



Wiltshire Council

A year of change – a year of achievement for a new cabinet

Entry for the Municipal Journal awards –
most effective political team of the year

A year of change – a year of achievement for a new cabinet

Wiltshire Council has made significant progress since it was formed 18 months ago. The merger of five councils into a new unitary council was upheld nationally as exemplary and a role model for managing change and making significant efficiencies – more than £14 million was saved in the first year.

Working locally formed the backbone to Wiltshire becoming a unitary council and this principle now permeates through the whole organisation. It shapes how we work and how we do things, from the vision set out in our business plan, our planning for the future, service redesign, and involving communities in decision making.

We think and act local – we turn ideas into outcomes and we are rebuilding public confidence and trust.

We all know that local government is facing a difficult and challenging time over the next few years and beyond. Whilst Wiltshire Council is still relatively new and has a new political team leading the organisation, it is in a strong position to deliver change and respond well to the challenges ahead and our cabinet recognises it must take on a new role...

Our vision

'To create stronger, more resilient communities' – is all about people and places, fostering a sense of community belonging and self-sufficiency where communities can solve problems – locally.

In Wiltshire a new relationship is forming between public services and communities. Our communities are becoming more self-reliant, reducing the resources needed and the dependency on public services as service providers.

We are making a significant break with the past. The era of us and other public agencies simply providing services alone and 'to' the public with no reference to communities is over. Our cabinet recognises that a new culture and different way of working is essential – with significantly less resource – now is the time to trust, empower and enable local communities to take control of their futures.

Quote

"The layout of the meetings was very friendly and welcoming"



We are building on the strong foundations – put in place in the transition to unitary. In our first year we delivered real outcomes;

- New state of the art modern working offices and a new customer access centre – in Salisbury
- A new library in Pewsey
- A refurbished leisure centre to utilise unused space for adults with learning difficulties and a youth facility in Chippenham
- In-sourced PFI offices in Chippenham – saving £350,000 per year – first local authority to in-source a PFI
- Built two academies
- Provided 472 affordable houses

Quote

“Fantastic that young people are involved”

We performed well

- Ofsted rated our Children’s Services as “Performing Well” in December 2010
- 74% of children are reaching Level 4 in English and Maths – 3% improvement on last year
- Awarded a ‘green flag’ by the Audit Commission for involving people in local decision making
- 2009/10 accounts approved and not qualified – first year of unitary
- Housing Benefit Audit Commission inspection found our service to be Fair with Promising Prospects for improvement – equal to best new unitary councils
- Housing Benefit payment and Council Tax collection performance – top quartile nationally
- ICT code of connection 4.1 achieved – equal best in the country
- 96% of repairs are completed on time on our housing stock in Salisbury.



We saved money

- The move to unitary has already saved £14 million and we have reduced the number of and managers by 220 – saving a further £8 million.
- £6 million saved through better procurement and purchasing this year
- Using a systems thinking approach to review our adult social care services has saved £1.7 million
- Being a unitary council has also allowed us to rationalise our assets and have fit for purpose buildings that save money. We are reducing from 95 office and administration buildings to four major hubs – saving £95 million over the next 10 years and reducing our carbon emissions by 40%
- Implementing a new business system (SAP) – achieved annual savings of £5 million – delivered one year early
- In-sourced ICT – saving £2.4 million
- Communications spending reduced by 40% over last 18 months, saving £1.4 million

Quote

“I found it really good that they listened to me”

We helped communities to help themselves – delivering Big Society – making it real

Wiltshire is gaining national recognition for its work with communities. Our cabinet members have driven this work and we have 18 area boards that meet in local communities – over 8,500 people have attended these meetings along with the police, fire and rescue, NHS, military, and housing associations, voluntary organisations and town and parish councils and our unitary members. Over £750,000 to support 250 community projects has been allocated – generating over £3 million of external funding and investment into our communities. Over 1,000 local issues have been resolved in communities by communities – quickly and effectively. Area boards are about decentralised control and local influence – involving the local community in decisions is becoming the way of working across Wiltshire’s public sector.



Communities are doing more for themselves. With some support from us and other partners, they are delivering positive outcomes. For example;

- Joining forces with the police and local communities across Wiltshire we have introduced community speed watch schemes. Speeding was raised as a real issue. Community volunteers are given training by the police and spend time monitoring traffic speeds using detection equipment. The information is passed to the police and used to identify speeding hot spots. The impact has seen drivers slow down.
- Promoting good health in communities – working with the NHS, health fairs have been held at all area boards – to raise awareness of health issues in local areas. Area boards are taking action to address the issues including obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual health matters and teenage pregnancy.
- Devolved £100,000 for youth projects via our area boards
- Delegated £500,000 for area boards to prioritise highways schemes in their local area
- Provided grants of just under £1 million to area boards for community projects including speed watch scheme, taxi marshals, skate parks, community radio, hydrotherapy pool, sports facilities and energy monitors.
- Implementing a new approach to helping people to live at home for longer – self direct support – offers people following an assessment personal budgets – 1,300 people have opted for this approach

We took action to combat economic recession

Claimant unemployment in Wiltshire has risen during the recession by 4,500 and the growth in unemployment is higher than the national average. Cabinet members wanted action to help those most affected. A Wiltshire Advice Line to provide benefits advice and affordable loans for vulnerable individuals without access to credit; the provision of employment opportunities for 495 unemployed young people through the Future Jobs Fund Programme – which generated £3.2m funding, won a national award and attracted ministerial interest, being cited as a “national exemplar”.

Future Jobs Fund employee's state;

“Having this job has improved my confidence and wellbeing greatly,”

“You’ve helped me to speak’.

“Now I have a job I’m getting on with my dad. For the first time in my life he invited me to go to the pub with him and we talk about work”

“I love my kid. He used to drive me mad when I was home all the time and now I can’t wait to get home to see him”.



We will invest money;

- £34 million into protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults – third more money
- £4.7 million into protecting and safeguarding vulnerable children
- £4 million into supporting the economy
- £23 million into waste and recycling
- £15 million into broadband
- £2 million into energy efficiency programmes
- £4.5 million into leisure
- £3.2 million into improving children’s attainment
- £3.2 million into our communities

We also plan to invest and take a radical approach to:

- delivering a wide range of dwellings to meet the growing needs of older people
- providing new and improved leisure centres
- developing service campus hubs in local communities in 5 pilot areas and,
- Exploring new ways to deliver services in these campus hubs by involving local communities , i.e.community trust models
- Reduce from 98 council offices to four major hubs.

Delivery of our plan is based on good leadership, strong management and making tough decisions.

We will make savings by;

- reducing our management costs by £8 million
- reducing the cost of purchasing goods and services by £36 million
- managing our assets better – to save £8 million
- transforming our services to save £47 million

Quote

“Some really informative presentations from officers”

