



PLEASE FIND ATTACHED: For your information.
Reports of the activities of Wiltshire County Council
May 2008 to March 2009

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WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

The year has inevitably been dominated by the continuing transition to one council.

As April 1 approaches and the Wiltshire Council is established, the main considerations have been twofold. First, to ensure that there is no interruption to all services across the county and secondly, to ensure that as many of our residents as possible are aware of the change and know how to access the services they may need.

Parish and Town councillors will be aware of the many public meetings we have held to keep the public informed and the "road shows" we have manned around the county have attracted many visitors and questions.

An Implementation Executive, responsible for overseeing the transition has met regularly throughout the year. The Executive, made up of councillors from all five councils has worked well and has had excellent support from officers in all those councils. Probably its most difficult task has been to determine a budget for the year ahead. Account had to be taken of the commitments of all five councils and priorities balanced over all their services. The economic downturn had its effect with lower interest rates, falling property values, lower income from chargeable services and an increased demand in the social services sector.

But the biggest problem was the receipt of the lowest general grant from central government of any county area. The average for counties was 3.34%; Wiltshire received only 1.68% which, if services were to be maintained, placed a burden on council tax, higher than we would have wished or expected. If Wiltshire had received no more than the average grant over the past two years, the increase in council tax could have held at 1.8% rather than the 3.5% that proved necessary. And it was only because of the move to unitary status and continued efficiency savings within the County Council, that the increase was able to be kept under 5% with services undiminished. Our unitary submission to government projected savings of £6m in the first year rising to at least £18m year on year by 11/12. In fact savings of over £8m, due to the transition, were made and a further £2m from greater efficiencies. It is an interesting fact that if we had received the same grant per head of population as the average such grant for all unitary authorities, then our Band D council tax would be £789 rather than the projected £1,195. Nevertheless, we remain in the lower third of all Band D levels.

Despite the considerable pressures on the Council, and its officers, over the year due to the transition, I am pleased that the Council has retained its 3 Star status from the Audit Commission and that they consider us to be "improving well" rather than "adequately" in their previous inspection.

The year ahead will be a testing one, not least because there will be a new Council to take on the transformation after the transition. I am confident that we will be handing over a financially healthy authority with the potential to make savings in excess of those projected which will enable it to further improve services or restrict increases in local taxation or implement a mixture of the two. It will be an exciting time for local government in Wiltshire.

Jane Scott
Leader, Wiltshire County Council

March 2009

Annual Report from the Customer Services and Staffing Portfolio.

This year saw the successful introduction of pay reform now concluded with minimal turbulence amongst staff.

The Shared Service Centre went live this year and is working well, with all staff transferred successfully, the team is working well and are happy in their new home over in the East wing.

The core HR functions have been restructured and a new head of HR appointed. Most of my role has been dealing with transition to One Council. The majority of staff across the districts and the county now know where they sit in the new structures, however there will be some staff who will have to wait a little longer to be placed. All staff will be TUPE'd across on 1 April and for those who do not have ownership of their current role, redeployment and training will be offered. I envisage very few situations where an individual is not offered a role in the new organisation.

The customer access channels are ready to go on 1 April, with the new single phone number supported by the golden numbers, face to face at the "Hubs" including a brand new centre for Salisbury located in the City centre, and a refurbished County Hall reception, and finally the new look web site with greater transactional functionality.

I am extremely proud of the staff in both the Districts and the County as they have quietly and efficiently worked together to build the new Council we can be very proud of the work that they have performed.

The Portfolio has also worked on the Members' Induction program for the new Councillors. A comprehensive and entertaining program is in place and ready to roll following the June elections.

The Portfolio has built upon the Council's Equality and Diversity policies, we now have robust Staff Forums for Disability, and Ethnic Minority groups. I work with both groups and they provide valuable feedback to assist the Council. We now have on our payroll several staff with learning disabilities who were introduced as work experience candidates but using the techniques we have learnt we were able to offer them meaningful employment with the Council. I hope the new Council will continue this work so that the Council can put itself forward as an exemplar employer and encourage outside employers to offer employment to people with learning disabilities.

Mark Baker
Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Staffing

Culture...Culture...Culture

- The County Council provides a network of 31 locally accessible 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.
- Our History Centre provides archives, archaeology and library services, with 7 miles of records, and an award-winning conservation and advisory service to 19 museums across the county.
- We support arts centres, theatres and community organisations country wide. Our theatres, arts and music centres reached out with over 1,700 events attracting over 230,000 people

Some highlights of the past year –

- Libraries have increased book and stock (DVD's etc) issues by 2.8%, and the number of active borrowers by 10%, by February 2009.
- History Centre has exceeded its target for visitor numbers. We had 18,058 users by February 2009.
- Visitor numbers are also up on last year for independent Wiltshire Museums, which we support with our conservation laboratory and advisory service.
- Our two nationally designated Museums are working well together. Wiltshire Heritage Museum now has a new Director.
- Government has still to make a decision on the location of a new Stonehenge Visitor Centre. We continue to eagerly await the outcome...
- The Summer Reading Challenge was, as ever, greatly enjoyed by both children and parents and, for many, has made a real difference to their attitudes towards books and reading
- National Year of Reading: Together with our partners across the county, we focussed on disaffected young people who have left school still unable to read, older people who may feel isolated but still have so much to contribute, and on encouraging parents to read with their children, with a wonderfully successful programme delivering over 260 events across the county.

And in the coming year we plan to

- Continue the partnership work started by the National Year of Reading. Reading opens doors of opportunity to employment and enjoyment, and our aim is to make this available to everyone.
- Develop new libraries for Trowbridge, Pewsey and Ludgershall
- Start a Heritage Education Service at the History Centre
- Create a Wiltshire-wide arts service
- Work with partners across the county to prepare for the 'Cultural Olympiad'. We want to Celebrate Wiltshire!

Mary Douglas

Report from Bridget Wayman, Lead Member for Children & Families
Year ending 31.03.09

This has been another hard year for the Branch with the numbers of children and young people coming into care increasing to an unprecedented level this year. Numbers have been low in Wiltshire, usually around 310, but increased to a new peak on 350 in July 2008. This is still low compared with national statistics but has created pressures on the fieldwork teams with the increase in referrals. Numbers are now at 338. This has placed a strain on the departmental budget, not least because we have had to place the additional children in expensive placements. We estimate that we require about 50 more foster carers in the county and we will be commencing a new campaign for more foster carers in May.

Our adoption figures are improving with more children being adopted this year in line with government targets.

The department was also the subject of an Ofsted Joint Area Review (JAR) this year which not only looks at the work done by the council but also joint working with partners and has judged us as Adequate. I personally feel that this was a little harsh as we are working well in many areas, particularly child protection, but acknowledge that whilst we know where we need to make improvements this has not yet happened. Part of the response to the JAR is to increase management capacity and a new service director has been appointed to replace Jimmy Doyle who retired at Christmas. Increased capacity has been provided within the social care teams to assist the field workers in coping with the increased number of referrals.

A substantial JAR Action Plan has been agreed with Ofsted to guide the department and partners through the changes required to improve services within the county. I am pleased to report that there has been good mutual co-operation with NHS Wiltshire in re-tendering the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to provide uniform provision across the county particularly for our Children in Care. There is also good joint work with the PCT and the Police in Child Protection, missing children and children who may be victims of domestic violence.

The number of Children's Centres is continuing to expand and these centres provide help for parents and their children particularly in the areas of higher deprivation in our more urban settings and also in areas of rural deprivation.

A new Special Educational Needs Manager has also been appointed and will start at the end of June and he will lead the reorganisation of the SEN service. The department has also been busy organising improvements to the Short Breaks service for children with disabilities as a large cash injection will be received in the coming year to kick start the programme.

It is anticipated that the budget outturn will be an overspend of £350,000 against the total budget of £55m for the department. Savings have been made by freezing and cutting some posts and cutting non-essential training.

Bridget Wayman.
20th March 2009.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ACHIEVEMENTS 2008-9

GENERAL

- ✓ *Commence construction of the Westbury By Pass in 2009 (subject to Secretary of State's approval)*
 - ✓ *Conclude the Planning and contract issues by 2009 to enable a Waste Processing facility to be established in Westbury*
 - ✓ *Commence construction of the Wellington College Academy*
 - ✓ 42% recycling during 2008/09
 - ✓ Significant progress on Minerals & Waste Planning
 - ✓ Maintaining overall bus service levels despite difficult commercial climate
 - ✓ Engaging communities in transport planning and scheme development
 - ✓ Introducing 'Civil Parking Enforcement' across Wiltshire
 - ✓ Surface: 67 kms of principal roads, 40 kms of non principal roads
 - ✓ Strengthen: 9 Bridges
 - ✓ Empty: 72,543 Gullys
 - ✓ Support: 3,519,000 journeys by bus
 - ✓ Transport 11,607 school pupils to school each day
 - ✓ £33m Oak Community School in Melksham which will be substantially completed during 09/10.
 - ✓ We will continue efforts to generate the Waterside site, even if the current plans fail
 - ✓ Introduction of cardboard and plastic bottles collections in to Salisbury District Council area
 - ✓ £3.7m (£2.4m SWRDA) secured to deliver Castledown Business Development Centre
 - ✓ Supported Wiltshire groups with funding advice to 120 projects seeking (value £22m) capital and revenue funding
 - ✓ Secured approximately £4m of funding to Wiltshire from LSC and DWP ESF (2007 – 10) to improve skills within the workforce (DWP £4m; across G, W & S, LSC c.£2m W)
 - ✓ £1.3m for Wiltshire Business to develop skills
 - ✓ £2m Train 2 Gain for WCC to deliver to own and other public sector staff
- £8.1m (over 5 years) of EU Leader Funding secured for Cranbourne chase, North Wessex Downs and Salisbury Plain Area

Marlborough Community Area

- London Road/Salisbury Road/George Lane pedestrian improvements (refuge, dropped kerbs and small length of widened footway)
- Cedars Bridge reconstruction
- Lamplands Bridge reconstruction
- West Overton Bridge reconstruction Improvement to land drainage in Shalbourne (River Road)
- Improvement to land drainage Church Road, Great Bedwyn
- Play area improvements at Salisbury Road, Marlborough (in conjunction with Marlborough Town Council).

ANNUAL REPORT – COMMUNITY SERVICES (DCS)

Budget report commentary for DCS – 2009/10

1. The department has balanced its budget and has now repositioned itself to become a commissioning led service. This will enable the department to transform services and better manage the longer term financial position.
2. The total gross budget for the department for 2009/10 is £152.382m. Net budget is £115.462m. This is an increase on the net budget for 2008/09 of £4.414m or 3.97%.
3. To meet future cost pressures, DCS have made commissioning efficiencies and savings totalling £5.9 million. These include:
 - i. Commissioning changes, such as supported living in the Learning Disability Services, for people in the Mental Health Service recovering from mental and support for people with Dementia to remain in their communities, and the Commissioning of Extra Care Housing;
 - ii. Staffing efficiencies across the department, such as the FOCUS care management review to achieve better customer outcomes;
 - iii. Continuing Health Care and continuing the programme of re-assessing people against these criteria for cost recovery from the PCTs;
 - iv. Efficiencies achieved through the reduction of expenditure on overheads and through contract savings.

Community Leadership and Governance

4. During this transition period significant progress has been made in developing and testing new local governance arrangements across Wiltshire with pilot area boards in 12 community areas: Calne, Trowbridge, Amesbury, Malmesbury, Tidworth, Corsham, Chippenham, Pewsey, Wootton Bassett and Cricklade, Warminster and Salisbury. The seconded team was later extended to cover other community areas including Marlborough, Devizes and Melksham. Different styles of meetings have been tried out, many local issues tackled and good working relationships established with our partners including town and parish councils, the Police and neighbourhood policing teams, Fire and Health – both at the local community level and on the strategic steering group for this major project.
5. The development of area boards has been closely watched through this period by a scrutiny task group. Many ideas have been put forward and we are now establishing a fully operational team for the future in the new Council to cover 18 area boards across Wiltshire's 20 community areas. Much work has been carried out with front line services, across all the Councils and partners services, town and parish councils and community area partnerships in determining how they will work with area boards. A handbook for area boards has been developed.

Adult Social Care

6. Services delivered
 - 60,000 calls received by Social Care Help Desk
 - Adult social care services provided to:
 - 11,200 older people
 - 2,100 people with a physical or sensory disability
 - 1,200 carers

- 1,100 people under 65 with a learning disability
- 900 people under 65 with a mental health problem
- These services include:
 - Home care (11,000 people)
 - Equipment (7,050 people)
 - Intermediate care – with PCT – to keep people out of hospital (3,000 people)
 - Day services (1,650 people)
- Delays in hospital - numbers of people delayed in hospital reduced significantly – numbers down by 80% across Wiltshire.

7. Service developments

- A free Reablement Service, (a different type of home care, helping people get back confidence and skills) following a period of reablement, 42% of people do not need further services.
- Short stay beds opened to help people regain independence after a stay in hospital (10 in Salisbury and 14 in Malmesbury)
- A Homeshare scheme set up to support people who wish to share their home with someone to can provide additional support.
- Extra care (very sheltered housing) scheme established in Devizes – 50 places. More places planned in Pewsey and Trowbridge. A successful bid was made for £1.4m national funding to provide extra care housing for 90 people on the old Rutland House site in Trowbridge
- Carers emergency card – 400 people registered so far.
- 5 slipper exchange events held to help prevent falls and provide information to people about keeping safe at home – resulting in over 1,000 visits
- DVDs produced to promote services and inform people about what is available
- £1m saved through Continuing Health Care reviews – ensuring that people receive the NHS services they are entitled to.

Community Safety

8. The Community Safety unit in the Council is working with partners in the Community Safety partnership on a number of priorities, including:
- i) Domestic Violence - Wiltshire has been shortlisted for accreditation for a domestic violence court in Salisbury and a successful theatre in education project has taken place in 10 schools.
 - ii) Acquisitive Crime – working with Trading Standards to train Parish Stewards in reducing harm to vulnerable adults at risk of distraction burglary.
 - iii) Anti-Social behaviour – a number of different intervention projects across the community areas including, Calne working with Atwell Motor Museum where several young people have been given the opportunity to develop their skills in relation to looking after the cars. In addition Parenting programmes are available county-wide. A recent national survey on perceptions of anti-social behaviour placed Wiltshire as third safest in this respect in the South West
 - iv) Violent crime – many initiatives to reduce the incidents of alcohol related incidents including taxi marshalls in a number of community areas.

ANNUAL REPORT 2008/9 - ICT

1. The last 12 months have been extremely challenging for the ICT community, as the provision of a coherent ICT service is on the critical path for the effective operation of the new authority. Early analysis identified the key areas that needed attention and investment and work on these commenced last summer with the active involvement of the scrutiny process within the council to review the proposals.
2. Excellent progress has been made to provide the essential infrastructure changes for the commencement of the new authority. This includes:
 - the development and implementation of the new wide area network (WAN) linking the key district sites with the county council,
 - the design and implementation of a new telephony system to join the 5 current authorities telephony together,
 - the introduction of a new email system,
 - a new Wiltshire Council internet site.
 - major revisions to the ICT security structures.
 - renegotiation of the Steria ICT support contract.
3. In all cases, the delivery of these projects will provide at least the minimum capability required for the new authority to work from the 1st April 2009. However much work remains to be done, including work to create a single ICT domain, rationalisation of computer rooms, rationalisation of ICT applications and the introduction of a new desktop standard operating environment across the new authority. Plans are in place to commence these major projects from April onwards.
4. This work has had to be done at the same time as maintaining current service and delivering essential projects to the service departments. Over the last 12 months a variety of major internal initiatives have been delivered amongst which the major ones include:
 - The roll out of a standard operating environment to the County Hall workstations, over 3000 machines have been completed simplifying build and support for all users
 - The further roll out of Ways of Working capability, with over 1500 staff now having access at home or on other sites to key applications.
 - Further development and major fault rectification of Carefirst. This system was unstable and unreliable last year causing major problems for customers. Following major efforts with the supplier and through work internally this critical system is now stable.
 - Delivery of new People's Network machines to all libraries
 - Delivery of a new Rights of Way system for our Environmental Services Directorate.
 - Major preparatory work to establish the contact point capability for children within Children's Services.
 - Major work to prepare the authority to link into government networks through the extremely onerous Government Code of Connection process.
 - The roll out of encryption to over 1000 laptops to provide essential security to our data
 - The further roll out of electronic data and records management tools and collaborative working devices across major segments of the authority
 - Major moves and changes of staff and offices
5. At the same time the day-to-day service support provided by Steria and by the in house team has improved. Steria had some capacity problems last year but they have now been dealt with. Incident management is delivering good results and software and hardware requirements and changes are now fully up to date. Service delivery and customer support still needs improvement, with joint efforts taking place by Steria and the in house team to improve processes. We need to ensure that the staffs with the right skills are available and this is being dealt with as part of the One Council reorganisation.

6. What has been attained has been done by the concerted and collaborative effort by staff from across the 5 authorities. It should be recognised that many of these staff, both county and district, have had to work in a state of considerable uncertainty regarding their job security and their future roles. It is a testament to their commitment that we have attained so much this year. The recruitment process in ICT will continue until around May. It should be noted that all senior management in ICT have been subject to competitive selection and in this process it is noteworthy that 4 of the 6 senior managers have come from district councils.

7. In summary, this has been a difficult but rewarding year for ICT. It has achieved its goals in terms of delivering the entire key one council projects in time for go live whilst continuing to deliver projects and support. Much remains to be done but we are in an excellent position to move forward. Major challenges will be the adequacy of financial and staff resource, as ICT demands from the service departments start to emerge. It should be noted that due to differing approaches between the county and the various districts the level of resource transfer will not have reflected the actual spend and the actual requirement for ICT. However the major projects have been scoped and costed and will be delivered and a full review of other requirements will be conducted through the ICT Steering Group, with scrutiny support, in the first quarter of the next financial year.

Report from Cabinet Member for Education and Youth 2009

We are continuing to improve school buildings in the council through a significant maintenance programme which includes works related to:

replacement roofs--eg. Ashton Keynes C of E Primary School, The Clarendon College
major rewires--eg. The Manor C of E Primary School, Avon Valley School
replacement boilers--eg. The John of Gaunt School
window replacements--eg. Grove Primary School

Nevertheless there remains a significant backlog of maintenance repairs in our schools.

Rebuilds to replace mobile classrooms with permanent, state of the art facilities, has continued and at Fynamore Primary School seven such classrooms are being replaced. The provision of Halls at primary schools continues to be a priority and one was completed at Minety C of E Primary School last summer.

The rebuilding of Manor Fields Primary School has been completed and the pupils are enjoying much improved facilities there. The rebuilding of The George Ward School is proceeding well and should be completed in 2010

Sure Start Children's Centres in Wiltshire

There are now 24 Sure Start Children's Centres open in Wiltshire. We are on target to achieve the Government's requirement to develop 30 children's centres by March 2010. This will provide at least one children's centre in each community area, with additional centres in the community areas with greater numbers of children under five. The children's centres are welcoming increasing numbers of children under five and their parents, and soon to be published case studies explain, in the parent's own words, how children's centres are transforming lives.

Parenting

Wiltshire has a network of facilitators who provide parenting groups for parents of children and young people. This support ranges from informal and supportive meetings, to short courses and longer evidence based programmes such as Webster Stratton, 'Incredible Years'. Parenting Wiltshire provides programmes for parents of children and young people at risk. Further Government funding from April 2009 will provide a wider range of available programmes for parents of children needing much more intensive help.

The admissions process for all September intakes is now fully co-ordinated across all schools in the County. In addition for secondary admissions only this co-ordination continues across county boundaries. From 2010 all applications which occur in-year (i.e. transfers between schools) will also have to be co-ordinated by the School Admissions Team. We are also planning now for September 2011 intakes because by that time primary applications will be handled in the same way as secondary applications and as the local authority we will receive applications from everyone who lives in the county no matter which school they wish to attend. The aim is to make the admissions system clear for parents and also ensure that the local authority is able to monitor where all children are.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has recently (Feb 09) published two new Codes covering Admissions and Admission Appeals. The Local Authority (and all other admission authorities in Wiltshire) has to act in accordance with these new policies. Fortunately the revisions in these two codes have meant we have had to do very little to amend our own ways of working.

The Admissions Forum has met three times in the past year and continues its monitoring role. There has been good support and agreement at these meetings for the way in which admissions are processed in Wiltshire. The officers from the Admissions Team have continued to work closely with colleagues in other local authorities through their attendance at the South West Admissions Group meetings which are held termly in Bristol.

The number of applications received electronically continues to rise and improvements to the software have seen a higher customer satisfaction rating this year. It is DCSF policy to encourage as many online applications as possible and in Wiltshire we are well positioned to meet this challenge

- This year over 15000 young people were in contact with the youth development service across all of the community areas.
- There are 10 times more young people undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Wiltshire, in any 1 year, than are brought to the attention of the youth offending service. This belies the general public view of young people.
- The latest National Youth Agency audit (07/08) which benchmarks services nationally clearly indicates that the youth development service is a low cost but high achieving service.
- We have introduced 'young people's councils' in each of the community areas and which will help shape developments in council services, locally.
- In February 2009, over 14000 young people participated in electing members of the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth and the UK Youth Parliament, the highest number ever and one of the highest nationally.
- A young people's portal, Sparksite, was redesigned and relaunched in 2008 and is now visited over 4000 times per month, a four fold increase from October 2008. This website provides information to young people about activities in their local areas. In a recent national 'mystery shopper' exercise, Sparksite was rated the best website for young people.
- Spark Radio, run by and for young people, is now providing live shows 5 days per week and operates from studios in both Chippenham and Salisbury, together with a mobile studio in other parts of the County.
- In 2009/2010 plans are in place to ensure that young people in local community areas have an increasing say over the money that is spent on providing local youth services; one of the first Counties in the country to do this.
- Working with colleagues from the Department for Community Services a partnership approach to the use of facilities is being extended from a successful pilot in Warminster to other community areas in the county. This will lead to a significantly more cost effective use of buildings.
- We were successful in achieving a national government grant of £250,000 for 2 years to provide 'full-time' volunteering opportunities for young people in the department for children and education.
- The youth opportunity fund, another national government grant, was distributed successfully across the County by trained groups of young people and is now providing over 40 new activities in the Wiltshire.
- In the recent Ofsted inspection all the service was rated as satisfactory with leadership and management being rated as good. This was a vote of confidence in the leadership of the County Council and we were commended also by Ofsted in the recent Joint Area Review in our approach to enabling young people's voice to be heard.

Nancy Bryant
Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Development
March 2009