

# EXECUTIVE NEWS

**Information bulletin from the Chief Executive's Department**

No. 40 July 2005

## Meet the new chief



OUR new chief executive, Joyce Redfearn, has thanked all councillors for the warm welcome she has received since joining Wigan last month.

She has enjoyed meeting members on their patches

and elsewhere, and says she already feels very positive about the borough, its councillors and staff.

Recently Joyce gave an interview to a local newspaper. The Public Relations team had its own reporter there, and here's the edited highlights of what she said.

### How's it gone so far?

**JR:** "I have been made to feel really welcome. Wigan is a fantastic place to come to and it is the people as well as the environment that makes this borough just wonderful. I have been made to feel at home at such a very early stage. People talk to me all the time about the council moving forward and there is a real energy about the place."

### What experience do you bring to the job?

**JR:** "I was assistant chief executive of Bolton for eight years. I have then been a chief executive for ten years. I went to Monmouthshire County Council as their chief executive to create a new authority, basically setting up a new council.

"This was really exciting and a very good experience. We had to put all the systems in place for a new and different local authority. We couldn't simply take some of the things that apply to a big organisation and use them because of the nature and geography of the place.

"I did that for about five and a half years and then became the chief executive of Gloucestershire County Council. In Gloucestershire I was working for a once good authority that had become a little bit complacent. So when I arrived it needed rescuing.

### What differences have you found between Wigan and Gloucestershire?

**JR:** "A place like Wigan, which is smaller than Gloucestershire, may be more effective at delivering services, appropriate for its local communities. Gloucestershire was nearly double the size of Wigan so we did have this advantage of scale but you felt more distant from the people who you served and there wasn't the same sense of community and pride.

### **What have been your first priorities?**

**JR:** "At present I am trying to meet as many people as possible. I am meeting local councillors and community representatives at the various township forum meetings. I am also meeting many of the council's officers and working with the council's senior management team."

### **And once you've done that?**

**JR:** "We are starting from a very strong base especially when it comes to working in partnership with other people."

"The areas I feel we need to be looking at include community safety and crime. Clearly a part of my role is to recognise that these issues matter to the public and we need to continue with the culture of improvement. We need to build on what already exists. Wigan is very good at looking at the things the community are concerned about."



*Transport - a priority issue*

"Another issue that we need to be looking at for the future is transport. We need to ensure we get good quality transport to help secure good quality jobs and inward investment for the borough."

"This is about improving infrastructure but also about thinking about the way we travel and the issue of sustainability. We need to bear in mind what we are leaving behind for future generations."

"Education and opportunities for young people are other important areas. There is

a good track record in schools but we now need to capitalise on this. We need to move forward because we want what's best for Wigan."



*Education is 'a key area'*

"We do not want to have a lot of empty places in schools because there is no point. It stops us putting the money into the kids who are in school. We are not a highly resourced authority so we have to make the most of what we have got."

### **Can you foresee any big changes yet?**

**JR:** "It is too early days for me to say all of the changes that need to take place to make sure Wigan continues to improve. I am very impressed by what is already here and what's been done. It is a great base to start thinking about the changes that have to be made."

"I will expect different things because my background and experiences are different. But the staff within the authority are really friendly and they are going out of their way to give me the knowledge about Wigan I currently do not have."

"By meeting as many people as I possibly can I am hoping they will get to know my personality rather than being some remote figure. I am learning a lot about the place and the people through these meetings."

### **What first impressions have you had of Wigan?**

**JR:** "What I have noticed about Wigan so far is that not just the staff of the local authority but the community want the

borough to move forward. Everyone seems willing to share and help. People in Wigan are really proud of where they come from and rightly so.

"Over the weeks ahead I would like to visit every part of the borough through the townships. I think this is important because different communities have different priorities, a different sense of identity and different views about what is important.

"It is important for the authority to take everyone's views into account and not just assume that what works in one corner of the borough will work everywhere."

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### MORI shows how to improve the image of local government

A MAJOR study of what drives the image and reputation of local government is to be published this week.

The Local Government Association commissioned MORI to investigate what action councils could take to improve their local reputation.

At the core of their research is confirmation that many people know little or nothing about their local council and even less about local government as a whole.

The research suggests that if a council commits to doing certain things well, these will have a significant impact on its reputation. Some of these concern communications:

- effective media management;
- provide an a-z guide of council services;
- publish a regular council magazine/newspaper;

- branding: effective and consistent linkage of council brand to community services;
- good internal communications.



The other main factors relate to street-scene and 'liveability' issues such as street cleaning, fly-tipping and environmental protection.

*A-Zs are the 'single most important publication that any council can produce' says MORI.*

In Wigan we are already tackling many of the communications issues raised by the report. We are looking at producing our A-Z more frequently with wider distribution.

Our *Borough Life* magazine has received high ratings from residents in the latest survey; and we are working on a new 'style guide' aimed at bringing greater consistency to use of the council logo and its visual identity.

The LGA report suggests that nationally, there is cross-party support for improving the reputation of local government. Helping residents to a better understanding of what their council does has the support of councillors, whatever their political persuasion.

The report is being launched at the LGA conference this week.  
(David Mather, 2164)

## POLICY & PERFORMANCE

### What the people say

70% of local residents say restricting the numbers of visitors to hospitals can aid the fight against so-called 'superbugs' like MRSA.

That's according to the findings from Wigan Council's latest Citizens Panel — a survey of around 900 people drawn from a cross section of the community.

Most people think allowing only two or three visitors at the bedside at any one time will help Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Trust reduce the number of hospital infections.

Respondents are divided, however, on the issue of hospital visiting times. 40% say that visiting times should be set for all wards for just one or two hours twice a day, but another 40% say visiting times should be as flexible as possible.

Also under the spotlight in the latest survey were waste and recycling, and arts and culture.



**Recycling pays off:** Ruth Halpin of the council's green team hands Susan Anderton her recycling prize while nephews Jamie and Marcus show off their new clubs

An amazing 96% of residents recycle at least some of their waste, with more than half prepared to do so even if it takes extra effort. Many people take advantage of the council's kerbside collection services, but also recycle rubbish at the borough's many recycling points and at council tips.

Four out of five residents are happy with Wigan Council's tips, saying that they are convenient, easy to use and that staff are helpful.

Panel manager Tracy Bennett says:

"The citizens' panel is a vital source of information for us and the latest results are already being used to inform and improve local services, and develop policy."

(Tracy Bennett, 2155)

## Performance figures now on the web

THE Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) results for 2004-05 and targets for 2006-2008 have now been published on our website.

You can find them by clicking What's New, or typing in the following URL:  
<http://boston/pub/performance/2005/index.htm>

So far we've published just the basic numerical information. However, graphs and comments on performance together with comparisons against other metropolitan councils will be published on the web by the end of July.

Overall performance shows 62% of the BVPIs have improved on the previous year.

## A harder test

The local government press has carried many stories in recent weeks about revisions to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from 2005 onwards that were published in early June.

There's a clue in the title – 'CPA: the harder test' - and it is obvious that it will be much harder for even currently excellent councils to achieve high scores in the future.

The chief officers' management team are working on understanding how the new rules will affect us and we will report back formally into Performance Panel and Cabinet with more information in future bulletins.

(Dave O'Connor, 2071)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Grundy's grand designs

Wigan & Leigh College student Dianna Grundy unveiled her design for the forthcoming 'Cleaner & Greener Leigh' campaign at a special ceremony at Leigh Town Hall.



Dianna presents her new logo to the mayor

College students were invited to come up with ideas by Leigh's Township Forum, who will be announcing the campaign and an annual award scheme later in the year.

Students were asked to capture the spirit of the 'Cleaner & Greener Leigh' campaign and Dianna's was chosen from a high standard of entries.

Andrew Sharrock, Township Manager, says:

"We were very impressed with the high quality of logos submitted and

if we ever need a logo for anything else we will certainly be asking Wigan & Leigh College and their students if they can help.

"We want to encourage community groups, schools and businesses to become more involved and proactive in caring for and improving the local environment, to make Leigh a better place to live, work, play and shop in."

### Plan to be launched



OUR revised Community Plan is about to be launched and rolled out across the borough.

The plan is seen by the government as one of the key

documents for local communities.

In practice the Community Plan tends to deal with big boroughwide issues, and many of the issues that are of more direct interest to local neighbourhoods are included within the Township Action Plans

The latest edition of *Borough Life* includes an 8 page summary. If you'd like copies of the Community Plan, or more information about the work of Wigan Borough Partnership, please contact Simon Dale, Community Engagement Team ext 6171.

### Action on township plans

FOLLOWING the Township Review process at the end of May, agencies and departments are now working on timescales and suggesting outcomes for the commitments made by the Operations Group and Board.

These will then be shared with forum members, who will have the opportunity to discuss any areas of action that they feel should be amended.

For further information, contact: Sian Jay ext 6151

## Grant aid review

LOOK out soon for the review of grant aid programmes for 2005 /06.

As in previous years we will be reporting on the performance of the local grant aid schemes (such as the Community Chest).

The review will show:

- How many grants paid out from each grant programme
- Example of projects and activities
- Numbers of groups and volunteers active in the borough

For more information on this work please contact Anne Roberts ext 6165

## Community Legal Services Partnership



The Community Legal Services Partnership supports the work of advice services in the borough, and is the means by which we work with the Legal Services Commission – helping them to spend their money in Wigan.

The Partnership has a new chair – Cllr Rona Winkworth – and is about to update its strategic plan by looking more carefully at needs across the borough.

More information from Anne Roberts ext 6165 or Richard Helmn ext 6167

## Community buildings study

Over the next few months the community engagement team will be working in

townships to update our records of community buildings. This work is being carried out in partnership with Douglas Valley and the community networks.

The information is obviously useful at a local level, but we also think it will be helpful to inform future plans for the borough. So far we have done some pilot work in Tyldesley, and are currently developing objectives around what we want to achieve in the long term.

For more information please contact: Richard Helmn ext 6167.

## Cohesion forum report



The Cohesion Forum meets twice a year. The report for the latest Forum held earlier this spring has now been produced. It's a good account of the day when the celebrated poet Lemn Sissay (*pictured right*), who grew up in our borough, visited Wigan Town Hall.

If you'd like a copy of the report, more details of the work of the Cohesion Forum or future meetings, please contact: Richard Helmn ext 6167.

## Swinley cohesion study published

Last year the Cohesion Forum commissioned research to help us get a better picture of how people in the borough feel about race issues. The researchers looked closely at one area of the borough – the old Swinley ward – and their report has now been published (it was discussed at the Cohesion Forum).

It has some things to say about race, but a lot more to say about how much people feel part of their community. Members who would like a copy of the report

(printed or via email) should contact Richard on 6167.

## PERSONNEL

### We're investing in our people



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Members will be aware of the Investors in People (IIP) standard, which is about the development of our employees to improve the council's performance.

We began the process of IIP accreditation in 1995 when it was agreed that each department would build the necessary steps into their work plans. **Every** department has now achieved the accreditation.

Achieving the required standards as an employer has resulted in:

- An induction process for new employees.
- Ongoing training and development linked to an appraisal system.
- Involvement of employees in the service planning process.
- Training and development links to service plans.
- An established communications network.

Now the council is going one step further and seeking 'corporate' accreditation.

We have enlisted the help of a team of 24 internal review volunteers to help us to achieve this. They are made up of representatives from eight departments. Their job is to be our 'eyes and ears' to make sure we carry on doing the right things when training and developing our employees.

The corporate assessment takes place in September this year and an independent assessor will speak to a sample of staff to ask questions about their job, how their job fits into what we are trying to achieve

as a council, and what learning opportunities they have.

The assessor will also need to interview a **sample of elected members** who will be asked about their induction (new members), their training and their knowledge of the council's Vision, Purpose and Values.

From the beginning of August 2005 IIP information will be available on the council's intranet.

#### Contact Numbers

Linda Jackson – Head of Personnel  
ext. 2132

Sharon Adams – Training and  
Development Manager ext. 2309

- Further information about the Investors in People standard can be found on their Web site at [www.IIPUK.co.uk](http://www.IIPUK.co.uk)

### The job's a good 'un!

Development with the Jobs and Careers section of the Council website has recently taken a significant leap forward, with the introduction of electronic application forms across a broader number of departments.

Through our internal and external websites, prospective applicants can now access all information about job opportunities and vacancies and return them electronically if they wish.

The Recruitment Agency have recently attached electronic application forms and guidance notes to the job adverts on the internet and intranet to supplement the job descriptions and person specifications that were already on for the following departments.

Community Protection  
Chief Executives  
Engineering Services  
Finance & IT  
Legal & Property Services  
Planning & Regeneration

Social Services (Adult Services) already have a similar facility and imminent extension to Education (Children's Services) jobs will complete availability for our main departments.

Recruitment manager Steve Gow says: "This development is long overdue and everyone will benefit from the change - jobseekers, recruiters, personnel, managers and the council as a whole.

"Everyone wins – choice for customers and greater efficiency for us.

"Almost immediately we've started to receive electronic applications and will be tracking cost savings as activity increases. This development also ensures that we meet the initial e-government requirements and gives us a platform for further development."

**If you would like to discuss further or require a demonstration please contact Steve Gow, Recruitment Manager on Ext 2144 or [s.gow@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:s.gow@wiganmbc.gov.uk)**

## Health and safety for councillors

The Institution of Occupational Safety & Health (IOSH) will have a training course for elected members available soon.

The course was developed by four safety managers from Greater Manchester - Stockport, Oldham, Trafford and Wigan.

Central safety advisor Brian Holt has a modified version of the course that he can present to Wigan's members if required.

The course details the responsibilities of elected members and how they can influence health and safety for both council employees and the public.

The course covers:

- Reasons for promoting health and safety (H & S)
- The government's revitalising programme for H & S

- Role of elected members in H & S management
- Value of H & S training
- Performance indicators for H & S
- Role of the Council's safety professionals
- Principles of continuous improvement in H & S performance
- Financial, legal, ethical and moral reasons for managing H & S

The course takes two and a half hours and can be run either during the day or in the evening. Central Safety would require at least 10 elected members to run a course

**Councillors who are interested should contact Brian directly.**

(Brian Holt, 2696)

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

### Inquiry date set

The local inquiry into revised parliamentary constituency boundaries in Greater Manchester has now been set for Monday 31 October to Thursday 17 November.



The Electoral Commission has received 358 representations about their proposals, which include placing Atherton (*pictured above*) in Bolton West constituency.

Any representations from the council will be heard on Wednesday 9 November. Wigan is supporting the plan, which will be considered by Nicholas Elliott QC.

(Brian Hayes, 2171)