

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 13 November 2008

Subject: Reputation Management

Report of: Select Committee No 2

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Purpose / summary: To report the findings of Select Committee 2 investigations into reputation management within Wigan Council and propose a set of recommendations for improvement.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:

Recommendation / decision: That Cabinet support the recommendations

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**

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	none
Staffing:	none
Policy:	none
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Not applicable at this time but impact would need to be considered as part of any implementation plan.
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?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

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

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **N/A**

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

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **N/A**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	6 October 2008		

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 18 September 2008

1.0 Background:

1.1 This Select Committee investigation focussed on what action Wigan Council takes to improve the reputation of the council for people within the borough. It was carried out as a result of a MORI survey that indicated members of the public were relatively happy if questioned about specific services within the council but were much less satisfied when asked about the council as a whole.

1.2 The Select Committee sought to identify best practice in terms of the overall reputation of the council. The Select Committee also investigated how to improve the three service areas that those interviewed were least satisfied. Namely cleanliness of the borough, activities for teenagers and transport around the borough

2.0 Proposals:

2.1 There are 16 recommendations made in the report. These are summarised in the appendices where timescales and responsible persons have also been identified.

3.0 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

4.0 Conclusions:

Overview and Scrutiny

Select Committee No 2

A Review of Reputation Management

Select Committee No 2

October 2008

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1.0 Executive Summary

This review was carried out to identify the major impacts on the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of its residents, and what steps should be taken to improve the Council's reputation.

Select Committee No 2 were asked to carry out this review after findings from the 2006 Best Value General Survey conducted by IPSOS MORI placed Wigan joint 12th with three other councils out of the 18 councils across Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire.

The Select Committee chose to interview key personnel, carry out a comparison exercise and study relevant literature when compiling this review. The key personnel were identified as senior management within the departments that had the poorest results from the survey. The Select Committee also felt it was pertinent to interview key personnel from within the Chief Executive's Services as they link to the reputation of front line services through matters such as the communication policy.

The key personnel interviewed were the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Head of Public Relations, the Director of Environmental Services, the Assistant Director of Community Safety, Environmental Services and the Assistant Director of Children and Young People's Services.

The Select Committee identified a couple of key findings: That reputation management must be considered at senior management level to enable it to be pushed up the councils agenda. In addition the Select Committee believed that the results of one survey were insufficient to provide enough evidence of why the internal reputation of the council didn't match its positive external reputation.

Numerous recommendations were drawn up by the Select Committee for improving the reputation of the Council for its residents, some of which have already been implemented by the Officers Group. These recommendations can be found on page 28 of this review.

2.0 Introduction

In 2006 a survey was carried out across 2230 residents across Wigan Borough. This was the 2006 Best Value General Survey conducted by IPSOS MORI, which indicated that residents across Wigan Borough believed that although individual services provided by the Council were good, their overall opinion of the Council was comparatively low. This was in direct contrast to the external Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), which rated the Council highly. Of the 18 councils across Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire, Wigan Council ranked joint 12th with three other Councils in the review.

The results illustrated that whilst customers were positive about the individual services they received from the Council, they felt that the council overall was underperforming. This result is in direct contrast to the official CPA results for the council, in which it is rated highly.

As a result of this low level of satisfaction Elected Members felt that it was necessary to review how the Council managed its reputation across the borough. Due to the potentially huge scale of the piece of work, the Select Committee focused on the key areas of the Terms of Reference. These can be found on page 11 of the report. The Select Committee was mindful, however, that the review should take account of:

- The three service areas considered most important in making Wigan a good place to live, and most in need of improvement, as highlighted by residents in the MORI survey.
- That the review should focus on the Council's reputation at a local level. This followed on from discussions which surmised that the reputation of the Council at a national level was positive.

The MORI survey highlighted that residents across the Borough were happy with many of the individual services they accessed, yet they were comparatively

dissatisfied with Wigan Council. It was the view of Select Committee members that improving the reputation of Wigan Council as a single body would be the focal point of this review. It was agreed that the three service areas identified through the MORI survey as having a significant impact on the quality of life for residents in the borough and identified as most in need of improving should be focussed on.

The level of traffic congestion across the Borough was highlighted as the second most important area in need of improving in Wigan. However the Select Committee decided not to focus on this work area as it was a significant piece of work in itself. It was also not investigated further as part of this review because work is currently being carried out on a draft transport strategy, which will address this area in significantly more detail. It was, however, agreed that the importance of reputation management should be highlighted to key personnel carrying out the draft transport strategy.

The questions asked and results from the survey are as follows:

Q1. Thinking generally, which of the things below would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live?

Q2. And thinking about this local area, which of the things below, if any, do you think most need improving?

Quality of Life	Q1 %	Q2 %
Access to nature	17	8
Activities for teenagers	30	60
Affordable decent housing	37	13
Clean Streets	52	34
Community activities	10	18
Cultural facilities	9	18
Education provision	36	5
Facilities for young children	21	29
Health Services	48	14
Job Prospects	22	19
Level of crime	69	44
Level of pollution	13	12
Level of traffic congestion	33	52
Parks and open spaces	28	17
Public transport	23	16
Race relations	5	4
Road and pavement repairs	20	32
Shopping facilities	24	15
Sports and leisure facilities	13	16
Wage levels and local cost of living	17	16
Other	1	2
None of these	*	*

The survey also asked residents for their opinion on individual services. The results for these questions provided significantly improved results for Wigan Council on an individual service basis.

The conclusion from this survey was that residents of the borough viewed Wigan Council as a separate entity to the services it provides. Whilst the CPA rated Wigan Council as Excellent, the results of the MORI survey confirm that there is a significant amount of improvement necessary for Wigan Council to improve its reputation with the residents within the Borough.

The Select Committee No 2 was asked to investigate the reputation of Wigan Council and to identify, where possible, recommendations for its improvement.

This report identifies what the terms of reference for the research were, the methodology used, the findings of the Select Committee and, most importantly, the recommendations from the Select Committee on what actions should be taken to improve the reputation of Wigan Council to its residents.

What is Reputation Management

Put very simply, reputation is the opinion of the public towards an organisation.

Reputation management isn't about spin or publicity. It's about identifying those factors which are affecting an organisation's reputation and doing something about them. It is about ensuring that an organisation's values and performance are recognised and understood and it takes and gets the credit for its performance.

A good reputation is about inspiring trust in what you stand for, convincing your public that you measure up to your values and being seen to offer good value for money.

Wigan Council has a wide range of different stakeholders and we are perceived differently by them.

Business community

Local and national government

Voluntary and other public sector agencies

Residents

Why does it matter?

The reputation of Wigan Council is important for a number of reasons. It is in the Council's own interest to have a good reputation because this is an important part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

A good reputation can improve staff morale because we all want to work for a good organisation. This can also assist in attracting good employees to Wigan Council and retaining them.

It is also an important area for members to consider, because they should be seen as community leaders (and not just at election time).

Finally, it is good for image of council and borough and can assist in the Council having more freedom to spend money as it sees fit and fewer audits.

How is it measured?

Every three years as part of our CPA we have a Best Value General Survey which looks at satisfaction with the council generally and with particular services. Based on interviews with 3000 residents.

The Best Value general survey of 2006 shows people are more satisfied with individual services than with the council as a whole. Something across the country, not just in Wigan. It's called the reputation gap.

For example:

Libraries	74% satisfied
Recycling	70% satisfied
Refuse collection	90% satisfied
Parks	62% satisfied
Planning applications	80% satisfied
Council housing	84% satisfied (4 th highest in the country)

But the overall figure for people who think we're doing a good job is only 50% (49% in 2003). This is slightly lower than the national average of 52%

In Greater Manchester terms we're sixth out of ten yet we were at one time the only excellent rated council in the county. We are still considered a four star council according to the audit commission but arguably not in the eyes of residents.

Therefore it is important for the council to address why we are seen this way and how it can be improved.

This information is supported by messages from a citizen's panel. People like our services but don't necessarily transfer that to overall satisfaction with the Council.

What drives/influences reputation?

There are several studies carried out by different bodies to determine individuals' satisfaction with the Council. These include MORI/ LGA/ I&DeA. These studies also show a link between being feeling well informed and feeling satisfied. This indicates that if Wigan Council tells its residents what it does in a way that is meaningful to them, then they are more likely to feel satisfied, thus improving Wigan Council's reputation. This has been demonstrated by the fact that councils that invest more in communicating with their residents score higher satisfaction levels.

Consistently surveys show that the services that really matter to people are those that tackle crime and grime. A MORI analysis shows that the key influencer on the assessment of Council performance is overall performance of the Council's environmental services.

Another consistent theme is that when asked what services councils provide, the big spenders such as education and social services – areas where Wigan is highly rated - are rarely mentioned. Most people unprompted know very little about what their councils spend their money on other than emptying the bins.

The media is often cited as an important resource for improving residents opinion of the council but how influential is it? The increasingly adversarial nature of local politics has led to a lot of negative stories about the council. But does this affect the council's reputation?

Should the Council be better branded? There is a lot of evidence that people don't associate schools or social services with the Council. However research has not been carried out to determine if this is because they don't use them personally or they are not obviously identified with the Council.

The signage across Wigan Council is inconsistent leaving residents unsure of what we do. Council tax bills and parking fines are the most consistently branded services!

When considering the reputation of Wigan Council it is necessary to include the sub-brands e.g. WLCT, W&LH, townships and partnerships. Once the council did everything but now there is a plethora of different brands. Does this create confusion about what residents get for their council tax and does a poorly performing sub-brand influence the reputation of Wigan Council?

Ben Dudley of the LGA stated, "If it's paid for by council tax payers – show them it's a service provided by their council."

It is a fact that councils have to do things that people don't like but if these services are performed well it can limit the impact these negatively perceived duties have.

All the reputation management in the world makes very little difference if your services are perceived as poor, or more importantly, not good value for money. Increasing evidence that value for money perceptions are important for residents.

This is partly due to council tax rises every year – residents are increasingly asking what value do they get for their money?

The Head of Public Relations advised there is an East/ West split in the Wigan Borough area. A lot of residents have no emotional loyalty to the Wigan 'brand'. Therefore improving the reputation of Wigan Council must be about more than simply better branding of the Council. In addition the MORI analysis of BVGS 2006 lists satisfaction by geographical area. Tyldesley and Astley are listed as having the highest satisfaction rates at 58%, whilst Hindley and Abram the lowest at 43%. To begin to improve the reputation of the council this variation in satisfaction levels dependant on the ward should be further investigated to be fully understood.

Although the Citizens Panel shows that relatively few people would ever contact their councillor for help with a problem members can be and are a positive force for good. They have involvement in Brighter Borough and are community champions. However negative press about Wigan Council by Elected Members operating for political reasons can be detrimental to the reputation of Wigan Council for its residents.

The poor results for satisfaction levels across the country has led the Local Government Association (LGA) to create a reputation campaign. This has resulted in the LGA identifying a series of actions that it believes all councils should sign up to if they want to improve their reputation. Wigan Council would have to agree to implement twelve core actions within twelve months under two headings of Cleaner, Safer, Greener and Communications.

3.0 Terms of Reference

The Review of reputation management was undertaken as a result of the findings of the MORI survey. It is also being undertaken to complement work within the Chief Executive Services on reputation. Reputation management is an increasing priority for Local Authorities and links into a number of Local and National Government Strategies.

To ensure the review was effective it was necessary to ensure the Select Committee had agreed focus areas. This would ensure that the review remained well managed, and did not duplicate other pieces of work that had already been carried out in this area.

Consequently the Select Committee agreed to the following purpose and objectives.

Purpose:

To produce, on behalf of Wigan Council, a report that provides recommendations to the council on the most effective ways of improving the councils reputation both within the borough and at a regional and national level. *This was subsequently scaled down to reputation at a local level because the research into Wigan Council's reputation at national level was found to be positive.*

Objectives

- 1.0 To become familiar with the outcome of the MORI survey of local residents attitudes to our services and agree key elements to be addressed.
- 2.0 To identify other local authorities and organisations with good reputations and identify any lessons that can be learned from how they achieve or maintain that reputation.

- 3.0 To examine how effective use of publicity and branding (including signage) can be used to improve reputation and raise awareness of the range and quality of services that the council provides
- 4.0 To establish what support members require in order to effectively promote the borough, whilst acknowledging political differences
- 5.0 To establish how staff can be enabled to be ambassadors of the council at all levels of the organisation.

Outcomes sought from the review

An assessment of the current strategies and actions implemented to improve the reputation of Wigan Council

A review of the work undertaken by the services highlighted in the MORI survey as most important to local residents, and most in need of improvement.

To make recommendations, where appropriate, for improving the reputation of Wigan Council for its direct service users.

4.0 Methodology

The methodology used for obtaining the information for this report was critical to the overall accuracy and influence of the report. The Select Committee agreed that the MORI survey would be the central piece of information used to guide the direction of the Select Committee. From this the following methods were chosen:

Interviews with key stakeholders: The purpose of this was for the Select Committee to be able to learn what action was already being taken to improve the reputation of Wigan Council. It also enabled Elected Members of the Select Committee to ask questions relevant to obtaining information for the review.

The persons chosen for interview are as follows:

Leader of the Council

Deputy Chief Executive

Head of Public Relations

Director of Environmental Services

Director of Children and Young People's Services

Assistant Director, Community Safety, Environmental Services Department

Literature Review: The Select Committee identified and interrogated the main pieces of research and guidance available to Wigan Council. This included national and local sources of information

Meetings: The Select Committee agreed to meet on a regular basis, of approximately 1 month intervals. This was to ensure the review continued to be progressed, set dates were available to interview key stakeholders and then debate the findings from these interviews, and from the research obtained.

Comparison Exercise: The Select Committee agreed that a comparison between Wigan Council and other local authorities should be carried out. This would provide an opportunity to analyse what did or didn't work elsewhere.

5.0 Current Position in Relation to Objectives

Objective 1.0: This was considered at length, which resulted in a good level of understanding of what local residents' attitudes were towards our services. It was agreed by the Select Committee that the attitudes towards services on an individual basis were quite positive. This was highlighted by the findings of the MORI survey in addition to internal surveys, for example customer care forms and performance targets being met.

The Select Committee therefore considered that it was the reputation of 'Wigan Council' as a whole that required consideration as part of this review. The information from the MORI survey was analysed and the key areas that appeared to affect the reputation of Wigan Council as a whole were ascertained.

The Select Committee agreed that the three key elements that could be addressed as a result of this MORI survey were the level of crime across the borough, activities for teenagers and clean streets. These key elements were addressed and recommendations drawn up, which are included in Section 2.0 of this review.

Objective 2.0: The Select Committee discussed a number of different councils that are geographically close to Wigan in terms of how they manage their reputation. This was particularly in terms of branding where the Bolton family and Salford magenta campaigns were considered. However the Select Committee felt that further consideration of these areas wasn't relevant to this review as they focused more on how external bodies perceived the Council, as opposed to how local residents perceived it. Discussions with the Leader of the Council and Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the external opinion of Wigan Council was positive and so didn't require further work as part of this review.

In terms of improving the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of how local residents perceive it, a recommendation for a benchmarking exercise was made. This would consider the results of other local authorities in terms of the MORI survey for other Greater Manchester Authorities, and identify potential areas of good practice.

Objective 3.0: The Select Committee considered the branding initiatives of Bolton and Salford and felt that a rebranding of Wigan Council to improve its reputation in the minds of local residents would be too expensive and was not necessary. However it was felt that there should be road signs on key routes into the borough, which emphasise the fact that Wigan Council does more than simply empty bins. It was agreed that similar signs used by St Helens Council appeared effective and so details were obtained. The Council is now pursuing the installation of two signs at main gateways into the borough.

The Council is also undertaking a study into corporate branding. The Council Style Guide has already been launched across the Council and reputation is being discussed at the Chief Officers Group.

Objective 4.0: The Select Committee established that it was important that members are able to effectively promote the Borough. It was also recommended that Elected Members should separate their political views from the reputation of the Council. To assist in this the Select Committee recommended guidance be created. However they were unable to create this within the time allocated to this review. It was recommended that this be taken to the Chief Officers group on reputation to pursue.

Objective 5.0: This objective was considered to a limited degree by the Select Committee. There is already ongoing work in this area, for example Employee Development Reviews being rolled out across the council. Also the 'Have Your Say' surveys and information-sharing through team briefs and the council newsletter.

The Select Committee have drawn up a couple of recommendations for further study into this area. However they agreed that the MORI survey demonstrated that residents were happy with individual services. This indicated that improving Wigan Council's reputation wasn't simply about employees doing their job better, but more about them reinforcing the positive image of the council as seen on a national scale, and selling the positive image of Wigan borough for its residents' benefit.

6.0 What we Found

MORI Survey

The results of the MORI survey were based on a survey of 2230 residents, and was conducted using a self-completion postal approach in the Wigan Council area. The fieldwork took place during the period 4 September – 3 November 2006. The Audit Commission weighted the data by age, gender, ethnicity and household size to reflect the known profile of residents in the Wigan Council area, based on the 2001 census. In accordance with DCLG guidelines for Best Value Performance Indicators, the results are based on those who provide a rating.

The survey asked residents to consider their local area and then identify the things that were most important to them to make the place somewhere good to live. Residents were then asked to consider which areas they felt were most in need of improving.

The survey highlighted a significant difference between the percentage of residents happy with an individual service, compared with their opinion of the Council as a whole. It also suggested that some areas of the borough were less satisfied with the council than other areas.

The analysis of the MORI survey highlighted three areas that were important to residents within Wigan for creating a good place to live, and were also identified as most in need of improving. These areas were clean streets, the level of crime and activities for teenagers. Both the level of crime and clean streets are work areas based within Environmental Services, whilst the role of providing activities for teenagers is based within Children and Young People's Services.

From the information available, it was decided that a better understanding of what work was undertaken would be obtained by interviewing key personnel within each department to identify what they did and what steps, if any, were being taken to assist in improving the reputation of Wigan Council for its residents.

Environmental Services

The Environmental Services Department provides many key areas of service that impact directly on the reputation of the Council as a whole. The Select Committee identified crime and street cleanliness as being two major issues that impact on the Council's reputation, that also present huge opportunities for being able to improve reputation if they are provided effectively and efficiently.

The Select Committee interviewed the Assistant Director, Community Safety, Environmental Services Department and found that a lot of work was being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership in terms of tackling fear of crime. The Assistant Director advised that there were five key priorities in tackling crime and the fear of crime across Wigan Borough. These five key priorities will form part of the new Local Area Agreement and will play an important role in achieving the Local Strategic Partnerships objective of "Building Stronger Communities". The five priorities are to reduce local priority crime, to reduce re-offending, reduce drug related harm, improve the cleanliness and greenness of the borough, and to improve public confidence, perception and involvement in provision of services. The Assistant Director also advised the Select Committee that Environmental Services had a reassurance officer and co-ordinator to tackle the fear of crime, through managing communications with the public and identifying opportunities to portray positive messages and ensuring a consistent approach is taken to informing our residents about how partners are working together to tackle issues in their areas.

The community safety partnership now has its own website, www.saferwigan.org.uk, and this website will be used to provide information to residents about what the partnership can do to help them, advice about dealing with common issues, how to report crime and disorder, as well as information about the various services and agencies that can provide support to victims and vulnerable people.

The Select Committee determined that the work being carried out was positive. However it struggled to determine how Wigan Council was highlighted as part of the Community Safety Partnership due to the large number of partnerships involved and the limited branding of Wigan Council on information provided by the partnership.

One aspect of the work that was supported by the Select Committee was the Community Improvement Projects (CIP) currently being rolled out across Hag Fold, Higher Fold, Ince and Platt Bridge. This is a multi agency approach to tackling the environment, crime and other factors in an area through a targeted approach. The work involves door to door consultation with residents for intelligence gathering which is then acted upon. It also includes community involvement activities, rubbish removal, recycling, education and enforcement activities across the area. The Select Committee believed that this approach would have a significant impact on residents' opinion on the level of crime and the cleanliness of the streets across the borough.

This work will be further enhanced by the roll – out of PACT's (Partnership and Communities Together) which will build on lessons learnt from the Community Improvement Projects and other Neighbourhood approaches that have been piloted in the borough, to ensure that we understand the issues residents have and their perceptions about their local area. This will enable partners and elected member to work together to address those issues and concerns with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life for residents and providing opportunities for them to get involved in decision making and influence service delivery.

It was understood that a lot of work is currently being undertaken within Environmental Services to improve the cleanliness of streets. The creation of Neighbourhood Teams has seen the combining of a variety of front line service delivery, previously provided by several different areas of the council into one place. Five geographical teams will each take ownership of a twin – township area and they will respond to issues in relation to street cleansing, minor highways repairs and anti social behaviour. Officers and operatives deal with a range of issues as they are multi skilled and can provide holistic solutions to the issues that often impact negatively on residents perceptions, such as anti social behaviour related litter and graffiti, dog fouling etc. The approach these will take will make them highly visible in the local areas and they will be approachable and provide a point of contact on the streets for residents. This area was considered in conjunction with the recommendations from the LGA reputation management campaign which suggested the following for improving the reputation of the Council.

- highly visible well branded cleaning operation,
- One phone number to report environmental problems,
- Identify and deal with grot spots,
- Fast removal time for fly tipping & abandoned cars,
- Win a green flag for parks,
- Education and enforcement.

Each suggested area is currently being undertaken to some degree although areas for improvement have been identified and considered in line with other initiatives.

Children and Young People's Services

The Department uses a variety of methods to promote its services, and is currently in the process of increasing the number of IT facilities for its customers to access. However it acknowledges that more could be done in this area to promote its services.

The Department has introduced two web based services, Linc on line, which provides features, news and views of interest to children and young people, and Help4me, which is primarily aimed at providing contact information about services for children and young people and their families.

Children and Young People's Services has a significant number of positive activities for its customers. These are introduced through a variety of formats, for example, Government Policy, transforming Youth Work, Every Child Matters, Aiming High and the Education Act 2006, which places a duty on local authorities to provide youth activities.

The Department actively targets children and young people to become involved in positive activities. This includes volunteering, entertainment and learning new skills and knowledge. The number of customers targeted has increased in the two years it has been operating, and the Department has set increased targets for future years.

Children and Young People's Services undertakes a wide ranging approach to promoting their services, and what they promote is a comprehensive and accurate picture of available services to children and young people, whether from the public, voluntary or private sector, or from national sources. They do this through websites, posters, promotional materials, resource centres, Linc Magazine and press releases.

Despite these positive actions for promoting their services, they are still identified as most in need of improving. Therefore the question for reputation management is what more, other than promotion of their services to young persons, should be considered?

The Select Committee found that little work was being done to inform adults of what services were available for teenagers. It was felt that the promotion of partnership working, for example with PCSOs and Trading Standards Officers to reduce underage drinking could be better promoted.

Other Departments

The Select Committee agreed that the reputation of the council included the involvement of other departments and not merely those identified in areas for improvement. From this it was agreed that representatives from the Chief Executives Department should be interviewed and so this was agreed with the Leader of the Council, Deputy Chief Executive and the Head of Public Relations.

The Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council informed the Select Committee that Wigan Council is highly regarded as a Local Authority in wider government circles and he felt it was his job to maintain a high profile for Wigan. He supported the work of the Select Committee in separating the reputation of Wigan Council into two areas: the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of external bodies and the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of its residents. He agreed that the focus area of the Select Committee was correct and should be pursued.

The Leader of the Council felt that the problem was highlighted by the MORI survey. Wigan Council provides high quality, low cost services in comparison with other local authorities across Greater Manchester, yet members of the public are unaware of this.

The Leader provided a number of suggestions as to why this discrepancy might have occurred. He suggested that residents within the borough didn't compare services with other councils as they had only lived within Wigan Borough. He also suggested that the reputation of Wigan Council had been damaged by negative media and suggested that this could be managed better. He agreed that an increased circulation of Borough Life was one way to tackle this.

The Leader supported the findings of the MORI survey when he suggested that the visual impact of environmental problems across the borough had an impact on people's views of Wigan Council.

The Chief Executive's Department

The Deputy Chief Executive

The Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) was new in post but this didn't deter her from having ideas about how to improve the reputation of Wigan Council for its residents. She felt that branding was an important area that impacted on the reputation of Wigan Council for its residents because a lot of residents see Council services as emptying their bin and little else.

The DCE also advised the Select Committee that the officers group, in addition to the Support Services Review, is undertaking a strategic piece of work in relation to the reputation of the council. This would establish a strategy for reputation management with a unified structure, systems and processes that would be distributed across the Council.

The Head of Public Relations

The Head of Public Relations provided an in depth piece of work which considered how Wigan currently manages its reputation , the Wigan Council image and provided suggestions for improvement.

The Head of PR advised Wigan Council currently manages its reputation through a number of different strands:

- Corporately the PR team is responsible for *Borough Life* residents' magazine, A-Z of services, media relations, brand management, and the communications strategy.
- Departmentally Wigan Council has information officers in several departments, for example economic and tourism marketing and WLCT. They have a separate PR Officer who identifies good news stories which are created into press releases for local newspapers.
- There is an internal communications network, which benefits and enables employees to become ambassadors of the Council.
- Wigan Council undertakes a lot of community engagement and consultation work to ensure the services the council provides match the needs and aspirations of residents across the borough.

The Head of PR also advised that a benchmarking exercise showed that Wigan Council currently punches below its weight in terms of resident satisfaction in Greater Manchester and other Council districts. He advised that the resources available for improving Wigan Council's reputation should be reviewed as Wigan's corporate team is the smallest across Greater Manchester apart from Bury.

The Head of PR asked "Is reputation management a strategic function in Wigan?" In an increasing number of councils the head of communications or a similar post is a member of the strategic management team. As a result issues to do with reputation and communications are considered at senior management level. It was argued that this is not the case in Wigan, for example there's no 'communications issues' box attached to cabinet reports, for example

The Head of Public Relations discussed the image of the borough and advised that whilst this was not strictly part of public perception of the council, Central

Government is increasingly demanding that the best councils should become 'place shapers'. This means being responsible for more than just local services but for the wider reputation and image of the area through working with partners. He advised that the external image of the borough, whilst improving, is still for some one of industrial, dark satanic mills influenced by Orwell. Work by an Image group had looked at how to improve this but has since stalled due to lack of resources.

Other Representation from the Chief Executive's Department

The Mayoral Secretary/Senior Administrator requested that as part of the Select Committee, consideration be given as to whether there should be a policy on the allocation of civic gifts. The existing situation involved individual departments buying civic gifts without any policy or guidance and from their own budget.

The Select Committee was asked to consider whether a centralised approach should be adopted to civic gifts and/or a policy drawn up on what was acceptable to use.

Publicity, Branding and Signage

This was an area that was rapidly developing as the Select Committee continued their review. The general opinion was that Wigan didn't need to be rebranded as such. However it did need to ensure consistency across the council in terms of signage, publications, letters and communication. Research by the Select Committee indicated that a signage audit of the 160 Council buildings, excluding schools, was necessary. This was because there was a high level of inconsistency across the borough on how buildings were signed.

The Select Committee also felt that there was poor signage across the borough for highlighting areas of interest. This included, for example, Borsdane Wood. The question was asked "do residents know what is available to them on their doorstep?" The lack of signage when entering the Borough was also identified as an area for improvement, so a comparison exercise was carried out with St Helens Council. At St Helens they have gateway signs with interchangeable areas to highlight matters of interest. It was felt that a similar scheme could be introduced in Wigan and so two

gateway points were identified to trial signage of a similar style to St Helens. This work area is currently being progressed by the officer group on reputation management.

The Select Committee agreed that there was limited uniformity in terms of the Council's vehicle fleet. It was argued that poor signage on the fleet was a lost publicity opportunity and didn't strengthen the "One Council – One Identity" initiative.

There was a discussion on whether residents recognise council employees: do they know what an employees role is on the street or are they seen as just a person in a suit? It was felt that this was an area that required considerable research to determine who should be identifiable as Wigan Council employees, how they should be identified and when.

Members Support

Elected Members of the Select Committee agreed that they had a part to play in improving the reputation of Wigan Council as they were seen as community champions and ambassadors of the Council. It was agreed that Members recognise this role and incorporate it into their work

The Select Committee felt that because the overall role of a councillor was to improve the borough for its residents that appropriate and sufficient guidance and administrative support should be available. The Select Committee found that there was no existing guidance for elected members on promoting Wigan Council and improving its reputation. Therefore they agreed that this was a topic area that should be investigated further.

Employees of Wigan Council

The importance of employees throughout Wigan Council can be best described by the Man on the Moon story:

In the late 1960s, as the space race was becoming very competitive, President Kennedy was promoting the message “We’re going to put a man on the moon”. To assist in this campaign a visit to NASA Headquarters was arranged for the President.

Security was very tight, and the managers at NASA HQ were keen for the place to look pristine and the visit to run smoothly where a number of dignitaries, astronauts and scientists had been lined up to meet the President.

President Kennedy, surrounded by security men was ushered down a series of corridors, but they took a wrong turn. They ended up going down a corridor and opening a door behind which they found a cleaner.

“What are you doing here?” challenged the security man.

“Why I’m helping put a man on the moon” the cleaner responded.

The Man on the Moon story recognises that there’s room for everybody, and everybody plays a part within the organisation.

It demonstrates that it might not always be obvious, and there may be a few steps between what one employee does compared to another. However it confirms that it is important for every employee to see where they fit in to the vision, purpose and values of the Council.

Wigan Council already has its success stories, for example Dave the Street Cleaner who has been willing and able to provide an essential daily service for the council over the last forty years without a single sick day.

The Select Committee found that the council is trying to encourage all employees to become ambassadors of the council and to create a consistency in the approach and communication of all employees in selling the council. This includes the employee survey, which assists in identifying current levels of motivation amongst employees, and promotional information - for example through removing individual department based magazines in favour of a Council wide magazine published five times a year.

Other Organisations

The Select Committee initially considered this area in depth, and looked at marketing campaigns by other local authorities within the Greater Manchester area. One example was the magenta branding for Salford Council. An analysis was carried out to determine whether or not Wigan should consider a similar approach. However the conclusion was that this type of branding was to improve the external reputation of the council, as opposed to how its residents view it. Therefore it was felt that this line of investigation wasn't relevant to this review.

These views were reinforced by the Leader of the Council, who advised that Wigan Council was highly regarded as a local authority in wider government circles. He felt that his role was to maintain and improve the external reputation of the Council.

7.0 Conclusions

The Select Committee investigated Wigan Council's reputation management in depth and concluded that the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of the residents that live within the Borough was an important topic area. From this the Select Committee considered that further research, funding and action should be taken in a number of key areas highlighted in the recommendations.

The Select Committee considered that the reputation of Wigan Council in terms of how other public bodies perceive it, was already at a good standard. It therefore concluded that no study would be conducted into this area and therefore drew no recommendations from this. It concluded that it was the resident's perception of Wigan Council that had opportunity for improvement as opposed to individual services.

The Select Committee also felt that merely analysing the results from the MORI survey was insufficient to provide a thorough understanding of how residents felt if the council wanted to improve its reputation. The Select Committee concluded that other surveys, for example the Citizens Panel should also be consulted for a more complete picture.

Due to the importance of this area of work, the conclusion from this Select Committee was that reputation management should be a growth area across the council. Therefore the findings of the Select Committee report should be taken to the officer group looking at reputation management for further investigation and action.

8.0 Recommendations

Having considered all findings from the interviews and research, the Select Committee put forward the following recommendations. Whilst the Select Committee accept that some of the recommendations may already be undertaken by the Council, they felt it important to highlight the activities in terms of reputation management in this area.

Each of the areas highlighted has been considered within an action plan (Appendix 1) which provides an overview of what work is currently being undertaken and what, if any, progress has been made in that area. The action plan also provides details of the timescales allocated to each recommendation and identifies the lead person or group. The Action Plan Reference number correlates with the number in the action plan. Where more than one recommendation correlates with an action plan number, they have each been given the same number.

- The Select Committee felt there should be **positive promotion** of the Council services that were highlighted as the worst performing in terms of the MORI survey. The Select Committee agreed that all positive stories about Council activities were beneficial, however they decided that a targeted approach for the three services identified in the MORI survey of crime, street cleansing and activities for teenagers should be carried out with a view to improving the Council's reputation. **Action Plan Reference 1**
- The Select Committee agreed that there should be a **focus of resources on improving the reputation of Wigan Council for its residents**, as opposed to the reputation of Wigan Council in relation to external bodies. It was agreed that the Council is already perceived as good through external validation such as Comprehensive Performance Assessment. **Action Plan reference 6**
- It was agreed that whilst the results of the MORI survey were important, they were not the only means of assessing residents' opinion of the Council. The Select Committee recommend that a **benchmarking exercise** should be

carried out to identify how the MORI survey results compared with other Councils within the Greater Manchester area. It also recommends that the results of other surveys, for example the Citizen's Panel and/or Greater Manchester Crime Survey be included when considering the reputation of Wigan Council by its residents. **Action Plan Reference 2**

- It was agreed by the Select Committee that the IT and media facilities available to members of the public should be analysed to determine their effectiveness in terms of improving Wigan Council's reputation. The Select Committee felt that the **website** was a valuable and rapidly developing area that required sufficient resources to ensure it met the needs of the public. It is recommended that a study should be carried out to determine how user friendly the website is for Wigan Council's residents and employees, and how it can be improved to meet the needs of the public. **Action Plan Reference 3**
- The review considered how communication impacted on the reputation of Wigan Council, and felt that this area was significant and had scope for improvement. It was confirmed that **Borough Life** was a well received communication source for the Council. The Select Committee recommend that expansion of this publication be considered. **Action Plan Reference 4**
- The Select Committee also believed that easy access to **council press releases** would assist councillors in remaining up to date. A trial period is recommended where all councillors receive press releases on a weekly basis with headings that identify what/where the press release relates to. **Action Plan Reference 5**
- The Select Committee recommend that a **funding review** be provided for improving Wigan Council's reputation within the borough be carried out. It was agreed that this should be carried out at a corporate level to ensure a strategic, council wide approach is undertaken. **Action Plan Reference 6**

- The Select Committee accepted that work was currently being carried out on the corporate style of Wigan Council known as the **style guide**. The recommendation was for this work to continue. The Select Committee also recommended that those carrying out this work should also consider branding of clothing for Wigan Council Officers, for example members of the Neighbourhood Teams. **Action Plan Reference 7**
- The Select Committee believed that **civic gifts** provided by the Council should come from a single distribution point. They recommend that there should be one person responsible for the purchasing and allocation of gifts. To enable this to be incorporated Council wide it was agreed that the information should be cascaded down from senior management. **Action Plan Reference 8**
- It was agreed that **public consultation** was important for maintaining Wigan Council's reputation. One example the Select Committee considered was the Community Improvement Project currently being carried out across Hag Fold, Higher Fold, Platt Bridge and Ince. The Select Committee supported this project and recommend that successful aspects of the project be adopted and rolled out on a Borough wide scale. **Action Plan Reference 9**
- It was recommended that Wigan Council identify the current level of **staff satisfaction** through the employee survey. The Select Committee agreed that if staff were motivated and had the right equipment and skills to carry out their job, then it was more likely that they would be ambassadors for the council. They would then be more open to promoting a positive image of Wigan Council in its entirety. **Action Plan Reference 10**
- The Select Committee recommend that more emphasis should be placed on line managers to promote the notion that employees work for Wigan Council rather than one area of work emphasising the **One Council** agenda. This would reduce rivalry between different work areas and increase employees ownership of issues that members of the public might raise. The Select

Committee recognises that work is currently being undertaken in this area to reduce 'silo thinking'. **Action Plan Reference 11**

- The Select Committee recommend that Elected Members separate their political views from the reputation of the Council. It was agreed that ultimately each Member wanted residents to receive quality services from Wigan Council, and that normal political differences should not lead to damage to the overall reputation of the council. To assist Elected Members with this, the Select Committee recommends that a **good practice guide for members** be created and distributed to Members. **Action Plan Reference 12**
- The Select Committee considered the amount of **support available for members**. It was recommended that additional clerical support should be provided to enable Members to act as more effective ambassadors of the council. **Action Plan Reference 12**
- One area the Select Committee considered was **improving the local environment** for residents. From this there were a number of recommendations:
 - highly visible well branded cleaning operation,
 - One phone number to report environmental problems,
 - Identify and deal with grot spots,
 - Fast removal time for fly tipping & abandoned cars,
 - Win a green flag for parks,
 - Education and enforcement.

The select Committee accepted that work was progressing in these areas, but felt it important to put them forward to highlight their importance in terms of improving Wigan Council's reputation. **Action Plan Reference 13**

- The Select Committee recommend that Children & Young People's Services include parents and the general public in their media target area. It was

agreed this would assist in tackling the negative press of children and young people hanging around streets and would highlight the number of **activities available for teenagers**. This was highlighted as the area most in need of improving in the MORI survey. **Action Plan Reference 14**

- Crime was identified as low in Wigan, but **fear of crime** was rated high in the MORI survey. The Select Committee recommend that publications in this area be studied to determine if there are potential areas for improving the reputation of the Council as a body. **Action Plan Reference 15**
- The Select Committee ask that the recommendations identified in the review be carried forward and considered by persons carrying out the draft **transport strategy**. **Action Plan Reference 16**
- A recommendation of using the Council's vehicle fleet to promote the services of the council was put forward. This **vehicle branding** was seen as a high profile publicity area due to the amount of time each vehicle is on the roads. **Action Plan Reference 7**

9.0 Select Committee Membership

Membership of the Select Committee consisted of:

Councillor F B Walker Chair

Councillor N D Ash

Councillor Mrs S Loudon

Councillor J Moodie

Councillor P Thompson

Councillor G Wilkes

Policy Officers Nicola Yates and Caroline Maffia

Co-opted member David Mather

The Select Committee met on 9 occasions and interviewed a range of parties as follows: -

Leader of the Council

Deputy Chief Executive

Director of Children and Young People Services

Director of Environmental Services

Assistant Director of Community Safety, Environmental Services Department

Head of Public Relations

Acknowledgement

The Select Committee would like to thank all those who attended the meetings as witnesses, together with those who provided information and other contributions to the review.

Appendix One – Reputation Management Action Plan

Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Review - Reputation Management Action Plan

Aim: To develop effective ways of improving the Council's reputation

No.	Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Progress on tasks (RAG)
1	Positive Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the reputation of services in relation to crime, street cleansing and positive activities for young people. 	Medium Term – 31 st March 2011	Building Stronger Communities Partnership	<p>These areas fall within the Building Stronger Communities Block of the new LAA along with measures to improve what residents think of council services.</p> <p>Targets have been set and consultation is underway about what delivery mechanisms will be required for delivery under this new partnership.</p>
2	Benchmarking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what surveys are available that can provide comparison on a sub regional, regional and family basis. 	Short Term – March 2009	DCE – Sue Johnson	<p>The Place Survey/Greater Manchester Crime Survey will provide a baseline for this benchmarking – however neither survey is yet operational.</p>
3	Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a survey to determine how user friendly the website is and what improvements need to be made. 	Short term – June 2009	Director of Business Support Services	<p>Steve Peddie has been contacted and a request placed that he carry this area forward</p>
4	Borough Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source funding for expansion of Borough Life 	March 2009	David Mather/Reputation Management Group	<p>Steve Peddie is currently pursuing potential funding sources</p>
5	Council Press Releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet/Committee report to suggest trial of providing a weekly 	December 2008	David Mather	<p>This can be progressed if the Overview and Scrutiny panel</p>

No.	Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Progress on tasks (RAG)
		summary of all council press releases to members			agree to it
6	Resources for Reputation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a corporate approach to reputation management to make best use of available resources. Identify further resources to improve the approach to reputation management. 	March 2009	Reputation Management Group/David Mather	Work has already been undertaken to unify the work across the council on reputation management. Further work required to identify and secure additional resources to meet the needs of the agenda.
7	Style Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a corporate approach to branding and communication style. 	March 2009	Reputation Management Group	Version 2 of the Corporate Style Guide is now available and deals with many issues including standards for over branding/logos etc. Some vehicle branding has been carried out but requires expansion across the council fleet
8	Civic Gifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single distribution point for purchasing and allocation of civic gifts. 	March 2009	Christine Charnock	Christine Charnock has been requested to identify a single point of contact
9	Public Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that successful aspects of community involvement projects are rolled out across the borough to enhance the reputation of the council. 	March 2009	Building Stronger Communities Partnership	A common approach to Neighbourhood Working and Community Engagement is being rolled out across the borough in order to deliver on the priorities with the LAA and to ensure that services are provided in line with community priorities.
10	Staff Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that staff are able to act as ambassadors for the council. 	Short term – staff satisfaction survey 2009	To be agreed	The recent staff satisfaction survey showed reductions in staff satisfaction with leadership and management of change. Working groups are currently

No.	Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Progress on tasks (RAG)
					being established to try to determine why the reduction occurred, and what can be done to improve satisfaction
11	One Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the notion that employees work for the Council as a whole rather than individual departments in order to reduce “silo working” and achieve better join up of service delivery 	Medium Term – March 2011	DCE	Work is on going in this area and some progress has been made to encourage a “one council” approach such as the development of “One Wigan”
12	Support for Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a reputation management good practice guide for members. To provide support to members to assist them in their role as ambassadors and community leaders. 	March 2009	Katherine Fairclough	The Democratic Service Review is already considering these issues amongst others.
13	Environmental Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop highly visible cleansing services Develop single point of contact for environmental problems Fast removal of fly tips and abandoned cars Green Flag for Parks Education and Enforcement. 	March 2011	Building Stronger Communities Partnership	These issues feature in the top 35 priorities of the BSCP block of the new LAA. Neighbourhood Services Division is implementing and ongoing programme of improvements to deal with these issues from an operational service delivery point of view.
14	Positive activities for Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted media approaches towards parents and the public to counteract negative press around problems with teenagers hanging around. 	March 2011	Building Stronger Communities Partnership	Positive activities for young people is a priority within the new LAA and the “Places to go, Things to Do Strategy” will deliver in this area.
15	Fear of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop approaches to how we improve the reputation on the 	March 2011	Building Stronger Communities	These issues feature in the top 35 priorities of the BSCP block

No.	Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Progress on tasks (RAG)
		Council in relation to crime and fear of crime.		Partnership	of the new LAA.
16	Transport Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create linkages between the Transport Strategy and Reputation Management 	March 2009`	Martin Kimber	Draft Transport Strategy in existence