

EXECUTIVE NEWS

Information bulletin from the Chief Executive's Department

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From excellent to outstanding

Chief Executive Joyce Redfearn has written to all employees setting out her initial thoughts on how the council can improve further. Here's what she has to say.



DURING my first five months with Wigan I have been getting to know the council, the borough and the people. Most importantly, I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you personally. What commitment and determination you all have. Not only are you doing your job well, you are also improving the service given to our customers and making our community a better place in which to work, live and play.

What I want to do now is to tell you with the help of members and colleagues we can go from being an 'excellent' council to an 'outstanding' one. This will not be an easy journey. Changes in government requirements, limited resources, and increasing customer demand will make it a challenge. But I believe we can

succeed and I want to explain very briefly the areas I consider important and some changes I want to put in place.

The three big areas:-

► **Joining Up Services**

Work is underway to bring together services for children and young people. Adult services are also being developed with closer links between health and social care. We now need to look at our other front line services and think about the ways we join up services that are meaningful to local communities. We also need to consider ways in which central support services are provided to facilitate and improve our front line delivery.

I propose to undertake a review of our community protection, engineering, and planning/regeneration services and to examine how we can join up services within local communities. The review will commence in November and be concluded by January 2006. Details of what the review means and how it will be conducted will be shared shortly.

Further into the new year I also propose to undertake a review of support service arrangements to ensure our structures and processes are right for a leading edge council.

► **Customer Focus**

Customer needs and access to services are already an area of importance in Wigan. We now need to take these forward a step and consider more personalised services for individuals, and the way in which we engage with communities as a whole. Community cohesion and the equality and diversity agendas also need our focused attention to ensure inclusion of the needs of all within our service design and delivery.

I intend to re-energise our customer focus with the appointment of a chief officer 'customer champion' to work with our Customer Access Group. We will make changes to improve our customer service in the short term, and look to more radical changes for the future. News of our successful bid for funding a new 'state of the art' Joint Service Centre in Wigan will aid our quest, and more information will again be provided on this soon.

► **Efficiency**

All councils will need to continue their efforts to become more efficient and prove they provide good value for money. Wigan is no exception, and whilst the authority has already received good assessments for its use of resources, the pressure for more efficient ways of working continue. This is particularly the case in the so called 'back office' or support services and in the way the council purchases its goods and services.

I also propose that a new team of senior officers will be set up (mainly drawn from deputy chief officers) which will take forward various corporate issues, including the use of resources and performance and the review of support services I mentioned above. This group will be entitled the Corporate Delivery Team and will be chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive Frank Costello.

► **Other Changes**

Because the council needs to work in partnership with other agencies and organisations, and work in a more strategic way, the form and nature of Chief Officers' Management Team is being changed. There will now be two teams formed at the top level:

The Strategic Partnership Team - composed of chief officers from the council, Wigan and Leigh Housing, Wigan Leisure and Cultural Trust, health agencies, police and fire. This team will meet on an eight week cycle and link with the Local Strategic Partnership to develop and deliver the Community Plan.

The Strategic Management Team - composed of chief officers of the council only. This team will meet fortnightly (except when the Strategic Partnership Team meets), and concern itself with forward planning, council wide issues and servicing of the cabinet and council.

Together with the Corporate Delivery Team, these three interlinked groups will provide the new top level management framework for the Council. This new format will start on 8th November 2005.

Conclusion

I will shortly be drawing up – with a lot of help – the big Issues Paper delayed from the summer so that these themes can be integrated into our full improvement agenda for next year. Your continued hard work and commitment is appreciated and I will continue to be in touch – which means you too can e-mail back or send messages to me if you wish.

Joyce Redfearn, x2001

Cohesion two years on

It's two years since people in the borough first came together as the Community Cohesion Forum.

When it started out, tackling the issues around ethnicity and racism was new to most of its members, and the Cohesion Forum was a new focus for this work in the borough. So now it's the right time to ask the questions.

- What's been achieved?
- What's been learned?
- Where should this experience take us now?

The 14th November will be a workshop session, with a priority around tackling issues concerning ethnicity and racism.

Richard Helmn, social inclusion officer said: "We aim to share the good things that have happened and set our agenda for the next two years, so if you have an interest and an involvement in this work, please come along to help us get it right."

To book places please contact: Nicola Robertson 01942 776171.
n.robertson@wiganmbc.gov.uk

Why voters fail to register



WHY don't people register to vote? The Electoral Commission has published a major new report into a subject that is exercising all political parties.

It's based on research by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and involves a comparison between the results of the 2001 national Census compared to the Register of Electors, and public opinion research to identify the reasons behind non-registration.

The main findings include:

- Non-registration among the eligible household population in England and lies between 8% and 9%. This compares with 7–9% in 1991. Some 3.5 million people across England and Wales were eligible to be on the register at their main residence but were missing from it in 2000.

(In Wigan, 92% of households responded to the canvass for the current Register. This was a drop on the previous year's response rate of 96% but the number of electors on the Register rose slightly over the previous year).

- Non-registration was higher in metropolitan areas, particularly inner London.
- Young people were less likely to be registered, as were those who lived away from home. Among all age groups, men were less likely to be registered than women.
- People from some minority ethnic groups had a relatively high likelihood of non-registration, but rates among Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and black Caribbean people were similar to those for white people.
- Mobility was a key factor. Non-registration declines with length of time at the address in question: it was 35% among those resident for two to three months and 2% for those resident for 10 or more years.

- Non-registration was highest among private renters, the unemployed, those without qualifications and those in non-permanent employment.
- The majority, 52%, of non-registrants in 2000 came from just three groups:
 - ❖ those living with parents;
 - ❖ those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date; and
 - ❖ those renting from a private landlord.
- While some non-registration is unintentional, some is quite deliberate and MORI found that among some non-registrants there was 'a conscious decision not to register, for ideological reasons... they simply wish to play no part in [politics].'
- It is difficult to assess the impact of rolling registration (the ability to change entries on the Register throughout the year between the annual canvasses). Most of the eight case study authorities took the view that it had not had a significant impact on registration rates, but had increased the accuracy of the register.

Copies of the report are available from the Elections Office.

(Brian Hayes, 2171)

Rallying round

NOT a lot of people know this...but Leigh councillor John O'Brien was a committed rally driver in his younger days, before the responsibilities of family life took over.

Now Leigh South member John is dusting off his kit and revving up for a place in the three and a half day, 1400 mile Lombard 'Revival' Rally from Oxford to Llandudno next month.

John's son Ross, 27 will be his co-driver/navigator, and there's a very personal reason why they are taking part.

The aim is to raise money for the Macmillan nurses who specialise in caring for people with cancer and their families.

John's wife Hazel has been battling breast cancer and the family see this as a way of supporting an organisation that does so much for patients and their families.

Says John: "The nurses help patients make informed decisions about their treatment, and guide them through the maze of different services. They also help people to cope with problems such as the symptoms associated with treatment and disease."



Peak practice: John and co-driver Ross during a practice rally in the Peak District

Hazel will be supporting John and Ross from the car that pulls the trailer. As she joked: "I don't let John go anywhere without me in tow!"

John has had a Peugeot 106 Rallye rebuilt from the bare body shell, and he and Ross will have entry number 32 in the event.

The event, from November 24-27, will take in all the famous rally forests of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Forest of Dean and Wales but also includes such famous stages as Wollaton Park in Nottingham and Chatsworth House in Derbyshire.

Teen Views On Life In Wigan

TEENAGER Kira Harman isn't afraid to speak her mind when it comes to what she wants for the future of Wigan.

And she was able to tell the council's Chief Executive Joyce Redfearn all about it when the two went head-to-head at a special meeting.

The 17-year-old from Goose Green received a special invite to Ms Redfearn's office after winning first prize in a competition aimed at encouraging children and young people to tell the council what they think about life in Wigan.



Kira pictured with Joyce Redfearn and Gerald Meehan

St John Rigby A-level student Kira was one of hundreds of young people who filled in a questionnaire in the borough's youth newspaper The Linc. The consultation exercise will contribute to the borough's Children and Young People's Plan.

Kira won £200 worth of shopping vouchers for her troubles and also got the opportunity to meet and chat with the chief. The pair spoke about Kira's education and how she plans to go on to study law at university and eventually train to be a solicitor.

They also swapped views on life in Wigan. Ms Redfearn said: "As a relative

newcomer to Wigan myself I am still learning about the borough so it is great that young people like Kira are willing to come forward and share their views.

"As a council it is important we not only listen to people but act on their views

While prize-winning points of view pundit Kira said: "A lot of people think that teenagers and children don't have opinions about such things or that we don't care but that's just not true. It's important that young people know what is going on and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives to help them plan for the future."

In brief

The revised Community Plan has now gone live on the council's website. You can find it at <http://boston/pub/commpplan/>

A completely new version of the council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints leaflet has been designed by the PR section. It is currently being printed and will be available to all members shortly.

Whatever happens in the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) results, to be announced in December, Wigan will no longer be 'excellent'. That's because the existing categories are being scrapped in favour of a star rating system from 0 to 4 star. The hope is that Wigan will be a 4 star council.

Borough Life, the council's residents' magazine, has been shortlisted for Council Publication of the Year in the 2005 Good Communication Awards. The results will be announced on November 7th.

A new 'style guide' has been prepared by a cross-departmental group of officers involved in communication. It gives guidance on the use of the council's visual

image and logo. The aim is to ensure greater consistency across the authority so that the council 'brand' is clearer and its key role in service provision is more explicit.

The North West Employers winter training prospectus has several training courses of interest to members. Subjects include press and media relations, charring meetings, work-life balance and effective overview and scrutiny. Any councillor interested should contact Brian Leigh on ext 3072.

The assessor responsible for Wigan's bid for corporate Investor in People bid has recommended that Wigan should be successful. His recommendation now has to go before the liP assessment board in a couple of weeks time. Several councillors were among the 270 people interviewed, so thanks are due to them for taking part.

Members of the citizen's panel are to be asked later this month for their views on the council's budget for 2006/2007. The 1200-strong panel will be asked to consider which areas of council spending are most important to them, and if there are elements of spending that should have less priority.

The council has received the following email from the Greater Manchester Health Protection Agency in connection with fears of an outbreak of bird flu.

"There have been numerous calls from members of the public who are concerned when they find a dead bird. If members of the public ring in to report dead birds you can refer them to the government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) helpline on 08459 335577."