

Stafford Borough Council

Annual Report

2008 / 2009



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

www.staffordbc.gov.uk

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Foreword

By Councillor Mike Heenan,
Leader of Stafford Borough Council

We have achieved some tremendous results in the previous 12 months – not only through our delivery of services but also the work we are doing with our partners.

This 'Annual Report' for 2008/09 is a snapshot of what we have been able to deliver and a look forward to what we have set out to achieve over the next year.

It demonstrates how we are meeting our targets in our priority areas, that is, Prosperity for All, Cleaner, Greener, Safer Communities, Health and Wellbeing, and Leading and Delivering for our Community.

It only takes a glance at the news to know how relevant all our priorities are to what is happening around the globe today and for the future.

Prosperity: We achieved the highly acclaimed Beacon Status for our work with our partners in boosting prosperity – at a time when we are in the grip of the worst recession for a generation.

Cleaner, Greener, Safer: With your help our new waste service has seen recycling hit nearly 50% putting us alongside the best authorities in the country. We have helped reduce crime by 15%, and one of our best performances has been the work keeping our streets and open spaces clean.

Health and Wellbeing: Membership of our new leisure centre has risen by 50% and we now have a high participation level of adults taking part in sport and active recreation.

Finally – **Leading and Delivering:** More people look to the Council to help them through the current economic climate – and it is at this time when we must lead and deliver for our community. From the achievements within this report, I am sure you will agree, that we have fulfilled our fourth priority in leading and delivering for the community.

I hope you find the report interesting and a testament to the hard work of all those employed by Stafford Borough Council who want to do what is best for our community.

Councillor Mike Heenan
Leader of the Council



PROSPERITY FOR ALL

It has been a difficult 12 months for families and businesses suffering as a result of the global recession. In 2009 the Council was awarded the prestigious 'Beacon Status' for its work in improving the prosperity of the Borough through partnership work.

Here are some of the ways the Council has been helping increase prosperity for the whole community during 2008/09 - and also what we plan to do in 2009/10.

It includes supporting new and existing business, promoting rural regeneration and the take up of benefits, and making our town centres attractive and vibrant places to visit.

Last year we:

- Were successful in getting £3 million from the government to help with future housing growth
- Worked with developers to progress the multi-million pound office and retail development at Tipping Street
- Assisted more than 400 businesses and helped create 90 jobs
- Helped residents claim an extra £1.1 million of 'Council Tax' and 'Housing' benefits they were entitled to
- Opened the new £15million Stafford Leisure Centre
- Organised a series of successful events including Stafford Half Marathon and the army homecoming parade
- Made improvements to the Riverside Walk in Stafford and the canal towpath area in Westbridge Park, Stone

This year we will:

- Move forward with major housing, retail and office developments in Stafford
- Reduce the time taken to process major and routine planning applications
- Work with Orbit Care and Repair to provide advice on housing adaptations
- Complete a further phase of towpath improvements from Stone to Barlaston
- Undertake a resurfacing programme for car parks across the Borough
- Deliver a range of cultural activities in Stafford Town Centre
- Work closely with local retailers and landlords to reduce the number of vacant shops

CLEANER, GREENER, SAFER COMMUNITIES

Climate change and anti-social behaviour are rarely out of the media spotlight and, along with keeping the Borough clean, they form the second of the priorities. In fact the cost of keeping our streets and open spaces clean is around £1 million a year - a large percentage of our revenue budget.

Highlights from this section include litter prosecutions, the successful doorstep recycling service and a reduction in crime.

Last year we:

- Increased doorstep recycling by almost 50% following the introduction of the new waste collection service
- Fined more than 40 people and brought two successful prosecutions for littering and fly-tipping offences.
- Beat our three year target to reduce crime by 15%
- Opened a shop in Stafford to promote Community Safety in Partnership with the Police, Primary Health Care Trust and Army, among others.
- Retained the 'Green Flag' for Victoria Park - awarded to the best parks in the country
- Carried out around 600 inspections of food premises and over 270 Health and Safety audits
- Introduced a website which rates food businesses on their hygiene standards

This year we will:

- Continue to increase recycling levels with the roll out of the new waste service to a further 4000 homes
- Increase recycling awareness to reduce the amount of rubbish thrown away by 2% from each household
- Provide more safe places for victims of domestic violence
- Work with clubs, pubs and restaurants to maintain a safe night-time environment
- Continue with improvement plans for Victoria Park and retain the 'Green Flag' status
- Improve CCTV cameras in Stafford town



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The problems associated with being overweight have been singled out as one of the biggest dangers to the nations health - especially in young people. We all have a duty to ensure this is tackled.

'Health and Wellbeing' forms the third of the Council's top priorities.

But we do much more than providing free swimming for youngsters. We ensure people live in safe conditions and that the anti-smoking legislation is complied with.

Last year we:

- Gave help and advice to more than 1000 residents on housing issues and prevented 128 households becoming homeless.
- Helped 120 people with disabilities have their homes adapted
- Gave 500 households help to make their homes warmer
- Provided free swimming for youngsters aged 16 and under in the school holidays
- Had high participation for adult sport and active recreation in the West Midlands
- Increased the number of health walks
- Inspected 500 premises to make sure they were complying with the smoke free laws

This year we will:

- Work with developers to provide an additional 55 affordable homes in urban and rural areas
- Open two new Signpost Centres to promote community involvement in healthier lifestyles
- Give a further 500 households help to achieve warmer homes
- Ensure a further 100 homes are adapted for people with disabilities
- Bid for more money to improve children's play facilities across the Borough
- Extend the free swimming scheme for those 16 and under and introduce it for the over 60s.





LEADING AND DELIVERING

During the unprecedented financial circumstances of the last 12 months people have looked to the Council to lead for the community. Whatever the challenges that lie ahead we will continue to deliver for our community.

To do this we will ensure our residents get value for money, improve the quality of communication with customers and put them first in all we do.

Last year we:

- Achieved government efficiency savings of more than £600,000
- Increased the number of dates for people to pay their council tax or non-domestic rates
- Enhanced our website with more than 16,000 transactions carried out online
- Rolled out the free bus pass scheme for older residents and people with disabilities
- Were ranked in the top ten nationally for burial and cremation services
- Dealt with over 500,000 telephone calls - with 80% being dealt with at first point of contact
- Made half of all our public buildings accessible to those with disabilities

This year we will:

- Increase the number of customer issues dealt with at first point of contact
- Ensure 60% of our buildings are accessible for people with disabilities
- Introduce an online booking system for leisure facilities
- Take the lead on Climate Change by helping establish the Borough's first 'low carbon community' in Derrington
- Develop our website to enable more transactions to be made online

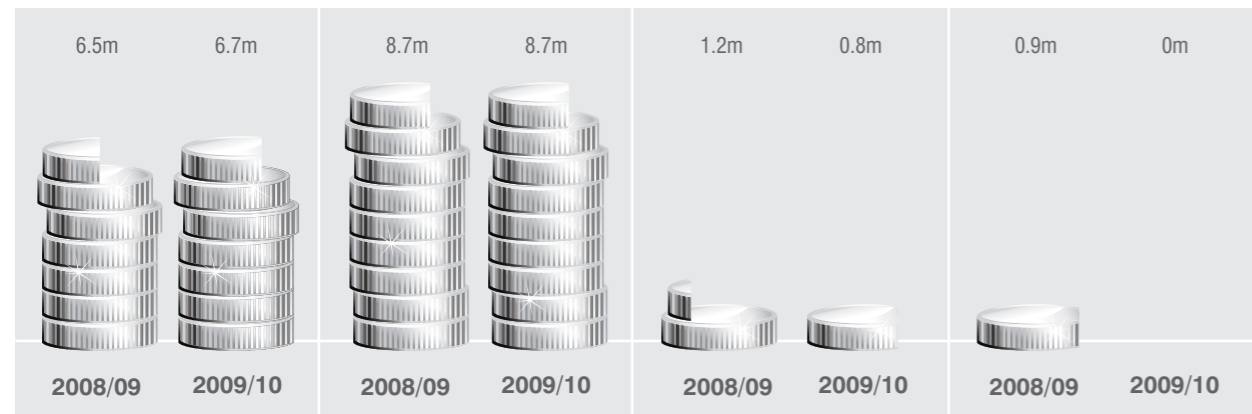


FINANCES

On these two pages we have summarised our income and expenditure for the last financial year and our money plans for the year ahead.

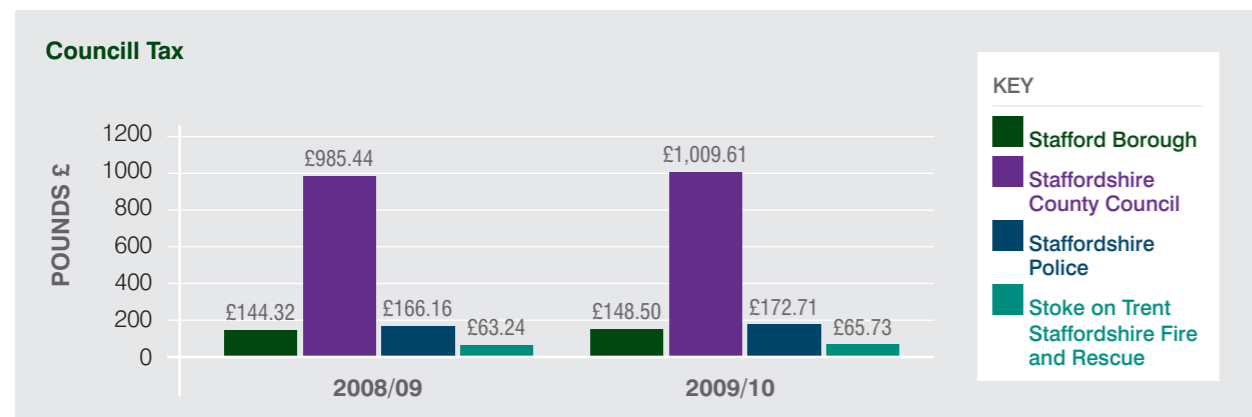
Our Income

Our total income in 2008/09 was £17.3m and is an estimated £16.2m in 2009/10. Around a third of our income is collected through the Council Tax: £6.5m in 2008/09 and £6.7m in 2009/10. The rest of our income is from other sources, including a significant proportion from central Government.



Council Tax

In 2008/09 an average band D Council Tax bill, before parish/town council precepts amounted to £1,359.16. This increased to £1,396.55 for 2009/10. The charts below show the different components of the Council Tax bill for an average band D household.

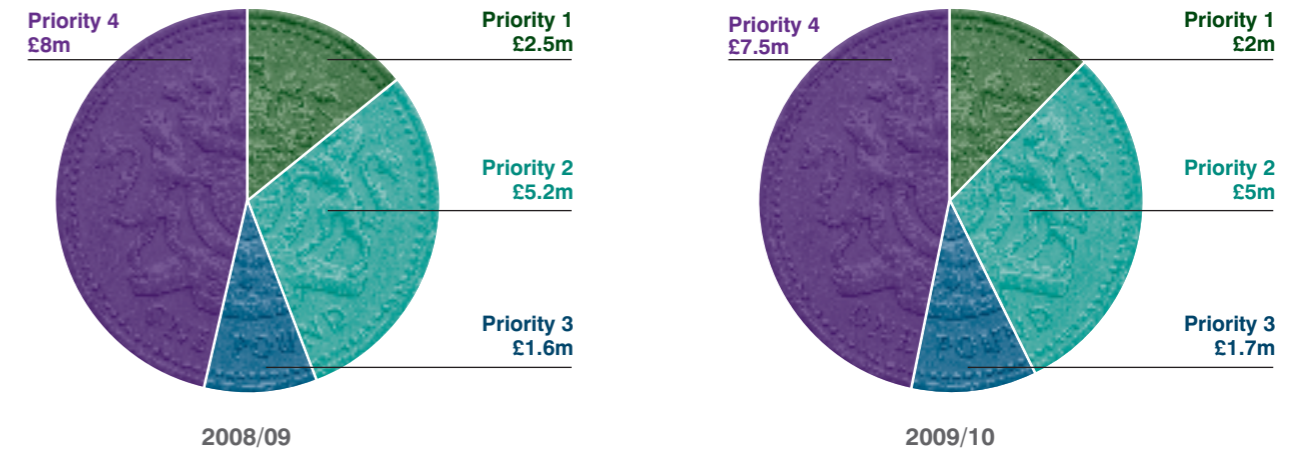


This Council has pegged annual increases in Council Tax to the rate of inflation for the last six years. This year just 10.6% of residents' Council Tax goes to fund our services. Our portion of the Council Tax for an average band D property is £148.50. This compares to a national average for district councils of £163.00.

FINANCES

Our Expenditure

We set our budget based on our four corporate priorities. The pie charts below compares our net expenditure on services [after fees, charges and other income] in 2008/09 with our planned expenditure for 2009/10.



PRIORITY 1 Prosperity for All	PRIORITY 2 Cleaner Green Safer	PRIORITY 3 Health and Wellbeing	PRIORITY 4 Leading and Delivering
Planning and Regeneration Housing & Council Tax Benefits Community Support Delivery Through Partnership Working Off Street Parking Enforcement Town Centre Management Tourism	Borough Markets Gatehouse Theatre Refuse and Recycling Services Community Safety Street Scene Parks and Open Spaces CCTV Licensing Powers Climate Change	Swimming Pools and Leisure Complexes Sports Development Health and Enforcement Health Promotions Food Safety Pollution Pest Control Housing Advice Housing Adaptations Affordable Housing Register of Electors	Customer Contact Centre IT Investing in our Buildings Procurement Council's Website Performance Management Human Resources Local Strategic Partnership Running the Council

We also invest in the Borough, making use of our proceeds from other asset sales along with grants and other contributions we receive to fund major projects. Our capital expenditure for 2008/09 and planned expenditure for 2009/10 is set out below:-

	2009/10 £000	2008/09 £000		2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000
Disabled Facilities Grants	801	760	Purchase of Riverside day nursery	153	-
Adoption of Housing Act Sewerage works	623	700	Disabled adaptations to Council buildings	116	150
Private sector housing grants	316	173	Purchase of Streetscene equipment	106	80
Eagle housing project	300	-	Gatehouse Theatre boiler replacement	-	150
Waterscape project	291	566	Car park re-surfacing	-	156
Stafford Leisure Centre fitness equipment	289	-			

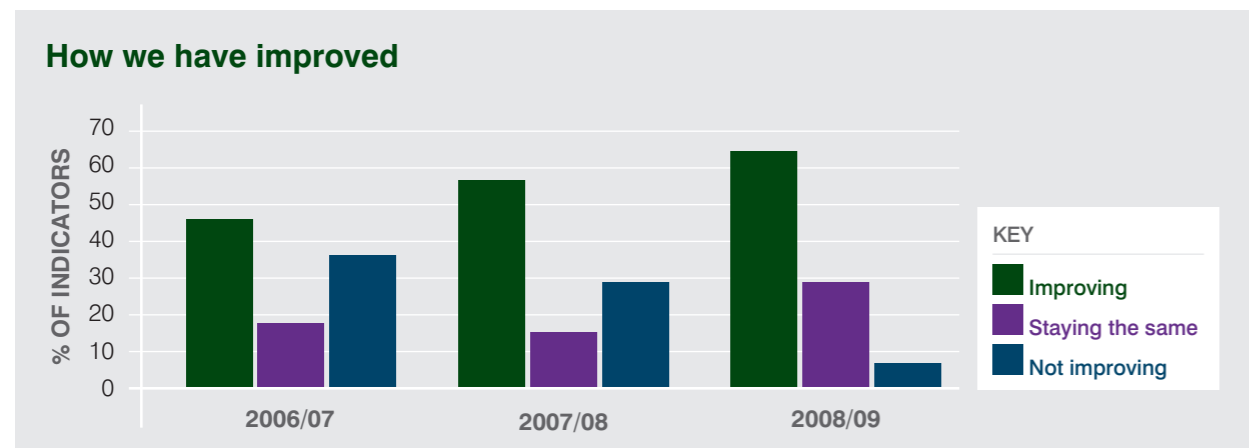
HOW WE HAVE PERFORMED

There have been many notable successes in 2008/09. Some indicators we set ourselves and others are national indicators set by the government. The amount we now recycle has put us among the best performing authorities in the country. In a difficult economic climate we have increased membership at the new leisure centre by 50%.

Here are some of our top performances:

- The amount of household waste recycled and composted
- Keeping the Borough streets clean and free from litter
- The number of households with access to recycling facilities
- Providing affordable homes
- Reducing crime in the Borough
- The number of leisure centre users
- Keeping cafes, pubs and restaurants smoke free
- Making it easy to find information from our website

The chart below shows how our performance has improved over the last three years.



Areas earmarked for improvement this year:

- Processing planning applications
- Work on climate change
- Bookings at the leisure centre and Gatehouse Theatre
- Answering calls through the customer contact centre more quickly and efficiently
- Processing of benefit claims

PARTNERSHIPS

To deliver the best service for our community we frequently work with other agencies. By working with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector we can pool resources and share expertise. A number of initiatives would not get started if it were not for the work we undertook with other organisations.

There are a number of important partnerships operating in the Borough. The overarching one is called the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which brings together public, private, community and voluntary organisations across the Borough to deliver lasting improvements for the people living, working or visiting the area. This ensures efficient use of resources and better outcomes for our community.

It was our partnership working which led to the Council being awarded the prestigious 'Beacon Award' in 2009 for improving prosperity for the Borough.

In total we work with around 300 agencies

Here are some of the achievements from partnership working:

- Creating a further two 'Signpost' centres to provide multi agency advice
- Opening the 'Safer Stafford Shop' in the Guildhall Shopping Centre to provide safety and other advice to the public
- Identifying six areas in the Borough for special measures to combat unemployment
- "Safer Stafford Shop outreach projects" – where we tackle local environmental issues along with the police and other agencies
- Safeguarding victims of domestic violence through the 'Sanctuary Scheme' which enables the victims to stay in their own homes
- Identifying five priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people in our Borough
- Providing exercise advice and opportunities for those in need of a healthier lifestyle



YOUR SAY

The government commissioned a survey of how people felt about issues concerning Stafford Borough. This is called the 'Place Survey.' The Council also has its own 'People's Panel' made up of 1000 residents selected randomly who agreed to play their part in telling us what they thought on a range of issues.

These results are extremely important to us as they help shape council priorities and tell us what we are doing well and in which areas you want us to improve.

Around 850 people responded to the government's questionnaire and this is just some of the what was revealed.

84% were satisfied with their local area. And overall satisfaction with local services provided by the Council is good. For example; doorstep recycling had a 79% satisfaction rating along with 80% for refuse collection.

The survey also revealed what aspects are most important to people across the Borough with 'level of crime,' health services' and 'clean streets' coming out on top compared with the least important issues to local residents of 'race relations,' 'level of pollution,' 'cultural facilities' and 'community activities.'

And the most important areas for improvement according to those who took part in the 'Place Survey' - activities for teenagers, level of traffic congestion and roads and pavement repairs.

Satisfaction with the Borough Council's leisure facilities was high in a recent response from our 'People's Panel.' For example, 'parks and play areas,' 'Stafford Castle' and the 'Gatehouse Theatre' received satisfaction ratings of more than 80%.

More than 70% of participants felt they were well informed with what the Council is doing with the local press the most popular medium for getting that information.

Our 'People's Panel' also want at the top of the Council's agenda - using its powers to reduce litter and flytipping, identifying priority areas to tackle crime and providing more affordable homes.

You can find out more details on the surveys from the 'People's Panel' newsletter as well as information on and how you can join online at:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/peoplespanel

Or email us at:

consultation@staffordbc.gov.uk

Alternatively speak to:

Sue Pote on 01785 619 293

Useful Information

ADDRESS:

Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford, ST16 3AQ

OPEN HOURS:

Monday to Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

CONTACT DETAILS:

WEB staffordbc.gov.uk

EMAIL customercontactcentre@staffordbc.gov.uk

TEL 01785 619 000

EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS:

TEL 01785 619 170

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES:

Benefits 01785 619 478

Council Tax 01785 619 279

Environmental Health 01785 619 402

Planning 01785 619 337

Streetscene 01785 619 401

HOW ARE WE DOING?

We would like to hear your views about the Annual Report. Tell us what you found useful, or what you would like to see in future reports, by contacting:

Norman Jones, Head of Policy and Improvement:

EMAIL npjones@staffordbc.gov.uk

TEL 01785 619 199

If you need this information in **large print, Braille, other language** or on **audio cassette** please contact:

EMAIL customercontactcentre@staffordbc.gov.uk

TEL 01785 619 000



2006-2007
*Transforming the Delivery of Services
Through Partnerships*

2009-2010
*Raising economic prosperity
through partnership*