

Annual efficiency statement - backward look

Local authority Wirral Council
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Overarching key actions taken

Strategy

The Council's overall strategy is directly influenced by the citizens of the borough and driven to improving customer service and customer access. This is being achieved through linking with partner agencies in the provision of One Stop Shops and Information points, the further enhancement of the Corporate Call Centre and the development of web-based channels of service delivery. Efficiency is being further enhanced through the IT systems replacement programme.

The Council is committed towards improving the identified priority areas as well as keeping Council Tax at affordable levels. The use of available resources is being maximised and targeted towards key front-line services through the programme of Service Re-engineering that was introduced in 2004.

Great importance is placed upon partnership working. With the Local Strategic Partnership setting the overall vision opportunities are taken within specific service areas. The Local Area Agreement building upon the Local Public Service Agreement whilst the on-going relationship with Wirral Partnership Homes following the transfer of the Council housing stock in 2005 assists in securing investment both for housing and regeneration.

Actions taken during 2006/07

In delivering the targets the Council progressed the initiatives already commenced and achieved further efficiency gains through the following actions :-

The Wirral Council Tax for 2006/07 represented a rise of under 4.5%, below the 5% maximum set by Government but higher than the 4% in 2005/06. The Council in responding to the demand pressures within care services for both adults and children allocated additional resources of £9.3 million to these services and to meeting the waste agenda invested an additional £1.3 million.

The programme of Service Re-engineering continued. The £3.7 million target proved challenging as it required a number of actions that were 'one-off' rather than of a permanent nature and included the maximisation of grant opportunities. Therefore, actions of this nature are reflected in the figures.

Cash limiting was applied to budgets with no inflationary rises for prices and contracts, excluding Adult and Childrens Services care. The demands for care continue to grow from an increasingly elderly population, from increasing numbers with complex needs and increasing numbers of looked after children.

A series of cost reduction options were agreed as part of the 2006/07 budget. Not all of these qualified under the 'efficiency' heading and the sums included here reflect that. Included are the consequences of capital investment into both Adult and Childrens Services that realise future revenue savings through a reduction in Out-of-Borough placements. The agreed energy efficiency investment programme whilst producing efficiencies also benefited the Council by off-setting the continued increases in energy prices. The Central Procurement Support Unit continued to support the delivery of efficiencies through purchasing that was enhanced with the implementation of the IT programme.

Information received from both Merseytravel and the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority regarding the apportionments to Wirral are incorporated within the relevant sections for transport and environmental services although the precise final details are awaited.

The Council continues to secure benefits from the release of assets for disposal through asset management and also through pro-active risk and insurance claims management. The latter has produced significant savings in previous years with further reductions realised in 2006/07 in releasing both sums set-aside for potential claims as well as for annual premium costs. Attendance levels increased during 2006/07 with these 'non-cashable' efficiencies included for this year, having reduced in 2005/06, and continue to show improvements over the last 3 years.

Title	Ongoing gains sustained from 2005/06 (£)		Further gains achieved in 2006/07 (£)		...of which expected to be ongoing (£)		Cumulative gains as at end of 2006/07 (£)		Related links
	Total gains	...of which cashable(£)	Total gains	...of which cashable (£)	Total gains	...of which cashable (£)	Total gains	...of which cashable (£)	
Adult social services	2,982,632	2,982,632	1,546,000	1,546,000	1,546,000	1,546,000	4,528,632	4,528,632	
<p>2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck</p> <p>Quality crosscheck 2005/06 2006/07 Quality crosscheck met?</p> <p>Time from referral to completed assessment (PAF D55) 71.8% 78.9% Yes</p> <p>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain: The level of inflation added in respect of supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £360,000. The transfer of home care provision into in-house capacity and the delegated reviews of care packages in the independent sector realised £350,000 in home care services. The better use of human resources and changes in use of bank staff / agency staff realised efficiency gains of £200,000. The contract with the Wirral Primary Care Trust was renegotiated and reduced costs by £156,000. Older peoples services care packages reviewed and procurement costs reduced by £150,000. A review of asset management and in particular administrative buildings saved £105,000. Efficiencies through improved administration and working practices and operating infrastructure achieved £100,000. Reviews of care packages for 30 people and improvements to the Adult Learning Services provision £75,000. Maintaining the initiative for individuals to move to direct payments saw 100 people transferring producing £50,000 savings.</p> <p>Quality crosscheck notes: Additional to the improvements in the percentage of cases having acceptable waiting times for assessments the changes in home care provision resulted in intensive care as a % of intensive home and residential care increasing from 29% to 30%.</p>									
Children's services	916,279	916,279	840,000	150,000	840,000	150,000	1,756,279	1,066,279	

2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Adoptions from care (PAF C23) (Star rating)

3.9%

5.8%

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

Work continues on addressing the numbers, and placements, of looked after children. Additional resources were allocated in the budget to assist in the process that includes residential, foster care and adoption services. During the year the pressures saw increasing numbers brought into care. The numbers in independent residential care reduced by 17 and procurement costs by £690,000.

The level of inflation added in respect of supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £150,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

The adoptions from care increased during 2006/07 and have now more than doubled over the last two years. This being supported by maintaining the stability of placements of children looked after and the longer term stability of children looked after as well as attaining 100% for reviews of child protection cases (PAF C20).

Culture and sport

693,587

693,587

685,000

685,000

685,000

685,000

1,378,587

1,378,587

2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Visits to museums per 1,000 population

366

447

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The full year realisation of efficiencies from 2005/06 in the areas of workforce reviews and energy efficiency measures (replacement of ageing boilers, energy management units, etc) realised £380,000.

Further reviews of the staffing levels and the re-engineering of service delivery took place in the grounds maintenance workshop, attendants and swimming staff at sports centres and libraries and in total saved £160,000.

The continuation of the energy efficiency programme produced £100,000 of efficiencies.

The level of inflation added in respect of supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £45,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

2006/07 saw the visits to museums and art galleries increase again. Cultural services provision on Wirral continues to be highly regarded by local residents. 2006 also saw the return of The British Open Golf championship to Wirral that was acclaimed as a major success - this event whilst under cultural clearly required strong links to local transport (highways and non-highways).

Environmental services

1,582,356	1,522,918	1,324,000	1,104,000	1,324,000	1,104,000	2,906,356	2,626,918	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Percentage sum of household waste arisings that have been sent by the authority for recycling (BV82a)

7.87%

9.10%

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority achieved efficiencies through waste minimisation measures that have produced contractual and landfill tax savings. They are expected to realise efficiencies in the region of £460,000 (final details awaited).

The level of inflation added in respect of supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £419,000.

Wirral agreed a new combined Streetscene Services contract covering waste collection, recycling and street cleaning that commenced from August 2006. Whilst this included increased investment to help meet the requirements of the waste agenda the next stage saw 'non-cashable' procurement savings achieved for the bins required of £220,000.

The NewHeartlands Pathfinder Housing Market Renewal Initiative involves Wirral working with Liverpool and Sefton Councils to regenerate areas through addressing housing issues. A restructuring of the staffing support for both this Initiative and other regeneration projects on the Wirral produced savings of £150,000.

As part of the on-going review of assets management the opportunity to release buildings produced efficiencies of £75,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

Streetscene and waste services have been a Council priority with 2006/07 seeing the launch of a number of interim measures prior to the letting of the new contract. This resulted in increases in recycling from 7.87% to 9.10% and in composting from 4.51% to 5.05% being the part-year effect of these initiatives.

Local transport (highways)

398,424	398,424	99,000	99,000	99,000	99,000	497,424	497,424	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The Council transferred its entire housing stock in 2005 to Wirral Partnership Homes and Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association and the Council continues to work with the two organisations to deliver the Decent Homes Standard. The partnership arrangement with Wirral Partnership Homes seeks to deliver further improvements to the area through the operation of a unique Community Fund built up from the residual Council Housing Revenue Account balances and the benefits from a VAT-shelter arrangement.

Quality crosscheck notes:

None.

LA social housing (other)

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

0

2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The Council transferred its entire housing stock in 2005 to Wirral Partnership Homes and Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association and the Council continues to work with the two organisations to deliver the Decent Homes Standard. The partnership arrangement with Wirral Partnership Homes seeks to deliver further improvements to the area through the operation of a unique Community Fund built up from the residual Council Housing Revenue Account balances and the benefits from a VAT-shelter arrangement.

Quality crosscheck notes:

None

Non-school educational services

1,346,417

1,346,417

445,000

445,000

445,000

445,000

1,791,417

1,791,417

2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Percentage achieving five or more GCSEs (BV39)

88.8%

92.3%

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The level of inflation added in respect of general supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £445,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

The improvement in the % of pupils in terms of GCSEs was supported in other areas including the % achieving level 4 at key stage 2 in maths (BV40) which increased from 76% to 77% and in English (BV41) that remained high at 81%.

Supporting people

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

Whilst the supporting people programme includes for the regular review of contracts no significant efficiency gains are claimed for 2006/07.

Quality crosscheck notes:

None.

Homelessness

3,074	3,074	0	0	0	0	3,074	3,074	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

Whilst this has not been a significant area for Wirral work continues with both the private and voluntary sectors to address the issues. No efficiency gains are claimed for 2006/07.

Quality crosscheck notes:

None.

Other cross-cutting efficiencies not covered above

Corporate services

6,175,985	6,175,985	1,376,000	1,376,000	1,376,000	1,376,000	7,551,985	7,551,985	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No deterioration in CPA `Use of Resources` score

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The success of the Risk Management initiatives, the robust approach to defending claims where there is no clear legal liability and the improved inspection regimes have increased repudiation rates. This was all recognised by the annual external assessment of potential liabilities when the potential total liability reduced as well as producing a revenue benefit in 2006/07 of £390,000. The level of inflation added in respect of general supplies and services, including central recharges, built into the budget a required efficiency gain of £324,000.

Asset management remains a focus of the authority with the reduction in assets continuing. During 2005/06 the capital receipts totalled £9 million and with the balance of interest gains, of £180,000, claimable in 2006/07. With receipts of £5 million for 2006/07 the part year claim for interest gains equates to £125,000 making a total reportable gain in the year of £315,000.

The further rationalisation in terms of the IT technical support saw the creation of a Corporate IT Unit from 2006/07. In the initial year the service re-engineering realised staffing savings of £100,000 and with savings from the procurement of IT contracts this was increased to £160,000.

The benefits offered by the new IT Systems enabled re-engineering to take place in departments as well as the central Financial Services Division with the latter saving £100,000.

Developments in technology, complemented by those to the Council Public Relations Unit and re-launched Printing Unit, helped deliver efficiencies of £87,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

Wirral received a score of 2 for the CPA Use of Resources in 2006 that was recognised as a 'solid 2' compared to the 2005 score. The annual Statement of accounts for 2005/06 was given an unqualified opinion by the external auditor.

Procurement - goods and services

535,429	391,957	492,000	420,000	492,000	420,000	1,027,429	811,957	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Corporate Procurement Strategy in place / reviewed in the last year

1

1

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The Corporate Procurement Support Unit, operational since November 2003, were involved in a number of contracts relating to the supply of goods and services to the Council. The benefits are across the Council but are included under procurement for reporting purposes and include stationery supplies with gains of £142,000, the schedule of rates for building repairs and other works (£118,000), Involvement in contract procurement for electricity contracts through e- auction (£100,000) and It routing (£60,000) The total gains identified being £420,000 of which £320,000 is cashable.

The collaborative approach to procurement and the use of other approaches realised 'non-cashable' efficiencies through time savings of £72,000.

The IT System includes e-procurement and the Unit is fully involved with the Centres for Procurement, Merseyside Collaborative Group and Wirral Public Services Group in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered from best practice and partnership working.

Quality crosscheck notes:

The implementation of the e-procurement element of the new Integrated Financial System became effective from April 2006 and this has enabled the Corporate procurement Unit to develop plans to focus on the areas highlighted above.

Procurement - construction

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

Wirral has made use of the Egan principles in the procurement of construction and building works for a number of years with most of this applied when the Council possessed its housing stock. At this time no efficiencies are being claimed under this area.

Quality crosscheck notes:

None.

Productive time

77,420	0	333,000	0	333,000	0	410,420	0	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Working days lost to sickness absence (BV12)

9.88

8.90

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

Initiatives continue to be undertaken to increase attendance and reduce absence. This includes the centralisation of Human Resources functions in 2004/05, better data capture, more effective management and the engagement of Occupational Health professionals. All supported with appropriate training and implementation of policies. Since 2003/04 the days lost through absence have reduced from 10.13 days per person to 9.8 days per person in 2006/07 although there was an increase during 2005/06. The gain reported takes account of the change and is a 'non-cashable' efficiency of £333,000.

Quality crosscheck notes:

Comments on the days lost (see above. Wirral Council also successfully achieved IIP accreditation during 2006/07 with this accreditation having previously been awarded to some, but not all, of the Council departments.

Transactions

858,647	858,647	420,000	420,000	420,000	420,000	1,278,647	1,278,647	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected (BV10)

96.55%

97.68%

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

The Customer Access Strategy seeks to make services more available to the people of Wirral. Through the Corporate Call Centre, One Stop Shops and Information Points the range of services is being enhanced. The face-to-face contact proving beneficial in the area of Housing and Council Tax Benefit that is supported by document workflow. This has been recognised as good practice nationally and has accelerated the speed and accuracy of processing claims to ensure claimants receive the benefits to which they are entitled. The procedures and increased throughput has achieved gains of £420,000.

Work continues to enhance the service with the implementation of an integrated IT System which, brought in towards the end of 2006/07, saw a slight dip in the Council Tax collection rate which has been restored in 2007/08.

Quality crosscheck notes:

The % of Business Rates collected increased to 97.68% in 2006/07 from 96.55% in 2005/06. However, the Council Tax collection % dropped to 96.3% from 97.3% essentially as a consequence of the implementation of the Integrated IT System.

Miscellaneous efficiencies

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
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2006/07 Primary quality crosscheck

Quality crosscheck

2005/06

2006/07

Quality crosscheck met?

No efficiency gains being reported in this sector

0

0

Yes

Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:

No efficiencies are being claimed under this heading.

Quality crosscheck notes:
None.

Total	16,976,828	16,696,498	8,577,000	7,262,000	8,577,000	7,262,000	25,553,828	23,958,498	
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