



This is an Open Report

Report to: Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Scrutiny
Committee
Cabinet

Date: 28th July 2010
29th July 2010

Subject: Wigan and Leigh Housing Performance 2009/10 and
progress made against the priorities contained within
the business plan

Report of: Executive Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Peter Layland 01942 828983

Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Councillor K Cunliffe

Purpose / summary: To report the performance of Wigan and Leigh Housing during 2009/10 and to set out ongoing priorities / actions in 2010/11.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: There are no alternative options

Recommendation / decision: The performance of Wigan and Leigh Housing for 2009/10 be noted and agreed

That progress made against the priorities outlined in the Delivery and Business Plan be noted and the priorities / actions taken forward in to 2010/11 be agreed

Key Decision This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 10 August 2010.

Risks / Implications:

Financial: Wigan and Leigh Housing Company has a management fee of £15.67million for 2010/11 (£15.3m for the three years previously)

Staffing: None

Policy: Housing Strategy

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? Report includes progress on the Equality Standard for Local Government and CRE Code of Practices for Rented Housing

Wards affected: All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

Full diversity impact assessments have been carried out on sensitive aspects of the housing service

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

No

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Key Decision		Corporate Issues	
Non-key Decision		Performance Monitoring	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
	Annual meeting with		

	WALH 12/7/10		
Committee	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	28/7/10	29/7/10	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Gillian Bishop

Date 14 July 2010

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH) is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) created by Wigan Council in 2002 to manage its housing stock. Functions include day to day housing management and stock investment. Currently WALH are responsible for managing 22,794 Council Homes and 276 leasehold properties. WALH also manage other housing functions on behalf of the Council such as the housing options services including homelessness. WALH are also now developing new build affordable housing in the borough, with currently 66 new homes being developed on site.
- 1.2 Within the contractual framework between the Council and WALH, the Company are required to submit an annual Delivery and Business Plan which covers issues such as stock investment, finances and priorities for development. Since 2003, a performance framework has been in place to ensure that WALH deliver the best possible services and contribute to the Council's strategic objectives.
- 1.3 Within the performance framework the Council requires:
- A wide range of indicators to be monitored and performance to be reported half yearly to Cabinet.
 - Close monitoring / reviews on WALH services based on a risk and performance basis.
- 1.4 To monitor the implementation of the business plan and performance the Council meets with WALH on a cycle of monthly, quarterly and annual meetings. The Annual Meeting is formal with the Cabinet Member with authority to act as the Council Shareholder and the Chairs of the Company in attendance. The meeting took place on the 12th July to consider WALH's performance over the last year and the Business Plan for future years.

2.0 Performance 2009/10

- 2.1 WALH have performed well during 2009/10. This assessment has been made by looking at the overall performance of the Company through the performance framework, the progress against the Delivery and Business Plan priorities for 2009/10 and alongside separate financial reports.

3.0 Performance Management Framework

- 3.1 As part of the performance management framework, quarterly reports are produced to detail ongoing performance. The quarterly and monthly meetings are used to discuss performance and to resolve issues that arise. The attached performance framework (appendix 1) provides detailed performance figures and outcomes at the end of the current year. Year end performance is compared against performance from the previous year, as well against the target set for the year. Also included, where available, is a quartile benchmarking comparison of WALH's performance against members of the Housemark's ALMO Performance Club. A health warning is required with the benchmarking of WALH's performance against other members of the Housemark ALMO

performance club. Some of the interpretations of performance indicator definitions and calculations between club members can vary, which affects performance figures reported and therefore benchmarking. As a result of this certain comparisons where there are clear questionmarks about the quality of the data are excluded. WALH have implemented a robust approach to conforming to performance indicator definitions to ensure figures are accurate. To demonstrate WALH's commitment to producing accurate performance data, the Council's Internal Audit Section independently validate several of WALH's indicators on an annual basis. This year 7 of WALH's key performance indicators are being validated by Internal Audit.

3.2 Of the 30 indicators detailed in appendix 1, 66% met or exceeded their targets and 90% showed improvement or remained the same on the previous years performance. Of the 16 indicators that can be benchmarked in Housemark's ALMO Performance Club 6 are in the top quartile (top 25%), 5 in the 2nd quartile (to 25% to 50%), 5 in the 3rd quartile (in the bottom 25% to 50%) and 0 in the bottom quartile (bottom 25%).

3.3 Particularly good performance occurred in the following areas:

- Tenant's saying the Contact Centre provided a excellent or good service.
- The Contact Centre, Customer Care and Customer Involvement teams achieving the Government's Customer Excellence standard (the replacement of Charter Mark).
- Continued high levels of performance in regards to the repairs focussed indicators and achieving high levels of satisfaction.
- Increasing number of successful homeless prevention casework.
- Significant reduction in the number of households living in temporary accommodation.
- Savings in the management fee that reduce the average weekly management costs per dwelling.

3.4 WALH continue to achieve good levels of performance across most areas, however there are some areas of concern. These include:

- Customer satisfaction with Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) complaints.
- Increased time to re-let housing and increasing proportion of empty homes as a proportion of the overall stock.
- Rent collection indicators
- Gas servicing

3.5 The Council has had discussions with WALH in regards to the areas of concerns and the following needs highlighting:

- The ASB service has been reviewed and an action plan with performance targets is now in place. Progress and performance will be reported to the WALH board and Tenants Committee on a quarterly basis. It must be noted that this is also a challenging area in which to gauge customer satisfaction.
- Whilst re-let times have increased by two days this year, there has been considerable improvement since 2005/06 when performance was 51 days. The proportion of empty homes has increased, but still remains historically low. The

- Rent collection underwent a major change during the year with the change in the rent collection system. Rent collection changed from payment “one week in arrears” to “real time” (rent due in the week of the tenancy rather than the week after). This change added some £1.4 million to the amount of rent to be collected last year and has affected performance in the short term. The level of this additional debt has now been reduced to £90,000 and the change will provide long term benefits. It must also be noted that the economic recession has made this service area more difficult and WALH have responded to this through having a proactive approach to income management through early contact with tenants to resolve rent payment problems and other financial issues they may be experiencing. As a consequence evictions for rent arrears have greatly reduced.
- Gas servicing – whilst WALH have exceeded the target set for gas servicing, performance is in the bottom quartile of the ALMO performance club. As noted earlier in the health warning with benchmarking, the calculation of this indicator across the ALMO performance club may vary which may have resulted in the lower quartile performance. WALH have asked Internal Audit to audit this indicator to ensure the calculation is being carried out correctly. Whilst lower quartile performance has been identified, there has been significant improvement in this indicator over the recent years, with 2.71% of gas safety certificates being outstanding in 2007/08, down to 0.71% in 2009/10. WALH have reviewed the service and now have a new gas safety policy in place and have introduced procedures to improve how they can access properties.

4.0 Performance against WALH 2009/10 Priorities / New Delivery and Business Plan Priorities and Actions

- 4.1 To further examine WALH’s performance, progress against its priorities contained with the Annual Delivery and Business Plan are considered. WALH drew up an extensive range of tasks to be included in the Business Plan for 2009/10. Due to the number of tasks in the programme it is was agreed that it would be delivered over a two year period during 2009/10 and 2010/11. Appendix 2 shows a summary of performance against the key priorities and shows good performance and progress.
- 4.2 The following priorities have shown good progress over 2009/10:
- Decent Homes Programme nearing completion.
 - Increased energy efficiency in properties including the boiler replacement programme which reduces tenant fuel bills.
 - New build affordable housing schemes now on site with completions expected from August 2010.
 - Review of the Council’s Housing Allocations Policy completed and agreed by the Council. The implementation phase of the policy is now underway.
 - Reduction in the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation and increased homelessness prevention.
 - Job evaluation scheme implemented.
 - New contract between the Council and WALH has been agreed.

4.3 As stated, the priorities within WALH's Delivery and Business Plan are to be delivered over two year period. Many of the tasks are carried forward into the priorities for the coming year as many are large programmes of work that fundamentally challenge various service areas, as well as the Company as whole. The tasks carried forward to the Delivery and Business Plan 2010/11 are also supplemented with revised tasks agreed by the WALH board and the Council.

4.4 A summary of the WALH Delivery and Business Plan is enclosed within this report which sets out the key priorities for WALH. These priorities for 2010/11 include

- Quality Housing services
- Customer Care
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Affordable housing
- Value for Money- Working Smarter

5.0 Financial Position

5.1 The purpose of this report is not primarily to provide financial aspects of the relationship between the Council and WALH nor to set out the position of the HRA. However, it is important to note that WALH's annual management fee has increased to £15.67 million this year, following a period of three years being held static. The ALMO company continues to trade on a "not for profit" basis and is transparent with the Council on its accounts. The ALMO has returned some £3.0m of its fee back to the HRA since 2006/7 (£454,000 last year). This is in addition to the significant savings it continues to deliver on the repairs and maintenance programmes, such as the £1.7 million in grants received in 2009/10 from utility companies for the energy conservation benefits delivered by the boiler programme. Despite this it is clear that further financial constraint in line with the rest of the public sector will be central over the next few years. A copy of the financial position of the HRA produced for the Annual Meeting is enclosed.

6.0 Contract Review

6.1 The mid term contract review was completed earlier this year, and Cabinet agreed to renew the contract for the remaining 2 years plus a further 5 years following. The written contracts are currently being finalised.










7.0 Conclusion

7.1 This report gives an evaluation of WALH's performance over 2009/10 and their progress against the Annual Delivery and Business Plan. WALH continues to perform well and make good progress against priorities set. Clearly there are areas where performance can be improved and WALH are aware of these and committed to delivering further improvements. However, importantly it retains high levels of tenant satisfaction and continues to deliver significant savings.

Appendix 1

Performance Framework

Goal 1 – Better Housing Services




	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
Avoidable contact: the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer (NI 14)	NEW	12.6%	12.66% 	Less is best	New Indicator	①
% of tenants who said that the service provided by the Contact Centre was Excellent or Good	97%	97%	98% 	Bigger is better		Local Indicator
% of new tenants satisfied with the allocations and lettings process	Revised indicator	85%	89.94% 	Bigger is better	Revised indicator	③
Local Authority Tenants Satisfaction with landlord services*	87.01%	87.01%	87.01% 	Bigger is better		①
Have you achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard	New	Yes – Partially	Yes- Partially 	Not applicable	New Indicator	Not applicable
Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in	Yes	Yes	Yes 	Not applicable		Not applicable

Rented Housing						
The level of Equality Standard for Local Government to which the ALMO complies	ES3	ESLG3	ESLG3 ☺	Not applicable	↔	Not applicable






* The last STATUS Survey was carried out during 2008/09 and the performance is carried over. A new survey is to be carried out during 2010/11.



Goal 2 – Decent Homes

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
% of non decent council stock (NI 158)	5%	3%	3% ☺	Less is best	↑	Major question over data reliability
% of urgent repairs completed within Government time limits	98.91%	98%	98.95% ☺	Bigger is better	↑	②
Average time to complete non urgent repairs	8 days	8 days	8 days ☺	Less is best	↔	②
% of repairs which are emergency / urgent repairs as defined by the Govt Right to Repair legislation	17.56%	18%	16.26% ☺	Less is best	↑	Local Indicator
Proportion of gas servicing certificates outstanding	1.32%	1%	0.71% ☺	Less is best	↑	Major question over data reliability
Tenant satisfaction with the overall Repairs service	99%	90%	99.0% ☺	Bigger is better	↔	①
Energy Efficiency- average SAP rating (2005 methodology)	61	65	65 ☺	Bigger is better	↑	Major question over data reliability


	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
% tenant satisfaction with programmed works	95.57%	95%	97.27% 	Bigger is better		①
% expenditure on planned to responsive maintenance	New	50:50	63:37 	Bigger proportion on planned maintenance	New Indicator	②

Goal 3 – Better Neighbourhoods



	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
% of customers satisfied with the way their ASB complaint is dealt with	NEW	83%	77% 	Bigger is better	New indicator	③
% of customers satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint	NEW	80%	71% 	Bigger is better	New indicator	③
% of ASB cases resolved	NEW	75%	82% 	Bigger is better	New indicator	②
Proportion of empty homes as a percentage of the stock	1.07%	0.97%	1.16% 	Less is best		Local Indicator

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
Average time to re-let local authority housing	28 days	26.25 days	30 days 	Less is best		③

Goal 4 – Access to affordable sustainable homes

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
Number of affordable homes delivered	NEW	50	0 	Bigger is better	New indicator	Local Indicator






Goal 5 – Housing Services for Vulnerable People

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
Households who consider themselves homeless who approach for housing advice and housing advice casework intervention resolves their situation, per 1000 household	2.72	4	7.32 	Bigger is better		Not available

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
in the authority.						
Number of households living in temporary accommodation (NI 156)	59	30	22 ☺	Less is best	↑	Not available

Business Enablers

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
Value for Money						
% void rent loss	1.04%	0.99%	1.02% ☹	Less is best	↑	①
Proportion of Rent collected including Arrears carried forward	97.76%	98.0%	97.88% ☹	Bigger is better	↑	③
Number of LA tenants with more than 7 weeks of (gross) rent arrears as a % of LA tenants	4.24%	4.00%	4.22% ☹	Less is best	↑	②

	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2009/10 Performance	Good performance	Performance trend from 2008/09	Quartile
% of LA tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0.17%	0.22%	0.09% 	Less is best		①
Proportion of former tenant arrears collected	13.59%	16.0%	14.41% 	Bigger is better		Local Indicator
Dwelling weekly management costs per LA dwelling	£11.30	£12.89	£11.88 	Less is best	New applicable	Not available

Appendix 2

Wigan and Leigh Housing – Progress against key business plan priorities 2009/10

Task	Progress
Better Housing Services	
Customer Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company wide Customer Care Standards agreed with the Tenants Committee. • Customer Service Excellence achieved for the Contact Centre and Customer Care
Implement an agreed income management strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
Review and re-tender the external debt collection contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete – new contractor Incasso from April 2010
Better Neighbourhoods	
Review the Customer Involvement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised approach to be agreed by WALH board by 4th August.
Review Anti Social Behaviour Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progressing well. • Dedicated ASB Estate Management Officers now operating from each Area Housing officer • Retraining of Estate Management Officers and Deputy Area Managers in May / June
Review grounds maintenance and gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project board set up • External benchmarking of the service to be carried out
Review cleaning of block flats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review commenced. Project plan agreed, research phase now in progress
Work in partnership with the Council to reduce the blight on estates from vacant properties and shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ongoing
Decent Homes	
Deliver the £40m 2009/10 agreed programme of works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major issues • Year end capital programmes completed on time and within budget. • External planned maintenance delayed to severe winter weather. • High tenant satisfaction with programmes and overall repairs service. • £1.5m of grants and rebates back to the HRA to be used on heating improvements and reduce tenant fuel bills
Complete decent homes programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final phase (Scholes Village) to be completed shortly.

Task	Progress
Provide energy saving measures across the borough to reduce fuel poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decency now at 97% • Ongoing programme of boiler replacements • Over 2000 boilers replaced with energy efficient condensing boilers. 473 heating systems replaced with gas. £1.5m grant and rebate savings allowing a further 600 boilers to be replaced.
Finalise management agreement for Durham Street properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on revised model of management. • Properties due to come into management Autumn 2010
Secure funding for Phase 1 Affordable Housing Bid and start on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and planning permission secured for 4 sites (1 WALH and 3 HRA). • Scholes, Etherstone Street and Windsor Avenue on site with first completions expected August 2010.
Access to Affordable Homes	
Complete the review of the Council's housing allocation policy and implement outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed and policy approved by Council. • Now in implementation stage.
Reduce the level of overcrowding in all tenures in the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project now in implementation phase. • Implementation October 2010 • 44 applicants downsized to free up larger accommodation. 11 applicants severely overcrowded families moved to alternative accommodation.
Housing Services for Vulnerable People	
Implement the outcomes of the Older Persons' Housing and Support Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice improvements made including inter agency guides and improved WALH website. • £1.4m works ongoing to sheltered housing stock for 2009/10 and programme for 2010/11 being identified. • Actions to improve void processes for sheltered housing agreed. • Revised service model for service during July 2010 – initial model challenged by external consultant.
Strengthen Safeguarding Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of policies and processes completed. • Audit plan actions now built into Business Plan for 2010/11.

Task	Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted training being provided internally.
Meet the requirements of the new Quality Assessment Framework (QAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self assessment completed and preparation ongoing for validation visit from Supporting People
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brecon Close – Cs and Bs for the service (Dec 2009) • Sheltered Service – achieved overall level B in inspection
Decrease use of temporary accommodation for homeless people and improve homeless prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households in temporary accommodation at 22 at year end against a target of 30. • Homeless prevention has significantly improved during 2009/10
Carry out review of funding on non HRA homeless and support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding for the homeless service from the Council.
Business Enablers	
Negotiate new ALMO contract with the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract renegotiated and 5 years plus 2 agreed with Council for both Housing Management and General Fund / Supporting People Services. • Written contract being finalised.
Implement job evaluation and new pay model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job evaluation scheme implemented
Review Document Management Strategy within Knowledge Management Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need recognised by WALH but timetable has slipped due to resources.

**ANNUAL MEETING OF WIGAN COUNCIL AND WIGAN & LEIGH HOUSING
MONDAY 12TH JULY 2010**

Wigan Council Financial Report

Contact: Noel Lawton

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2009/10 Year Financial Performance

Purpose/Summary:
This report provides a summary of the financial performance of the Housing Revenue Account for the year and confirms the final accumulated surplus of the HRA as at 31 st March 2010.
Recommendations:
It is recommended that the various elements of expenditure highlighted in the report be considered and noted.

1.0 Background

1.1 The 2009-10 provisional out-turn for the Wigan Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was approved by full Council in March 2010. The final accounts for 2009-10 have been completed but are still subject to examination and certification by the Audit Commission.

2.0 Overview

1.2 The accumulated surplus for the HRA revenue Account is £9.6 million as at 31st March 2010. This is some £3 million higher than expected at provisional out-turn. Appendix 1 to this report provides the financial summary for the year where final out-turn has been compared with provisional out-turn to show variations. The £3 million overall variation is a combination of many items for which explanations are provided in section 3 of this report.

3.0 Explanation of major variations (items over £0.5 million)

3.1 Programmed works. Under spend of £4.5 million

Half of this underspend is due to the reclassification of boiler replacements (£2.5 million) from revenue to capital. The remaining £2 million was due to procurement savings and the delays to programmes caused by the abnormal severe weather.

3.2 Revenue contributions to capital. Additional expenditure of £3.4 million

This is the funding that the HRA revenue account provides to the HRA capital programme. Main reasons for the increase are the reclassification of works from revenue to capital and include boiler replacements (£2.5 million) and works to void dwellings (£800k).

3.3 Contractor surpluses returned to the HRA. Additional income of £0.5 million.

The surplus from LBS that is returned to the HRA was substantially greater than forecast. There is also a small increase in the Gainshare payment from Mears.

- 3.4 **WALH Management Fee. Under spend of £0.5 million**
This represents a saving of 3% on the agreed management fee of £15.332 million and is mainly due to savings on staff costs. This saving has been added to HRA balances but Council have agreed that this be made available for use by WALH in 2010/11 and future years provided that there is agreement between WALH and Wigan Council on how the funds are spent.
- 3.5 **Various items. Under spend of £0.9 million.**
There are a number of under / over spends that are under the £0.5 million limit used to classify major variations for the purposes of this report. These include savings on Day to Day responsive works, interest payments on HRA debt (partially offset by reduced Housing Subsidy), reduced contribution to the bad debts provision and reduced supervision & management expenditure.
- 4.0 **Capital Expenditure**
- 4.1 Capital expenditure of £20.4 million took place in 2009/10 compared with a budget of £20.6 million. There was an under spend of £300k on the new build schemes due to programme slippage and a small over spend of £100k on the general capital programme.
- 5.0 **Summary**
The HRA has an accumulated surplus of £9.6 million as at 31st March 2010. Included within this surplus is £0.5 million that will be available for WALH to use in 2010/11 and beyond in consultation with Wigan Council. The remaining £2.5 million of the 2009/10 revenue account under spend will be retained within HRA balances for use in 2010/11 and future years. The £300k under spend on the new build part of the HRA Capital Programme was due to programme slippage and will be spent in 2010/11.

Appendix 1**SUMMARY HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

29/06/2010 11:57

	Projected Out-turn 2009/10 £	Actual 2009/10	Variation 2009/10
EXPENDITURE			
Net S&M and Repairs Administration expenditure	14,819,073	14,094,366	-724,707
Rents, Rates, Taxes & Miscellaneous Costs	45,266	52,330	7,064
Housing Programmed Repairs (net of capitalisation)	10,600,000	6,122,026	-4,477,974
Housing Responsive Repairs (net of capitalisation)	16,637,898	16,267,401	-370,497
Building DLO surplus + Contractor Gainshare	-137,898	-677,750	-539,852
Capital Charges - Depreciation: dwellings	13,904,878	13,847,011	-57,867
Capital Charges - Depreciation: other property/land	132,127	133,660	1,533
Capital Charges - Debt Management Costs	43,777	49,111	5,334
Capital Charges: Loan Charge Interest	13,848,763	13,538,098	-310,665
Capital Charges: Housing Set Aside	0	0	0
Revenue Contributions to Capital Exp.	1,400,000	4,810,225	3,410,225
Contribution to Bad Debts Provision	400,000	230,950	-169,050
Housing Subsidy Payable to Central Government	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	71,693,884	68,467,428	-3,226,456
INCOME			
Rents: Dwellings net of voids	66,845,789	66,823,167	22,622
Rents: Other	634,132	645,455	-11,323
Housing Subsidy	1,168,902	959,341	209,561
Interest Receivable: Cash Balances	65,450	75,652	-10,202
Interest Receivable: Mortgages	2,777	2,812	-35
Capital Charges: Depreciation (non dwellings)	132,127	133,012	-885
Total Income	68,849,177	68,639,439	209,738
Deficit / Surplus (-)	2,844,707	-172,010	3,016,717
Balance Brought Forward 1st April	-9,446,298	-9,446,298	0
Balance Carried Forward 31st March	-6,601,591	-9,618,308	3,016,717
MAJOR REPAIRS RESERVE (MRR)			
Balance Brought Forward 1st April	0	0	0
MRA - Allowance received/receivable	-13,847,011	-13,847,011	0
Contributions to Capital Expenditure	13,847,011	13,847,011	0
Balance Carried Forward 31st March	0	0	0
TOTAL BALANCES-IN-HAND at 31st March (HRA and MRR)	-6,601,591	-9,618,308	3,016,717

1. Executive Summary – Better Homes, Brighter Futures

Better Homes and Brighter Futures

Our Vision of 'Better Homes, Brighter Futures' was developed in 2006 after tenants gave us a clear message that they wanted not just better homes but better neighbourhoods and brighter futures. The five goals of our Vision are

- Better Housing Services
- Decent Homes
- Better Neighbourhoods
- Affordable Homes
- Supporting the most vulnerable

Significant progress has been made since the Vision was developed. 97% of council homes now meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and we have one of the highest levels of overall tenant satisfaction in the country up from 83% in 2006 to 87%. We have also established a reputation for delivering quality services for our customers. External accreditations include:

- Customer Service Excellence
- Customer Contact Association
- Community Legal Service (General Help)
- Supporting People QAF accreditation for support services

During 2009/10 we looked at "where we are going" in the next few years and "how we get there". There is now a clear wish from both the Board and tenants that we continue to provide a good quality service in the 'core' housing services whilst doing more to address the key issues for tenants around the quality of neighbourhoods, poverty and worklessness to create 'Brighter Futures'.

The four main objectives agreed by the Board for the next few years strongly reflect tenants' wishes:

- Continuing to deliver services of the highest quality
- More action on tackling anti-social behaviour on our estates
- Improving the financial position of our tenants
- Reducing the gap between the quality of life on our best and worst estates

Looking Back – what we achieved in 2009/10

2009/10 has been another successful year for us and key achievements have included:

- **Improving customer care**

Tenants had told us that we needed to improve our customer care, particularly around staff helpfulness. In 2009/10 we established a Customer Care team to develop and co-ordinate our approach. The Board approved a Customer Care Strategy, customer care standards were agreed with tenants and a comprehensive staff training programme was introduced. Key customer services such as our Contact Centre which handles some 215,000 calls a year also achieved the

Government's Customer Service Excellence standard which recognises our customer service culture.

- **Strengthening our approach to anti-social behaviour**

A major issue for tenants which can greatly affect their quality of life is anti-social behaviour. We completed a fundamental review of the ASB service with progress against the improvement plan to be scrutinised by the Tenants' Committee. Through partnership working we also successfully obtained funding for a Family Intervention Project which will focus on early intervention and a "carrot and stick" approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

- **Increasing the supply of affordable housing**

The shortage of affordable housing within the borough is a key issue. Working in partnership we have secured £12 million of funding to build 101 new homes of which 66 are on site. We were delighted to receive a visit from the former Housing Minister, John Healey MP, in April 2010 to view our major regeneration project in Scholes Village which will see all our tower blocks being improved to the Decent Homes Standard and 52 new homes built. Our Tenant Board Member, Pat Riley, welcomed the Minister into her improved flat and explained that her heating bills had reduced by £150 a quarter thanks to the insulation works to the blocks.

- **Supporting the most vulnerable**

Changes to how the housing support services are delivered led to a major improvement of our services to some of our most vulnerable customers. Over 1,000 households received advice and support to prevent them from becoming homeless and there was a significant reduction in the use of temporary accommodation from 59 households in 2009 to 22 in March 2010. The Housing Options service was also re-accredited with the Community Legal Service advice award.

- **Developing our social responsibility**

Our tenants are amongst the most deprived within the borough and are very concerned about the current recession. Over the last year our Social Responsibility Framework has:

- Tackled unemployment with over 20 apprentices employed at any one time, over 50% live on our estates, and partner contractors providing another 60 apprenticeships
- Reduced tenants' fuel bills by around £300 per year with the installation of over 2,000 new energy efficient boilers and insulating some 500 dwellings in the Scholes high rise blocks
- Empowered tenants by establishing the Tenants' Committee and increasing the Better Neighbourhoods Fund to £250,000 a year to enable tenants to improve the quality of life on estates
- Improved health by installing long life smoke alarms in nearly all our properties in just one year in partnership with the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
- Looked after our staff by successfully implementing the Job Evaluation pay and grading structure and continuing to invest in staff training and development

We would also like to record our gratitude to the contributions our building contractors made again last year in trying to make the borough a better place to live. Some 60% of all their workers live in the borough and, in addition to providing 60 apprenticeships, they continued to support the Western Skills Centre providing construction skills training to young people. They also donated £20,000 to the charity Communities United Project which is providing much needed activities for young people on our estates.

- **Improving performance**

Overall performance has continued to improve maintaining our position as a top performing social housing service. In particular, there has been excellent improvements in homelessness and gas servicing with the repairs service again delivering exemplary performance. Again this has been delivered with no increase in the management fee since March 2006 and in 2009/10 again we managed to make another saving on the management fee part of which is being reinvested into our house building programme.

- **Delivering value for money services**

In addition to the saving on the management fee, further efficiency savings in 2009/10 included over £500,000 open book efficiency savings with our repairs contractors and £1.5million in grants and rebates secured through the boiler and fuel replacement programme. Comparison against other ALMOs revealed that we are an above average performer with most of our costs for delivering services being below average.

As a result of our track record of achievement since 2006 the Council decided to give us a new contract for all our services to 2017. This provides us with some stability for the future. So we ended 2009/10 in a strong position and are clear on where we need to improve.

Looking Forward – what we aim to achieve in 2010/11

The key priorities set by tenants and the Board for 2010/11 include:

Quality Housing Services

The Better Housing Services programme will be focussing on agreeing local service standards with tenants and how these will be scrutinised. This will help with trying to reach our Tenant Board Members' aspiration of 92% tenant satisfaction and ensure we meet the requirements of the Tenant Services Authority's new regulatory framework.

Customer Care

We made good progress on improving our approach to customer care in 2009/10 including introducing a comprehensive staff training programme. A key priority for 2010/11 is to complete the delivery of this training across the organisation to ensure our customers receive a consistently good service which ever service they use.

We have also been working with tenants to implement the improvements they wish to see in our repairs service. During 2010/11 we will introduce with our building contractors a new repairs appointments system Opti-time which will enable tenants to make appointments at a time and date to suit them. We aim to use this new

computer software to optimise the use of contractors' staff and deliver value for money savings in 2011/12.

During 2010/11 we will also be refreshing our approach to ensuring 'a fair service for all' by revising our Equality & Diversity Strategy and developing local standards which take account of ease of access to services.

Anti-Social Behaviour

When refreshing our Vision the Board placed greater emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour. A Service Improvement Team reviewed the ASB service in 2009/10 and a key priority is to implement the improvement plan to produce quicker resolution of complaints and improved customer satisfaction with the process and outcome. Working with partners will be critical to making improvements as some of the perpetrators have complex behaviour issues which we can't resolve on our own.

Affordable Housing

Our vision of house building is being realised with funding in place and new homes now being built. We need to ensure these new developments are sustainable by having effective processes in place to successfully bring these properties into management. We will also be looking at alternative business models and identifying potential sites to allow us to continue building.

Value for Money – Working Smarter

With increasing pressure on local government finances but higher expectations for better services we need to be working 'smarter, not harder'. A major programme starting in 2010/11 will look at reducing accommodation costs by reviewing our combined approach to mobile/home working, use of accommodation and document management.

Our Future

In March 2010 the Government published its proposals to reform housing finance. Initial indications are that the proposals appear reasonable, but more work needs to be done to establish whether or not we will have enough money to maintain the stock and run services for the next 30 years.

There will be some difficult decisions and we will have to find more savings, but this is nothing new for us. We enter 2010/11 as a strong organisation able to deal with these challenges.

This Plan demonstrates that we are an improving organisation with a clear Vision, a highly committed and dedicated workforce, a Board and managers who run the organisation well, robust financial management, good performance and high levels of customer satisfaction.

We will be working with our partners to deliver the priorities in this Plan which will make a difference to our customers. If you would like to know more about Wigan & Leigh Housing then you can read this Plan or visit our website www.walh.co.uk