

EXECUTIVE NEWS

Information bulletin from the Chief Executive's Department

No. 41 September 2005

Challenges ahead...



**"The Chief Executive's Department provides a range of services that enable the council to meet its democratic responsibilities, that contribute to the development of its citizens and the borough, and that support the delivery of those services."
(Departmental mission statement)**

THIS month we make no apologies for focusing exclusively on the department's service plan for the coming year.

This document includes individual plans for all the department's sections, and shows how they contribute towards the overall council vision for the borough.

It will be of particular interest to councillors given the close working relationship that many of the department's sections have with elected members.

The full version of the plan is available on the web at:

<http://boston/cexec/servplan0506.pdf>

Our vision for Wigan as a borough: **Building the future together – a place where people matter and you can afford to live the life you want.**

All of our strategies, plans and performance management are aimed at delivering that vision.

The big issues facing the department

According to head of department, Assistant Chief Executive Adrian Hardy, the big issues facing the department in 2005/2006 are:

- Preparing for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment due in 2006.
- Making sure equality and diversity is at the centre of all our work.
- Risk management - understanding and assessing the risk in all our work.
- Delivering improved customer access to council services.
- Leading the job evaluation scheme.
- Developing a council-wide approach to workforce planning.
- Supporting the Greater Manchester authorities in their regional role.
- Delivering effective democratic processes through both the committee services and the township programme.



Introducing the plan, Adrian says:
“The past year has seen substantial changes take place within the department, the inclusion of Corporate Personnel Services, the bringing into a

single office location of the Policy and

Performance Improvement Team, further embedding of the Registrar’s service within the local authority and the successful conclusion of the all-postal ballot for the European and local council elections.

“We have successfully adapted to change in recent years, with the continuing commitment of staff and members we will continue to do so into the future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and the councillors who work with us for their support and co-operation in delivering the work of the department.”

The service plan has been considered recently by the Performance Panel, who endorsed its contents.

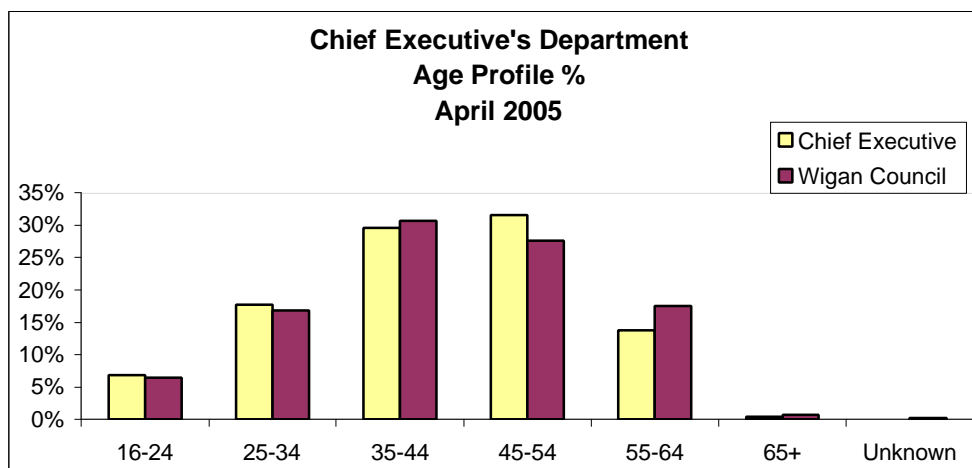
The pages that follow are simply a small selection, highlighting just a few aspects of what is a complex, 115 page document.

It drives everything we do and for members who are interested in the strategic direction of the authority it is – if not exactly bedtime reading – an important pointer to the future.

Any member wanting more information can contact Adrian Hardy on 2130.

Who we are, what we do

- The chart below shows the age profile of the Chief Executive's Department's employees in comparison to that of the Council as a whole. 14% of the Chief Executive's Department are due to retire within the next 10 years. This factor will influence our staff development and workforce planning policies.



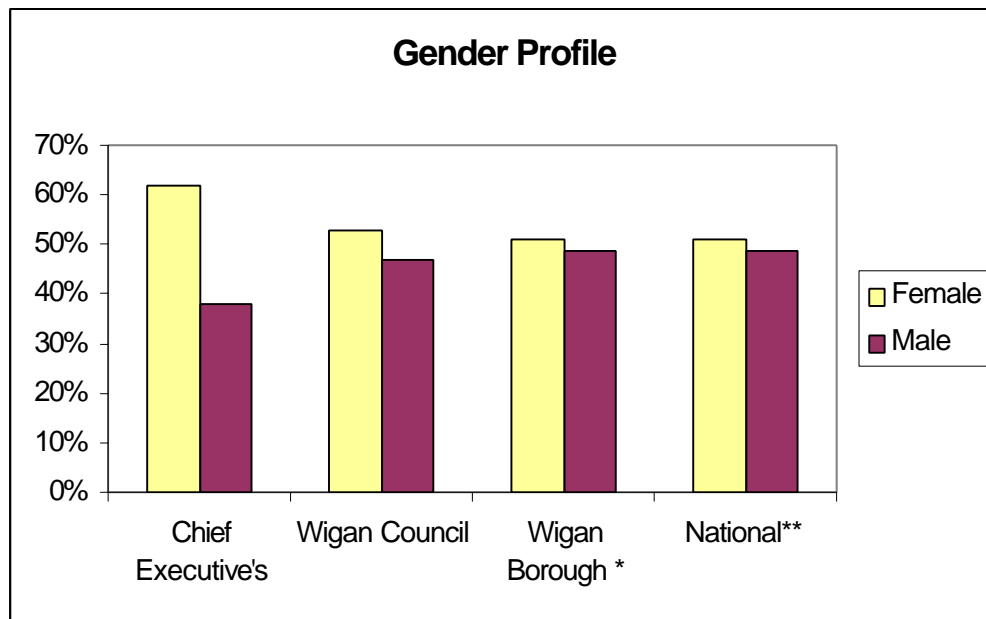
- As one of the major employers in the local area the authority recognises the need and benefits in having a representative workforce. The department has produced recent data to support the Council in making continued improvements in this area.

	Chief Executive's	% of Wigan Council
Total employees	203	3%
Full time equivalent (f.t.e.)	183	4%

	Chief Executive's	Wigan Council
Full Time	84%	53%
Part Time	16%	47%
Permanent	86%	82%
Temporary	14%	18%
Female	62%	72%
Male	38%	28%
Disabled	0%	1%
Ethnic minority	2%	1%
Ethnicity not given	13%	30%

The department includes 9 separate sections: AGMA, Central Services, Corporate Personnel, Policy and Performance Improvement, Community Engagement, Democratic Services, Print Services, Public Relations and Registrars.

- The majority of employees of the council are women. Women disproportionately have greater family life responsibilities; it is important that present and future policy development considers and ensures the issues of flexible working, time-off for childcare and caring responsibilities.



CPA - the harder test

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment process is changing this year and will become much more rigorous. We started to prepare for the changes in 2004 through a full self-assessment of how the council is managed. We identified 5 major priorities to improve the way we worked:

1. Continuing to improve performance management across the council through our 'golden thread' project that shows how everything fits together. This is recognised by the government as one of the most ambitious projects of its kind in the public sector and is led by Policy & Performance Improvement Team.
2. Introducing core management standards across the council – supported by Policy & Performance Improvement Team
3. Implementing the Wigan Manager project – a range of employee 'competencies' and support to help people achieve them. This is led by Corporate Personnel.
4. Improving the way we prioritise change – supported by the Policy & Performance Improvement Team
5. Managing customer relationships – led by the Assistant Chief Executive and supported by Policy & Performance Improvement

The Audit Commission has published full details of the new process. We are now carrying out a 'gap-analysis' this year to see how well we perform against new CPA criteria (called 'Key Lines of Enquiry') and prioritise actions to improve council management and services still further.

Serving our customers

Wigan Council is committed to involving local people in planning and decision-making. The Council tries to meet expectations within available resources and has adopted a number of methods of consulting with local people to identify their key concerns.

This strategy builds on discussions held with elected members, council officers and other stakeholders and has been particularly influenced by feedback from the annual Partnership Convention.

Here in the Chief Executive's Department we use a variety of different methods to find out what our customers think of our services. As we lead on Community Engagement we also need to understand residents' views about the Borough and their priorities for the future; our work in Townships helps us to do this.

Some examples of things we have done in the past year.

- Surveys – in the Registrars service to get customer feedback on the service provided and how it might be improved
- The Citizens panel – to find out residents' views on how the Council communicates, attitudes to Borough Life magazine etc.
- Consultation documents - to find out if the priorities are right in the new version of the Community Plan
- One to one interviews – to get customer feedback on services provided in the PPI team

Whatever approach we take we are committed to using the views of our customers and residents of the Borough to improve the services we provide and to make sure that corporate policy and strategy properly reflects people's views.

What does it all cost?

<i>Section</i>	<i>2004/05 Outturn</i>	<i>2005/06 Approved budget</i>
AGMA	<i>Funded by the 10 Greater Manchester Councils</i>	
<i>Central & support services</i>	£1,280,036	£1,250,618
<i>Community Engagement</i>	£265,774	£269,451
<i>Customer Service</i>	£113,916	£119,860
<i>Democratic Services</i>	£273,330	£319,459
<i>Elections</i>	£271,573	£278,776
<i>Graduates</i>	£182,289	-£27
<i>Personnel</i>	£296,645	£1,543,739
<i>Policy and Performance</i>	£963,189	£891,234
<i>Print</i>	-£63,220	-£60,692
<i>Public Relations</i>	£219,781	£221,145
<i>Registrars</i>	£25,672	£71,597
<i>Total</i>	£4,828,985	£4,905,160

The department is very much aware that a great deal of its costs are recharged to other departments in the Council. For this reason costs are controlled very closely, since any overspend we incur can only be recouped by taking money off the services provided by other departments.

The health of the department

	Chief Executive's	Wigan Council
% Short Term Sickness	1.8%	2.1%
% Long Term Sickness	1.9%	3.7%
% Total Sickness	3.7%	5.8%
% Council Sickness	2.7%	
% of Council Total Time	4.3%	

The Chief Executive's Department's sickness absence is lower than the Council as a whole, which indicates that the department does not have a serious sickness absence issue. However this does not give cause for complacency and managers will continue to closely monitor absence, conduct return to work interviews with all staff and use the sickness capability procedure.

Equality and diversity

A new Equality and Diversity Officer, Andrew McCorkle, has been employed to support the continued improvement within this vital area. An important aspect of Andrew's work over the next year will be to review and assess the Council's current position in relation to the wider equalities agenda and will include some analysis of the following areas; Age, Class, Disability, Ethnicity, Gender, Religion, and Sexuality.

This assessment will influence future strategic planning and will ensure the Council continually improves. It is a major part of the new CPA. Credibility in promoting diversity and equality issues is a good way of attracting and retaining the most qualified and talented employees who are best able to deliver the services to those communities that the Council services.

Supporting councillors



The Chief Executive's department undertakes a great deal of work with councillors to train them in the necessary skills, to give them day to day support in their work with constituents, to keep them informed of key issues emerging within the council and from outside

which will have major implications for their work.

The department is also working with the North West Employers Organisation towards gaining the North West Charter for Member Development.

The recent changes in governance arrangements for local authorities envisage councillors playing a central role in the leadership of communities and townships. We've put arrangements in place to support Elected Members to develop skills that they consider necessary for the effective discharge of their democratic function.

A councillor development strategy is in place along with a review process that enables Elected Members to discuss and agree training and development needs with either a Cabinet Member or Brian Leigh, the

Resource and Development Manager within the Chief Executive's department. This process enables Elected Members to access training opportunities across a broad spectrum of subjects to assist them in the role as community leaders.

We hope that the Elected Member Development Strategy will shortly be considered for accreditation by the Northwest Employers Organisation. Award of the Charter is in many respects similar to the Investor in People accreditation process for staff development programmes.

Buildings



The Council is looking to improve its building stock to meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. This is proving difficult in some of the Council's older buildings, although access requirements are being met in our new premises. The Council has a small improvements fund that has been used over many years to undertake building improvement work – this will continue to be available.

The Council is presently trying to find ways helping to maintain buildings for the future by working with our partners to review facilities available for community use and which will be of benefit across the Borough.

When this work has been completed it is intended to have a common strategy to maintain existing buildings, the groups that meet in them and the encouragement of new

Another element of the agreed strategy has seen the creation of a cross-party Councillor Services Group that meets on a regular basis. The group operates to support and advance Elected Member development on non-party political lines.

ideas for service delivery using a range of non-council premises.

In the coming year upgrading of the foyer at Wigan Town Hall will be a priority for the department.

In the swim

But as members will have recently read, Wigan is on track to get a state of the art new library and swimming pool as part of an ambitious £64 million plan to revitalise the civic heart of the town and create a unique public service 'hub'.

The overall project is being described as a Joint Service Centre, and while the new pool and library are the centrepiece, the plans go well beyond this, heralding a new civic heart for the town centre.

The aim is to link all public services within a complex of buildings connected by bridges. According to the council's submission: "It will result in the conversion of the traditional administrative centre in Wigan into a vibrant accessible hub for the majority of local public services that will become the natural focus of the Wigan community."

There will be four 'zones' - for information and learning, community safety, democracy and healthy living.

The swimming pool, along with a smaller children's pool and a hydrotherapy pool, will be at the heart of the Healthy Living Zone, while the new library will lie at the heart of the Information Zone as the first port of call for all community advice and information about public services.

The future starts here.....

This final chart shows how it all fits together – the celebrated ‘golden thread’ that links the overall council vision with the individual work of the department and its teams.

