

## **WIGAN COUNCIL**

### **FUNDING BOOST FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

A group of innovative community projects in Wigan Borough will go ahead thanks to a £350,000 funding boost. A total of 76 projects will share the investment as Wigan Council announced the latest round of its Deal for Communities Investment Fund.

The pot of money is now in its fifth round and by the end of this round a total of £9m will have been invested in more than 450 groups in Wigan Borough. The council has invested millions of pounds into local projects and groups who are tackling local priorities and helping to solve some of the borough's biggest social problems. It's all part of The Deal – Wigan Council's informal contract with its residents where both sides work together to make the borough a better place.

The investment ranges from £200 to £10,000 and is split into three categories – start-ups, small investments and getting going, which is a specific strand of funding to get people active in their communities.

Investments include £4,000 to True Colours CIC to deliver the borough's first autism specific festival, £2,000 to Atherton Salvation Army to host youth activities, £10,000 to Reflect Therapeutic services for walk and talk therapy to improve people's mental health and £10,000 to Christ Church Pennington for increased youth provision in Leigh. A programme dedicated to giving girls aged 11-16 the self-belief and skills needed to pursue a career in digital and tech was given £8,930 investment. The group said: "This is fantastic news! Thanks so much for believing in us. We're really looking forward to working with you."

Strike a Chord CIC was given £8,800 investment to host a festival in Lilford Park. Bevan Thompson said: "We are delighted to receive funding. With it we intend to bring a live music event, artisan stalls and a family day out for the people of Leigh to enjoy. We are hoping to build on the success of our inaugural festival last year, with a bigger and better event, after listening to feedback from the community. The festival is planned to highlight the wider aims of the CIC of bringing music to the people, and with the long term goal of creating music hub in Leigh for local bands, young people and disadvantaged people to get into music, who normally may not have been able to

Cllr Chris Ready, Cabinet Member For Communities, said: "Unlike so many other places we are bucking the trend and investing money into our communities. We have already seen it have a huge impact on residents and we are seeing real results. "Other local authorities ask us what the secret formula is in Wigan but we just have a common sense approach and a great relationship with our communities. Our innovative way of working is being mirrored in other areas which we're very proud of.

"We face many different social issues and we know local people are best placed with the knowledge and connections to help us to address and tackle these problems. We've given the control to our residents and we're seeing it work and have real impact. "We are delighted to be able to keep supporting so many of our fantastic groups and small organisations." The big idea applications for the fund will be announced in 2018

For information please contact The Deal for Communities team at [dealforcommunities@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:dealforcommunities@wigan.gov.uk)

### **FINANCIAL GIFTS GIVEN THIS CHRISTMAS**

Residents across Wigan Borough who may not know they're entitled to extra financial support are being given a helping hand this Christmas thanks to Wigan Council.

Wigan Council has recently undertaken a Winter Award Drive, identifying residents who may be eligible for housing benefit, Council Tax Reduction (CTR), discretionary housing payment and council tax refunds, discount and exemption awards. The review is part of the town hall's plan to help residents manage their finances ahead of the Universal Credit roll out in April 2018 and goes hand in hand with their 'Don't struggle with debt' campaign in partnership with Unify and the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

In the last twelve months, (October 2016 – November 2017) 1,718 people visited Wigan Council's crisis desk due to having no food, no money or no gas or electric so the local campaign encourages residents to get support if they are worried about falling into debt or are already struggling.

Councillor Terry Halliwell, portfolio holder for welfare reform said: "We are committed to helping our residents manage their finances and ensuring their income is maximised to enable them to pay their bills on time. "At this time of year it can be easy to spend money on things that aren't needed and there is support out there for residents who need help managing their money - such as credit unions like Unify. "We recognised that a small portion of residents may be unaware of the extra support they could receive, so by identifying those who are eligible for refunds and discounts, we can help households who need it most. We hope this will ease stress, especially during this financially demanding time of year."

When claiming for Universal Credit, unlike housing benefit, the local authority does not receive an application for CTR, however, to help identify eligible residents, the council will now treat every Universal Credit claim notified by the Department for Work and Pensions as a CTR claim.

Since November 2017, 1,150 cases were reviewed and as a result, more than £240,000 in unclaimed CTR has been awarded. And with the review continuing, it is hoped that even more eligible residents will be identified. This is alongside £5.2m in housing benefit and £158,000 in council tax refunds and discounts being awarded in December.

Councillor Halliwell added: "Thanks to our various payment plan options, we can also work with residents experiencing financial difficulties to help them pay their council tax bills on time, on a date that suits them. We encourage anyone who may benefit from this to contact us as soon as possible. "If you find that you are struggling with debt and are unable to manage repayments, it is important to think about which debts you need to deal with first. There can be serious consequences to not paying your bills and we don't want people falling into debt."

Council tax reduction is awarded to residents who are liable to pay council tax and are on a low income. There are different levels of support depending on the circumstances of the household and residents can find out if they're eligible by visiting [www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltax).

For help and advice on how to manage your money, visit: [www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice)

### **ARE YOU GOING DRY THIS JANUARY?**

Last year 79 per cent of participants of Dry January saved money, 63 per cent had better sleep and more energy and 49 per cent lost weight. January 2018 is expected to see over 3.1 million people in the UK ditch the booze for Dry January, according to a YouGov poll commissioned by the charity Alcohol Concern.

The national Dry January campaign has launched in what will be one of the busiest periods of the year for the emergency services as Christmas parties lead to alcohol-related injuries and violence. Alcohol costs the NHS an estimated £3.5 billion each year, which amounts to £120 for every taxpayer.

Two-thirds of people who attempt Dry January make it through the month without drinking, while 72 percent maintain lower levels of harmful drinking six months later than before Dry January.

Professor Kate Ardern, director for public health at Wigan Council said: “Christmas can easily be a time for excess, particularly for those who enjoy a drink to celebrate. So why not kick start a healthy new year by taking part in Dry January.”

Dry January is run by national charity Alcohol Concern, which merged with Alcohol Research UK in April to become an even stronger advocate for a world in which alcohol causes no harm. To sign up to Dry January and get support every step of the way go to [www.dryjanuary.org.uk](http://www.dryjanuary.org.uk)

### **PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM FLOOD**

Close to £1m has been spent on essential flooding repairs to Wigan Borough and residents are encouraged to ensure they are prepared for winter weather.

Wigan Council was allocated £857,000 from the Department for Transport in April 2017 to carry out repairs to roads and culverts that were damaged in the 2015 Boxing Day floods. As a result of the funding a number of drains and more than 135 sections of highway have been repaired.

The council has also commissioned a survey of all main roads and known flooding hotspots to see how the risk of flooding can be reduced in the future. This piece of work across the whole borough involves putting cameras down each drain to see if there are any blockages in the system and means the council will be able to gather detailed information about the drains.

Storm Eva battered Wigan Borough on Boxing Day 2015 when more than a month’s rainfall fell in 24 hours leaving many properties, roads and greenspaces damaged. Work was also completed earlier in the year to repair the drain networks in Lilford Park, Platt Bridge, Crooke village and at key locations in Aspull which were all badly affected.

Councillor Kevin Anderson, cabinet member for environment, said: “This money gave us an extra boost to complete further repairs to our network. These measures should protect our communities and reduce the future flood risk. “It’s also important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their own properties from flooding. If you know your property is in a flood zone then please sign up to the flooding warning system and make sure you have insurance to cover any damage caused by flooding.”

Other works including lining of the sewer at Park Road/ Leyland Road, Hindley, repair of Coffin Lane culvert at Bolton Road, Bamfurlong and the replacement of highway drains on Shevington Lane and Church Lane, Shevington and Smethurst Road Billinge.

You can check whether your property is at flood risk by contacting the Flood Advisory Service.

Tips for protecting yourself from flooding:

- Register for flood warnings
- Buy sand bags and store these ready to use
- Check your insurance cover
- Develop a personal flood plan

If flooding occurs:

- Don’t drive through standing flood water if you aren’t sure of the depth
- Don’t enter or swim in flood water
- Make sure you have sandbags ready
- Turn off all electrical items if your property is flooded
- Move your belongings upstairs if your property is flooded

More information at: <https://wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Crime-Emergencies/Flooding.aspx>

### **RUDOLPH THE RECYCLING TRUCK SURPRISES PUPILS**

Hindley Green Sacred Heart Catholic Primary and Oakfield High School and College both produced winning videos to promote recycling and won £1,000 each for environmental improvements to their schools, sponsored by FCC who look after the borough's recycling centres.

The eco-council pupils from both schools were shocked to see the bin wagon, dressed up as Rudolph, pulling into the school playground and even more shocked to see Santa driving him! Santa said he loved both the recycling videos and gave the children selection boxes as a thank you.

Councillor Kevin Anderson, cabinet member for environment, said: "Both schools produced brilliant videos encouraging more people to recycle more, recycle right and they are so passionate about it. We were so impressed with them both and wanted to do something to say thank you!"

Tony Waterworth, site business manager for FCC Environment, said: "We are delighted to have been involved in this project and we too have been really impressed with the videos so it was a huge honour to hand over our wagons to help deliver the great news to the two worthy winners."

View the winning videos on YouTube:

Oakfield High School and College: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAE1Ae0J1fQ&feature=youtu.be>

Hindley Green Sacred Heart Catholic Primary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJsg2u-Gi1M>

### **ONE STEP CLOSER TO BECOMING FOOD WASTE FREE**

A new device for recycling food has been unveiled as Wigan Borough steps up its ambition to become a food waste free place. Fur Clemt Wigan's Real Junk Food Project have celebrated the opening of a RIDAN Composter which will turn their non-edible food waste into quality compost reducing food to landfill.

The mission of Fur Clemt is to 'Feed Bellies Not Bins' through its 'Pay As You Feel' cafes and Food Boutiques, and although waste is kept to a minimum inevitably there is an element of waste from the kitchen which will be used to make quality compost. Through working with local businesses the project has intercepted in excess of 450 tonnes of edible and filled 70,000 bellies in the last two and a half years. The project has expanded across the borough opening satellite cafes and food boutiques and shared produce with 35 local organisations with the help of funding from Wigan Council's Community Investment Fund.

Shirley Southworth, director of the project, said: "Food waste is a growing problem in the UK and across the world. We aim to make a difference in our borough by intercepting the food and making it available to the local community. "The new composter will enable us to turn our in-edible waste into compost, reducing our waste costs. Once it's ready it will be made available to growing projects in the borough."

Fur Clemt has teamed up with Wigan Council to host a Nil To Landfill – Food Waste Conference in January 2018 where they will be encouraging local businesses to consider working with them.

The leader of Wigan Council, Lord Peter Smith, said: "Fur Clemt do some fantastic work that really makes a difference with our communities. We're supporting their ambition to be the first food waste free borough in the country and are delighted with the new composter. "Processing food and garden waste in this manner contributes to making our borough cleaner and greener. More importantly, Fur Clemt support some of our most vulnerable residents and ensure they can eat every day."

To find out more about Fur Clemt visit [www.realjunkfoodprojectwigan.org.uk](http://www.realjunkfoodprojectwigan.org.uk)

### **BAKERY BACKS CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE**

A Leigh bakery's support for domestic abuse victims proved to be the icing on the cake for a successful awareness campaign. Waterfield's Bakery has backed the White Ribbon campaign which takes a stand against domestic abuse. Men who support the campaign wear a white ribbon as a symbol that they oppose violence against women.

Richard Waterfield, owner of Waterfield's Bakery, has backed the campaign and his business is now one of the first in the borough to sign up to a workplace policy for domestic abuse and violence. The policy helps companies with practical tips on how to manage and support an employee suffering from domestic abuse.

Waterfield's Bakery helped mark international White Ribbon Day by baking cakes with the White Ribbon logo. The delicious cakes were handed out in Leigh town centre to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the White Ribbon campaign.

Richard said: "As a company we are delighted to support the White Ribbon campaign. "Businesses have an important role to play in supporting employees who may be victims and under an incredible amount of stress. "The workplace policy is really useful to help businesses with advice and guidance on how to support someone suffering from domestic abuse. "People sometimes forget that domestic abuse happens to males in the family as well as females so it is important to be aware of the signs and as a company we have heightened awareness."

The work place policy guidance for domestic abuse and violence has been created by Wigan Council and Wigan Clinical Commissioning Group.

Donna Hall, Wigan Council's Chief Executive, said: "I would like to thank Richard for his personal leadership on this serious problem. "The workplace policy provides simple steps employers can take to respond to this important issue. "It is important that managers are aware of the warning signs that might suggest a member of staff may be suffering from domestic abuse as well as the sources of support available to victims. "We would encourage as many businesses and organisations in Wigan Borough to sign-up to the policy and provide that much needed support. "All business owners, directors and managers have a duty of care to ensure their staff feel safe and supported at work."

In the UK more than 20 per cent of women take time off work annually because of domestic violence and two per cent lose their jobs because of it. Small steps to help can include giving an employee time off work to consult a solicitor, diverting telephone calls, providing a safe place to park or changing working patterns.

Waterfield's Bakery is a family business established in 1926 and is a major employer in Leigh serving tens of thousands of customers a week.

For more information on signing up to the workplace policy for domestic abuse visit [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk) and search 'domestic abuse'.

### **LEIGH IS UP FOR THE CHALLENGE!**

The town of Leigh has been chosen to be part of a high profile urban regeneration challenge spearheaded by the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Wigan Council has chosen Leigh to be in Andy Burnham's new Town Centre Challenge initiative to regenerate town centres across Greater Manchester. The challenge invites all ten councils across Greater Manchester to nominate a town to be part of the initiative.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester will then work with each council and bring together housing providers, public and private landowners, developers, community groups and other key stakeholders in a concerted effort to support local councils to unlock the potential in town centres. A key focus will be on delivering new housing in town centres with powers under compulsory purchase orders available and investment from a new housing deal supporting the challenge.

Wigan Council's Cabinet agreed that Leigh should be the town put forward by Wigan Borough. Cabinet members agreed that Leigh had many existing strengths but also significant regeneration and growth opportunities.

Karl Battersby, Director For Economy And Environment, said: "Nominating Leigh for the Town Centre Challenge will help accelerate regeneration in the town and bring in new investment to realise the huge potential Leigh has. "Leigh is one of the borough's two biggest centres and by attracting investment it will have a positive knock-on effect for the surrounding area in the east of the borough especially for towns such as Atherton which are very close by.

"The council has already committed major investment for Leigh with £5m to be spent there in the coming years and the town centre challenge will really enhance that on-going work. "We hope the challenges will kick-start new developments in the town centre which will provide a transformational boost to Leigh and build on the continued success of the Leigh-Salford-Manchester Guided Busway."

Mr Battersby said that while there had been protests in Atherton about Leigh being chosen the council could only choose one town and an assessment process had been undertaken to support the Cabinet decision. Leigh town centre has a strong business and retail community with a thriving indoor market and a local catchment area of 120,000 people. However, like many other towns across the UK Leigh has been affected by changing shopping habits with fewer shops than a decade ago increasing the number of empty units.

In 2013 a Greater Manchester Town Centre study predicted there would be 31 per cent fewer shops in town centres by 2020. Wigan Council has recently completed town centre masterplans for Wigan, Leigh and Ashton-in-Makerfield and masterplans for Atherton and Tyldesley are in development. The masterplans identify how the borough's town centres need to play a significantly different role for local communities with housing having a more important future role.

Having more housing in town centres supports the Mayor's agenda to reduce the amount of greenbelt used for housing. Many town centres have no effective housing market due to costs of development, mixed land ownership and a low end value of any schemes.

### **WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OUR HOMELESS**

A new and improved approach to homelessness is helping to keep thousands of residents off the streets of Wigan. The approach, which sees Wigan Council working more closely with the voluntary and private sector, is helping to deliver more effective support and rehabilitation for the borough's homeless and rough sleepers by identifying and supporting those at risk as early as possible to prevent them reaching crisis point.

In addition to the current day time programmes offered by a number of groups, the new approach will implement a borough wide outreach provision, which will operate out of hours and at weekends. Two rehabilitation and support hubs will also be created, bringing together all relevant services to help rough sleepers.

The Leigh hub, based at Leigh Court House, will be operational at the end of January 2018 and the Wigan hub will be operational in summer 2018.

There will be emergency access beds available for the homeless and borough-wide services will be available seven days a week.

If you see a homeless person on the streets, please email [roughsleep@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:roughsleep@wigan.gov.uk) with as much information as possible (including their location) and our officers will investigate. You will also receive an update on the situation. Those who find themselves on the streets can also ring our out of hour's service on: 01942 828777

### **MANAGE YOUR MONEY, DON'T STRUGGLE WITH DEBT**

'Don't struggle with debt' is the message of a new campaign launching in Wigan Borough. Wigan Council has teamed up with Unify and the Citizen's Advice Bureau to help residents manage their money at one of the most expensive times of the year.

In the last twelve months, (October 2016 – November 2017) 1,718 people visited Wigan Council's crisis desk due to having no food, no money or no gas or electric so the local campaign will encourage residents to get support if they are worried about falling into debt or are already struggling.

There is lots of local support and advice out there for people but sometimes it can be difficult find help before it is too late. Credit Unions can provide loans for individuals without a good credit history and interest rates start at just 12.7 per cent, compared to payday lenders which charge APR of up to 1,509 per cent. The council is warning residents against using a payday lenders or loan sharks and is instead urging people to apply for a cheaper loan through a Credit Union or seek advice for how to manage their finances.

Lesley O'Halloran, Assistant Director For Customer Services at Wigan Council said: "If you find that you are struggling with debt and are unable to manage repayments, it is important to think about which debts you need to deal with first. There can be serious consequences to not paying your bills and we don't want people falling into debt. "At this time of year it can be easy to spend money on things that aren't needed and there is support out there for residents who need help managing their money. There are cheaper and safer alternatives to payday lenders and loan sharks. Although they may seem like the easy option, people don't realise how much interest they charge and it can be so damaging."

Angela Fishwick, chief executive of Unify Credit Union, said: "Residents should take extra care when borrowing money to pay for the cost of Christmas. Always ask how much the repayments will be, and what is the total cost of credit and only borrow from licensed lenders. Don't be tempted to borrow from doorstep lenders charging on average 400 per cent APR or from payday lenders charging in excess of 1000 per cent APR. If you are struggling to repay your high cost loan, talk to Unify, we are here to help."

For help and advice on how to manage your money, visit: [www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice)  
Alternatively, email [welfarerightsadvice@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:welfarerightsadvice@wigan.gov.uk) for information about the council's welfare outreach sessions.

### **TOGETHER WE CAN**

You may have already seen this on our social media channels but Wigan Council recently launched a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and wellbeing.

The campaign, #TogetherWeCan, takes into consideration a range of ages and triggers or life events that can be difficult times for people. We want to help people before they reach crisis point but the campaign is

also designed to resonate with those who may have more complex mental health needs by reinforcing the message that together, we can help.

The launch of the campaign focused on bereavement and loneliness in older people and the collateral we created (video, poster, flyer and email signature) can be found at [www.wigan.gov.uk/togetherwecan](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/togetherwecan) underneath the '#TogetherWeCan Campaign' tab. This web address also signposts to support available and we hope to develop the page to include real-life stories.

We will be creating more collateral like this based on other triggers and ages throughout the year and will push extra messaging on our social media channels. We would like to encourage everyone to engage with our campaign by tagging @WiganCouncil on Facebook and Twitter and using #TogetherWeCan.

If you have a positive story to tell or think your group / services could benefit people with mental health needs on either a minor or more complex scale, we would love to hear from you.

We also run free one hour long InMind sessions, which help people to learn more about looking after their mental wellbeing and spotting the signs of negative mental health. The session covers a number of key messages including, noticing changes in yourself, family members or friends, reducing the stigma and having the confidence to have different conversations around mental health.

Please email [public.health@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:public.health@wigan.gov.uk) to be involved and a member of the team will be in touch.

### **ADVICE AT HAND EASIER THAN EVER**

Starting Point Plus will now have longer opening hours and a new online service when Wigan Council begins offering the highly regarded support which has previously been provided by Age UK Wigan Borough.

To find out more go to [www.wigan.gov.uk/startingpointplus](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/startingpointplus).

The new phone lines will be available Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5 pm and 8.45 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. To contact the service call 01942 489011

### **THINK YOU CAN FOSTER?**

To find out more about fostering and how to become a foster carer in Wigan Borough go to [www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering) and for more details on 'You Can Foster' go to [www.youcanfoster.org](http://www.youcanfoster.org)

### **INCREDIBLE EDIBLE WIGAN**

What is Incredible Edible?

What Can I Grow?

How to get involved

Is there Funding Available?

Keep up to Date with Events & Workshops

Go to <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/The-Deal/Deal-Communities/Incredible-Edible/index.aspx>

For lots more information

### **WIGAN COUNCIL'S GOOD TRADER SCHEME**

Wigan Council's "Good Trader Scheme" is a directory of over 200 local, reputable businesses. All the listings have star ratings of up to five gold stars that previous customers have awarded them.

Ratings are given based on workmanship and customer service; the more satisfied the customer the higher the rating.

The scheme has been set up to ensure that the residents of the Wigan Borough are getting a fair deal when it comes to work round the home.

Trading Standards check out the traders' trading history before allowing them to be part of the scheme. Whether it's painting and decorating, joinery, or just tidying up your garden make sure you visit [www.wigan.gov.uk/goodtrader](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/goodtrader). Or ring the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 040506.

If you are aged over 50 or have a disability Wigan Council Starting Point Plus can access the Scheme on your behalf, contact Starting Point on 01942 489011

### **HEART HEALTH HELPS WITH FIGHT AGAINST DEMENTIA**

To find out more about dementia support visit [www.wigan.gov.uk/dementia](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/dementia)

### **TOGETHER FOR ADOPTION**

To find out more about Together for adoption visit [www.togetherforadoption.co.uk](http://www.togetherforadoption.co.uk)

### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE ON BUDGET FOR EFFICIENT WIGAN COUNCIL**

Bold reforms in delivering adult social care and strong financial management have helped a pioneering North West council stay on budget despite increasing demand from an ageing population. Wigan Council was one of the worst hit local authorities in the country for budget reductions after the announcement of austerity measures in 2010.

Through its Deal for the Future strategy the council has so far saved £115m through efficiency measures, reforming services and reducing demand. In the council's half-yearly financial report to cabinet members its adult social care department is highlighted as an example of how reforms have helped maintain a strong budget position. This is despite a sustained rise in the volume and complexity of people aged 18-64 requiring support, particularly in the area of learning disability.

Paul McKeivitt, Wigan Council's deputy chief executive and director of resources, said: "The Deal for the Future radically changed the way we deliver services compared to the past and will help us maintain a secure financial position in the future. "Despite an ageing population and an increased volume of complex cases our adult social care is on budget which is testament to the successful transformation of services in this directorate. "This does not mean there are not significant budget challenges ahead but the current and projected position is strong and one which our excellent staff and innovative leadership have all contributed to."

Stuart Cowley, Wigan Council's Director For Adult Social Care And Health said: "Through the Deal we focus on what really matters to residents who need adult social care support. "Our new model now better connects people into their local communities - through activities they enjoy - which has reduced reliance on traditional day services. "The fact that our different approach has not only improved many people's lives but also helped us maintain a strong budget position is a double success and one we are very proud of."

Overall the half-yearly report states the council is on track to hit its £16m savings target for 2017/18. Further good financial news for Wigan Council can be revealed with the authority receiving a £1.9m dividend boost through its shares in Manchester Airport Group.

The council along with the nine other Greater Manchester councils are shareholders in the airport, which thanks to its growth and success, is delivering healthy annual dividends. Mr McKeivitt added: "The dividend from the airport is a welcome additional income for the council and will help us realise savings and support vital services."

Wigan Council is shortlisted for the national Local Government Chronicle Awards 2018 for most efficient council of the year. It has achieved its required savings early through an accelerated plan saving on potential borrowing and inflationary costs.

As a result the savings target for the next three years up to 2020 has reduced from an original £45m to £38.6m. For the next three years the savings targets are: 2017/18 £16m, 2018/19 £12m and 2019/20 £10.6m The council has also kept Council Tax low – with it being the second lowest out of the ten Greater Manchester councils.

Pressures on the budget for the next three years include the introduction of the National Living Wage in the care sector potentially costing the council up to £3.4m and on-going residential costs for looked after children

### **NEW SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE IN WIGAN BOROUGH**

Sexual health services in Wigan Borough will be more accessible and community-led thanks to a new partnership.

Wigan Council awarded Spectrum Community Health CIC, a values-driven, not-for-profit social enterprise company, a five year contract to deliver all sexual health services across the borough. After a review identified opportunities for sexual health improvement, the local authority did a consultation to find out what services residents wanted to access, what challenges they currently faced and who they wanted to access services from.

Out of the responses received, 90 per cent strongly agreed that there should be one organisation responsible for care co-ordination and 88 per cent strongly agreed that there should be increased outreach in communities.

Professor Kate Ardern, Director For Public Health at Wigan Council said: “We are dedicated to providing effective services and it is important that our residents shape how those services are delivered. “We need to do things differently to get ahead of the curve and encourage a pro-active, preventative approach. We are extremely excited to welcome Spectrum CIC and believe that this new way of working will reduce the stigma and taboo nature of talking about sexual health.”

Spectrum CIC will deliver both adult and young people’s sexual health services and will be in the heart of communities through nurse-led clinics in seven areas across the borough. They will also adopt a digital focus, which could see service users self-testing for sexually transmitted diseases at home and accessing help online.

Dr. Linda Harris, Chief Executive at Spectrum Community Health CIC, said: “We’re absolutely delighted with the news of being chosen by Wigan to deliver their sexual health services and are excited by the opportunity to support the ambitions the council has to develop innovative citizen centred sexual health and wellbeing services. “We are very much looking forward to working with the council and the people of Wigan Borough to shape the services they want and need.”

The new partnership will be official from March 2018.

For more information about sexual health visit [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

### **COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION DECLARED FOR ALL CARE LEAVERS IN WIGAN BOROUGH**

Young adults who have left care are to be exempt from paying council tax in Wigan Borough. Wigan Council’s cabinet this week approved plans to exempt anyone aged between 18 and 21 who has previously been cared for by Wigan Council from paying council tax.

It is hoped the move will help support care leavers to establish independence and reduce the risk of these young people from getting into debt and rent arrears at this crucial time in their life. The change has been introduced by the council immediately and will be back-dated to April. Care leavers in full time education up to the age of 25 are already exempt.

James Winterbottom, Wigan Council's director for children's services, said: "Care leavers are among the most vulnerable groups in our community but also have many individual skills and talents that benefit our communities in many ways and we want to make sure that we support them to make best use of these. "As corporate parents and through our commitment in The Deal the council wants to ensure that young people's experiences of leaving care and moving into independent living are positive and improve their life chances – just as any parent does. "We are proud to have introduced this change and know through speaking with our young care leavers and through the research available that this will make a big difference to their lives."

Wigan Council supports young people through the Deal for Children and Young People and its children and young people's service was rated as 'Good' by Ofsted earlier this year. Most children who come into care have experienced complex trauma and faced significant challenges early in life.

National research shows that care leavers often experience debt and arrears of rent, council tax, household bills and transport costs and feel insufficiently prepared for independent living when they left care. Care leavers are often in a position where the transition from care to independent living is swift and at a younger age than their peers.

There are 142 care leavers aged between 18 and 21 living in Wigan Borough and the exemption will currently directly affect 31 care leavers in the borough who are paying council tax

### **SCHOOL READY IN WIGAN**

The number of children ready for school in Wigan Borough has almost doubled in the last five years. As the Mayor of Greater Manchester urges organisations to sign up to a new pledge to help get children ready for school, Wigan's school ready journey is already well underway.

Figures released by the Department for Education showed that last year 12,157 children in Greater Manchester started school not ready to learn. This represents 32.5 per cent of children who started school last year in the city-region. In Wigan school readiness figures have improved significantly over the last five years from 37 per cent in 2013 to 69 per cent in 2017 – higher than the 67 per cent North West average.

Thanks to its proactive approach Wigan Council was invited to speak at the October Greater Manchester School Readiness Summit by Mayor Andy Burnham. At the summit the Mayor said more needed to be done to bring neighbourhood services like health visitors, school visitors, GPs and schools together to identify and support those children at risk. This approach is already being utilised in Wigan through its Start Well model.

Mike Chew, Assistant Director For Children's Integration at Wigan Council, said: "The model was set up two years ago after residents told us they wanted services to be more accessible and joined up. "On the back of that we commissioned five Start Well Family Centres to be based in those areas facing the most difficult challenges in a bid to improve outcomes for children and families by supporting them to live well and healthy lives. This place-based model puts the emphasis on communities, ensuring services are accessible and visible. The aim is to wrap services around local communities to improve links between organisations."

Nowhere is the impact of this approach more evident than in the Norley Hall estate in Wigan. The local school, GP practice, church, charity and Start Well Family Centre is working together to improve outcomes for children.

The GP practice holds drop in sessions for parents to give them the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have about their child's behaviour or development as well as medical needs. Fur Clemt, a charity that intercepts food deemed for landfill, is helping to provide low cost meals to ensure families on a budget can afford to eat. And the church runs a number of sessions including toddler sessions, debt support advice and a youth club.

The Strategic Lead for Westfield Start Well Family Centre is Ruth Houghton, who is also the assistant head teacher for foundation phase at Westfield Community School. Ruth said: "Working in this place-based way ensures that we take our services to our families where and when they need them. Our work as a Family Centre is based very much on the principle of the community supporting us, not us supporting them; with everyone working together from the roots of our community to create better outcomes for families and young people."

The next phase of Start Well will bring health visitors and school nurses together under one roof, further integrating health and social care for the benefit of local children.

### **WIGAN BOROUGH'S NEW DRUG AND ALCOHOL RECOVERY SERVICE**

A national charity will take the reins on Wigan Borough's drug and alcohol recovery programme this year in a bid to make services even more visible and available in local areas.

Addaction, a service supporting people of all ages to make positive behavioural changes has been awarded a five-year contract by Wigan Council to deliver all drug and alcohol services across the borough. It is the first time that adult and young people's services will be integrated, which will provide a smoother recovery journey, especially those transitioning into adulthood.

Professor Kate Ardern, Director For Public Health at Wigan Council said: "We understand that the recovery process is different for everybody and can also be extremely sensitive, so we want to work with Addaction to provide a bespoke plan for service users based on goals individuals set for themselves. "This is an exciting new partnership, which will build on the existing successes of our current drug and alcohol recovery programme and will put a larger focus on early help, prevention and self-reliance.

"We are innovative and flexible in our approaches and value community knowledge. In addition to providing our own services, we are proud to support a number of local groups with our Deal for Communities Investment Fund, such as Greenslate Farm in Orrell, who also help bring recovering individuals back into society by giving them skills and routine."

The current main bases in Wigan (Coops) and Leigh (Kennedy House) will remain and there will be dedicated officers in each of the seven service delivery footprint areas who will work within the community to truly understand residents' needs.

Siobhan Peters, service manager at Addaction said: "We are very happy to have been awarded this contract and are committed to working with Wigan Council to support people with their recovery. "Although we have a thorough understanding of the borough's needs as a result of our work within the current service delivery model, we are keen to deepen this understanding through our community orientated approach."

Wigan Council is leading the way with its drug and alcohol recovery service by working with primary care providers and communities to combat addiction to all drugs, including over the counter medication. For more information about Addaction visit: [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

### **FROM THE STREETS TO THE TOWN HALL**

A man who has turned his life around after finding himself homeless has championed a scheme that helped him get there.

At age 16, Joseph Shaw, was diagnosed with a mental illness and his relationships with family members were strained. Joe left the familiarity of the care system behind at 18 and found himself on the streets just six months later after falling into rent arrears.

Wigan Council helped Joe get his name on the housing register as a priority resident but before he was housed in Hindley, he drifted from couch-to-couch and slept rough. The council's care leaver's team also offered Joe an opportunity to gain experience in the work place through the Confident Futures programme, which offers young people who grew up in the care system the chance to try out different work placements and to develop professional and transferable skills.

Joe did his placement with the council gaining experience in property maintenance, which led to an apprenticeship. Now 20, Joe works full time in the council tax team in the town hall and has nothing but positive things to say about the programme.

He said: "It really has changed my life. It has given me the confidence, resilience and the skills to apply for opportunities I will benefit from. "The council has given me a chance. The organisation's attitude towards young people is great as they understand we have new ideas and there is a real drive to get young people involved. One of my ideas has even been implemented at work, which makes me feel really valued here. "The level of support I've received from colleagues has been tremendous, especially after the recent passing of my brother, Chris, who also had his own troubles and had found himself on the streets. I'm now in touch with my Dad and feel like because of the opportunities I've been given, I've had the confidence to build these relationships again." Joe will also benefit from the council's new motion to waive council tax for care leavers up until the age of 21.

Donna Hall, chief executive of the council said: "We want our residents to be ambitious and successful and we're committed to investing resources into our young people. "Joe has faced many obstacles in his life from a young age and to see what he has achieved and how he has turned this into a positive is really inspiring. He is a fantastic member of staff and I'm really proud of him.

"The Confident Futures programme offers young care leavers lots of support to help them succeed in whatever job role they choose to go into and to help them live well independently. "We will continue to offer support to help care leavers stay on track as they start to get jobs and move into their own accommodation."

Any young care leavers who are interested in getting involved in future Confident Futures programmes should email Wigan Council's aspiring futures team, [aspfut@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:aspfut@wigan.gov.uk)

### **FAMILY WINS WALKING COMPETITION**

A committed family who walked seven miles to enter a competition have won first prize.

Wigan Council installed seven giant heart structures in parks across the borough earlier this year, encouraging people to get active and improve their physical and mental health. The hearts, designed by local school children, each include a one-mile route helping people to take the first steps to healthier living,

while also appreciating the borough's stunning surroundings. Those completing the walks were given the chance to enter a competition by figuring out a word that was made up of the hidden letters on each heart.

The Wadeson family from Ashton-in-Makerfield entered the competition, correctly submitting the word 'healthy' and have been awarded passes for Haigh Woodland Park's high ropes and crazy golf. Michael Wadeson, 7, said: "I really enjoyed doing the walks and it was good to see so many different parks. My favourite bit was finding all the letters on the back of the hearts. I enjoyed trying to work out the mystery word. I'm really excited to play on the high ropes and crazy golf next year!"

Michael's Mum, Joanne Wadeson, was really pleased with the council's scheme, which was put in place as part of 'The Heart of Wigan' – the council's flagship public health programme. She said: "I think it's a great way to get people out walking. It's not too strenuous but gives you that well needed burst of fresh air and it's great for families and children. Michael really enjoyed finding the letters and he was really happy to have won the competition. "I think the one-mile walks are also a really good way to encourage people to discover different green spaces they may not have previously known about, we were really impressed!"

The heart structures are in pride of place at the following parks:

- Mesnes Park
- Pennington Flashes
- Golborne Park
- Haigh Woodland Park
- Amberswood
- Three Sisters
- Lilford Park

### **SUCCESS FOR RESIDENTS SUPPORTED INTO EMPLOYMENT**

Residents in Wigan Borough with disabilities who have secured and sustained employment have had their important contribution to the workplace recognised and celebrated.

At the annual supported employment awards Warriors Player Anthony Clubb joined parents, carers, family and friends to recognise the fantastic achievements of disabled residents that have been supported into employment and continued employment for 5,10,15 and 20 years. The awards night also applauded bosses from local firms who employ a workforce that reflects our local communities who also provide excellent leadership and support to people with disabilities.

Wigan Council is encouraging local employers who could offer paid opportunities or work placements to someone with a disability to come forward and join the success.

Local firm MPV Packaging has been supported Wigan resident Andrew Knight, who has a learning disability, for 16 years. Andrew was one winner of the Supported Employee of the Year 2017. Louise Boardman from MPV Packaging said: "When Andrew first started he was very shy and over the years has grown into his own. He hasn't let any of his disabilities affect him. "With support from his colleagues and supported employment services Andrew has completed all the challenges that have been set for him and has shown determination and fully deserves his award as supported employee of the year. "We would like to thank the supported employment service for their continued support over the last few years."

The council's supported employment team works with people who have a disability, getting to know them, developing and matching their skills, interests and aspirations to the right job for them. As well as helping with job applications, they help with interview techniques, work placements and provide support in the

workplace. The service also celebrated an outstanding achievement of one individual who has been employed for 20 years at a local retail store.

Cllr Keith Cunliffe, Cabinet Member For Adult Social Care, said: “Over the years our residents have achieved brilliant things. The awards night is great because you get a real insight into what employment for someone with a disability really means to them and how important their role and contribution can be. “I’m so proud of what the service has achieved. Our advisors do a fantastic job of working with individuals and employers to find the right opportunities and to see people flourish and grow in their positions is inspirational. “We would urge local employers to come forward if they can offer an opportunity to someone with a disability. We can support them with the right training and will be there every step of the way until people can work independently.”

Wigan Council has also pledged to strengthen its recruitment of people with disabilities or long term health conditions, recognising the strengths of a diverse workforce that reflects local communities, committed to offering a wide range of jobs across all areas of the council.

Employers are being encouraged to contact the council if they would like to learn more about the advantages of creating employment opportunities for people with a disability within their workplace. If your business can offer paid opportunities or work placements for disabled people please contact [supempt@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:supempt@wigan.gov.uk) or 01942 828439.

Full list of winners from night:

Paul Davies – Wigan Council – 5 years employment (Although he has been employed for 40 years)

Dawn Turnbull – Tesco – 10 years employment

Stephen Robinson – McDonalds – 10 years employment

Robert Hamlet – Wetherspoons The Bocket – 10 years employment

Sean Gough – Asda – 10 years employment

Darren Turner – Empire Cinema – 10 years employment

Kevin Starkie – Profile Patterns – 10 years employment

Paul Heaton – Belmont Packaging - 15 years employment

Colleen Beaman – Morrison’s – 15 years employment

Ciaran O’Connor – Sainsbury’s – 20 years employment

Matthew Turnbull – Special Recognition Award –Asda Swinton

Andrew Knight – MPV Packaging – Supported Employee of the Year

### **YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE LEARNED TO COOK FOR CHRISTMAS**

A group of young people have been learning how to cook healthy versions of their favourite takeaways in a project run by Wigan Council in partnership with The Bridge Community Café in Leigh.

Lisa Darlington, one of the trustees from Leigh Caring Kitchen, the charity behind The Bridge Café, says, ‘We wanted to educate the young people on basic cooking skills and they told us their favourite foods were takeaways so we decided to teach them how to cook their own healthier versions of them from scratch. We’ve made chicken dishes, burgers, pizzas, using fresh, local ingredients. We’ve shown them how easy it can be and how much cheaper it is to cook for yourself. I’ve loved this project and the young people have been brilliant. We’ve all eaten each meal together as a group after cooking it and everyone has made friends and got along together.’

14 year old Jack Warburton, from Hindley, says ‘I’ve learned all about the timing of cooking foods and how to cook safely. I’ve enjoyed everything about this project. I’ve enjoyed learning how to cook and I like eating together, it’s calming and relaxing. I’ve learned I can get along well with other people.’

The young people celebrated the end of the project by inviting their parents and carers for a Christmas dinner at The Bridge Café, which they enjoyed with staff from Wigan Council who set up the project and volunteers from The Bridge.

Chrissie Eckersley, Jack's mum, says, 'He's done so well, he's learned how to cook for himself and he's even started teaching me how to cook! He's more relaxed and helpful at home and he joins in when I'm cooking and when his dad's cooking.'

Wigan Council's Deal encourages young people to get involved in their community, challenge themselves to give new things a go and to help others. Councillor Jenny Bullen, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, says, 'This project is a great example of young people giving up some of their free time to learn a new skill that will really benefit them and help them to be more independent in later life. It's fantastic that volunteers in Leigh have also given up their time to pass on their cooking skills to local young people, it seems that everyone has got a lot out of this project and I hope they all enjoyed their Christmas dinner!'

### **WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAMME GIVES SANDY A NEW LEASE OF LIFE**

Sandy Mottram enrolled onto the Lose Weight Feel Great programme shortly after his 32nd birthday, and hasn't looked back. For two years Sandy had been taking prescription pain killers every day due to the damage caused through putting pressure on his knees, this was down to his weight gain. At the time he weighed around 18 stone, which was the heaviest he had ever been.

Sandy found the sessions at Lose Weight Feel Great difficult at first as he was trying to tackle the harder levels straight away and was finding it hard to keep up. His instructor worked with him to start at the lower levels with the aim to build up in the weeks ahead. He said: "Having the option to drop down to a lower intensity kept me motivated in those early weeks, I feel if I hadn't taken their advice I would have been disheartened by my inability to keep up and perhaps I would have stopped attending the classes."

Each week Sandy would set himself new targets until he was able to maintain his highest level throughout the whole class. He said: "I even started running a mile from my house to the exercise class each week to get warmed up, sometimes I would run home afterwards."

A few months after Sandy started the programme he adopted a rescue dog named Nico, previously Sandy didn't feel fit enough to exercise a dog as much as it needed. Now Sandy walks Nico for miles every week and regularly goes running with him. Sandy said: "Nico gets tired before I do." Managing to reach his target weight in just under six months Sandy lost a total of 4 stone 9 pounds, but more importantly he's maintained his weight loss for a further eight months.

He reflected on his inspiring journey through the Lose Weight Feel Great programme, Sandy said: "I have enjoyed a wide range of different classes with different instructors, though I found one thing the same in all the classes and this was the extraordinary amount of care that all of the instructors have for every single person on the course, the level of care and attention still overwhelms me each week."

Sandy now plans his meals and exercise regime for the week and it's become second nature to him, he genuinely looks forward to it: "I strongly recommend the Lose Weight Feel Great programme to anyone who is looking to make a healthy lifestyle change. "The exercise classes are possible for anybody at any level and there is room to improve each week, this works because it's not a diet, it is a lifestyle change. If your experience is anything like mine you will never look back!"

For more details regarding weight management please call 01942 496496 or visit the Lose Weight Feel Great webpage.