



## **Making Better Use Of Our Resources**

### **Making Blaenau Gwent ‘a better place to live to work’**

The Welsh Assembly Government has a vision of a Welsh Public Service that shares common goals and works across service and organisational boundaries. This vision is being developed through a review of public services that is being undertaken by Sir Jeremy Beecham. The Review was completed and reported back to the Welsh Assembly in July 2006 and the recommendations set out a key agenda for change that will build on the existing policy frameworks for:-

- Community Leadership
- Wales Programme for Improvement
- Making the Connections

This agenda for change will provide the Council with significant challenges. Blaenau Gwent Council has shown over the past 2 years that it can rise to such challenges and opportunities. However it is important to remember that if we do not rise to these challenges the Beecham Review will lead to significant changes in the way local government operates.

To ensure value for money and the delivery of efficient, high quality services the Council is improving its Performance Management arrangements by linking financial and performance information together. This information provides a more accurate picture of how services are performing and how they can become more effective. Last year the Council introduced a 3-year Financial Strategy that included a Priority Based Budget setting process, as a result the Council has been able to address its key risk areas over the last 12 months and make significant improvements to its services.

All efficiency gains are now recorded in a Central Record of Efficiencies that evidence the Authority's progress against the target.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to maximising value for money in order to deliver better quality services in Wales and has set a target of achieving £600 million of value for money improvements across the Welsh public service by 2010 with at least half of this being reached by 2008. This has resulted in the Council having to make at least £1.1 million of efficiency savings each year. The aim of targeting value for money improvements is to free up resources for use in delivering further improvements in public services. It is not about public spending cuts that result in reductions in public services. The Council has therefore had to either (a) achieve the same levels of output for reduced inputs, or (b) achieve greater output for the same input.

The £1.1million target for efficiency savings was achieved, and exceeded in 2005/06 (subject to audit). A summary of the achievements is shown below, with efficiencies identified under the four main themes recommended by the Welsh Assembly, of:

- Smarter Procurement
- Streamlining Support Functions
- Shaping Public Services
- Making Better Use of Staff Time, Skills and Expertise

<b>THEME</b>	<b>2005/06 OUTTURN (£'000)</b>	<b>2006/07 FORECAST (£'000)</b>	<b>2007/08 FORECAST (£'000)</b>
Smarter Procurement	203	89	338
Streamlining Support Functions	78	235	300
Shaping Public Services	1,486	1,116	710
Making Better Use of Staff Time, Skills and Expertise	77	15	380
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,455</b>	<b>1,728</b>



### **Smarter Procurement**

This covers efficiencies made during the procurement of goods and services. The vast majority of these were savings made by the Authority's Procurement Section and relate to savings on the procurement of goods and services for the whole Authority e.g. stationery, telephones and office furniture. The Authority has also been developing an electronic procurement initiative and successfully piloted the Welsh Purchasing Card scheme during the year.

### **Streamlining Support Functions**

These are efficiencies achieved by simplifying and standardising business processes to ensure they are streamlined e.g. changes in the way we advertise jobs etc.

### **Shaping Public Services**

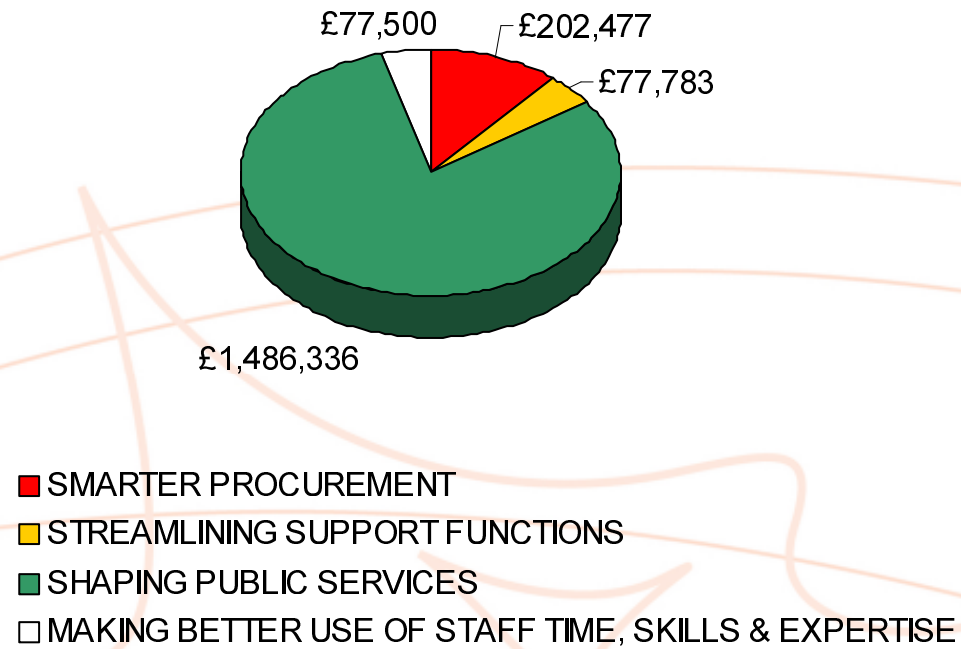
These are efficiencies achieved by re-shaping services to meet the needs of today. By reviewing the Authority's insurance claims patterns, it was possible to capitalise insurance payments and invest money in footpaths and highways in the County Borough. As a direct result of introducing the Leisure Corporate Membership Life £70,000 of efficiency savings has been achieved. A review of the land disposal policy has resulted in additional income being made available to fund more schemes, and the reconfiguration of the Looked After Children service has secured more efficient and focussed services for children in need. One of the largest projects undertaken this year is the opening of C2BG – the Authority's new Contact Centre which is providing a more flexible and focussed point of contact for the public.

### **Making Better Use of Staff Time, Skills and Expertise**

By restructuring some functions and redeploying staff, the Authority is able to ensure staff resources are used in the most cost efficient and effective way.



## Total Efficiency Savings 2005/06 Across Themes



All efficiency gains are now recorded in a Central Record of Efficiencies that evidence the Authority's progress against the target.