the “Wiltshire Core Strategy” in late 2009 to inform decisions on where housing and employment growth should be provided

#### **Supporting Wiltshire’s communities**

The weekly Chippenham Library Technology Club allows the over 50s to meet, discuss and solve their IT problems supported by Year 12 and 13 students from the school. This is a truly intergenerational project where older people can learn about IT in a relaxed environment with a group of knowledgeable young people.

#### **We will also;**

- Complete 89% of Public Protection service request investigations within 60 days
- Start construction of the Westbury Bypass subject to receiving decision from the Secretary of State
- Complete the parking facility at Petersfinger in Salisbury as part of the transportation package for the city
- Substantially complete the brand new secondary Melksham Oak Community School
- Complete enhancement works in Melksham, Warminster and Westbury town centres
- Find immediate and appropriate short term housing solutions for homeless people
- Expand the Parish Steward’s role to provide wider support to local communities, including working with the Police and other organisations
- Work with volunteers and local groups to maintain and improve the county’s rights of way network
- Increase the number of Spark Radio shows hosted by young people, and the number of young people writing articles & contributing to Sparksite (website).
- Create a Wiltshire Arts Service to support all arts throughout the county
- Promote reading throughout all our services as a doorway to opportunity for every person in Wiltshire, following a very successful National Year of Reading

## Our Services

The services we provide as a new council are diverse and cover many aspects of living and working in Wiltshire. This section summarises the services we provide.

The council is an organisation which has many demands placed upon it and limited resources. We have to balance money and services, which fall into two main categories;

**Statutory services** - these are services which the council is required to provide by Act of Parliament such as education and school buildings, care services, highways and planning, public protection, waste collection and disposal and many more which you receive on a daily basis.

**Discretionary services** - The council also has the power to do anything else it wishes where it believes it is in the best interests of local people. This is known as the general power of wellbeing. We deliver a vast and wide range of discretionary services that directly impact on well being of our local communities. These include leisure facilities, arts activities and venues, activities for young people, parks and open spaces, cycle routes and funding for local activities and facilities such as play areas and village halls.

The major constraint in delivering discretionary services relates to the level of funding available and the pressure that this council faces in balancing the ever increasing demands set by government each year.

### Keeping Wiltshire safe

We tackle anti-social behaviour; reduce domestic violence through initiatives to raise awareness and encourage earlier reporting; continue to work with our partners to reduce violent crime; raise awareness of elder abuse and how to report it; improve our street scene including reducing litter and graffiti; deliver parenting programmes; support drug and alcohol services; keep our children safe; and provide a Safer Schools Website.

We protect our communities by maintaining high public health standards using education and fair enforcement of legislation. We also comply with statutory duties with respect to all licensing functions.

### Did you know?

- 71.1% of you think that anti-social behaviour has either stayed the same or decreased
- In the last year, our four anti-social behaviour panels have discussed 220 cases where a partnership response has been provided
- Our trading standards service carries out under-age sales checks
- Every year, 2000 county children enrol on our Bikeability course and 1500 on the Cycling Proficiency course
- The council works with other agencies in the Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership, to develop strategies to keep our communities safe and work to increase public reassurance

- We respond to 96% of your requests to our Public Protection services within 5 days
- Over 90% of Wiltshire's food establishments are compliant with food hygiene laws.

### **Maintaining and improving our streets**

We maintain most of the highway network in Wiltshire (except for the motorways and trunk roads). This includes repair and safety work including repairing potholes; resurfacing; winter gritting; grass cutting in rural areas; street lighting; traffic signals; drainage and maintaining and protecting rights of way.

### **Did you know?**

- We maintain 2,727 miles (4,390 kilometres) of road
- There are more than 3,790 miles (6,100 kilometres) of footpaths, bridleways and byways in Wiltshire
- There are more than 32,000 acres (13,000 hectares) of Access Land, providing public access to Wiltshire's beautiful and varied countryside.
- We have resurfaced many sections of A and B roads to improve skid resistance and improve safety,
- We manage more than 43,000 streetlights and illuminated signs in partnership with our highways consultant Mouchel Parkman.

### **Getting from A to B in Wiltshire**

We fund bus services that are not provided by commercial operator and we support and develop community and voluntary transport. We also provide home-to-school transport for those pupils and students, who qualify for it, and arrange transport for social care clients.

### **Did you know?**

- Almost half of all bus services in Wiltshire depend on financial support from the council.
- Our budget for public transport has been increased by an average of 16% every year since 2001/02 to account for rising transport costs.
- We provide transport to school or college for more than 12,000 pupils and students (including nearly 1,000 with special educational needs), and for 250,000 journeys each year for social care clients.
- The number of trips made on Wiltshire's buses has risen from 9.7 million in 2006/7 to 12 million in 2007/8 – an increase of 23%.
- More than half of rural households have access to an hourly or better weekday bus service (90% have a daily bus service).
- 53,000 elderly and disabled residents in Wiltshire are provided with a free national bus pass.

### **Helping our children to reach their full potential**

Working with other organisations, we provide support for children's early years to ensure that they have the right start in life and that parents can access appropriate child care.

We work with schools to promote high standards to help pupils to learn and achieve. We plan and organise the provision of school places in the light of changing demands and manage admission arrangements.

We provide opportunities for young people to take part in a number of youth development activities and to help them make the right choices for education, training and employment.

We also have responsibilities for the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people. We have a number of teams of social workers and other support workers who respond to concerns and offer support in crisis situations.

In light of the Haringey Baby P case we are reviewing child protection responses. This includes training update work with an emphasis on management supervision, ensuring we keep the focus on the child, increased use of the common assessment framework, multiagency challenge and quality assurance work.

### **Did you know?**

- We support around 2,500 children in need of which around 330 children and young people are in our care
- We maintain child protection plans for around 125 children and young people who are at risk of harm and provide support to keep them safe

### **Housing people**

We help to provide all types of homes and to ensure that those without a home have a roof over their heads. We also help those in private housing who, because of low income may find maintenance difficult or may need their home adapting because of disability.

We also work with housing associations to provide more affordable homes in our towns and villages.

### **Did you know?**

- When a new private housing development is planned we negotiate a proportion as affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.
- You can access the Homes 4 Wiltshire website via the Council's website and see all the housing association and council house vacancies each week.
- If you face the possibility of losing your home, the council can help you with advice and support to help you keep your home.
- Last year 440 new affordable homes were completed in Wiltshire.
- We helped prevent 528 households from becoming homeless.
- 94% of our council houses meet the decent homes standard
- There are 190,000 homes in Wiltshire, of which 28,000 are council or housing association homes to rent.

### **Reading, arts and local heritage**

We provide 31 local libraries; 5 mobile libraries; a 24/7 virtual library and a People's Network of 170 internet linked computers, serving more than 200 villages and communities.

Merge the existing county and district art services into one countywide team to support and help develop Wiltshire's art and music centres, festivals, theatres and community arts events."

**Did you know?**

- 20,000 people joined Wiltshire libraries for free last year
- The library service has more than 29,000 large print and 20,000 audio books available.
- Last year, we had 2.3 million visits to libraries; 3 million items loaned from the service; 100,000 active library members and 80,000 visits to the library web pages.
- Our history centre provides archive, archaeology and library services with 7 miles of records and an award-winning conservation and advisory service for 19 museums
- Wiltshire's theatres, arts and music centres staged over 1,721 events, attracting over 230,551 people in the last year

**Reduce, reuse and recycle**

We recycle and dispose of your household waste through waste collections; the black box kerbside recycling scheme; household recycling centres and mini recycling sites.

**Did you know?**

- The county's household recycling rate is 36.67% and we're on course to meet our target of 40% by 2010
- The council operates ten household recycling centres which handle around 75,000 tonnes of waste a year
- More than 35 different items can be recycled at your local household recycling centre, from paper and mobile phones to garden waste
- The average family in Wiltshire produces around a tonne of waste a year
- A home food waste digester can cut the contents of the average household bin by a third
- Wiltshire handles more than 226,000 tonnes of household waste every year

**Planning and the Environment**

We protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of Wiltshire, whenever possible by responsible decision making on planning applications. We also coordinate the delivery of new housing and employment opportunities and take action against unauthorised development. At the same time we need to balance this growth with the protection of the environment and ensure that sustainable development is at the heart of our policy making. We will listen to communities' views when preparing planning policy for Wiltshire.

We will also work with partners to help develop and promote a vision for a sustainable future for wildlife and people of Wiltshire through the "Environmental Alliance". This includes working to increase the number of local wildlife sites across the county that are in positive management, and continuing to fund biodiversity and environmental partnerships in Wiltshire.

We will assess the potential impacts of future climate change across our buildings and services. This includes continuing to monitor energy use in our buildings (176 buildings now display an energy rating) and working to reduce the carbon emissions produced by those buildings.

### **Did you know?**

- We will process and determine approximately 8,000 planning applications in our first year and more than 80% of these will be within 8 weeks of submission,
- 44% of Wiltshire's land is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB),
- The current contract for street lighting and property energy supply (worth around £4 million) uses 100% renewable energy.

### **Keeping fit and healthy**

Our Leisure Service provides opportunities for people of all ages to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through participating in sport and physical activity, recreational and entertainment activities.

### **Did you know?**

- There are 23 indoor leisure centres managed either by, or on behalf of, the Council.
- More than 2.9 million people visited the centres last year.

### **Supporting our older residents and disabled people to live more independently**

Working with other organisations, we support older people and disabled people to lead fulfilling lives and to participate as equal citizens in their communities.

We do this by providing a first point of contact for advice and information on social care issues through a dedicated helpline Social Care Help Desk (0800 0856666).

We provide a range of social care services for vulnerable people within the community which help them to continue to live in their own homes. This is as well as providing access to residential care for those who need it.

We support and fund voluntary agencies to deliver services such as befriending; carer support groups; service user groups and advice and information.

We have responsibilities for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and work with colleagues in the health and police services to investigate concerns and develop risk prevention strategies. We also work with providers on developing good practice that helps protect vulnerable adults.

We host events to promote fair access to opportunities and services and break down barriers faced by disabled people.

### **Did you know?**

- We conduct 8,300 new assessments every year.
- We conduct 11,000 reviews of existing service users every year.
- We arrange 15,000 breaks for carers annually.
- 7,000 people receive equipment to aid their daily lives each year.

- We have significantly reduced the number of delayed discharges from hospital enabling people where appropriate, to return home with care and support packages.
- We recently opened a new residential and care complex in Malmesbury.
- We secured a £1.4 million government grant towards an £8.1 million 'extra care' development (sheltered housing with home care) in Trowbridge.
- Our dedicated care line deals with more than 4,000 calls each month.
- We work with NHS Wiltshire neighbourhood teams to provide care in people's homes.

### **Working together to improve Wiltshire**

Many organisations are working together to take action to improve the quality of life in Wiltshire. Wiltshire's 'family of partnerships' brings together the public sector, the voluntary & community sector and the private sector. Public sector partners include the council, the police, the primary care trust, probation, fire & rescue, the college, and other local, regional and national bodies working in Wiltshire, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Regional Development Agency. The commitment from Wiltshire's diverse voluntary and community sector is vital to our success, and the participation of Wiltshire's new area boards and community area partnerships help make a difference throughout Wiltshire. The private sector brings in organisations like the Chambers of Commerce representing local businesses, and the Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership.

Together, the "family of partnerships" agreed to take action to improve aspects of Wiltshire life which are not currently sustainable and need improvement. Action by partners to take forward these 7 key ambitions is shown in the Local Agreement for Wiltshire:

- Resilient communities
- Affordable housing
- Lives not services
- Environment for economic growth
- Communities that are safe and feel safe
- Natural environment and CO<sub>2</sub>
- Working together

The Local Agreement also includes targets agreed between Wiltshire and government to improve things that are important to central government and important locally.

If you want to find out more about Wiltshire Council then contact us on **0300 456 0112** or [customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk).

Our A to Z of services is available online at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)

We would be pleased to receive your comments on this document. Please email us on [programmeoffice@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:programmeoffice@wiltshire.gov.uk).

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