



WIGAN & LEIGH HOUSING

Better Homes, Brighter Futures

Business Plan 2008-2010



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



The professional body
for customer contact



Community
Legal Service



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Chair's Introduction

Reflecting on the changes within Wigan and Leigh Housing over the last couple of years it is clear that they have been substantial. We have simplified our structures and significantly increased the influence of tenants both on the Board and through other mechanisms such as Area Housing Forums. The Board's new Vision "Better Homes, Brighter Futures" focuses on what tenants see as important as well as the needs of the Borough and Wigan Council and government priorities. Much of the vision is now turning into reality. To help deliver *Better Neighbourhoods* we have aligned our boundaries with the Police and Council resulting in greater collaborative working on the "crime and grime" agenda.



**Geoff Roberts,
Chair of the Board**

Our Area Forums are established and have some delegated budgets to enable tenants to create "a sense of place". The Pathways programme is giving young people from deprived communities access to our high quality apprenticeship programme. On *Affordable Housing* the Government has opened the doors for us to build new homes for rent. Strong and mature partnership working gives us a greater chance of realising our vision. The investment programme has transformed Council houses and estates and means we will hit our target on *Decent Homes*. We continue to improve our services for *Vulnerable People* and we are now much better at preventing and dealing with homelessness.

Tenants are especially keen on us providing *Better Housing Services* and we have worked hard towards this. There has been a continuing, steady improvement in performance giving Wigan's Housing Services the highest rating of 4 out of 4, "performing strongly" from the Audit Commission. And we have one of the highest levels of customer satisfaction with services and tenant participation in the country.

We have recently been re-accredited with a number of external awards and all this has been achieved with no increase in the Management Fee since April 2007 and returning a surplus to the Housing Revenue Account of nearly £1 million a year last year. In addition, we have delivered efficiency savings of around £20 million in recent years through negotiating below inflation increases in our repair and improvement contracts.

We are not complacent, however, and we believe we can do better through ensuring our performance continues to improve whilst working hard towards another nil increase in the Management Fee for 2009/10.

Delivering the priorities in this plan will ensure we achieve our Vision of Better Homes, Brighter Futures and I commend it to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Geoff Roberts
Chairman**

Contents

	Page
Chair's Introduction	2
Executive Summary	4
Introducing Wigan & Leigh Housing	5
The Organisation's Vision and the 5 Goals	8
How the Organisation is Organised and Resourced	10
Our Performance Management Framework	18
How We Performed Last Year	20

Appendices

<i>A</i>	<i>Vision and Goals (full version)</i>	21
<i>B</i>	<i>Directorate Plan Housing Management</i>	
<i>C</i>	<i>Directorate Plan Housing Needs</i>	
<i>D</i>	<i>Directorate Plan Strategy, Policy & Projects</i>	
<i>E</i>	<i>Directorate Plan Stock Investment & Repairs</i>	
<i>F</i>	<i>Directorate Plan Deputy Chief Executive's</i>	

Executive Summary

Wigan & Leigh Housing is in the second year of a 5 year management agreement with Wigan Council which has the potential to be extended into a much longer-term arrangement. We are a large provider operating at an exciting but challenging time for housing providers. We are positioning ourselves to take advantage of any opportunities which arise, particularly around providing new affordable housing.

The Vision supported by 5 goals has been refreshed and is now well understood and owned by our employees and the Board. A number of priorities to support the achievement of the five goals have been agreed. This includes improvement to some of the business enabler services and the start of two major programmes of work around Access, Involvement and Customer Care and Business Process Re-Engineering.

The organisation continues to seek value for money in its activities. A robust budget management regime has now been introduced. This has enabled the Company to hold the management fee at 2007/08 levels for the coming year. In addition, we have negotiated value for money uplifts with our major contractors, contributing significantly towards the Council's efficiency targets.

A managed approach to risk is obtained by periodically reviewing and updating a comprehensive risk management register and having plans for business continuity in key areas of activity.

Key aspects of cross-cutting support services like ICT, Human Resource Management, equality and diversity and customer care are regularly reviewed and have their own strategies and policies in place.

There is a robust performance management framework in place to ensure that progress against priorities and against service delivery targets is regularly reviewed by the Executive and by the Board.

An annual review of performance shows that good progress was made in achieving most of the priorities in the 2007/08 plan. Most areas of operational performance showed improvement and we are well on the way to agreeing areas to monitor and compare our performance with other ALMOs in the coming year.

Introducing Wigan & Leigh Housing

Wigan and Leigh Housing was one of the country's first Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). At our inception in 2002 we were one of only 8 ALMOs. Currently there are over 60 managing more than a million homes. We are a company limited by guarantee and wholly owned by Wigan Council. Our core business is the management of the Council's 23,000 homes but we are also responsible for some related housing activities such as dealing with homelessness and we are increasingly involved in broader initiatives between the Council and its partners.

We are now in the second year of our second management agreement with Wigan Council. The early years of our existence involved overseeing major investment in the housing stock to bring it up to the Government's decent homes standard. The organisation has been judged as providing a "Good – 2 star" housing service by the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate during two separate, very rigorous inspections in 2002 and 2005.

In 2005 the Housing Inspectorate also concluded, however, that our prospects for improvement were "uncertain". This second judgement provided a wake-up call and we have worked hard to make improvements so that the same could not be said in any future inspections. This work has included developing a new Vision and Goals for the organisation, carrying out a review of our Governance structures and revising the management agreement with Wigan Council. We have also tackled value for money issues from a relatively weak starting position and continued to improve our performance in service delivery right across the organisation. This led to a score of 4 out of 4 for housing services in the Council's recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Our Operating Environment

Wigan and Leigh Housing provides a range of housing services for the community of Wigan Borough. The borough is around 77 square miles in area. It comprises the two towns of Wigan and Leigh and a number of smaller townships. The population is over 300,000 living in over 130,000 households. The population and the number of households are predicted to rise slightly in the coming years due to the formation of smaller households.

We plays a leading role in housing provision in the borough accounting for some 23,000 homes for rent and is by far the biggest provider of social housing. The other social housing providers are a small number of Registered Social Landlords and there is also a small private rented sector.

The council housing stock is mostly of a traditional construction. Nearly half comprises three bedroom houses. Major investment since 2002 and significant environmental work has improved the appearance of estates and now most homes meet the Government's decency standard. However, the main areas of deprivation, poor health, unemployment and low educational attainment continue to be concentrated on Council estates in the borough. Recent research carried out as part of the SMART Neighbourhoods Project has reconfirmed this. Worklessness, low income, poor health and disability are major issues in the local communities we work with.

Several factors, including house price rises and a diminishing housing supply through Right to Buy, have combined to increase demand for social housing in the borough. These factors are largely outside Council's or Wigan and Leigh Housing's control but present a real challenge in meeting the housing need of the most vulnerable whilst maintaining stable and sustainable communities.

At a national level the Government has clearly moved housing much higher up the agenda. It is clear that one of their main priorities is to increase the supply of affordable housing. 2 and 3 star ALMOs can now compete for grant funding to allow them to build new homes. Wigan & Leigh Housing, supported by Wigan Council, is determined to take advantage of this opportunity to help increase the amount of social rented housing in the Borough. Indeed, in the face of a very difficult subsidy settlement for 2008/9 and the inevitability of tight financial settlements over at least the next couple of years, moving into the area of providing new homes may be vital to our long-term viability.

Whilst making progress on the supply of affordable housing is key for the organisation's long-term future, it is also an important contributor to Wigan Council's wider agenda to achieve the goals in the Community Plan around regeneration, placemaking and making Wigan "a place where people matter and you can afford to live the life you want". The most relevant direct contribution is around *Goal 6: Provide access to decent homes in clean, safe neighbourhoods* but also indirectly to other goals around staying healthy, education and a strong economy

2007 was a very busy time in Housing. The Government published a number of national reviews which will shape the sector over the coming years. Of particular significance was the announcement of a review of the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system and the setting up of a new social housing regulator. OFTENANT will take over the regulatory role from the Housing Corporation and, in due course, will also become the regulator for Councils and ALMOs. We are keeping a watchful eye on these developments and will look for opportunities to improve the services we provide.

Our Vision and Values

In May 2006 a working group which included tenants and other stakeholders met to develop a new vision for Wigan & Leigh Housing. The group considered a wide range of information including:

- Housing condition, housing needs and market research
- Other local factors including deprivation
- Emerging government policy
- Wigan Borough's Community Plan and Housing Strategy.

A draft vision was approved in July 2006 and was then subject to extensive consultation including tenants, staff, the Local Strategic Partnership and Black and Minority Ethnic tenants. After considering the feedback at its meeting on 15th August 2006, the Board adopted the Vision and goals.

In October 2007 the Board held a “Strategic and Governance away day” with the Management Team, the shareholder and the Council’s lead officer on housing strategy. The key points to emerge were as follows:

- The Vision was still relevant and fitted well with both the emerging government housing policies and local circumstances.
- It was accepted that the goal of “Better Housing Services” should remain as a basic given. The group wanted Wigan & Leigh Housing to be amongst the top performing ALMOs nationally with costs at, or below, average.
- It was imperative that we completed the decent homes programme and then maintained the stock in good condition.
- Parts of the Vision could be better explained.

The vision has now been “refreshed” and has been used to shape the new Governance structure, the officer structure and this Delivery and Business Plan. It has been subject to extensive consultation and has received significant support. We also recognise that any organisation of our size needs efficient business processes and a range of effective support services in place to function effectively. These “business enablers” are critical to our overall success and a simplified version of the Vision and Goals and business enablers is shown at Figure 1. The diagram also contains some illustrative tasks to underpin the achievement of the vision that will be undertaken in the coming year. The full version of the vision can be found at Appendix A. the full list of priority tasks can be found within the Directorate Plan Appendices.

Our Vision 2006-2016

Better Homes, Brighter Futures

<p>Better Neighbourhoods</p> <p>Review Estate Inspection process and implement changes</p> <p>Support Partners in the development of Neighbourhood Working in the borough</p>	<p>Decent Homes</p> <p>Produce 5 to 10 year asset management plan</p> <p>Remediation of contaminated land at Ince</p> <p>Procure new partnering contracts for external programmes of work</p>	<p>Better Housing Services</p> <p>Programme of reviewing Access, Involvement and Customer Care</p>	<p>Affordable Homes</p> <p>Produce detailed business case for involvement in new house building</p> <p>Understand operation of housing market and review allocation policy</p> <p>Embed Housing Options approach</p>	<p>Housing Services for Vulnerable people</p> <p>Achieve full compliance against the Council's Safeguarding Children's audit tool</p> <p>Agree and start to fully comply with Safeguarding Adults' responsibilities</p> <p>Reduce reliance on temporary accommodation for homeless families</p>
--	--	---	---	--

Value for Money:	Implement procurement strategy
Information Technology:	Development of organisation's Website and Intranet
Human Resources:	Continue to progress Job Evaluation work
Governance:	Introduce Board Member Development Programme

In meeting our customers needs and delivering excellent services to achieve the vision we have embraced the following core values as an organisation:

- **Be honest, open & helpful**
- **Respect the individual**
- **Value diversity**
- **Empower staff and support their development**
- **Value feedback, listen and learn**
- **Be visionary and forward thinking**
- **Look to continuously improve and encourage innovation**
- **Strive to go the extra mile**
- **Be accountable and responsible**
- **Work smarter not harder, think value for money**

Working with Wigan Council

Wigan & Leigh Housing is a key player in helping Wigan Council achieve its strategic objectives and we play an increasingly important role in this through membership of the Local Strategic Partnerships and the Local Strategic Management Group. We will also contribute both directly and indirectly to the Local Area Agreement targets. Our Vision and our Delivery and Business Plan contribute to the priorities of the Council and its partners as the following diagram shows:

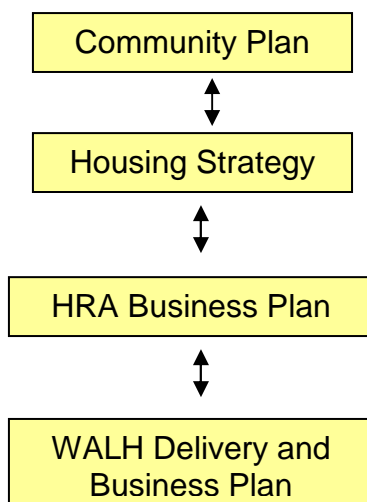


Figure 3: Contribution to Priorities of the Council

The Community Plan sets out the vision for the Wigan Borough Strategic Partnership. The Housing Strategy translates this into housing related priorities and provides the context for all housing provision in the borough. The Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out the Council's vision for its stock; outlines its key objectives and the strategies being adopted to achieve them, as well as the framework for monitoring and evaluating progress. Our Business Plan turns the wider Council strategies on housing into reality. There is a "Golden Thread" linking the operational activities of the organisation in delivering services to the wider objectives in the Community Plan. Internally within the organisation, the Delivery and Business Plan is

supplemented by Directorate Plans, which are included as Appendices to this main plan and a number of other plans and strategies.

How the Organisation is Organised and Resourced

Wigan & Leigh Housing is governed by a Board of Directors. Following a review of governance arrangements in 2006, a new streamlined structure was introduced which strengthened the leadership of the organisation. The position was further enhanced by a second review in 2007 which made minor changes to the roles of the different Committees but, significantly, it increased the influence of tenants by increasing the number of tenant board members to 6, making them the largest constituency group of the Board's 14 Directors which also comprises Council nominees and independent members. The Board is supported by two Committees and during 2007 five Area Forums, each with a tenant Chair, was set up. Council nominations are made annually by the Council. Tenant Members are elected and retire in rotation. Independent Members are now selected by tenants and bring to the Board key knowledge on issues such as audit and finance.

The governance structure is shown below.

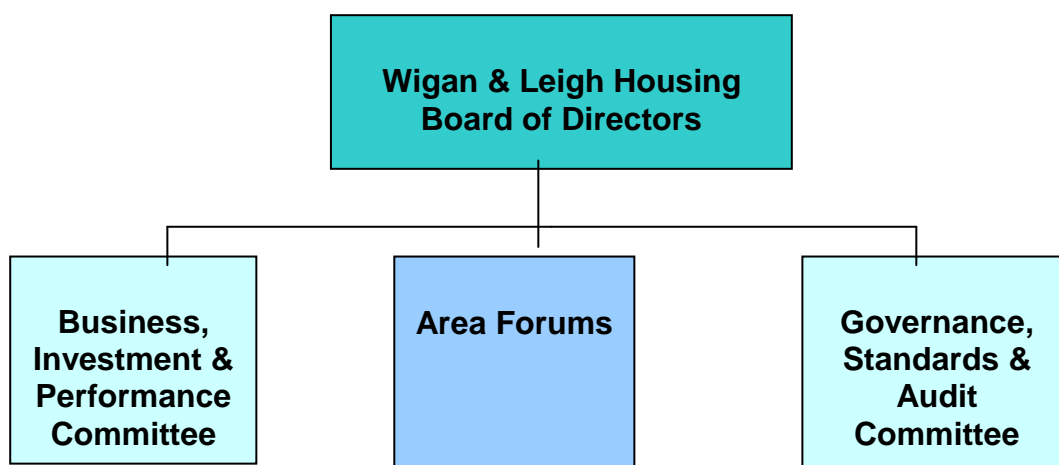
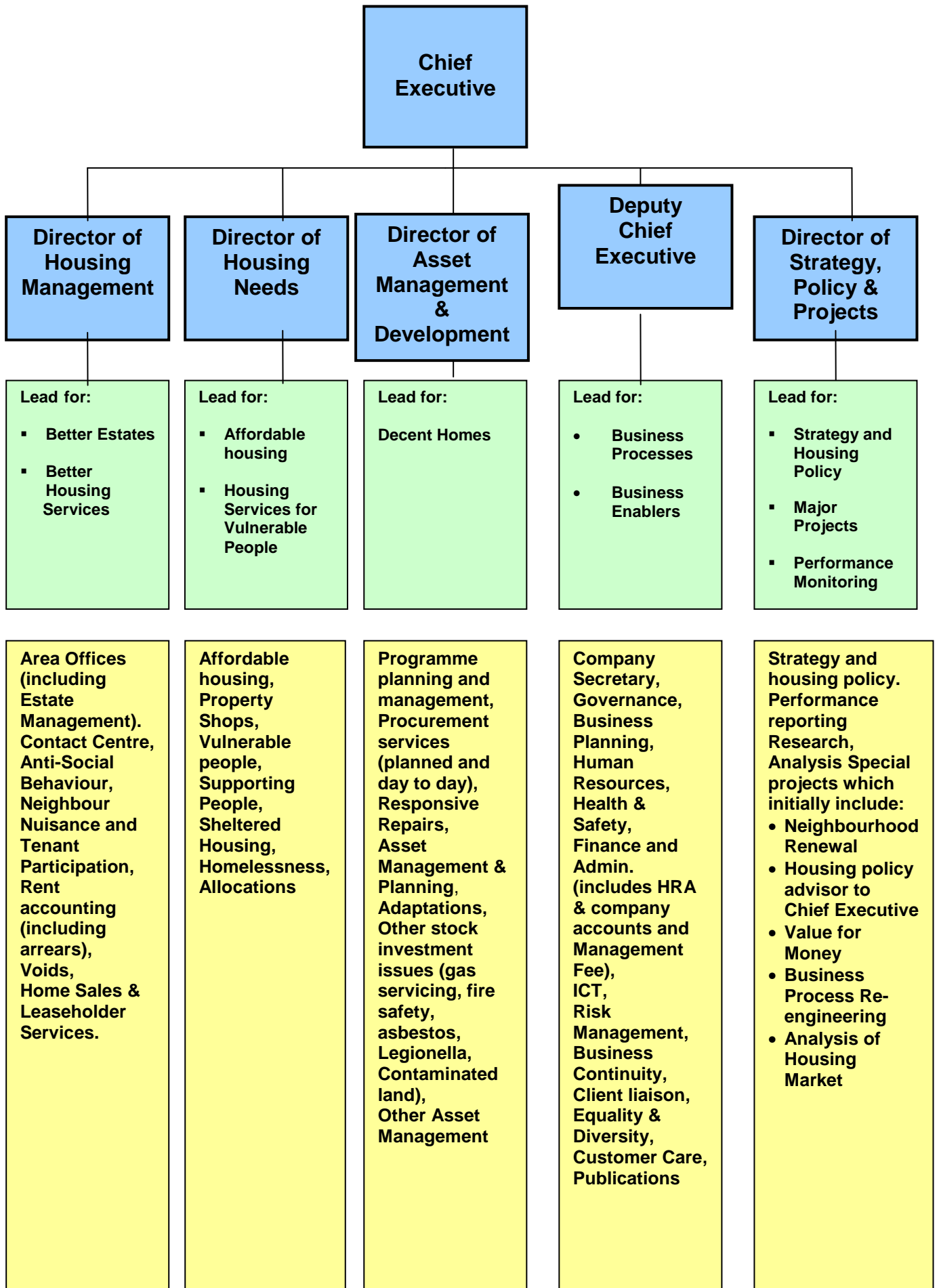


Figure 4: Governance Structure

The Management Team structure as at 31st March 2008 is shown in Figure 5 overleaf. During the first half of 2008/9, the Director of Policy Strategy and Projects is taking over the day to day management of a proportion of the Director of Housing Needs portfolio to release her to work on the development of our approach to affordable homes.

Further changes to the Management Team structure from 2008 will be phased in through the year. A new Director of Resources post will ensure our aspirations for house-building can be resourced, provide strategic resourcing plans and influence the Government's review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System. The Deputy Chief Executive's post will be phased out at 31st March 2008 and responsibilities passed to the Director of Resources.

Figure 5: *Wigan & Leigh Housing Management Structure*



Our Finances

Wigan & Leigh Housing is a Company limited by guarantee and is a non-profit making organisation. Our aim is to use our resources as efficiently as possible, providing maximum value for money for the services that we deliver. The more efficiently that WALH delivers its services, the greater the funds available to the Housing Revenue Account to fund programmes of work or other services that directly benefit tenants.

Our income is almost exclusively derived from a management fee paid by the Council via the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The fee is negotiated annually having regard to available HRA resources. Some services delivered by the organisation are funded through a contribution into the HRA from other sources, notably the management of the homeless service which is funded through General Fund contributions to the HRA and then paid to ourselves through the management fee.

The Council's ability to pay an adequate management fee depends on the level of resources available to the HRA. The sufficiency of the HRA is affected by a number of factors, some of which are outside the Council's control. The annual subsidy settlement is by far the most significant factor. Reliance on an annual process makes long-term planning difficult to do with any certainty. A series of assumptions need to be made by the Council when forecasting the resources available to the HRA. We work closely with the Council in developing these assumptions. The Medium Term Financial Plan HRA Forecast to 2011 is set out below. The 2007/08 figures have been included for comparison.

Figure 6: Medium Term Financial Plan HRA Forecast to 2011

	<u>2007/08</u>	<u>2008/09</u>	<u>2009/10</u>	<u>2010/11</u>
Stock at beginning of year	23,093	22,878	22,663	22,448
Revenue	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m
Income				
Rents: Dwellings	64.9	66.0	68.6	71.3
Voids and bad debts	-1.1	-1.0	-1.2	-1.2
Subsidy	4.9	0.7	0.0	-1.0
Total Income	68.7	65.7	67.4	69.1
Expenditure				
Net Supervision and management	13.3	14.1	14.3	14.6
Responsive repairs	11.8	12.0	12.5	12.5
Revenue programmes	3.1	4.7	4.5	5.0
Debt charges	15.6	15.6	15.6	15.6
Debt repayment				4.4
Major Repairs	13.7	13.6	13.9	13.7
Total Expenditure	57.5	60.0	60.8	65.8
Net surplus	11.2	5.7	6.6	3.3
Balance at beginning of year	4.3	7.6	4.6	3.7
Interest on general balances	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Revenue contribution to capital	8.2	8.9	7.7	
Balance at end of year	7.6	4.6	3.7	7.2

The organisation continues to be a major contributor to the Council's efficiency targets and value for money in both supervision and management and works expenditure is given a high priority. Below inflation increases have been negotiated with our main contractors for the current year to support this.

By managing finances carefully during the previous year we have been able to return a surplus to the Council's Housing Revenue Account to be available for re-investment. However, this year's subsidy settlement for the HRA is particularly tight and signals a return to a more challenging financial climate in which the organisation has to operate. This situation is likely to continue for at least the next couple of years. In 2007/08 management fee was reduced by £145,000 from the previous year's figure to £15.33M. The fee has been frozen at the same level in 2008/9. Wigan & Leigh Housing is committed to continuing its efforts to deliver value for money and its medium-term financial plan envisages no increase in the Management Fee for 2009/10. This will necessitate further efficiency savings in the order of £400,000 in 2009/10.

Figure7: Management Fee Breakdown 2008/09

	Actual 06/07 £000's	Probable Outturn 2007/08 £000's	Estimate 2008/09 £000's
Income			
ALMO FEE	-14,470	-14,295	-15,332
Expenditure			
Employees	11,395	11,111	11,967
Premises	1,019	1,019	1,055
Transport	393	371	408
Supplies and Services	990	1,086	1,133
Agency and Contracted Services	242	254	257
Support Services	464	482	516
Recoverable costs	-33	-28	-4
Total Expenditure	14,470	14,295	15,332

Risk Management

Although the Government has stated that ALMOs have an important future role to play in the housing sector, there remains a major problem with the level of resources available. Because ALMOs remain within the vagaries of the housing subsidy system it makes it difficult to plan with any certainty about available resources. We have entered a period of financial constraint with a very tight financial settlement for 2008/9. The inability of Housing Revenue Accounts to adequately fund services to tenants in future years is a major concern. The Government has announced a review of the housing subsidy system which is unlikely to have any impact for at least a couple of years.

Right to Buy sales have stabilised from recent high levels but still contribute to a reduced income stream. At the same time upward cost pressures and increasing demands on services make the high quality housing services delivered by ALMOs increasingly difficult to fund in the future if structural weaknesses in the Housing Revenue Account are not tackled.

We take the management of risk seriously and a full risk management review, in collaboration with the Council and our auditors, is conducted annually. It looks at the potential risks facing the public sector housing service in the borough in general and Wigan and Leigh Housing in particular. A comprehensive risk management register is agreed by the Board and the Council each year. The register covers both strategic and operational risks, assesses their importance, likelihood and impact and sets out mitigation measures and controls.

In addition to the risk register we have adopted a robust approach to business continuity management and have identified the service areas most at risk. Appropriate plans will be reviewed and refined this year to ensure business continuity against a range of scenarios.

Two major risks have been added to the risk register in respect of:-

- The risks associated with embarking on a house-building programme
- The Government's review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System

Our approach to equality & diversity – “there is “no quality without equality”

Recent years have seen a dramatic improvement in our approach to Equality & Diversity. We have achieved levels 2 & subsequently 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). That achievement and confirmation that we follow the Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice in Rented Housing was validated by external organisations and a group of partners and customers in 2005/06. We carried out an assessment to ensure that we complied with the revised code at 31st March 2008.

In 2008/9 we will concentrate on ensuring that our good practice is captured in a Race Equality Action Plan to complement the existing plans on gender and disability.

We believe there is no quality without equality and our aim is to provide a fair service and respect for all. There is more work to do to embed this in our mainstream activities but we continue to make some progress, for example requiring that Equality Impact Assessments are carried out before new policies are adopted by the Board and carrying out an equal pay audit in 2008/9.

People – our greatest resource

Our key aim is to ensure that by investing in people we maximise their potential, and have a talented, motivated and skilled workforce that is able to deliver high quality, value for money services.

During 2008/9 we will develop a Workforce Strategy that has the same lifespan as this Business Plan. Key goals within the Workforce Strategy can be summarised as making Wigan and Leigh Housing an employer of choice by:

- Attracting, retaining and developing outstanding people
Includes: reviewing recruitment and selection policies, developing succession planning, developing the modern apprentice programme, introducing a graduate trainee scheme, reviewing training provision, reviewing the employee appraisal process
- Having strong and visionary managers to lead the organisation
Includes: introducing a management/leadership development programme, supporting personal development, wider use of 360° appraisal, developing mentoring skills
- Being inclusive, supportive and valuing diversity
Includes: building on the workforce profile and diversity monitoring that was established under the Equality Standard for Local Government
- Embracing modern employment practices
Includes: reviewing discipline and grievance procedures, carrying out stress management and equal pay audits, developing the role of JCC and other employee involvement mechanisms
- Establishing a clear organisational culture
Includes: expected standards of behaviour, operating a revised bullying and harassment policy, setting clear parameters, respecting confidentiality, openness and honesty

Information and Communication Technology Strategy

Competent highly motivated employees must be supported by effective ICT. We use Wigan Council's Information Technology infrastructure through a recently reviewed service level agreement. Our main operating system is the Housing Management Information System (HMIS). The system supports web-based interactive functions that allow customers greater direct access to our services and contribute towards the Council's e-government agenda. The first interactive systems covering choice-based lettings and rent enquiries are already operational.

Wigan & Leigh Housing also uses other Council systems, for example the Financial Management Information System, and uses their communications networks for e-mail and telephony. We have and maintain our own website www.walh.co.uk

There are approximately 450 IT users located in various sites across the borough. The organisation operates with an in-house IT support team who liaise with the Council to maintain and develop systems, provide assistance and training for our employees and produce information from the data held. ICT is an essential tool in helping us to maintain our employee/customer profiles and make sure that our employment practices do not unfairly discriminate and that services are provided fairly and with respect.

In 2007 we developed a separate Information and Communication Technology strategy with the same life span as this Business Plan. A copy of the strategy can be found at www.walh.co.uk/xxxxx. The main strategic aims contained in the strategy are:

- To ensure that ICT resources are aligned with the needs of the business
- To provide a reliable, secure and resilient Information Technology infrastructure
- To work collaboratively with the Council and other stakeholders
- To manage and maximise the information available to the organisation
- To maximise customers' electronic access to information held or services delivered by the organisation
- To champion the innovative use of technology to improve, and wherever possible reduce, the ongoing cost of services

Customer Care and Involvement

Tenants and other customers are central to what we do. The aim of developing competent highly motivated staff, supported by good information and communication technology is to provide the best possible services to our customers.

This is something that we work hard to achieve. We are pleased that our tenant satisfaction levels, recorded in the last full tenant satisfaction survey in 2006 were very high and improving and the level of complaints received is low. We have also been re-accredited during the last year with the Chartermark for customer service and by the Customer Contact Association for our Contact Centre.

In order to maintain and improve the situation we will be carrying out a major programme of reviews covering Access, Involvement and Customer Care, starting in 2008.

The programme scope will emphasise the three distinct elements: Access, Involvement and Customer Care. The overall objective is to improve the satisfaction and experience of customers whenever they come into contact with us by ensuring we have appropriate avenues for contact and that we treat them well and involve them in shaping the services we deliver. Maximising the opportunities for our tenants to get involved in decisions that affect them will improve our decision making.

The project will **not** encompass the **how** of service delivery is done by the organisation's "back office" though this obviously also has a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

The project aims to deliver

- A range of ways and locations to access our services that are convenient for our customers
- Top quartile performance on the levels of customer satisfaction with services provided by Wigan & Leigh Housing and with opportunities for tenants to get

involved

- A 10% increase in the level of customer satisfaction with how helpful they perceive staff to be by 2010
- Clear, customer-agreed, service standards that are understood, implemented and monitored across the organisation
- External re-accreditation through the revised Chartermark scheme

Our Performance Management Framework

External Scrutiny

Wigan & Leigh Housing is subject to a stringent monitoring framework both from the Government through Housing Inspections and the CPA inspections and from the Council itself. The Council needs to ensure that it is obtaining value for money from the management fee that it pays to the Wigan & Leigh Housing. The Council also needs to ensure that we are delivering quality services on the Council's behalf and that it is working towards its agreed strategic objectives. As part of the agreement with the Council we provide auditable performance information in respect of all the national indicators covering the services for which it is responsible and for those to which its performance contributes.

This monitoring regime reflects the mature relationship between the organisation and the Council and takes a rounded view of progress against the main issues. There is an agreed "open book" approach to performance, particularly if any areas of activity are giving cause for concern. Progress is scrutinised through the quarterly and annual meetings and is periodically reported to the Council's Community Protection Panel and Cabinet.

Internal Management of Performance

During 2006/07 the performance management framework was fundamentally changed. Each member of Management Team, together with their service heads, is responsible for performance management and is directly accountable to the Board. This means understanding the definition of the individual indicators, ensuring that collection systems collect the correct data, that staff are using the systems properly and that any calculations arising from the data collection are accurate and delivering performance to targets. The remaining statutory indicators are subject to audit for accuracy both by our internal auditors and by District Audit.

This approach has contributed to continuing improvement in both accuracy of information produced and in actual performance. The removal of the requirement to report the majority of the current list of national performance indicators has given us an opportunity to rethink what are the key measures to ensure that the business is managed appropriately. We will be developing these during early 2008 and working closely with other ALMOs and Housemark to ensure that we are able to compare performance with our peers.

Overall performance is formally monitored on a quarterly basis. Managers are expected to be closely managing the performance of their own service and some areas need to be measured more frequently. Key areas like rent arrears, void management and temporary accommodation are monitored on a weekly basis. On a quarterly basis, an agreed set of indicators is collected centrally, together with comments on performance from service heads. This information is discussed formally at a Management Team meeting where any necessary action is agreed. Performance is then reported to the Board and to the Council. Prior to this, managers discuss their team's performance in team meetings and are expected to take necessary action, set appropriate targets and monitor progress against them.

The key indicators of performance are shown in the individual Directorate plans in the appendices.

In addition to the performance in service delivery there is a quarterly scrutiny of progress against agreed priorities.

Each Directorate produces an annual plan, which is appended to this plan, containing a limited number of priorities which either contribute directly to the Vision and 5 goals or are business enablers which contribute indirectly towards them by making Wigan & Leigh Housing operate more effectively. Progress against these Directorate plans, is again scrutinised quarterly through Directorate Management Teams, the Executive Directors as a whole and through the Board and the Council.

How we performed last year

WALH performance is measured across the whole range of services provided. At its meeting in June 2007 Board approved a set of indicators and associated annual targets for 2007/08. There are 32 indicators reported annually. 8 of these indicators were treated as “at risk” since they were either particularly important or covered an area where performance was giving cause for concern.

Of the reported indicators:-

- 19 improved on the previous year’s performance
- 2 were static
- 9 deteriorated
- 1 was a new indicator so no comparison with earlier years was possible

The most marked improvements in performance were

- A significant drop in the number of days lost to sickness.
- A substantial drop in the number of empty properties.
- A marked improvement in collection of former tenants arrears.
- A drop in the number of repeat homelessness cases, i.e. those who have been accepted as homeless where they had been homeless on another occasion within the previous 2 years
- An increase in the number of households where prevention casework has succeeded in resolving the situation. Performance has not met the very stretching target set, but is greatly improved on last year.
- An improvement in the number of invoices paid on time.
- Higher levels of energy efficiency confirmed by the recent stock condition survey.
- More urgent repairs completed within Government time limits.

There were no major areas of concern with any of the reported performance although there were some areas where improvement was not as rapid as we would wish to see. One area where the figures show a mixed picture is the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households. Average time spent in temporary accommodation reduced but overall numbers at the measurement dates increased. A great deal of effort is now being devoted to proactive management of temporary accommodation and this seems to be having a positive impact with recent trends showing dropping numbers, particularly in the use of Bed & Breakfast.

Each year Councils are assessed by the Audit Commission to establish an overall assessment of how they are performing. Part of that assessment focuses on individual service areas such as Housing. It covers both the management of Council housing, carried out by ourselves and the strategic housing functions such as dealing with

homelessness that are shared with the Council. Whilst these indicators are still subject to external audit scrutiny, the Company's performance in 2007/8 on the indicators it was responsible for would contribute to a top score of 4/4 for the Housing block within the overall assessment.



Wigan & Leigh Housing's Vision 2006-2016

Better Homes, Brighter Futures

What we want to achieve	Better Housing Services	Better Neighbourhoods	Decent Homes	Access to Affordable Homes	Housing Service for vulnerable people
	90% overall satisfaction with service	85% satisfaction with opportunities to participate and creating a sense of place	Maintain at least 95% of homes to the Government's Decent Homes Standard	Increasing the supply of good quality affordable housing by 100 dwellings a year	Support older people to live active lives in their communities
	Top performing ALMO with average costs (CPA score of 3 or more)	Reduce the gap between our estates and the Borough average for crime, anti-social behaviour and street cleanliness		Prevent homelessness	
		Reduce poverty and worklessness			
How we will deliver	Providing quality customer care, easy access to services and personal choice	Increasing tenant involvement to include social and cultural activities on estates and activities to tackle deprivation e.g. credit unions, benefit take ups and health promotion	Continued investment in quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned maintenance programmes Responsive repairs services Environmental schemes 	Building at least 50 new homes a year for rent in small developments in right locations	Develop sheltered schemes into "hubs" with a mix of housing support and inclusion in community activities
	A strong emphasis on value for money and learning to do better	Quality tenancy and estate management linked to strong partnerships on "crime and grime"		Reducing the numbers of vacant Council houses (less than 127 per 10,000 properties)	Provide a comprehensive housing advice service to prevent homelessness, support those most vulnerable and prompt access to appropriate accommodation
	Having well informed, trained and motivated staff	Providing pathways into training and employment		Housing options for clients including Choice Based Lettings	

The Vision is underpinned by Business Enablers

Business enablers - ensuring we deliver	Achieved through	Measures (* staff surveys)
Strong governance	Governance reviews	Delivering Vision's improvement plans
Clear vision	Strategic planning and reviews and prioritising key tasks	Achieving outcome measures
Good business management	Business planning	Delivery of 90% of the key tasks
Excellent performance	Performance management of teams and learning	Comprehensive Performance Assessment housing score of 3, top performing ALMO
Value for money	Value for money strategy and processes	Services delivered within budget
Valuing staff and learning	Workforce plan and PPDs	Investors in People. 75% staff satisfied with opportunities to learn *
Clear communication	Corporate Communications Plan	75% staff feel well informed *
Effective use of ICT	Information and Communication Technology Strategy	Delivering annual ICT programme
Lean quality processes	Process re-engineering major work flows	Implementing Service Improvement Team plans and Housemark staff per property measure.
Excellent access to services and customer care	Access and customer care strategy and high quality contact centre	90% customer satisfaction (deprivation adjusted) and Chartermark
Participation and Partnerships	Tenants' compact and valuing partners Play full role in Wigan Borough Partnership Excellent partnering arrangements with contractor partners	85% tenant satisfaction in involvement opportunities (deprivation adjusted)
Effective use of assets	Asset management plans	Delivery of asset management plans
Valuing Equality, Diversity and Promoting Cohesion	Annual Equality and Diversity Plan	COPRE and Level 3 ESLG
Protecting our environment	Sustainability plan	Reduced carbon footprint