

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

### **NATIONAL INDICATOR (NI 179) – 2008/09 ACTUAL**

#### **Strategy**

Council strategy is directly influenced by the citizens of the Borough and driven to improving customer services and customer access. This is being achieved through working with partner agencies in the provision of services, the continuing enhancement of the One Stop Shops, Call Centre and the developing of web-based channels of service delivery. The progress made by the Council was recognised by the Audit Commission in their Access to Services Review 2008. The conclusion of a good service with promising prospects for improvement being the highest rating so far awarded.

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 re-engineering of services that was introduced in 2004. Great importance is placed upon partnership working. A new multi-partner Local Area Agreement commenced during 2008/09, which included a shared Vision of Place for Wirral. With the Local Strategic Partnership setting the overall vision opportunities are taken within specific service areas. This includes Adult Social Services and joint commissioning with the health sector and the relationship with Wirral Partnership Homes following the transfer of the Council housing stock in 2005. Again the Audit Commission recognised the progress being made as in January 2009 the Council increased from adequate performance to performing well in the annual Use of Resources assessment.

#### **Actions taken during 2008/09**

In meeting the Indicator target the Council expanded upon the actions taken in previous years and achieved further efficiencies through the following actions which have helped keep the Council Tax affordable and improve customer services.

The overall Wirral Council Tax for 2008/09 represented a rise of 3.66% (the Wirral Council element was 3.5%) being below the prevailing rate of inflation and below the 5% maximum set by the Government. This saw further sums allocated to the priority areas including £8.9 million to schools, £0.4 million to support matched funding investment in Wirral and the development of the new, Local Area Agreement, resources allocated to local communities as part of participatory budgeting through the Area forums and the You Decide initiative and money for a range of policy options tackling crime, environmental and social issues.

Inflationary increases of 2% for pay, prices and contracts were built into the 2008/09 estimates. The agreed pay award was in excess of this figure and departments contained this additional sum within the budget allocated. Similarly a number of services such as waste and social care saw increases beyond the inflation provision resulting in the need to deliver efficiencies to maintain existing services within the resources allocated. The demands for care continue to grow from an increasingly elderly population, from increasing numbers with complex needs and for looked after children. The latter area received a consequential increase in referrals following high profile issues in other parts of the country. Whilst additional resources were input into all of these areas working with external agencies, particularly in respect of adults, delivered efficiencies to maintain services.

A series of cost reduction options totaling £13.4m were agreed as part of the 2008/09 budget although not all of these qualified under the 'efficiency' heading and the sums included reflect that. Included are the consequences of capital investment into Care Services that realise future revenue savings through a reduction in Out-of-Borough placements, the energy efficiency investment programme which whilst producing efficiencies also benefited the Council by off-setting the continued increases in energy prices and more specific Invest-to-Save schemes within Cultural Services. The Procurement Unit continued to support the delivery of efficiencies through purchasing that was enhanced with the implementation of IT changes and joint working across both Merseyside and the North West region.

Information received from both Merseytravel and the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority regarding the apportionments to Wirral is incorporated although the 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 continued to produce significant savings in previous years with further reductions realised in 2008/09 in releasing both sums set-aside for potential claims as well as for annual premium costs.

Significant savings were made in the year from Treasury Management activities. Proactive management in this area of expertise resulted in savings from the virtual elimination of temporary borrowing costs. However whilst benefitting the Authority and Council Taxpayers many of the Treasury Management savings are not eligible for inclusion within the indicator. The Local Government Chronicle Awards 2008 saw the Council officer responsible receive the Investment Officer of the Year Award.

Department Area of expenditure	Value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains since the start of 2008/09 (£)	Further ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains achieved in 2009/10 (£)	Further ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains achieved in 2010/11 (£)	Cumulative ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains from 2008/09 to 2010/11 (£)	
Adult Social Services	2,420,600	-	-	2,420,600	
<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b>  The continuing changes in the provision of domiciliary care achieved a net savings of £700,000 from the expansion of the home assessment and reablement team (HART) and a further £500,000 from the take up of assistive technology care by 533 service users in the year. The more efficient use of support services produced a further £400,000 of efficiencies by the re-organisation of the finance and performance branch. By working with the private sector gains of £130,000 from renegotiated care contracts were achieved. Reassessments and use of supported living arrangements rather than residential care produced efficiencies of £250,000 which were complemented by a further £170,000 net saving through re-provision from an in-house residential home to providing the service via the private sector. The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £270,600.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b>  Key areas where the time taken from referral to completed assessment increasing from 76.4% in 2007/08 to 78% for 2008/09. People supported to live independently through Social Services (Adults) reached 2,842 against target of 2,186. Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carers service, or advice and information 25.46% versus target of 18.0%.</p>					
Children's and Young People	2,068,700	-	-	2,068,700	
<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b>  The re-provision of services through working with the private sector realized a transfer from in-house provision which realized efficiencies of £525,000. In terms of reviewing support the review of operational support and Family Support Teams released efficiencies of £190,000 and £173,000 respectively whilst the rationalisation of the planning and resources support service released a further £421,000. Reductions in admin support and in contracts support allowed efficiencies of £119,100 to be achieved. The reconfiguration of the behavioural review programme generated £200,000 of efficiencies,</p>					

	<p>Re-organising Youth offending services provided an additional £70,000 and a review of Social Welfare and play services commissioning provided savings of £123,000. The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £247,600.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> The progress made in transferring looked after children from the most expensive care through to lesser costing care continued. However, events elsewhere in the country in the latter part of the year resulted in an additional number of referrals such that the progress made was not sustained to the year-end.</p>			
<b>Regeneration (including Culture)</b>	284,700	-	-	284,700
	<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> A number of efficiencies within this area are not eligible under the criteria as they involve either reductions in service provision, increases in income or the use of grant income from other public bodies. Efficiencies were obtained by better use of IT (£28,700), a review of the finance function (£27,500) and the reorganization of supported housing (£14,300) The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £214,200.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> The year saw the refurbished Oval sports Centre and the new Floral Pavilion Theatre &amp; Conference Centre opened with the latter winning a Best practice award at the Northwest Regional Construction Awards in 2009.</p>			
<b>Technical Services</b>	1,105,000	-	-	1,105,000
	<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> The Environmental Streetscene Services contract which commenced in August 2006 continues to be further progressed through close working with the appointed contractor. A review of the waste contract and of contractual management released £186,600 whilst recycling rates continued to improve. The limited inflation awarded to the waste contract meant that efficiencies of £257,200 were generated to maintain the service level. Reviews of highways maintenance produced efficiencies of £358,000, whilst the ongoing rationalization of support services and administration processes through the use of IT contributed a further £80,000.</p>			

	<p>Reviews of traffic management, health and safety and building and control functions released efficiencies of £115,000. Extensions to streetscene contracts and energy conservation initiatives provided a further £35,000 of efficiencies. The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £73,200.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> The % of household waste sent for recycling increased from 20.8% in 2007/08 to 22.6% in 2008/09. In terms of highways the number of killed or seriously injured road casualties decreased from 171 in 2007/08 to 145 in 2008/09</p>			
<p><b>Corporate Services, Law, HR and Asset Management</b></p>	<p>392,500</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>392,500</p>
<p><b>Finance Department</b></p>	<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> Essentially around support a series of reviews were undertaken within Corporate Services to achieve efficiencies. These included the areas of strategic development staffing (£75,000), restructuring administration functions (£60,000), a similar exercise reviewing central services (£50,000). A restructuring the tourism and marketing and transformational change functions released £60,000 and £30,000 respectively whilst changes to the management and operation of legal and democratic services released a further £40,000. The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £77,500.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> The nature of these areas is essentially the provision of ‘back-office’ support to front-line services.</p> <p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> The continuing review of Housing and Council Tax functions and improvements in controls resulted in efficiencies of £600,000. The creation of the Corporate IT Unit was further developed through increased integration and this resulted in £100,000 of savings. As the IT investment of previous years is developed additional benefits are achieved and the benefit of integrated systems provided further cash releasing efficiencies of £380,000 through reduced staffing and contract costs. A further £200,000 was achieved through systems support and new technology savings and £80,000 from</p>			

	<p>reductions in call centre staffing.</p> <p>The content of the Corporate Procurement Strategy remains under annual review and the Procurement Unit continues to support departments in the delivery of efficiencies. This includes the use of e-auctions and the national solution operated by the Office of Government Commerce Buying Solutions.</p> <p>The level of pay inflation built into the budget for 2008/09 an efficiency gain of £190,400.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b>  Despite the economic downturn Council Tax collection continued to improve with the 2008/09 rate of 96.7% slightly above the 2007/08 rate of 96.6%. The Audit Commission review of Access to Services rated the Council as good with promising prospects for improvement whilst their annual assessment of Use of Resources saw an improvement to performing well from adequate performance.</p>			
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	746,300	-	-	746,300
	<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b>  Further improvements in the cash flow forecasting resulted in a permanent reduction in the resources allocated towards the need for temporary borrowing allowing efficiencies to be delivered and re-invested into other services. A total of £550,000 being made available. The proactive approach to insurance and claims management produced further efficiencies. The property insurance retendering produced like for like savings of £101,800. This was then reinvested to provide increased coverage of areas previously not catered for such as flood damage from burst pipes.</p> <p>The year saw an increased focus on the management of the asset base which will deliver substantial efficiencies in future years. During 2008/09 the sale of surplus assets generated capital receipts of £1.8 million. Equating this to the cash flow savings this amounts to £94,500.</p> <p><b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b>  The improvements in Treasury Management received external recognition by the Local Government Chronicle as Wirral received the investment Officer of the Year Award 2008.</p>			
<b>Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority</b>	0	-	-	0
	<p><b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b>  The efficiency information is awaited from Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority.</p>			

	<b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> None.			
<b>Merseyside Transport Authority</b>	872,900	-	-	872,900
	<b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> The provisional figures were received previously from Merseytravel and the supporting information is awaited.  <b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> None.			
<b>Brought Forward from SR04</b>	8,148,000	-	-	8,148,000
	<b>Key actions undertaken to achieve efficiency gain:</b> Under NI179 criteria any cash releasing efficiencies achieved as part of the previous efficiency regime (as part of SR2004 and reported through the Annual Efficiency Statement process to the Government) are allowed to be carried forward into the new regime (as part of CSR 2007).  <b>Quality crosscheck notes:</b> The Annual Efficiency Statement Backward Look 2007/08 included cumulative cashable efficiencies of £33,748,000 compared to the target of £25,600,000.			
<b>Total NI 179 Efficiency Gains</b>	<b>17,589,100</b>	-	-	<b>17,589,100</b>

**CERTIFIED AND APPROVED BY:-**

Councillor Steve Foulkes  
Leader

Stephen Maddox  
Chief Executive

Ian Coleman  
Director of Finance