

Report

Subject : Salisbury District Council: A Legacy of Achievement for South Wiltshire and Our Residents

Report to : The Cabinet

Date : Wednesday 25 March 2009

Author : Performance Manager

Leader of the Cabinet: Councillor Paul Sample

1. Summary:

- 1.1 Salisbury District Council has a strong track record of achievement, reflected in the high levels of public satisfaction with a large number of its services. This is the result of many years of hard work and commitment to the area and its residents, from councillors and staff.
- 1.2 This report highlights key achievements and areas of performance over the past few years. While it can only provide a summary of what the Council has delivered during that time, it does illustrate the extent and longevity of that achievement.
- 1.3 We are justifiably proud of our record over the years. Salisbury District Council hands over a substantial legacy to the new unitary council, both in relation to the quality of its services and the strength of its financial and asset base.

2. Major Initiatives and Activities:

- 2.1 **Recycling** - Over the past decade the council has brought in many measures to help residents recycle more:

- opened over 70 mini recycling sites in the rural parts of the district.
- introduced the black box kerbside recycling scheme to 26,000 households in 2004 and extended the scheme to every household in 2007
- introduced new wheeled bin collection for plastic, cardboard and garden waste in 2008

- 2.2 This year, south Wiltshire residents helped the council reach its highest ever recycling figure of 36.6%, with a very substantial increase in the last nine months of 9.5% (see comparative performance figures appendix 1).

- 2.3 **Housing** - Housing is one of the top issues for the people of south Wiltshire. For some time now the council has been unable to build its own new homes, but instead has formed partnerships with housing associations to help them to build new affordable rented homes. In all, there are 1,732 housing association homes in the Salisbury District area.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



- 2.4 Salisbury District Council is the only council in Wiltshire that has retained ownership of its council housing in Wiltshire – this was overwhelmingly what tenants wanted when balloted about a possible change of control. The Council has spent £74 million on improving its housing stock and it will meet the Government Decent Homes Standard by the 2010 target date.
- 2.5 In the last three years over 200 new homes were built and offered to people on the housing register. The Local Development Framework core strategy developed by the Council and now handed over to Wiltshire Council was developed through substantial consultation with residents and provides a solid foundation for addressing housing needs in the future.
- 2.6 **Park and Ride** - The Council has vigorously campaigned for and promoted park and ride as a way of improving Salisbury, with the Council contributing £5.1m to the running costs for park and ride.
- 2.7 The first park and ride site opened at the Beehive, Old Sarum in March 2001. Since then, three more sites were opened at Wilton, Britford and London Road, removing, on average, 750 cars per day from Salisbury's roads.
- 2.8 Park and ride celebrated its one millionth user in September 2007. Work is underway on the final site at Petersfinger, with an estimated completion date of January 2010.
- 2.9 **Sport, leisure, arts and entertainment** - The jewel in the crown of the district's leisure facilities began operations in July 2002, when the Five Rivers Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool opened its doors to the public. In 2007, the gym underwent a £150,000 refurbishment.
- 2.10 The Durrington Pool and Fitness Centre opened in 1974, the same year that Salisbury District Council came into existence. Tisbury and District Sports Centre opened in 1990. Like Durrington, the centre is owned by the county council but managed by Salisbury District Council.
- 2.11 In the last two years, the Council has invested £550,000 on new equipment and facilities at these leisure centres, re-opened on bank holidays, and provided free swimming in school holidays and for the over 60s.
- 2.12 In the last year, the Council has made significant financial contributions to museums, the arts, leisure and community organisations in south Wiltshire, totalling £1.15 m.
- 2.13 The Council has also supported a wide range of significant community events, including the St George's Day festival, with Salisbury one of very few cities to celebrate England's patron saint, the Salisbury Food and Drink Festival, launched in 2004 and the Christmas lights. In 2008 the Council invested more money in the latter event so new lights could be bought for the city.
- 2.14 **Supporting Rural Communities** - We are particularly proud of the work in rural communities through what is called 'the parish planning process', as well as the area committees. Since 2000 this approach has been designed to help rural communities to drive forward priority schemes for their areas.
- 2.15 The district council supported parishes throughout the process of completing their plans and getting them up and running. Over the last few years, thirteen parishes in south Wiltshire have completed their plans: Dinton, Durrington, Pitton and Farley, Amesbury, Alderbury, Tisbury, Bemerton Ward Plan, Donhead St Mary, Figheldean, Landford, East Knoyle, Laverstock and Ford, Maiden Bradley and Mere.

3. Service Performance and Improvement:

- 3.1 Appendix 1 highlights performance in relation to a number of areas that relate to the quality of life for residents of south Wiltshire, as well as the efficiency of the Council. The tables show performance over five years, where the information is available.
- 3.2 For the purpose of this report the quartile comparison data for each indicator is based on the 2007/08 audited BVPI data (published by the DCLG on 17th December 2008).

3.3 Highlights from the performance information include:

- in the top ten across the country for resident satisfaction
- rapid improvement in recycling over the last three years and particularly the last year
- substantial improvement in street cleanliness in the last three years
- top quartile for decent council homes
- top quartile in housing benefits processing

4. **Financial Management and Value for Money:**

- 4.1 As well as providing responsive, high quality services, the Council has always aimed to ensure tax payers money is carefully managed and spent. The recent use of resources assessment from the Audit Commission (2008) gave the Council a three star assessment for overall financial management and for value for money.
- 4.2 Their overall assessment of the Council concluded that it: *'... continues to provide good value for money. Overall costs, and those of many services, compare favourably with other similar councils. Spending per head and average Band D council tax remain in the lowest 25 percent nationally.'*
- 4.3 The Audit Commission's recent Direction of Travel report (2009) commented that: *'No significant weaknesses exist in financial arrangements at Salisbury District Council that impact on the future one council. The Council continues to exercise tight control of its budget with no major variations in spending patterns. Reserves have generally been strengthened, apart from the use of capital receipts to fund capital spending which have been further used during 2007/08 in accordance with the existing investment policy.'*
- 4.4 As a result of this careful stewardship, Salisbury District Council has no external debt and will be handing property and assets worth £358m to the new Wiltshire Council (the combined assets of the other district councils in the county are just £123m).

Current financial risks/opportunities identified during January and February 2009

- 4.5 Appendix 1 provides an update on progress on risk identified during the third quarter of the financial year. (October to December 2008).
- 4.6 At month six it was estimated that investment income would outperform budget due to the interest rates. Since then there have been significant decreases in interest rates, and it is not estimated that there will be any significant financial opportunity from this area by the end of 2008/2009.
- 4.7 The current forecast is that the Council will break even for 2008/2009. The biggest challenge continues to be the impact of the economic downturn which is already having a significant negative impact on the fees and charges raised in discretionary areas.
- 4.8 Included in appendix 2 is a list of the year end variances from the last five years. This shows an overall variance in the five years of £49k underspend, and highlights the robust financial monitoring and control in the period.

5. **Recommendation:** Cabinet is asked to comment on and note the content of this report.

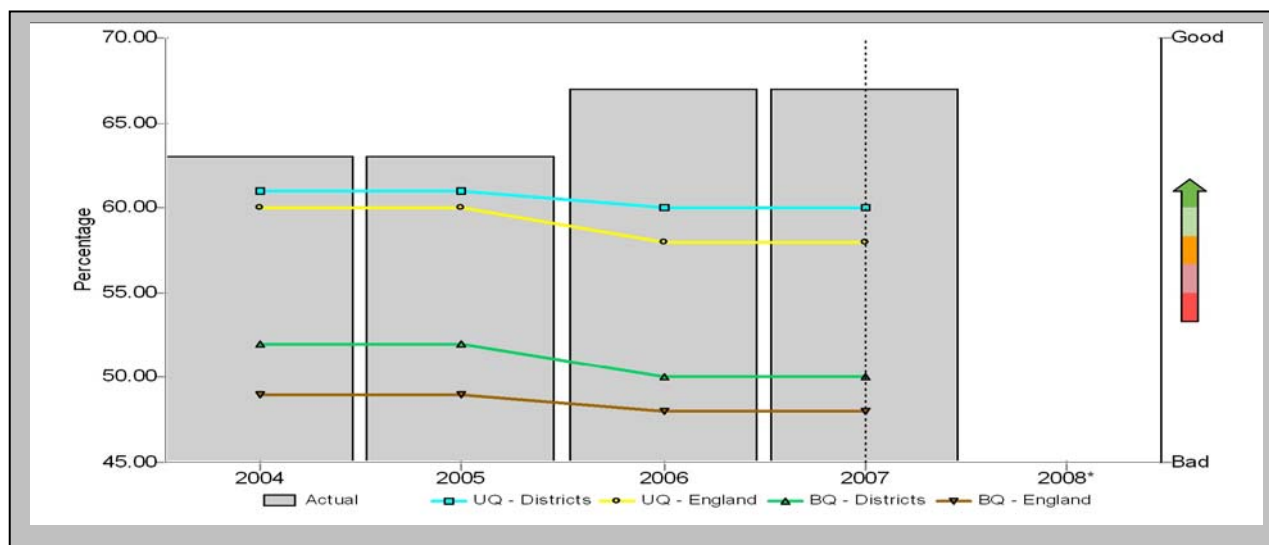
6. **Implications:** None

7. **Background Papers:**

Performance Management Tool
Value for Money data from the audit commission website
BVPI General Survey 2007
Joint Direction of Travel Report – Audit Commission 2009
Use of Resources Assessment – Audit Commission 2008

Salisbury District Council Performance 2004-2008: Key Indicators Summary

SSBVPI 003 - Overall Satisfaction with the Council 2006 - 2007



* 2008/09 Place Survey figures yet to be published

- was 67%, up 4% since 2003/04
- above the national average by 13%
- ahead of both the all England upper quartile (58%) and the Districts upper quartile (60%)
- best in Wiltshire
- most significantly, one of the top 10 authorities in the entire country

NI 192- Recycling Rate (Recycling and Composting)

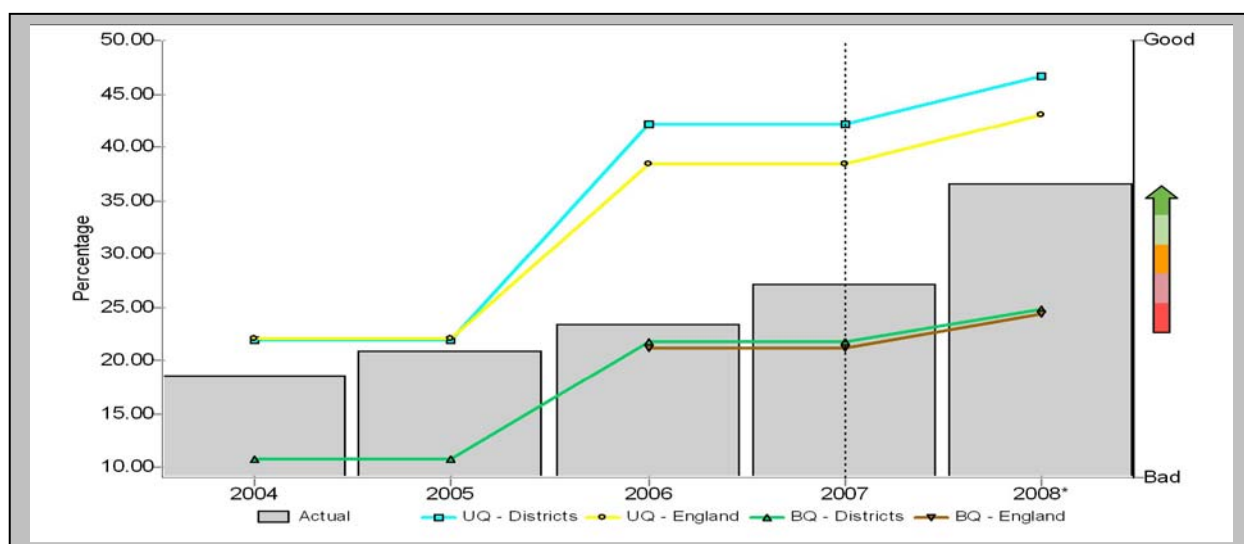
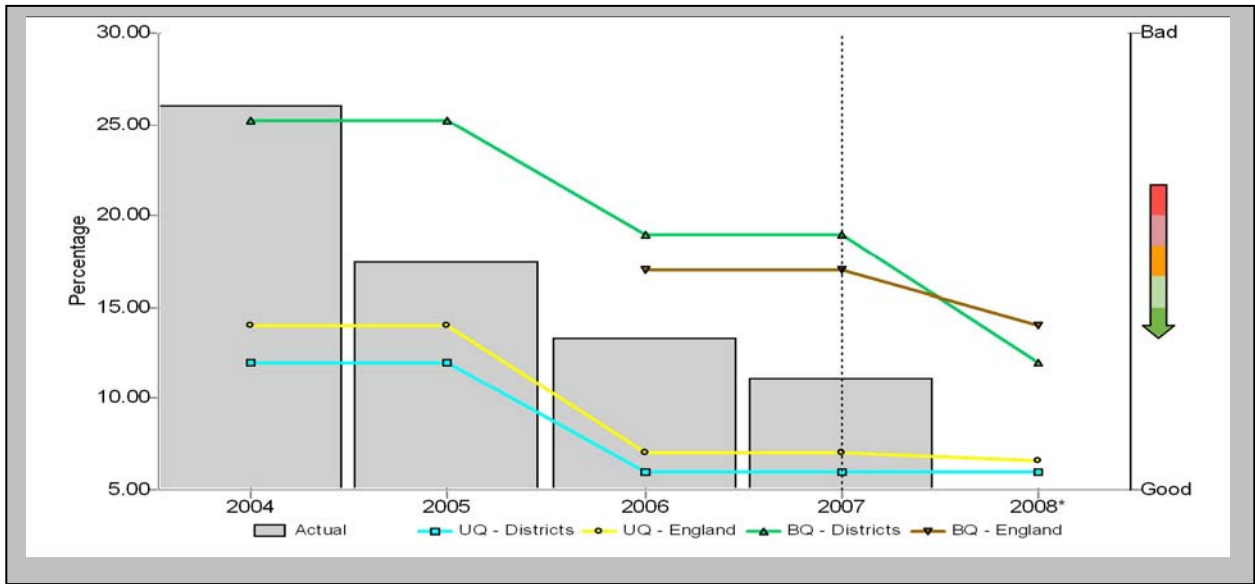


Figure for 2008 is the average performance of this year to date

- shows continuous improvement year on year
- recycling improved from 27.11% last year (Q4 2007) to 36.61% (Q3 2008)
- beating both All England and District BQ levels and catching up on both QU levels

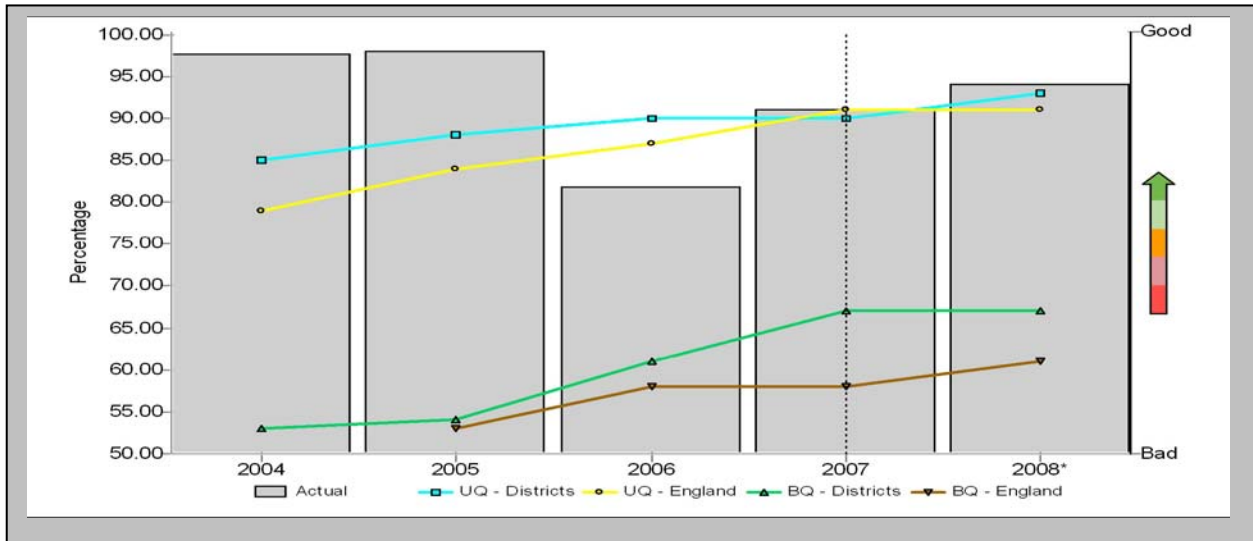
BVPI 199 a - Litter & Detritus



* Please note that data is no longer available for 2008/09 in the same format

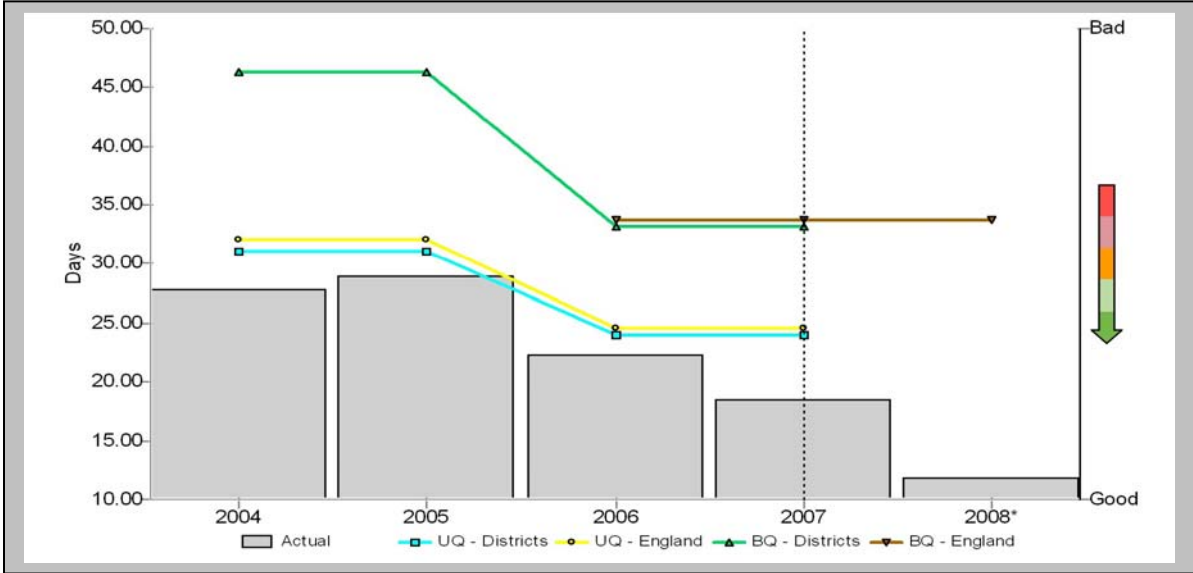
- litter and detritus levels reduced by over half from 2004 (26%) to 2007 (11.1%)
- performing in the bottom quartile in 2004 by 2007 we were above the All England Average
- shows continuous improvement year on year

NI 158 % decent council homes



- current performance 94%
- outperforming both the All England upper quartile (UQ) and the District UQ levels
- 19.3% higher than the All England Average
- since 2006/07 SDC has achieved a significant improvement of 12.25%
- based on the latest comparative data SDC is in the top 45 of councils that own housing stock
- the change in figures from 2005 to 2006 was due to a new stock condition survey and a change of database to record the figures
- the council fully anticipate meeting the new government target of 100% by 2010

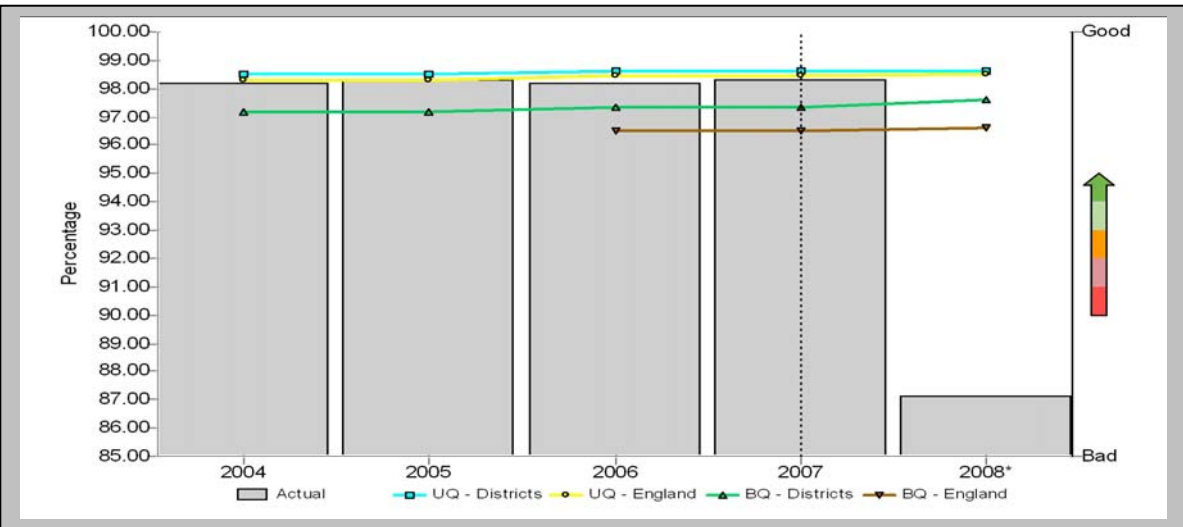
BVPI 078 a - New Housing Benefit Claim Processing



*please note the comparative data is from 2006/07

- current performance is 14.17 days
- approximately 24% faster than both the All England and District UQ levels
- under half that of the All England Average of 30.8 days
- in last year SDC has improved by 23.1% (4.26 days) based on yearly averages
- the last 5 years has seen the turn around time halved

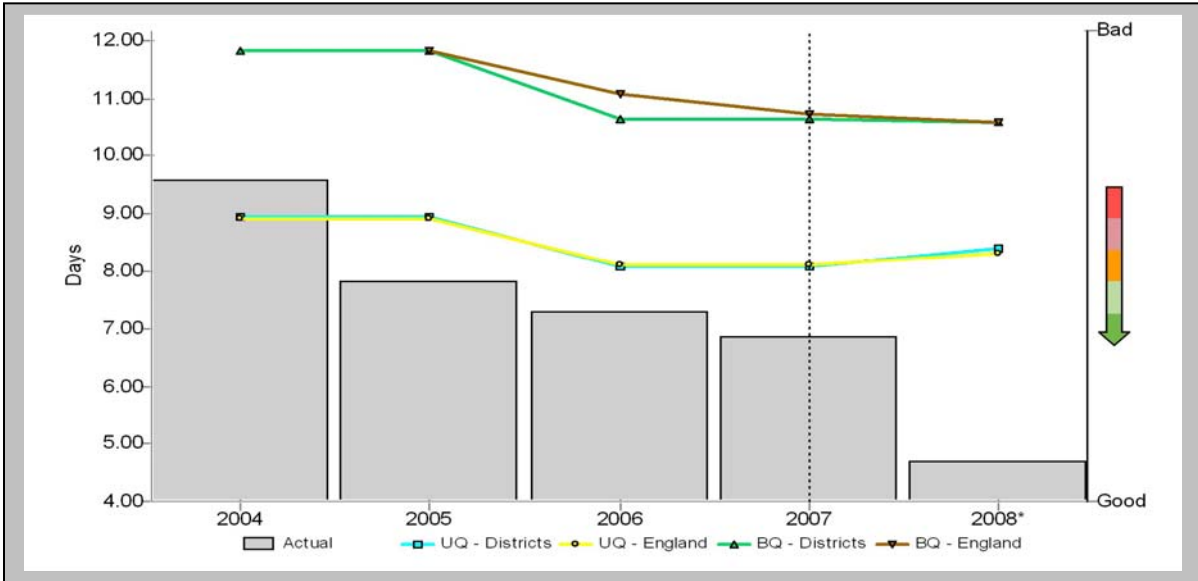
BVPI 009 Council Tax Collection



* Note that the figure for 2008 is accumulative and represents performance to Q3

- the council is in line to improve on last year's performance by year end
- the council's performance based on 2007/8 is above both the District (98%) and the All England (97.4%) average
- short of the District Upper Quartile by only 0.4%

BVPI 012 / EI 006 - Sickness Absence



* 2008 figure is a the average so far in the current year

- SDC's staff Sickness levels have fallen by over half from 9.6 days to 4.7days in the last 5 years.
- Fallen by 2.15 days in the last year.
- Best in Wiltshire by over 2 days
- 18th of all districts based on 2007/8 figures
- Approximately half that of national and district UQ levels.

APPENDIX 2

Risk Category	Service / Nature of Risk / Opportunity	Explanation	Action taken
1a FINANCIAL RISKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services 	Estimated £150k overspend mainly due to increased staffing costs.	Overspend expected at year end due to increased staffing costs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car Parks 	Estimated £200k - £250k overspend. The income is behind budget at this stage. This could be a symptom of the economic downturn.	Monitor Car park income to review impact of price adjustments. Review of Park and Ride operations underway. Separate reserve set aside to deal with financial risk, although this will be fully utilised by 31/3/2009.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control Fees and Land Charges 	Estimated £250k overspend. Income from fees in these areas have fallen behind budget. This is probably related to the economic downturn.	Review of possible compensating savings to be undertaken in these areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure Centres 	Estimated £100k overspend. A combination of higher staffing costs and lower than expected income have lead to an overspend in this area.	Review of possible compensating savings to be undertaken in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Housing 	Estimated £100k overspend. A combination of higher staffing costs and lower than expected income have lead to an overspend in this area.	Review of possible compensating savings to be undertaken in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Costs (all services) 	Staffing expenditure is up across the Council. This is mainly due to the extra costs relating to employing short term staff in the transition period relating to LGR. This also relates to additional travel and subsistence costs of 1C4W.	Some areas are now showing large staffing underspends due to vacancies, which should continue.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay award (all services) 	Government advice was that pay awards in the public sector should not exceed 2%. A final	This recurring cost needs to be matched with a recurring opportunity.

		agreement was made of 2.8%. (0.8% = £140,000).	Adjustments have been made in the base for Wiltshire Council.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment Income (New Risk) 	Estimated £80k overspend. Interest rates have decreased by 4.5% from October (1.5% from December) resulting in much lower than expected returns.	Overspend expected due to cutting of Interest Rates to historic lows.
1b FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Health 	Estimated £50k - £80k underspend. Income from green waste is ahead of target and other miscellaneous underspends.	Expecting increased expenditure in the final month of year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation 	Estimated £50k - £80k underspend Short term staff savings due to vacancies.	Review budgets during year along with capacity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Benefit 	Estimated £200k underspend. Income from benefit recoveries is currently overachieving budget.	Possible opportunity to match with any recurring risks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Revenue Account 	This area continues to under spend on repairs, supervision and management. Budget ring fenced to tenants.	This was reviewed as part of the recent HRA business plan. Some repairs contracts were delayed in being awarded, but this should adjust itself by year end. Higher balances will help with longer term issues in subsidy system.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAT Refund Received (new one off opportunity) 	A one-off amount of £230k was refunded in respect of a backdated VAT claim.	One-off receipt

TABLE OF VARIANCES OF SALISBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL OUTTURN

Year	Net Outturn variance (Under)/Over spend	Variation %
2003/2004	£176,778	1.5%
2004/2005	£45,603	0.4%
2005/2006	(£222,826)	(1.8%)
2006/2007	£38,878	0.3%
2007/2008	(£87,291)	(0.65%)

Five year sum of variation (£48,858)