

Wigan Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Annual report 2006/7

Introduction

The constitution of the council requires an annual report to be submitted by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, reporting on the activity of the previous year and setting out its work programme for the year to come. This requirement has not been consistently complied with in previous years; the preparation of this report may act as a reminder to officers and the committee that such reports do need to be prepared in future.

Structure of council and Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wigan Council operates under an Executive model, of the Leader and 9 other Executive Portfolio Holders. There are a number of committees that work alongside the Cabinet in order to deliver council services; Regulation and Planning Committees look after all delegated matters in relation to licensing and development; Overview and Scrutiny undertakes the remit of Health Scrutiny in addition to monitoring the work of the Executive.

Article 6 of the Council's constitution defines the terms of reference and guidelines the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Select Committees as follows:

- i. review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's or Other Body's functions;
- ii. make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Executive and/or any policy, joint or area committee or Other Body in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- iii. consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants; and
- iv. exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive and/or any policy or area committees or Other Body

In previous years there has been a tendency for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be reactive to decisions being taken in Cabinet and call matters in for scrutiny. This had led to some frustration on the part of the committee, in that it did not see matters prior to decisions being reached, and Cabinet, in that its decisions could not be actioned until Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the matter, which could add several weeks before actions could be commenced. In 2006/7 a more pro-active relationship was attempted, where matters were brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to Cabinet and their views were taken into account prior to decisions being made. This had the intended effect of reducing the number of call-ins whilst enhancing the potential for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make appropriate and timely comments on matters going to Cabinet.

There are a number of Panels, comprised of councillors and co-opted members which debate policy related issues in respect of the major service areas, e.g. Children's Services, Adult Services, Environment, Regeneration. These have no

decision making powers but can refer their thoughts on specific proposed initiatives on to Cabinet prior to it reaching decisions.

Role of Select Committees

Since the Panels referred to above undertake elements of work which in other councils would be seen as the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the committee has developed a series of Select Committees which undertake specific reviews during the year. There are four select committees, one of which deals solely with Health Scrutiny; the other three deal with topics that are identified by the committee as having relevance across the council and its partners – membership of these select committees varies depending on the interests of each member of the committee and the amount of time that they have to devote to the meetings.

The selection of topics is up to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who in 2006/7 undertook investigations into: -

1. Invasive weeds and their treatment in the borough
2. The adoption of roads and open spaces.
3. Generic Call-handling

As there was some disagreement at the outset of the municipal year as to the chairing of these select committees, their work started later than anticipated and consequently only three reviews were undertaken during the course of the year.

Call-ins occurring during the course of the year.

Date	Item	Resolution of Cabinet
22 May 2006	Location of police posts in Ashton and Hindley Town Halls – O&S Committee asked Cabinet to have a thorough review of police provision in these towns.	Resolved not to change its original decision in relation to this matter
19 June 2006	Traffic calming and assessment prioritisation tool – O&S resolved to support the decision that had been made by Cabinet	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
19 June 2006	Sale of land at Wordsworth Ave, Wigan – O&S agreed with the potential disposal of this land but asked for more stringent covenants to be put in place to prevent its development	Cabinet note the recommendation.
17 July 2006	Shakerley Primary School proposed closure – request to be kept updated on the consultation process in relation to this school	Cabinet noted the recommendation.
14 August 2006	Wigan Pier Quarter Development – O&S requested Cabinet to order a further review by officers into options	Cabinet agreed with this recommendation and authorised the work to be commenced.

	that would deliver an affordable performance space	
29 August 2006	Standish Township enhancements – by the time of the meeting the decision of Cabinet had already been actioned.	The original Cabinet decision could not be disputed.
9 October 2006	Land adjacent to Mere Oaks School – potential for the joint marketing of two plots of land – the O&S Committee resolved to support the decision of Cabinet	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Shakerley school closure consultation process – the O&S committee did not consider this in time to vote prior to the guillotine coming into effect.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Housing Revenue account 2007/8 – the O&S Committee agreed with the Cabinet proposal to increase rents.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Mere Oaks school, Standish, development brief – the O&S Committee declined to refer this to full Council for discussion.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Wigan Pier Quarter, Eckersley Mill complex – the O&S Committee declined to refer this to full Council for discussion.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Control of Ruddy Duck at Wigan Flashes and Pennington Flash Country Park – Cabinet asked to review again their decision to allow the cull to proceed	Cabinet reaffirmed its earlier decision.
4 December 2006	Use of the capital receipt from the sale of Atherton Baths – the O&S Committee declined to refer this to full Council for discussion.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
4 December 2006	Disposal of the Freehold reversion at Wood St/ Trencherfield Mill, Wigan – the O&S Committee declined to refer this to full Council for discussion.	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.
12 February 2007	Use of playing fields at Oakfield school, Hindley – the O&S committee supported the Cabinet decision but sought	The original Cabinet decision was not disputed.

	clarity on the application of the Open Fields policy in future.	
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Items brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to determination by Cabinet

As previously indicated there has been an increase in the number of items being brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to Cabinet determination. Those considered in 2006/7 were:

Date	Item
22 May 2006	Forward Plan
19 June 2006	Minutes of the Safeguarding Children Board
	Joint Service Centre update report
17 July 2006	Children's Trust arrangements
14 August 2006	Equality and Diversity Progress Report
29 August 2006	Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel into Members Allowances – at the request of Cllr P Franzen
11 September 2006	Budget Timetable and principles 2007/8
	Medium Term Financial Plan 2007-10
	Bullying and the Sentinel System in Schools
9 October 2006	Minutes of the Safeguarding Children Board
	Disposal of land at Walthew House Lane, Wigan
	Forward Plan update
6 November 2006	The Council's housing allocation policy
	Wigan and Leigh Housing Governance Review
4 December 2006	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places – at the request of Cllr P Franzen
15 January 2007	Forward Plan
	Children's Trust arrangements – updating
12 February 2007	Forward Plan update
	Post Office Network Consultation
	Amendments to the constitution
5 March 2007	Local Government White Paper
2 April 2007	New Vision for Heritage Services
	Joint Commissioning Framework for services for children and young people
	Minutes of the Safeguarding Children Board
	Discussion around the creation of a Chair of Council Business

Update on previous reviews

An update on all the previous reviews as at June 2007 is appended to this annual report. It is the intention of the committee that this list should be reviewed at six-monthly intervals.

The final reports of each of the Select Committees can be found on the council's web site at

Select Committee Reviews proposed for 2007/8

Following suggestions from members and discussion at committee, these three topics were determined to be subject to Select Committee Reviews in 2007/8. Should they be completed quickly, then additional topics may be brought forward.

1. **Townships** – their role in improving customer focus and perception; how do they fit into the forward plans of the authority
2. **Reputation Management** – how do we improve the way people view us; how do we improve our reputation; how do we address concerns highlighted in the MORI survey; how do we encourage Councillors and officers to "sell" the authority
3. **Transport issues** – what elements should be incorporate in the Transport Investment Fund bid? What are the benefits and the costs of encouraging people to use public transport, how do we do it, what is needed and how do we get it. What economic benefits would flow from such investment?

Health Select Committee

The Health Select Committee produces its own comprehensive annual report, which is not reproduced here. A copy can be found at (hyperlink to be inserted)

Future direction for the committee

Each year the council produces an Issues Paper, which outlines the challenges it will face. The Issues Paper for 2008 can be found at <http://boston/geninfo/issues2007-08.pdf>.

Of particular relevance to this committee are the provision of the Local Government and Participation in Health Bill, which has now received royal assent. This envisages a wider and stronger role for scrutiny. The Act includes new powers for local councils to require evidence from all local service providers and a duty on them to have regard to scrutiny recommendations.

The Council will be reviewing the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the Panels that look into specific subject areas. An alignment of the panels with the key areas of the Local Area Agreement and an increased scrutiny role for them alongside an enhanced resource to assist councillors in researching alternative proposals is being considered. This would create a far more effective platform for all councillors to pursue the needs of their constituents whilst contributing to the council's strategic role.

Review Area	Key Findings/Issues	Reported to Panel/ Committee	Update position at June 2007
Missed Bins	The collection of domestic refuse with particular emphasis on missed collections and their rectification. The Help List facility for the elderly and physically frail. All aspects of customer liaison	19-Nov-01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations now complete. Updated report to Overview and Scrutiny/Environment Panel submitted 7th February 2005/23rd March 2005. • Currently undertaking full review of service following a Best Value review in 2006. Reporting back to Cabinet in September 2007
Asylum Seekers	The impact and integration of asylum seekers on the community	18-Feb-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed name of Asylum Seekers Providers Forum to Refugee & Migrants Forum to reflect changing issues. • R&MF in process of developing 'Welcome to Wigan' - strategy to support Refugees & Migrants to Wigan • All Support for Asylum Seekers now provided through private sector - 3 providers in borough, all have good relationship with Council. • Partnership Policy Framework for the Dispersal and Integration of Asylum Seekers in Wigan Borough regularly updated and continues to be implemented (NASS recently updated their guidance to all LA's / Private Sector Providers using a variation on Wigan's model).
Casual Swimming	Increase access, usage and profitability of the pools	18-Feb-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been overtaken by the introduction of free swimming for the under-16's and over-60's
Linc Cards	Increase usage and profitability of card. Fulfil an effective role in meeting its social exclusion aim. Increase number of young people using card.	10-Jun-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been overtaken by the changed procedures within the Trust intended to identify their customers more effectively and allow targeting into areas of most deprivation.

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<p>Loan Sharks</p> <p>Loan Sharks (continued)</p>	<p>Access to affordable credit. Provide advice. Reduce levels of debt.</p>	<p>15-Jul-02</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2002 CAB have dealt with a total of £42.8 million of debt. • A total of £7.2 million has been written off for clients • A total of £35.6 million has been re-scheduled so that clients can make affordable repayments. • Currently a Debt adviser works in targeted areas of the Borough including from Family Resource Centres and community facilities. The funding ends in March 2008. • CAB continues to provide an adviser at County Courts at Wigan and Leigh on mortgage and rent possessions days and 900 clients have kept their homes as a result. • A Bond Scheme is in place to provide a deposit for the potentially homeless who do not qualify for Local authority housing and prospective tenants have to attend sessions including financial literacy before being accepted on the scheme. • Partnership protocol developed with CAB and Wigan and Leigh Housing. Tenants with rent arrears or other debt or benefit problems are referred to CAB for advice and intervention. • In 2005 links between CAB and Unify Credit Union were established. <p>CAB operate an outreach session and Unify's office in Ince</p>

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Traffic Calming	Consider 'points based' and other types of methods of prioritising schemes. Detailed comparisons to be made with other authorities. Review budgets for scheme.	24-Feb-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming Area Prioritisation Scheme now adopted • All other aspects of report have been acted upon.
Health: Dentistry Health Dentistry (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Leadership • Poor attitudes to dental health locally • Benefits of water fluoridation • Registration rates • Lack of performance management • Identification of areas having difficulty accessing NHS dentists • The need for future services to meet local need. 	14-Jul-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental Action Plan produced • Working with local profession to shape out of hours emergency dental access. • Subject to review during the course of the current year.
Numeracy and Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising attainment in early years towards the Early Learning Goals. • Raising attainment at KS3 & KS4. • Monitoring quality standards. • Narrowing attainment gap. 	14-Jul-03	<p>To raise attainment in the early years .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Foundation Stage Profile, has been introduced to record achievement for pupils under 5 years old. • There is a well co-ordinated programme to support and develop early years provision including, the Sure Start Local Programme, Early Excellence Centres, Children's Centres and Quality Assurance advisers and consultants. • This support programme also includes voluntary and private settings offering early years provision. <p>Raising attainment in key stages 3 and 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of pupils achieving level 5+ in the KS3 tests in 2006 for mathematics and science

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Numeracy and Literacy (continued)			<p>were the highest LEA results so far, at 79% and 73% respectively. Performance in English declined slightly to 72%, but this is in the context of continued reservations nationally about the reliability of the assessments in this subject.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance at Key Stage 3 improved slightly, with the aggregate of test percentages at 224 across the 3 subjects, compared with 221 in 2005 • Overall the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE in 2006 showed significant improvement. • 56.9% of pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C at GCSE in 2006 compared to 51.7% in 2005, and 51.3% in 2004. • The GCSE “average points score”, which shows how well young people of all abilities have done across their subjects, improved dramatically to 366.5 from 338.7 in 2005 – taking Wigan ahead of the national average. • A new national indicator for 2006 was 5 or more A*-C GCSE including English and mathematics. Our 2006 figure for this indicator was 41.7%, which is below the national average of 45.8%, and work is in progress through the secondary strategy to close this gap • Raising attainment at GCSE is one of our LAA targets and is a key target in the Children's and Young People's Plan.

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Numeracy and Literacy (continued)			<p>Narrowing the attainment gap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of results at all Key Stages shows improved engagement of boys. However, overall there has not been a narrowing of the attainment gap between boys and girls. Raising boys attainment is one of our LAA targets and is a key task in the Children's and Young People's Plan. <p>Monitoring standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a well-structured programme of supported school self-evaluation built into the Link Adviser visits that is providing a robust support and challenge to all schools. Good practice is identified and shared, for example through the Leading Aspect Awards. <p>Schools of Concern are identified and appropriate intervention and support is agreed and provided</p>
Managing Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that young people with disabilities are given best possible opportunity to develop their full potential without discrimination. Providing best service and working together with partners. 	08-Sep-03	Overtaken by the CYPP developments and will be monitored through JAR.
Youth Nuisance and Substance Misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and understand main causes of youth nuisance. Access to recreational facilities where appropriate. Working with other departments. 	08-Sep-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi agency Respect Group created under the auspices of the Community safety Partnership comprising a range of external partners and relevant Council Departments which has ownership of this agenda through a Respect Action Plan and

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			<p>the Anti Social Behaviour Action Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of first year anti social behaviour action plan incorporating youth nuisance issues completed and reported to CP Panel March 2007 • 2007/08 action plan created and endorsed by CP Panel June 2007 • CYPS in the process of developing a Places to go, Things to do Strategy
Utilities Review	<p>Possibility of opening the Connections market up to competition. Performance against targets of utility connection. System to track progress of jobs. Lack of communication between UUNC and their sub-contractors.</p>	13-Oct-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All actions put in place and review closed.
Inequalities in Health in Wigan Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need for a holistic approach to planning for health equalities across the borough from all agencies involved. • The need to encourage healthy lifestyles in children and young people. • There is little information on the attitude and behaviors of local people and why they do not adopt health improvement messages. • Improved monitoring and evaluation 	23-Aug-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to new review in light of updated survey material that is now available and comparison with other adjoining authorities..

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	of current schemes so that evidence of delivering health improvement is available.		
Specialist Housing Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of homeless. • Number of offenders returning to the borough. • Lack of accommodation for homeless. 	06-Sep-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital funding / site obtained / planning application lodged for reconfiguration of Richmond Fellowship supported housing project (for people recovering from Mental Health problems) • Short term funded projects coming to fruition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bond Scheme now supporting 44 people • Housing Options Worker delivered 38 workshops to 263 individuals during 06/07 • Rainer Intensive Mediation Project currently supporting 12 of the borough most chaotic young people. • Key Project re-housed 61 clients in 06/07 / Former Bricklayers Arms purchased to be used as a base for Key Project and the Bridge Group (building in need of refurbishment) • OARS: 19 people supported for a 12 week period 'through the prison gate' • 2 yr funding secured for Learning Disability Housing Options Development Worker • Funding secured to establish Housemates scheme for people with LD • Costs of B&B reduced significantly in 2006/07 (continue to use furnished temporary tenancies) • Prevention becoming main focus of homelessness services

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Specialist Housing Provision (continued)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Strategy being revised during 2007/8 • Developing 'Partnering Arrangement' with RSL's to attract investment into specialist housing provision
Teenage Pregnancy	<p>Reduce under 18 conception rates by 50% by 2010. Get more teenage parents into education, training and employment. Establish downward trend in rate of under 16 conception by 2010.</p>	20-Sep-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst a wide range of initiatives has been undertaken the teenage pregnancy rate has shown an increase in recent years. The overall Family Planning and Teenage Sexual Health service in the borough is being reviewed and tendered at present. The Committee may wish to call for a brief updating review late in the year.
The Effect of CCTV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantifying cost of continuing service at current and increased levels. • Identifying good practise. • Identify beneficiaries of contributors to the service. 	15-Nov-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the original review two other internal reviews have been undertaken. The result of one of these was to outsource some of our CCTV work, making a large revenue saving. • We now use of proactive monitoring of time-related hot spots across the borough, identifying incidents before they escalate and liaising with partners to effectively deploy resources. • We have also developed alarm activated CCTV to assist schools, the technology enables confirmation of intruders before they enter a building, preventing vandalism and gathering evidence for investigation purposes. • There are currently seven town centres with full static CCTV systems deployed, the costs of extending the network are prohibitive, however we are currently exploring the effectiveness of IIP

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The Effect of CCTV (continued)			<p>cameras which can be transmitted back to Central Watch through the internet. This significantly reduces the capital and revenue costs of installing static CCTV and would enable areas suffering crime and anti-social behaviour to benefit from targeting limited Partnership resources, in addition we will also be trialling audio CCTV in a town centre to improve communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service will continue to develop as technology becomes available to create a safer and secure environment for all members of the public who live, work and visit the borough.
Affordable Housing	House prices in Wigan increased in recent years.	23-May-05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing Strategy Implemented: • Change way council properties allocated – ensure goes to those in greatest need. • Negotiated nomination agreement with RSL's over 50% their properties let through council waiting list - accredited private landlords able to advertise through Property Shop • Bond scheme supporting 44 people in private sector • Pulled out of asylum seekers contract releasing 146 properties to help address need for more social rented housing • Affordable Housing Planning Policy implemented July 2006... likely to see first affordable provision November 2007 • Developing 'Partnering Arrangement' with RSL's to attract investment into affordable housing provision

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<p>Re organisation of Children's Health Services across the footprint of Greater Manchester, East Cheshire, High Peak</p>	<p>To inform members of the possible impact on local health services for children and young people to enable them to respond to the consultation exercise planned for 2006.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decision has now been made. Option A will see the creation of eight centres of excellence for maternity and children's services with neonatal care provided at three large, specialist Neonatal Intensive Care Units. Wigan will be one of the eight. In addition, the changes will mean: • Community services and health care in the home will be developed • Greater opportunity and support provided to manage conditions in the home • More experienced consultants dealing with specialist areas. • It is anticipated that changes will be established over the next 3 – 5 years. Wigan will not be affected by the location changes; however, we will have to ensure that we have effective health and social care provision available in the community to support the proposed changes. • The committee will monitor progress of the changes through the Greater Manchester Health Committee.
<p>Audiology</p>	<p>We suggest that the following improvements should be made and a fundamental review of pathway design should take place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That initial assessment, the testing of hearing frequency and altitude ranges and the results and suitability for hearing aid should be undertaken on 	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>Further report back needed during 2007 to indicate the level of progress made.</p>

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	<p>the same day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the new style of digital aid be introduced as soon as possible • That the above step be merged and undertaken on the same day as the appointment with Audiology to have the moulding made of inside of the ear. • We would like to see evidence from the trust to demonstrate the 11 week waiting target has been met by May 2007. <p>Improvements to facilities and patient experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend that the report from the PPI Forum sent to the trust at the end of November 2006 is considered and further action put in place to improve accommodation at the Leigh site. • Opening hours should be considered and adapted to suit patient need where possible. 		
Invasive Weeds	Japanese knotweed presents a significant risk to the council in future years in terms of potential litigation, impact on land value and right to buy values as well as environmental impact	March 2007	Action Plan developed highlighting key recommendations to go to Cabinet in June 2007.

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	<p>of unchecked spread if proactive management is not commenced. There is potential to pool existing resources which are currently used disparately to treat the weed, to create a joined up approach to tackling the problem which will have increased benefits.</p>		
Adoption of Road and Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership is a complex area. • We have powers to enforce land maintenance when there is a registered owner. • Limited powers when no registered owner. • Adoption of open spaces working well. • Adoption of highways – signing of agreement for adoption is critical phase in process. Lack of incentive for larger developers to complete work to adoption standard. • Our own management arrangements for the land we own do not follow the concept of ‘one council’. This can cause delays and confusion for members of the public and elected members. 	March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to contracts for Section 38 agreements to ensure agreements are signed as quickly as possible without delays caused by need for agreements between United Utilities and developers regarding sewers and pumping stations. • Raised awareness of our powers under Section 215 to ensure the condition of land does not adversely affect the amenity of an area. • Raised awareness of the concept of community leasing of land as a viable alternative to land disposal. • Identified further recommendations to strengthen our approaches in the areas concerned by the review.

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Generic Call handling	<p>In seeking to improve services for the public we should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the public can access to services from 8.00 am - 8.00 pm Monday-Friday and Saturday mornings. • Provide better information leaflets for the public about services which they can access in public buildings i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access to a telephone ○ Information Board about Council services ○ Libraries • To develop partnership working arrangements to provide information leaflets about Council services for the public i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local supermarkets/shopping malls ○ Community and voluntary groups ○ GP Surgeries • Develop well trained personnel to provide the highest level of customer care to the public. <p>To have more flexible staffing arrangements to handle effective service delivery.</p>	March 2007	These aspects will be included in the specification of services to be provided from the Joint Service Centre that opens in 2010. In the interim steps will be taken to implement specific recommendations in whole or in part within the council and also with its partners in the borough.