



# EXECUTIVE NEWS

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

*No. 45 April 2006*

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## Testing times ahead

How Wigan is gearing up for crucial inspections

As council members know, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (or CPA) is the way the government measures the performance of local authorities. This year Wigan will have a full **corporate assessment**, which means:

- We have to submit a 'self-assessment' of how we're performing.
- We also have to submit an assessment of our children and young people's services. This is known as a Joint Area Review (JAR).
- We have a two week inspection in the borough by both CPA and JAR inspectors.

This edition of the bulletin explains more about what will happen.....

### **The self-assessment**

A self-assessment is one element of the wider CPA framework. It measures how well a council is working to deliver improved services for local people.

It relies on what the Audit Commission calls "key lines of enquiry" to gather evidence for the assessment. These measure how well a council understands its local communities; how this shapes its ambitions and priorities; its capacity to deliver these; and what the council is achieving.

From this assessment, we can identify our strengths and areas for improvement and submit this to the Audit Commission as part of the overall corporate assessment, resulting in a final score of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest).

### **Cutting through the JARgon**

As part of the corporate assessment there will be something called a Joint Area Review (JAR). This will look at services provided for children and young people. The scores from both of these assessments will form part of the overall CPA rating, resulting in the final rating of the council of 0 to 4 stars.

Similar to the council's self assessment, the JAR will:

- Review and inspect children and young people's services.

- Cover **all** publicly funded services for children and young people in Wigan, including health, youth justice and the community and voluntary services.
- Assess how services are **working together** to make life better for children and young people aged between 0 and 19.
- Review the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and have good future prospects.

The review will also link to the council’s children and young people’s plan (CYPP) by demonstrating:

- How the priorities for the CYPP were identified, including how young people were involved, and;
- How effectively agencies are working together to meet the priorities

## The inspectors are calling

These are the key elements of the inspection process.

Council’s CPA Self Assessment	Joint Area Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder survey – a survey of our main partners that takes place prior to work on site.</li> <li>• A series of workshop and focus groups – the inspectors will want to have discussions with key groups of employees and residents. This will be part of the on-site fieldwork in September.</li> <li>• On-site inspection – five inspectors will be in the borough for two weeks in September, using this time to form a judgement on our corporate assessment.</li> </ul> <p><b>As part of both the corporate assessment and the joint area review (see opposite) it’s likely the inspectors will want to talk to councillors of all parties to get their views on how the council is performing.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case tracking – inspectors review 100 cases of children and young people to judge how their needs have been met in terms of assessment, referral and inter-agency working. 10 complex cases are then selected for an in-depth analysis.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood study – inspectors will work for 3 days in a deprived area, involving discussions with children and young people, parents and carers, as well as front-line staff and volunteers. They will also visit a number of places providing services for children and young people.</li> <li>• “Tell us” survey – 400 school pupils will be asked to complete an online survey of their views on what it’s like to live in Wigan. The schools will be selected at random by OFSTED. The results of the survey will help inform the inquiries to be pursued by the inspectors</li> <li>• On site inspection – up to ten inspectors will be on site for two weeks in September using this time to form a judgement on our JAR assessment.</li> </ul>

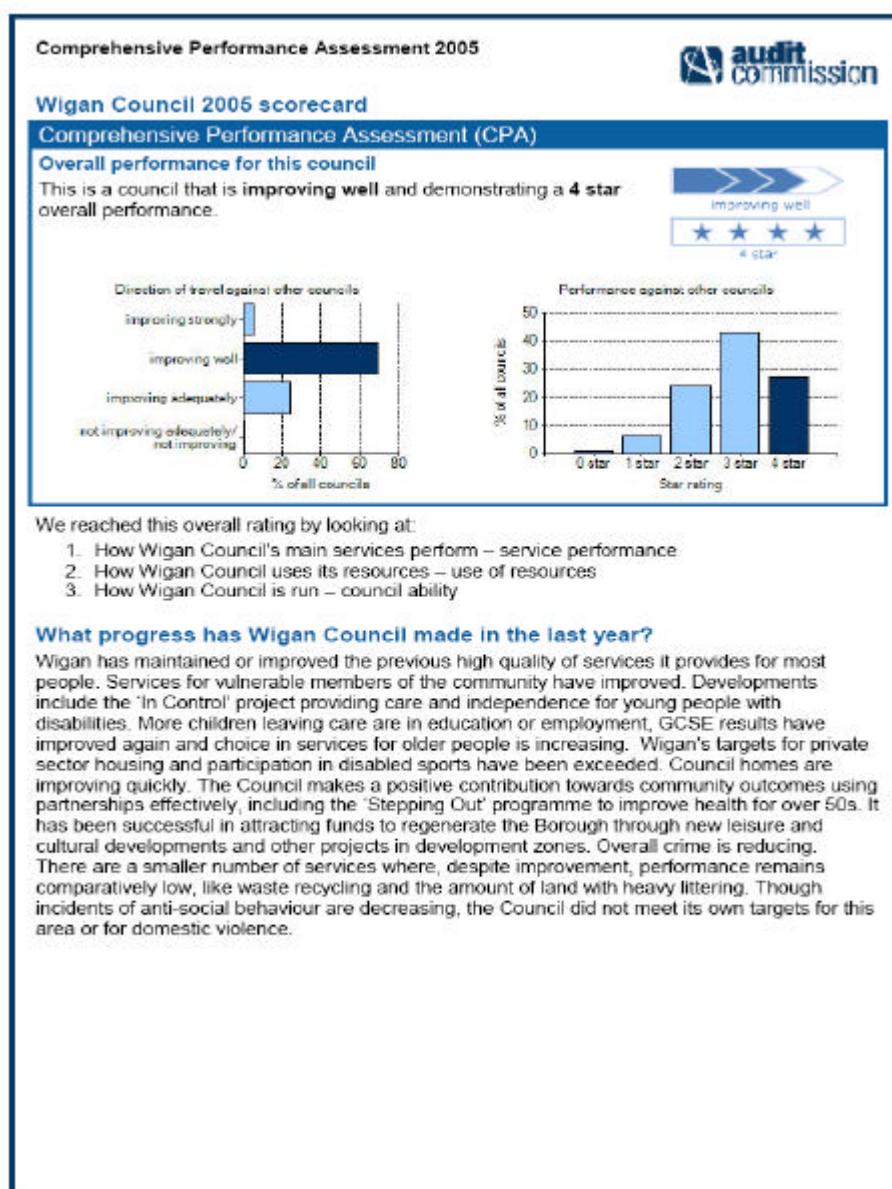
The good news is that preparation for both of these, the corporate assessment and the joint area review, is well underway and we have begun to plan to help us manage the next few months more effectively.

## The final countdown (Corporate Assessment and Joint Area Review)

STAGE	DATE
Joint set up meeting	15 May 2006
Stakeholder Survey	19 May 2006
Self assessment returned (CA and JAR)	23 June 2006
Analysis week (JAR)	10-14 July 2006
On site fieldwork	4-15 September 2006
Draft reports sent to council/partners for comments by...	18 October 2006
Comments received on draft reports by....	6 November 2006
Final CA report to council	22 November 2006
Feedback meeting	24 November 2006
Latest dates for council to request review of CA report	6 December 2006
Publication of results	11 December 2006

## The way we are

For the fourth year running Wigan was rated in the top group of all councils. In 2005, we were rated as a 4 star council that is improving well. This is our current 'scorecard':



## Knowing who we are

The Audit Commission has admitted that this new form of CPA will be a harder test for councils. It is vital that we all “know” our organisations and how we shape up against the self-assessment. We have been working on this for some months now and understand the weaker areas where we might be at risk.

We will also know later in May which of our performance indicators is a risk for us. We will be reflecting back on those areas for improvement that were identified in the last formal inspections (corporate assessment, Ofsted and joint review of children’s services), to be sure that all have been actioned – it’s the first place inspectors will look.

The final self assessments must be submitted by the end of June. This will go to cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup> June.

## Keeping you informed

This is the first of **three** briefing papers that we intend to produce for members. It’s intended to raise awareness about CPA and the process we will follow.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> briefing will be produced in July and will reflect on success and performance. It will identify those strengths and weaknesses arising from the self-assessment. **This will also form part of the members’ seminar which has been organised for July.**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> briefing will be used to communicate the results and will be produced at the end of December.



Most of all we need to remember that local people have told us what is important to them right now, and we have developed our plans to deal with the issues they have highlighted. We also understand their long-term hopes and expectations for themselves, their families and their neighbourhoods. We need to ensure we are all working together to achieve our vision for local people:

**Building the future together - a place where people matter and you can afford to live the life you want.**

If you require any further information or would like this briefing in any other format, please contact:

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## Council's new policy chief

Katherine Fairclough (*pictured below*) is the council's new head of policy and performance improvement.

She succeeds David O'Connor, who is leaving Wigan for Lincolnshire where he has been appointed the county council's assistant chief executive.



Katherine will lead the team dedicated to improving council performance and advising on customer relations, communication, equality and diversity, research and policy co-ordination.

A native Wiganer and graduate of Leeds University, Katherine started her career in advice work with the Citizens Advice Bureau in 1989, then worked in various welfare rights and benefit advice roles at St Helens Council until 1992, when she moved to Wigan.

She started as welfare rights advisor in the social services department, before being promoted to service manager in

1995. Katherine moved to the Chief Executive's department in January 2001 as the council's corporate policy officer for consultation. She set up the council's citizens' panel and improved its approach to consultation with residents.

Since then Katherine has taken on various policy roles around corporate communications, scrutiny of local health services and a wide range of improvement projects. She was promoted to Policy and Performance Improvement team manager in 2003 and deputy head of PPI in 2005.

Katherine has taken a leading role in developing Wigan's Local Area Agreement and customer relationship strategy. She is currently working on developing a business case for a £64 million Joint Service Centre for Wigan, to be built through a PFI bid.

## Strikes are off

Proposed strike action set for April 27th, May 3rd and May 4th over changes to local government pensions has now been suspended.

Unions and employers have agreed a framework for detailed negotiations on the issue.

The Local Government Association said: "We will be working hard in meaningful discussions with the unions to come up with a long term reform of the Local Government Pension Scheme that is fair to employees, continues to make local government an attractive place to work in and is affordable for council taxpayers."

Unison's statement said: "The joint union/LGA statement is a positive step

and that is why we have decided to suspend our planned strike action. It provides a framework to enable negotiations to take place on the future of the local government pension scheme and on protection arrangements.”

Both sides are committed to:

- Discussing protection for current members of the pension scheme if the so-called 85 rule were to be abolished.
- Making 50% of the savings available to pay for protections.
- Agreeing that changes in future should be made by agreement where possible.
- Negotiating a fair new-look scheme for the future.

## **Leanne's off to Oz**

Leanne Greene, committee clerk to a whole raft of committees and panels for the past seven years, is packing up her notepads and disappearing down under.

Leanne, 35, is leaving her hometown of St Helens and emigrating to Perth in Western Australia with husband Kev and daughter Jess next month.

Over the years Leanne has looked after the highways and works, public protection, lifelong learning and economic resources committees ... and more recently, the environment and regeneration panels.

She's also been responsible for compiling the members' information bulletin since its very first edition six years ago.

All councillors who have worked with Leanne over the years will want to wish her, Kev and Jess all the best for a brilliant future. She'll be much missed in democratic services and throughout the department.