



MONEY WELL SPENT

ANNUAL REPORT | SUMMARY 2009/2010



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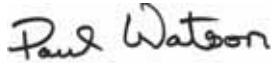
INTRODUCTION

In spite of the economic storms, your council tax only increased by 2.9% last year, the lowest rise in more than 10 years. During 2010/11 the increase is just 1.2%, which means that once again we have the lowest council tax in the region.

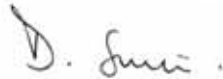
One reason we have been able to keep council tax down is that we are absolutely determined to provide public services in the most efficient way we can. So we have been looking at everything we do and asking ourselves: "Is it money well spent?"

In the following sections, after a brief explanation of how the council works, we look at what we have been doing during 2009/10 to meet your expectations and work with the Sunderland Partnership to fulfil our shared strategy for the regeneration of your city.

So what do you think? At the end of this document, we invite you to have your say. We hope you will get involved in any way you can.



Cllr Paul Watson
Leader of Sunderland City Council



Dave Smith
Chief Executive
Sunderland City Council

HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

The council has 75 elected members covering the 25 wards in the city. Their role is to ensure that the work of the council meets the needs of the city's residents and businesses. The council's members elect a leader who then appoints a cabinet which meets once a month to make decisions on behalf of local communities.

Cabinet

The body is chaired by the Leader of the Council with a deputy and eight members who are responsible for key areas of activity called portfolios. The Cabinet also has authority to take most decisions about council services and to make recommendations to Council on major policies.

Leader of the Council
Deputy Leader of the Council

Clr Paul Watson
Clr Florence Anderson

Portfolio Holders

Resources
Children & Learning City
Prosperous City
Healthy City
Safer City
Attractive & Inclusive City
Sustainable Communities
Responsive Services & Customer Care

Clr Dave Allan
Clr Patricia Smith
Clr Bryan Charlton
Clr Mel Speding
Clr Denny Wilson
Clr Jim Blackburn
Clr Harry Trueman
Clr Cecilia Gofton



Leader of the Council
Clr. Paul Watson



Deputy Leader of the Council
Clr. Florence Anderson



Resources
Clr. Dave Allan



Children & Learning City
Clr. Patricia Smith



Prosperous City
Clr. Bryan Charlton

Portfolio Holders

Scrutiny committees

To ensure that councillors represent the views of local people on all the important issues, there are seven scrutiny committees, covering these areas:

- Management
- Children, Young People and Learning
- Community and Safer City
- Environment and Attractive City
- Health and Wellbeing
- Prosperity and Economic Development
- Sustainable Communities

An overview of each scrutiny committee's work programme can be found in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10.
www.sunderland.gov.uk/scrutiny

Area committees

Local area committees operate in each of the five areas of Sunderland. They consist of the ward councillors within each area. The five areas are:

Coalfield (covering Shiney Row, Copt Hill, Houghton and Hetton wards)

East Sunderland (covering Hendon, Millfield, St Michael's, Ryhope and Doxford wards)

North Sunderland (covering Redhill, Castle, Southwick, Fulwell and St Peter's wards)

Washington (covering North, East, South, West and Central wards)

West Sunderland (covering St Anne's, Pallion, Sandhill, Barnes, St Chad's and Silksworth wards)

Each area committee produces a local area plan which aims to focus services and resources on the key issues identified by residents. www.sunderland.gov.uk/areacommittees



Healthy City
Cllr. Mel Speding



Safe City
Cllr. Denny Wilson



Attractive & Inclusive City
Cllr. Jim Blackburn



Sustainable Communities
Cllr. Harry Trueman



Responsive Services
& Customer Care
Cllr. Cecilia Gofton



THE THINGS YOU CARE ABOUT

Sunderland City Council is committed to giving residents value for money. To make sure we are concentrating on the areas that matter most to you, we conduct periodic residents' surveys, and consult regularly with the citizens' panel, Community Spirit. Individual services also conduct their own satisfaction surveys and focus groups. So far, the responses we've received suggest that you like what we're doing.

At the same time, the council is working alongside all the other public bodies, organisations and businesses that make things happen in our city. We attach great importance to our links with the Sunderland Partnership.

By consulting residents and businesses and working closely with other local organisations, Sunderland City Council has identified the five things you care about the most:

1. **Prosperity** – the Economic Masterplan and its role in creating jobs, promoting business and a low-carbon economy
2. **Health** – its importance for personal wellbeing, community and family life
3. **Attractiveness** – essential for ensuring that a greener Sunderland can draw in people and investment
4. **Safety** – freedom from crime and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, to build community cohesion
5. **Learning** – fostering knowledge across generations, to build a better future

We share these priorities with the Sunderland Partnership. In the following pages, we look at these issues in turn – and explore what some of the people of Sunderland think.

PROSPERITY

Just as the electorate expects the government to put the economy first, the people of Sunderland look to the council to create conditions in which business, jobs and economic activity can flourish. Our Economic Masterplan details how we will use Sunderland's assets – including its seafront position, university, new business parks and low-carbon industries – to build a stronger economy over the next 10 years.

The council's efforts to promote employment are part of a regional programme that aims to create 3,450 jobs before March 2011. Among several new initiatives is one scheme, Just the Job, in which specialist advisors, training providers and talent scouts help people to gain the skills that will enable them to start their own businesses. So far, Just the Job has helped 180 business start-ups, of which Kevin Cooke was one.

Kevin spoke to a business advisor at the North East Business & Innovation Centre, after taking voluntary redundancy. Together they wrote a business plan, and now Kevin is his own boss, with a flourishing business that is growing every day.

“When I first became self-employed,” said Kevin, “I started off with fencing and decking work. Now I have a locksmith and property maintenance business. If I hadn't taken part in Just the Job, I wouldn't have half the recognition I do now. People are turning to smaller businesses rather than the big national companies and franchises, so it's important that the council are encouraging and supporting them, especially in the current climate.”



Kevin Cook - Houghton

HEALTH

Over the past year, Sunderland's residents have become healthier and more active, while the council has supported their good intentions by providing better healthcare, social care and leisure facilities. The percentage of residents describing their health as good or very good, has risen from 66% in 2008 to 69% last year.

Participation in sport in Sunderland has risen from 17.5% in 2008/09 to 19.6% in 2009/10, and swimming is becoming very popular. The number of swims increased from 608,807 in 2008/09 to 657,016 during 2009/10, and since then, two new 25-metre public swimming pools have opened, in Silksworth and Hetton. As grandfather George Short can testify, swimming is something for all generations.

“The pool at Silksworth is excellent,” says George. “I’ve never been able to swim, so when my son said there were free swimming lessons, I put my name down. I was a bit apprehensive at first, but now I’m having a competition with my grandson to see who’s going to learn to swim first! The pool’s shape is ideal for new swimmers; if you’re too frightened you can always put your feet on the bottom. I’ve really enjoyed it, in fact I liked it so much I signed up for another 15 weeks.”



George Short - Silksworth

ATTRACTIVENESS

We are proud that Sunderland is an attractive place with good transport links and a low-carbon economic hub. At the Northumbria in Bloom Awards, we won the Best Large City and Best Business Park categories. Our streets are cleaner than before, with only 2% of them having unacceptable levels of litter and 3% having unacceptable amounts of graffiti.

We are spending £3.6 million regenerating Barnes Park, with new playgrounds, toilets, benches, a cycleway, a bridge over the lake and new gardens. The park's historic bandstand, cannon, railings and gates are being restored to their former glory.

We think our seafront location is one of Sunderland's best features. Anthony Hindmarch agrees.

"I've lived in Seaburn all my life and I count myself very lucky." Anthony said. "The seafront's at its best in the evening. You can enjoy a drink in one of the pubs, a meal in one of the restaurants, a bike ride along the promenade or a peaceful walk along the shoreline. I think it's excellent that the council are going to regenerate Roker and Seaburn seafronts. The seafront is a unique selling point for Sunderland. Some cities can be claustrophobic, but you just don't get that here, thanks to the sea. It really is a hidden gem."



Anthony Hindmarch - Seaburn



Shannon Carruthers and Shauna Hibbert - Ryhope

SAFETY

Figures for crime in Sunderland have improved across the board. The city's crime rate is still below the national average and has fallen 11% since our 2008/09 report. This means that, since 2002/03, there have been over 17,000 fewer victims of crime.

Our streets are safer, thanks, in part, to a number of initiatives which have combated anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related disorder and improved the security of our homes. The safety of city streets also depends on young people feeling part of their community, being able to express themselves and find positive outlets for their energy.

We have been seeking new ways to reach out to young people in Sunderland. During 2009, following the success of pilot XL Youth Village Events, 10 XL Youth Villages were set up across the city. A total of 1,230 young people attended 78 free events over the summer, with an average of 100-200 attendees each night. XL Youth Villages combine music, street dance, sport, advice and other services for young people on Friday and Saturday evenings.

They operate in areas where little or no provision for young people exists. Early results show a reduction in anti-social and criminal behaviour and a stronger sense of community cohesion in areas where the villages are operating.

Young people across the city have been enjoying the organised activities.

"We've used the climbing wall, have done dancing, played football and have had a go at DJ-ing" said Shannon. "It's really good and I like the fun activities the most."

Shauna, who also attended the XL Youth Village when it visited Ryhope said; "The activities are brilliant. Young people up to the age of 19 take part and if the villages weren't there we'd have nothing to do. We're going to go to Youth Villages in other parts of the city and then we'll get the chance to meet more young people."

LEARNING

Education and learning are improving rapidly in Sunderland. New schools and libraries have contributed to much better exam results and a broadening of knowledge for people of all ages in the city.

In Summer 2009 the proportion of students achieving an A-C grade in their chosen A-Levels rose from 52% last year to 63%. Overall passes (A-E) increased from 94% to 96%. GCSE passes are also up, with 69% of students achieving five or more A*-C grades, 5% more than last year. This is double the percentage of students achieving these grades 10 years ago.

Under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) there was significant capital investment of over £120 million in a number of the city's secondary schools. In September 2009 Washington School and the three 'Sunderland Model' Academies at Red House, Castle View and Academy 360 were opened, with major refurbishments of Biddick and St Robert of Newminster RC School completing in 2010. The newly built Southwick Primary School also opened in 2009.

Residents also have better access to information about council services via the Customer Services Centres throughout the city.

The refurbished Washington Customer Service Centre and Library is another example. Yasmin Stringer, 18, and Alex Scott, 14, both from Washington, are two of the young people we consulted on the look and content of the new young person's area in the library.

"We gave our ideas of what we would like the young people's area to be like," said Yasmin. "I suggested the bookends and we all helped with the text and the patterns above the shelves."

Alex also played an important part in designing the young people's area.

"We went on a book buy and we created the designs for the wall. We took the names of people's favourite books and asked our friends at school and in youth clubs for their ideas. We each had a budget and chose books we wanted to read. We also chose the chairs and magazines for a new magazine rack. It's good and it's really colourful. It's obvious that this is the young people's corner, and I think other young people are more likely to use the library now."



Alex Scott and Yasmin Stringer - Washington

BEING MORE EFFICIENT

The council always strives to provide good value for money. That's why we're pleased that in 2009/10 Sunderland City Council achieved efficiency savings of £9.44 million that we have been able to reinvest in priority areas.

The council deals with 7,000 businesses in the course of the financial year. We collected 98.2% of the business rates due in 2009/10, making Sunderland one of the best-performing metropolitan councils and also one of the top-performing authorities in the country in this respect.

Council tax for 2009/2010 was set at £1,325.72 (Band D), the lowest in the whole of the North East region for the second year running. The council issued almost 300,000 council tax bills¹ in 2009/10 and handled more than 65,000 direct debits. More than 75% of all council tax is now being collected by direct debit, which is the most cost-effective method available. Our collection levels were better than average collection rates for all comparable metropolitan councils.

We also need to make sure that we spend your money in ways that directly benefit you. That's why we use residents' surveys and the council's Community Spirit panel to get your views on a range of council decisions such as priorities for local areas and budgets.

Elizabeth Dunne from Fulwell is a member of the Community Spirit panel.

"They listen to our views and they do respond to them," says Elizabeth. "Wasting paper is a good example. Every time they sent out a confirmation of you attending the group, they used to send out a map with it and I said, if you live in Sunderland you know where the city centre is, so now we don't get a map. That's starting to save from the ground up."

Elizabeth was a member of Community Spirit for three years, having her say on issues like waste management, the state of the city, adult social care and health initiatives, and has chosen to join the Friends of Community Spirit so that she can continue to be involved.

"You might expect the council just to run things and tell you what they've done afterwards," she says. "but I think it's nice that you can get involved in finding out what they do and have your say. If it works for me, it can work for other people."

¹This includes bills that we reissued throughout the year due to changes in households circumstances.



Elizabeth Dunne - Fulwell

SUSTAINABLE SUNDERLAND

Over the past year, we have advanced towards our goal of making Sunderland the most liveable city in the UK, and in everything we do we're committed to reducing our impact on the environment. The Forum for the Future ranked Sunderland first out of the UK's 20 largest cities for our commitment to tackling climate change. We were the first UK city to submit its Sustainable Energy Action Plan to the Covenant of Mayors, which brings Europe's cities together in the fight against climate change.

Twelve of the city's most important employers have become 'low carbon champions', highlighting the actions they are taking to cut their carbon emissions by at least 10% in the next 10 years.

A new home-insulation scheme began in November 2009 and, by March 2010, it had helped residents install cavity insulation in 471 walls and insulate 917 lofts. Besides being environmentally friendly, the scheme has been a financial bonus to those in, or at risk of, fuel poverty.

Across the city centre we have installed on-street recycling facilities. Residents are receiving new blue recycling bins, designed to encourage everyone to recycle more. These bins have an internal caddy that keeps paper separate from the glass, cans, cardboard and plastic bottles in the rest of the bin.

"The blue bins are a massive stride forward," says Mike Robinson from Rainton Bridge.

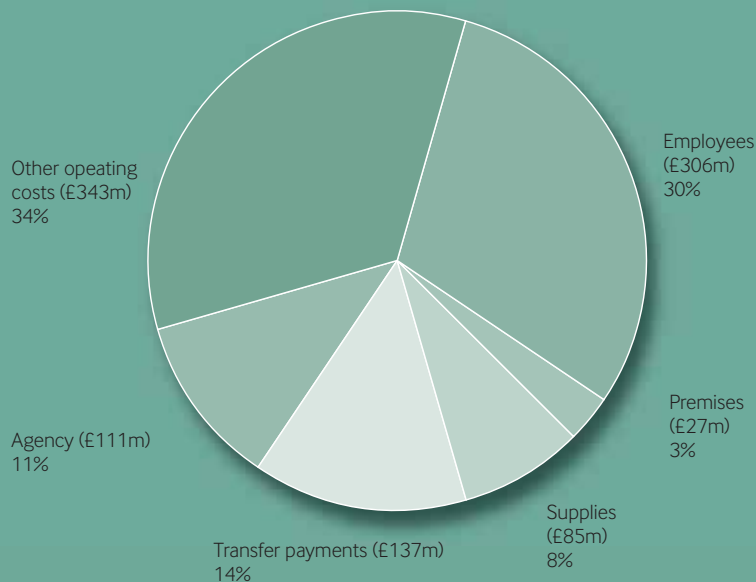
"If you want people to recycle, you've got to make it easy for them, and quite honestly it used to be a pain to take stuff to various recycling depots. Now it's a heck of a lot easier. I've noticed people are recycling more with the blue bins than they ever were before, so I think it will work."



Mike Robinson - Rainton Bridge

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

This is a very brief version of the council's accounts (subject to audit). The figures in this summary will be externally audited, to ensure they present a true and fair view of the council's financial position.



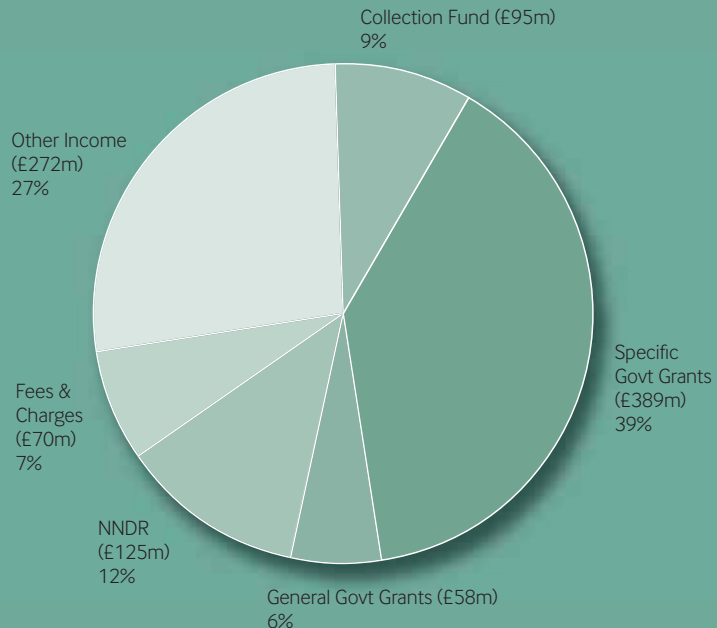
The council's gross expenditure in 2009/2010 was £1,009m.

The chart shows how this money was spent.

The figures in this summary will be externally audited, to ensure they present a true and fair view of the council's financial position.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

The £1,009m expenditure was financed from the following sources:



There is a wide range of information held on the council's website (www.sunderland.gov.uk) and in most council offices and libraries.

You can read the full version of the council's published accounts for 2009/10 here: www.sunderland.gov.uk/annualaccounts

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We are pleased that, on the whole, residents say they are satisfied and happy with the services we deliver. The input we receive from surveys and Community Spirit allows us to understand what you want and ensure that we're spending your council tax in ways that you appreciate.

More residents believe that they are a part of the decision-making process in Sunderland, 28% - up from 26% in 2008. We want to see that figure continues to climb.

If there is anything you think we could be doing better, please get in touch. Call us on 0191 520 5555 to give us your views.

There are many ways in which you can get involved in decision-making in Sunderland. You could join a group such as a residents' association or the city-wide citizens' panel, Community Spirit. There are also police and community forums, as well as forums for young people or older people.

You can take part in a survey or other consultation. Recent examples include us asking for your views on what would make your neighbourhood a good place to live, bus services and the future of the seafront. You can also speak to your local councillor by visiting them at a ward surgery or attending an area committee.

Further information on consultation in Sunderland can be found at:

Freephone tel: 0800 783 1710

Email: consultation@sunderland.gov.uk

Web: www.sunderland.gov.uk/consultation

We would love to hear your views on this annual report summary. Please fill in the form below and send it back to us at the address overleaf, or email your comments to: communications@sunderland.gov.uk

Tell us what you think:

The length of the summary is:

Just about right

Too long

Too short

The information provided in the summary is:

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

The financial information provided in the summary is:

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

I would like to see in the next annual report summary:

What do you think is the best thing about Sunderland?

Any other comments:

Community Spirit
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Sunderland SR2 1BR