

Draft
Wiltshire Council - Where everybody matters
Our first year plan

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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 we find ourselves in. 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 and 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 in everything we do. We value and recognise our elected members and staff and 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 get involved and work with us to strengthen their ability to deal with local challenges making Wiltshire a good place to live and work in.

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 and,**
- **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 who we work with consider as 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 £6m – to reinvest in our frontline services and keep our Council Tax increase under 4%**
- **Make sure you are satisfied with the services we provide**
- **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**
- **Ask you what you think of our services and how we could do better**
- **Deliver services fairly**
- **Being a progressive organisation and employer of choice**

Our Services

The services we provide as a new council are diverse and cover many aspects of living and working in Wiltshire. They include;

Keeping Wiltshire safe

We will tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce domestic violence through campaigns and initiatives, raise awareness of elder abuse and how to report it, make improvements to our street scene, deliver parenting programmes, support drug and alcohol services, keep our children safe and provide a Safer Schools Website.

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, rural grass cutting, street lighting, traffic signals, drainage and maintaining and protecting rights of way.

Did you know?

- We maintain 4,390 kilometres of

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.

road

- There are over 6,100 kilometres of footpaths, bridleways and byways in Wiltshire
- There are 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

Getting from A to B in Wiltshire

We fund bus services that are not provided by commercial operators and we support and develop community and voluntary transport. We also provide home-to-school transport for entitled pupils and students 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 over 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%
- Over half of rural households have access to an hourly or better weekday bus service (90% have a daily bus service)

Helping our children to reach their full potential

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

We work with schools to promote high standards and improvement 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.

Did you know?

- We support around 2500 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 importantly 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 takes place 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 out with advice and support to help you keep your home
- Last year 440 new affordable homes were completed in Wiltshire
- We helped 528 households from becoming homeless

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 over 200 villages and communities.

We also support arts centres, theatres and community arts organisations county-wide.

Did you know?

- 20,000 people joined Wiltshire libraries for free last year
- The library service has over 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

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 to 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 Public Protection

We protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of the county by responsible decision making and advice on planning applications. We also coordinate the delivery of new housing and employment opportunities and take action against unauthorised development.

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.

Keeping fit and healthy

Our Leisure Service provides opportunities for those 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
- Over 2.9 million people visited the centres last year

Supporting our older residents and people with disabilities to live more independently

Working with other organisations we support older people and people with disabilities 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 settings. We support voluntary agencies to deliver services such as befriending, carer support groups, and service user groups. 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 people with disabilities.

Did you know?

- 60,000 calls are received by Adult Care every year
- We conduct 8,300 assessments of new people every year
- We conduct 11,000 reviews of existing people receiving a service every year

- We arrange 15,000 carers breaks annually
- 7,000 people receive equipment to aid their daily living annually
- 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

Slipper Exchanges

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 within care homes.

Working together to improve Wiltshire

In Wiltshire there are many public sector organisations such as the new council, the police and the NHS, private sector organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce representing local businesses, and voluntary groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, that work together as to take action to improve the quality of life in Wiltshire.

Together, as a "Family of Partners", they produce a document called a Community Strategy, which focuses on the aspects of Wiltshire life which are not currently sustainable for the future and need improvement and action.

The government also places a duty on the new council to produce and deliver a Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW) which is an agreement between the family of partners and the government and sets out key actions for delivery over the next three years to improve the quality of life in Wiltshire. The actions have been agreed with the government who monitor their delivery. The reputation of the Council depends on achieving delivery of the actions as well as achieving a satisfactory result in the various inspections and external reviews that will also take place.

Working together to support and strengthen Wiltshire's 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 therefore 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 45% to 30% as of September 2008.

Balancing money and services

The council is an organisation which has many demands placed upon it and limited resources. Its provision of so many varied services falls 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, 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.

Actions we will deliver in our first year

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 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 to live and work in.

Overall 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

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 to live and work in.

In order to respond to the current economic climate, we will;

- **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 £Xm 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 of 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.
- Commence 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

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

- Develop flood working groups to co-ordinate the response to flooding problems
- Work with local town and parish councils and landowners to seek local solutions to flooding problems
- Open children's centres in new locations
- Significantly improve primary school buildings
- Continue to take opportunities to merge schools to strengthen the standards of education
- Open the new Wellington College 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 picture of the condition of Wiltshire's houses.
- Invest in Extra Care Housing and Supported Housing for Elderly and Vulnerable Adults
- Provide free swimming sessions for those of you aged 16 and under, or 60 or and over

- Invest in Extra Care Housing and Supported Housing for elderly and vulnerable adults

Communities in Control

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

Did you know?

- Wiltshire has a population of around 456,000
- Wiltshire covers an area of 1,257 square miles
- The county has over 190,000 households and 20,000 businesses
- 80% of you are satisfied with your local area as a place to live.

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 and keep the Council Tax below 4%**
- Review your 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 people with disabilities

Did you know?

- The new council has a gross budget turnover of £845 million
- We have one number **0300 456 0112** where all your queries can be dealt with
- We will process and determine approximately 10,000 planning applications in our first year and over 80% of these will be within 8 weeks of submission.
- 96% of your requests to our Public Protection services are responded to within 5 days
- 94% of our council houses meet the decent homes standard

Local, open, honest decision making

We will;

- **Hold local Area Boards to provide opportunities for you to decide what's 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**
- 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, town and district 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
- 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?

Approximately one third of you feel able to influence decisions affecting your local area.

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 each of Wiltshire's 20 community areas.

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

- There are over 16,000 thousand people on the waiting list for affordable housing in Wiltshire
- There are 190,000 homes in Wiltshire, of which 28,000 are council or housing association homes to rent
- 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
- More than 13,000 households are on the waiting list for affordable homes

We will;

- **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.**
- 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
- To 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

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.

Did you know?

- Over 90% of Wiltshire's food establishments are compliant with food hygiene laws
- Less than 6% of working age people are on out of work benefits in Wiltshire
- 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

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.

If you want to find our more about Wiltshire Council then contact us on **0300 456 0112**

Contact details & further information

- Area Boards
- Joining a Citizen's panel
- Our Community Strategy