

Annual Report 2008

South Staffordshire

A Community of Communities



South Staffordshire Council

Council Members 2008-09



- 1 Cllr B.R. Edwards -
Leader of the Council
- 2 Cllr A.G. Hinton - Chairman
- 3 Cllr Mrs C.J. Raven - Vice-Chairman
- 4 Cllr L.J. Ashley
- 5 Cllr A.E. Ball
- 6 Cllr B. Bates
- 7 Cllr F.W. Beardsmore
- 8 Cllr D.J. Billson
- 9 Cllr Mrs M. Bond
- 10 Cllr Mrs J.M. Burton MBE
- 11 Cllr N.P. Caine
- 12 Cllr Mrs A.A. Caine
- 13 Cllr Mrs P.E. Campbell
- 14 Cllr D.E. Cartwright
- 15 Cllr I. Clay
- 16 Cllr D.J. Clift J.P.

- 17 Cllr R.J. Cope
- 18 Cllr B.J.W. Cox
- 19 Cllr J.L. Evans
- 20 Cllr D. Fereday
- 21 Cllr Mrs I.G.A. Ford
- 22 Cllr J.E. Gosling
- 23 Cllr Mrs P.A. Griffin
- 24 Cllr M.R. Hampson
- 25 Cllr Mrs B. Heath
- 26 Cllr D. Heseltine
- 27 Cllr Mrs R.A. Heseltine
- 28 Cllr R.F. Holt
- 29 Cllr A.K. James
- 30 Cllr Mrs J.A. Johnson
- 31 Cllr S.R. Lees
- 32 Cllr K.E. Mackie
- 33 Cllr R.J. Marshall

- 34 Cllr R.J. McCardle
- 35 Cllr J.K. Michell
- 36 Cllr R.E. Moreton
- 37 Cllr Mrs S.M. Oatley
- 38 Cllr Mrs K.M. Perry
- 39 Cllr R.J. Perry
- 40 Cllr Mrs E.D. Ray
- 41 Cllr R.F. Reade
- 42 Cllr G.M. Spandler
- 43 Cllr Mrs C. Timms
- 44 Cllr B. Williams
- 45 Cllr Mrs J. Williams
- 46 Cllr Mrs K.A. Williams
- 47 Cllr Mrs P.A. Williams
- 48 Cllr R. Williams
- 49 Cllr R.A. Wright

Introduction

Welcome to South Staffordshire Council's Annual Report for 2007/2008.

This looks back over the past financial year detailing what we achieved, the good news and the not so good.

South Staffordshire

South Staffordshire is a rural district covering an area of 101,000 acres on the northwestern edge of the West Midlands conurbation. Despite having a population of 105,200 there are no towns in the District. Rather, there is a collection of diverse settlements ranging from small hamlets to large villages with over 13,000

residents. The lack of a single dominant settlement is one of the defining features of both the District and the Council, which is aptly described as 'a community of communities'.



South Staffordshire also has a wealth of history, heritage and rural splendour. It is an attractive rural environment in an accessible central location adjacent to Birmingham, the Black Country, Shropshire and Worcestershire.



Highlights of 2007-2008

Although South Staffordshire District has relatively low levels of crime they still remain an area of concern for our residents. The Community Safety Partnership had a target to reduce overall crime by 12.5% between 2005 and 2008 and exceeded expectations by achieving a reduction of 23%. The categories of crime included were burglary, wounding, criminal damage, theft of and theft from motor vehicles, common assault, vehicle interference, theft from a person, theft of pedal cycle and personal robbery.

With your support we recycled and composted 46.64% of material during 2007/2008. The target for all of England is to recycle and compost 40% of waste collected by 2010 so congratulations for everyone for meeting this target 2 years early.



Every resident now receives a kerbside collection of at least one material. By the end of 2008/09 all residents will receive a kerbside recycling collection of at least four materials.

Encams' Local Environmental Quality Survey for England 2007/08 recorded a range of environmental elements (such as cleansing, litter, fly posting etc) across South Staffordshire and found that 76% were satisfactory or good compared to a national average of 47%.



2007-08 saw an unprecedented demand for Housing Grant Assistance.

We spent £501,517 providing 115 properties with disabled adaptations and a further £226,489 was committed to renovation and repair work helping 84 homes achieve the "Decent Homes" standard.



For the 4th year running the number of homeless households has dropped to 72 households compared to 92 for the previous year. For the same periods, the number of clients given housing advice has increased from 230 in 2006/07 to 532 in 2007/08. Of these, 37 have resulted in their homelessness being prevented by the housing options team. 97% of customers rated the service as good or excellent.

A new Mountain Bike Track at Baggeridge in February. The number of users is looking encouraging and the activity brings another dimension to the park.

We launched the Staffordshire "Rate my Place" initiative where the results of food related business inspections are now being scored and published on the Council's website. At the end of January there were scores for 315 businesses on the site with 41 of those having attained five stars. Since the launch of the scheme there have been 4,904 'hits' on the site.

The successful promotion of the Smokefree Legislation. Almost one thousand visits have been made to businesses complying with the new smokefree help legislation.



How the Council is organised:

South Staffordshire Council operates a 'Council Leader and Executive' model of Local Government. It has 49 Councillors. The political breakdown of the Council is as follows:

42 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat, 5 Independent

Each year at its annual meeting, the Councillors elect the Leader of the Council and the five members of the Executive. Each Executive member has a specific portfolio of responsibilities. These are:

Partnership Services (Councillor Brian Edwards) Leader of the Council
Strategic Services (Councillor David Billson)
Community Services (Councillor Robert Marshall)
Environmental Services (Councillor Mrs Joan Williams)
Direct Services (Councillor Roy Wright)
Support Services (Councillor Robert Reade)



The Executive meets each month to make decisions and discuss issues affecting the District and the Council. Members of the Executive also take decisions on a day-to-day basis, through their delegated powers outlined in the Constitution.

Overview and Scrutiny is a function of the Council where all members of the Council (except the Executive and Audit Committee) complete work on a variety of topics in order to develop and improve services. In the Municipal Year 2008/09, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being chaired by Councillor Mrs.J. Johnson.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprises three panels, which mirror the portfolios of the Council. The Council also has a Health Scrutiny panel which works in partnership with the Staffordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee. These panels undertake detailed reviews into subjects that affect the community and make recommendations on how best to improve our services in these areas.

Last year, the panels completed detailed review work of The Effectiveness of CCTV in South Staffordshire, Enforcement of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, Ethical Procurement and The Protection and Provision of Community Facilities. Furthermore, the panels can scrutinise decisions of the Executive, are consulted on a range of reports and receive presentations from outside representatives on subjects concerning the Council or its residents to ensure Councillors are fully aware of all the issues facing South Staffordshire.

This coming year, the panels will be completing detailed work on Mobile Telecommunications Infrastructure, Voluntary Carers, Gypsy and Traveller Sites, Leisure Services Concessionary Scheme and Policies to Deal with Alternative Power Supplies.

Matters that arise which are of a regulatory nature, for example planning or licensing, are dealt with by the Regulatory or Licensing Committees. Some issues however, are reserved for the Council as a body to determine; largely these are matters which by law may not be delegated to a committee, sub-committee or the Executive.

All Executive and Committee meetings are generally open for the public to attend, except when personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

Best Value User Satisfaction Survey - November 2006

In November 2006, the Council undertook a Best Value User Satisfaction survey as required by Communities and Local Government.

All Local Authorities were required to submit this data to the government every 3 years.

You told us how satisfied or dissatisfied you were with the way the Council runs things:

62% of respondents were satisfied with the way South Staffordshire Council runs things.

78% agreed that the Council was working to make the District cleaner and greener, whilst 74% agreed that the Council was working to make the local area a better place to live.

Over half (55%) of the respondents felt the Council provided good or better value for money.

You told us how satisfied or dissatisfied you were with the way the Council dealt with enquiries and the quality of information provided.

Just 15% of respondents had contacted the Council between 2005 and 2006 with a complaint.

38% were satisfied at how their complaint was handled.

Other than making a complaint, respondents contacted the Council principally to ask for advice/information (36%). Contact is generally made via the telephone (70%).

In response to this we are now looking at better ways to deal with comments, compliments and complaints and to use this information to improve how we deliver our services. The Council is also developing a customer focused contact centre.

Overall, almost half (48%) of respondents felt the Council keeps them very or fairly well informed, whilst the remainder (52%) felt the Council does not keep them well informed.

In terms of sources of information about the Council, respondents tend to get information from the Council itself (41%) and the local media (17%). Many of our residents read the Council's newspaper the South Staffordshire Review.

On local public services, you told us that:

76% of those who responded were satisfied that the Council kept open public land clear of litter and refuse.

75% of those who responded were satisfied with the provision of local recycling facilities – with 36% suggesting that they thought the service had improved from 2003.

79% of those who responded were satisfied with doorstep recycling collections – with over half suggesting that the service had improved since 2003.



Sports and Leisure facilities:

61% of those who responded were satisfied with the sports and leisure facilities – showing an increase of 5% from 2003.

Parks and open spaces

Satisfaction with parks and open spaces, at 67%, was up 2% from 2003.

A large majority (87%) of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, with 25% rating themselves as very satisfied.



Local decision making

21% felt that they would like to be more involved in the decision making process.

South Staffordshire Viewpoint

Your Views

South Staffordshire's residents' panel 'South Staffordshire Viewpoint' was formed in 2005 and consists of between 1000 – 1300 residents. The panel is managed and recruited by BMG Research, and is representative of the District in terms of age, gender and economic status.

Around one-third of the panel list is refreshed annually to ensure that no individuals are asked to sit on the panel for any longer than three years.

The results of the surveys are compiled into reports that help the Council target and deliver its services and provisions across the District.

The District is grouped into five distinct localities.

| Sub-Areas | Parishes |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Locality 1 (North) | Acton Trussell, Bednall & Teddesley Hay Dunston with Coppenhall Hatherton Huntington Penkridge |
| Locality 2 (North West) | Blymhill and Weston-under-Lizard Brewood & Coven Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston |
| Locality 3 (North East) | Cheslyn Hay Essington Featherstone Great Wyrley Hilton Saredon Shareshill |
| Locality 4 (Central) | Bilbrook Codsall Patttingham & Patshull Perton |
| Locality 5 (South) | Bobbington Enville Himley Kinver Lower Penn Swindon Trysull/Seisdon Wombourne |

Open Spaces Strategy - Summer 2007

On open spaces you told us that:

Over four in five (83%) panel members believe that there is enough open space in their local area. Residents of Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Featherstone and Brinsford, Great Wyrley, Saredon and Shareshill are most likely to state there is not enough space in the area ten to 15 minutes walk from their home (28%).

The open spaces/facilities most commonly described as insufficient or absent in South Staffordshire villages are: young people and children's facilities e.g. equipped play areas, skate parks, multi-use games areas (32%); parks & gardens (28%) and outdoor sports facilities e.g. sports pitches, tennis courts (25%).

Amongst those residents who stated that the quality and availability of open spaces had deteriorated between 2005 and 2007, (93 respondents) the reasons most commonly given to explain this opinion are: too much development of green belt land/new housing (36%), an increase in rubbish/litter (18%) and poor maintenance of facilities (15%).



Clearer and better maintained sites (37%), greater nature conservation at sites (29%) and improved personal security and safety (28%) are the factors that respondents most commonly state would encourage them to make greater use the District's open space.

Approaching six in ten (58%) panel members feel that improvements to open spaces should be a high priority for South Staffordshire Council. A lower proportion (45%), believe improvements to outdoor sports facilities should be a high priority for South Staffordshire Council.

The Council is using this information to inform a Open Space Strategy for the District. The Open Space Strategy seeks to establish a vision for the provision and enhancement of open spaces in South Staffordshire, by clearly setting out how the Council will improve open spaces in terms of their quantity, quality and accessibility. As well as help at an operational level, the Strategy will also be a strategic document and will therefore be fully integrated with other key Council Policies and Strategies.

The final published Open Space Strategy will act as a vehicle for real improvement and increased provision through supporting the Council's Corporate Aims and Objectives and the Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as informing the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF).

On global environmental issues you told us that:

79% of our panel members expressed some concern about climate change.

Between 2006 and the date of the survey, 56% of panel members stated that their concerns on global warming had increased.

One in five (21%), believe climate change to be the most significant problem facing future generations, whilst over half (55%) state it is one of the most significant problems facing future generations.

Some of the measures residents have taken to reduce their own carbon footprint include; turning down central heating to save energy (85%); stop leaving electrical appliances on standby to save energy (82%) and installing energy efficient light bulbs (77%).

We have produced a Climate Change Strategy and will continue to provide advice and guidance to the public on what people can do to reduce their carbon footprint whilst acting on what we as an organisation can do to do the same.



On Local Environmental issues you told us that:

When asked what the worst problems were in terms of untidiness, 63% of residents suggested that it was fast food litter whilst 61% of residents selected crisp and sweet wrappers.

Two thirds of panel members (67%) believe that the Council should issue fixed penalty notices for littering from the age of criminal responsibility (10 years of age).

For dropping a cigarette on public land, 86% favoured a fixed penalty notice.

For dropping chewing gum on public land, 85% favoured a fixed penalty notice.

For failing to clean up after a dog has fouled on public land, 67% favoured a fixed penalty notice.



For paying an unregistered waste carrier to dispose of household waste which is subsequently dumped illegally (fly-tipped), 42% felt that the offender should be prosecuted.

We now issue fixed penalty notices for dropping chewing gum or cigarettes and also for dog fouling. Our enforcement policy is to give one formal warning to secondary school age children before we issue them with a fixed penalty notice, younger children get a letter sent to their parents.

Similarly in 2007-2008 we had two successful prosecutions for fly-tipping and a further two formal cautions were also issued.



On crime and community safety you told us that:

Nine in ten of our panel members feel safe during the day when outside.

63% describe themselves as feeling safe when outside in their local area after dark.

The number of young people "hanging about," the absence of Police and Street Wardens and crime coverage in the local media are the reasons that are most commonly given by those who don't feel safe in their local area.

The issues that are most commonly described by all residents as the most serious in their local area are: teenagers "hanging around on the street" (16% of panel members), a lack of facilities/activities for young people (13%) and road safety (speeding related) issues (13%).

71% of panel members stated they were conscious of crime but not particularly afraid of it, whilst 21% described themselves as afraid of becoming a crime victim.

The crimes that the highest proportion of residents are most worried about being a victim of are: having their home broken into and having something stolen (47%), anti-social behaviour/nuisance (41%), other drivers acting in an aggressive manner towards them on the roads (38%).

Residents aged 65 and over are more concerned about bogus callers and home break-ins than younger residents.

Overall, this is a very positive result and the Community Safety Partnership has worked hard on projects to help people to feel safe out in the community. This, in addition to the visible presence of the Police Community Support Officers and the out of school activities provided for children and young people, is helping to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour. We are fortunate in South Staffordshire as levels of crime are low overall.



Climate Change Strategy

South Staffordshire Council published their climate change strategy in March 2008. The strategy takes a district wide approach to meeting the challenge of climate change as the major environmental impact facing the District. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the district as well as looking at how we will adapt to the changes that Climate Change will inevitable bring. A part of the action plan concentrates on the Council's own performance, in order to show leadership in the community and demonstrate what is achievable.



South Staffordshire Council emissions baseline (2005/6)

To measure improvements in the reduction of CO² we need to have a baseline to know where we are starting from. This was compiled as part of the climate change strategy. It includes a broad boundary of emissions from Council operations including Council buildings, fleet transport, business travel and disposal of our waste.

| Source | CO ² (thousand tonnes) | % split |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Buildings, including depot | 452 | 80 |
| Fleet | 8 | 1 |
| Business mileage | 77 | 14 |
| Waste | 27.7 | 5 |
| Total | 564.7 | 100 |

The Council is aiming to reduce its baseline by 2% for the year 2008/9.

We will report on how we are getting on in the next annual report.

South Staffordshire's District emissions baseline (2005)

The climate change strategy also set actions on how to reduce emissions across the District with the help of partners, schools and the wider community. Data provided by DEFRA illustrates the split in our district wide emissions.

| Source | CO ² (thousand tonnes) | % split |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Industry and Commercial | 252 | 22 |
| Domestic | 267 | 23 |
| Road Transport | 610 | 53 |
| Land use change | 11 | 2 |
| Total | 1141 | 100 |

What action are we going to take?

The strategy and action plan is split into 5 themes with each having individual actions on how we are going to reduce their impact during the life of the strategy.

The main target areas for 2008/9 are;

- Promoting funding and grants available to increase domestic energy efficiency.
- Negotiate reduced rates for insulation measures for all residents.
- Make locally relevant information on climate change easily accessible.
- Undertake a feasibility study of Council buildings to reduce energy use by 2% year on year.
- Promote greater use of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources and other sustainable energy technologies in private sector housing.
- Review and update waste strategy, including consideration of cardboard and recycling, in-vessel composting, waste minimisation and trade waste.
- Ensure increase in domestic recycling rates.

Further information can be found on our website at
www.sstaffs.gov.uk/climatechange

Local Strategic Partnership

The South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is made up of a number of key agencies working within South Staffordshire. As an LSP, we work with the community to improve the quality of life for all our residents.

The Vision

We will strive to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities, where everyone can develop their abilities to the full, and pass on to future generations a better environment.

The Purpose

The purpose of South Staffordshire's Local Strategic Partnership is to:

- Prepare and implement a Community Strategy that sets out plans, projects and a long-term vision for the future that will make a real difference for everyone in South Staffordshire.
- Be the 'partnership of partnerships' within South Staffordshire providing strategic co-ordination and linking other plans and bodies at local, sub regional and regional levels.
- Work with Staffordshire County Council and its partners to develop and deliver Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs), and the Countywide Local Area Agreement (LAA).



South Staffordshire's Community Strategy:

A Sustainable Community Strategy has been produced and was launched July 2008. The Community Strategy for South Staffordshire sets out our long-term vision for the District based on what you have told us, and what you want South Staffordshire to be like in the future. Our long-term vision is based firmly on local needs and the aspirations of those who live and work in the District.

Based on what you said, we organised ourselves into 6 delivery groups in order to develop actions to deliver the priorities. These groups will all help to enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of those who live and work in South Staffordshire.

The six themes are:

Children & Young People

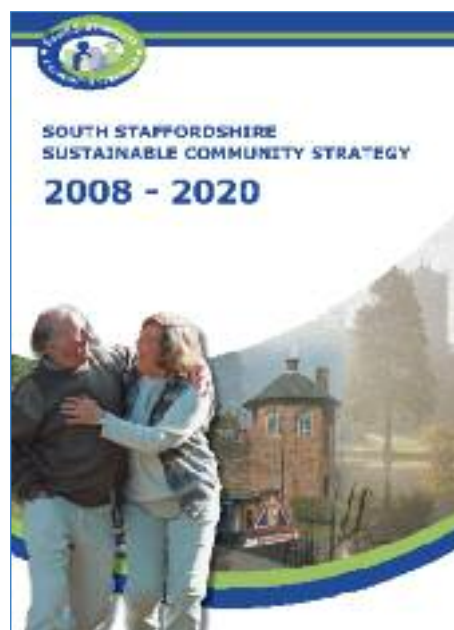
Community Safety

Economic Vibrancy

Environment

Health and Wellbeing

Housing



Achievements for 2007/08 so far!

Case Study 1

In August 2007, Wolves football legend Steve Bull joined almost 1,000 people in Great Wyrley at the second annual 'Quinton Fun Day'.

The Fun Day formed part of a wider 'Quinton Project' and was aimed at building bridges within the local community in and around the Quinton area, with particular focus on engaging with and gainfully occupying the time of young people. The day was about challenging the perception that young people 'hang about causing trouble' and promoting young people and the positive role that they play in the community.



The Project Team later received national recognition from the Home Office for their efforts to reduce crime and disorder.

The success of the project truly showed how good partnership work can make a real difference to our local communities.



Case Study 2

In November 2007, the Community Pride Team, joined young people and their parents on a clean-up day in Featherstone.

As part of the 'Featherstone Community Pride Project', the clean-up day helped clear litter and graffiti and gave local residents help and support to improve the quality of life within the village. The new Village Agent and Community Pride Team are continuing to work closely with local residents to identify how they can tackle issues like litter and graffiti and improve the village's environment.

Case Study 3

Young people looking for employment in South Staffordshire received a boost thanks to extra funding secured by the LSP.

The expansion of the Employment Liaison Assistant (ELA) role, based at Connexions Staffordshire was secured in January 2007 and is helping boost employment and work-based learning opportunities for local people.

The extension of the ELA post has been important in helping young people across the District develop skills and find long-term employment. The funding for this project is just another example of how the LSP is working in partnership, across our communities to help provide younger people with the skills and ambitions that will benefit them throughout their careers.



Case Study 4

A three-year project aimed at providing support for sufferers of dementia and their carers was launched in 2007 thanks to the support of the LSP.

The Dementia Support Project is aimed at increasing awareness of the disease and providing practical support for sufferers and their families.

The majority of the funding pays for a full-time Dementia Support Worker.

With an ageing population, services like this are helping to improve the health and wellbeing of people with dementia and their families.

These are just some of the projects that the LSP is helping to deliver.

If you would like any further information on how the Partnership is helping your local community, visit the LSP website at www.lsp.sstaffs.gov.uk

Progress against our Corporate Aims 2003-2008

Aim One:

To be a Council which celebrates and improves South Staffordshire's distinctive environment.

What we achieved:

Air Quality

- We completed a further assessment of air quality and set up a working group to produce an action plan to tackle poor air quality in the air quality management areas (AQMAs) in the District. In addition we also produced an Annual Progress Report on air quality. Both the Action Plan and Report will be consulted on during 2008-2009.

The further assessment resulted in the revocation of one AQMA (at Featherstone) as current pollution levels have improved to the point where there is no risk of breaching the relevant nitrogen dioxide levels. Conversely, we had to declare a new AQMA on the A5 Between Four Crosses and the motorway island. Current trends in nitrogen dioxide levels show a continuing reduction. None of the relevant monitoring sites within the AQMAs were above the national objective level in 2007.

Local Development Framework

- We continued to work on the development of the Local Development Framework. Consultation was carried out in December 2006 on the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper. Since this time, the Council has been working towards the formulation of the Core Strategy Preferred Options. The Local Development Scheme target for consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options was November 2007, with Submission in September 2008. There is some slippage on this timetable, as the Council was advised by the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) that before formal consultation on the Preferred Option was carried out, further technical consultation with the key service and infrastructure providers on the deliverability of the strategy would be advantageous. This consultation has now been concluded, and the Council is considering the responses before undertaking formal consultation with the wider public and stakeholders. The delay in the LDF timetable is also due to other factors, the most significant being the delay in receiving the outcome of 3 major planning inquiries for significant housing development in the District. If all 3 appeals are allowed, this could mean a total of 2,000 dwellings being built in the District, which would have a significant impact on any preferred option, and the Council would need to re-evaluate its position.

The delay taking forward the Core Strategy is disappointing, but every effort is being made to publish the Preferred Options as soon as this is practicable. As for the other documents within the Local Development Scheme (LDS) this delay will obviously have a knock on effect on the timetable for the Site Allocations and Policies DPD and other documents. In the meantime, the Council is working on a number of documents to strengthen our evidence base including an Employment Land Study, a refresh of the Settlement Study, together with background work on the Wolverhampton Airport and Site Allocations and Policies DPDs and a Village Design SPD.

- Significant progress with our Core Strategy towards publishing the preferred strategy, including completion of consultation with key service and infrastructure providers to ensure the Core Strategy is deliverable.
- Completion and publication of a number of background studies to support our evidence base for the LDF, including a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
- Analysis of the responses received to the Wolverhampton Airport Policy Area DPD Issues and Options consultation.

Climate Change

- We produced a Climate Change Strategy which is available on our web-site:
<http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/pdf/Climate%20Change%20Strategy.pdf>
- We attended over 10 local events eg Big Summer Event, Wombourne Carnival, Wheaton Aston over 50s social group, promoting energy efficiency. Also attended concessionary bus pass events in District and combined have given away over 5000 energy saving lightbulbs, saving 130 tonnes of CO²
- We involved Parish Councils in helping save energy as part of the Climate Change Strategy by conducting energy audits of 4 local buildings, and running 3 workshops at the 2007 South Staffordshire Parish Council Summit.
- We completed the open space audit.
- We are currently producing a District Waste Strategy in support of the County wide strategy.

Aim Two:

To be a healthy and safe District in which to live, work and visit.

What we achieved:

- A pilot intergenerational project, which will bridge the gap between the different generations has been included as part of the RESPECT project.
- The 'Make a Difference Project' has been actioned in Perton and Bilbrook which involves working with residents in identifying the hot spots for crime related incidents. This will inform the patrol routes for neighbourhood policing teams.
- The Community Carpenter in Action scheme, affectionately know as the "Bobby Van " is now operational and fits security measures to 6-10 properties a week.
- We started the first community pride initiative in Featherstone which supported groups of residents to improve the area. A litter pick day was held, the community centre was made more accessible and alternative activities were developed for children and young people.
- We launched central Government's RESPECT campaign across the District, more details are available at [www. Respect.gov.uk](http://www.Respect.gov.uk). The first events will be held in 2008-2009.
- The South Staffordshire Domestic Violence bus was deployed 15 times in South Staffordshire to raise awareness of domestic abuse, with 2800 packs handed out to potential victims of domestic abuse. We also staged a play within the District called "And he brought me red roses." 6000 leaflets were distributed through the letterboxes of houses in the District advertising the domestic violence helpline. This was all done to raise the profile of domestic abuse within the district.
- We held 4 multi agency training days here at South Staffordshire last year to train front line staff such as the police, leisure centre staff, housing staff and staff from the PCT. We also held one Sexual Violence awareness training day to raise the profile of sexual abuse with front line staff.
- Last year we provided advocacy support in the specialist domestic violence courts in Cannock and Stafford.

- The fitness Suite at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre was refurbished and extended and opened to the public in December 2007. The work included the provision of changing rooms enabling customers access to quality changing facilities throughout the day. In addition disabled access has improved with the installation of a lift down to the suite.
- Plans for the refurbishment of Penkrudge Leisure Centre are well under way for completion during 2008/09. There has been a delay with this project due to some technical difficulties with the lift access. The work to the fitness suite is due to commence over the summer of 08/09 followed closely by the installation of the lift to the first floor.
- The rolling programme of minor improvements at the Council's public car parks has been completed, enabling all 12 sites to be put forward for accreditation under the national "Safer Parking" award scheme. Plans are currently in place with Staffordshire County Council for a further joint-use site at Penkrudge.
- Further significant advancement on street cleansing performance has been achieved. BVPI 199a (% of sites where levels of litter and detritus fall below a prescribed figure) has been improved still further from 12% in 2007-08 down to 10% in 2007-08 heralding a dramatic improvement over the last 3 years.
- We have entered into a cross Staffordshire partnership to introduce a "Staffordshire Healthy Eating Award" scheme for local businesses.
- The Leisure services 'Get Set' scheme in partnership with Environmental Health (Commercial) Services have run the revised Home and Leisure Quiz aimed at school children.
- A work programme for the Council's internal public health group has been agreed.
- We provided a generic support service in partnership with South Staffordshire Housing Association and Carr Gomm a specialist Housing Support service, to provide housing and support for people with specific needs including the frail elderly, people suffering from mental illness and people escaping from domestic violence.

Aim Three:

To be a prosperous District with thriving communities.

What we achieved:

- We worked with Housing Associations to enable development of a range of affordable housing from bungalows, through to flats and houses.
- We started delivering an outreach housing service from Wombourne Leisure Centre in July 2007. Work is ongoing with other partners to further develop the scheme.
- Through the Local Strategic Partnership Health and Well Being group, a working group is being established with the County Council, DWP, Pension Service and ourselves to develop proposals to work more closely and effectively to the benefit of the residents of South Staffordshire, in encouraging take-up of benefit, maximising income to the District and reducing duplication in the claim process.
- Proactive work commenced during 2007/08 to educate our customers with regard to reporting changes in their circumstances promptly in order to ensure that they are in receipt of the right amount of benefit.
- We will have completed the capital improvements to the industrial estates and Hinksford Mobile Homes Park by September 2008.
- A Housing Market Assessment was undertaken in 2007, to provide up to date housing needs information which has primarily highlighted the large unmet demand for affordable housing. It also raised the ageing population issue which will present us with significant strategic housing issues in the next 20 years. If you would like more information then the Housing Market Assessment is available on our website at www.sstaffs.gov.uk.

Aim Four:

To be a District which encourages and promotes lifelong learning opportunities.

What we achieved:

- The programme of Spring Concerts have continued to be delivered at a variety of venues across the District, and we have now expanded the programme to also include Autumn Concerts, which are delivered to 6 venues.
- The Children and Young People's board is now well established and has a clear focus on Access, Engagement and Family development, supported by a strong action plan for future work.
- The District Youth Council is also acting as a Shadow Board to the Children & Young People's District Board and is fully integrated into the structure. Through this we are continually consulting and engaging with children & young people on a variety of different issues, including a Young People's Housing Protocol and developing a website. Work continues to develop a 'young people's tool kit' in conjunction with the Shadow board.

Aim Five:

To be a well managed Council and community leader.

What we achieved:

- Once again Baggeridge Country Park has achieved Green Flag status demonstrating the quality of the service offered. Each of the four Leisure Centre's maintained their Quest accreditation and in cases where full re-assessment was required they improved on their previous assessment.
- Council approved a restructuring and the appointment of Membership Officers and Membership Administration staff to operate at each of the Leisure Centres. These appointments were made in March 2008 and following all the relevant clearances the system will be in full operation in June.
- We achieved Charter Mark accreditation for our homelessness advice service.
- We introduced Choice Based Letting in partnership with the Housing Associations.
- Performance across the Revenues and Benefits service has shown continuous improvement during the 2007/08 year, which has been achieved by an improvement in workflow monitoring and control, together with the hard work and commitment of the whole team.
- There were technical difficulties in the development of the technology to implement e-billing and mobile working, which are now scheduled to commence during the current year. BACS payments were introduced during the 2007/08 financial year and will be marketed shortly to encourage take-up of this method of payment of Housing.
- The review of the Customer Service Standards framework and the development of a comprehensive Customer Access Strategy has been rolled forward into 2008/2009 as part of the Contact Centre Project.
- The new telephony is installed and working and that we are working towards integrating telephony and face to face services.
- The core financial system went live on October 1st as planned, as did the Business Objects reporting tool.
- We trained 36 members of staff to European Computer Driving Licence standard.
- We continued to increase the number of interactions available on-line, including job applications.
- We introduced a Council-wide Print Policy to increase efficiency and reduce costs.
- The Corporate Procurement Strategy was subject to a Scrutiny Panel review so will be produced in 2008/2009 incorporating more green issues - sustainable, ethical and climate change.
- The concessionary travel scheme was amended to meet new legislative requirements of the national bus pass scheme. The scheme is subject to further review later this year to consider the outcome of the Rural Transport Review.

Day to day spending

What did we spend the money on?

We show the cost of running our services in our revenue account. This account shows you the net costs in 2007/08 of the Council's main services and the amount left to be financed from local and national tax income.

What we spent

Net Expenditure £000s 2007/08

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Central services to the public – council tax collection and elections | £1,687 |
| Cultural and related services – such as leisure centres and parks | £2,906 |
| Environmental services – such as waste collection and recycling | £4,268 |
| Planning | £1,170 |
| Transport and car parks – including travel tokens | £1,307 |
| Housing | £1,030 |
| Corporate and democratic costs | £1,604 |
| Net cost of services | £13,972 |
| Less: income from cash investments | £1,677 |
| Less: net transfers of money from revenue and capital reserves | £2,432 |
| Cost of local services met by local and national taxes | £9,863 |



All this for £87.24*

the lowest Council Tax in Staffordshire!

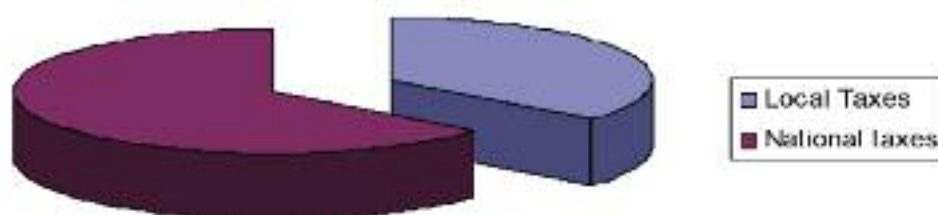
*South Staffordshire District Council's proportion of the Council Tax bill (based on average Band D property)

Day to day spending

How did we pay?

We spent £9.683 million on running services after allowing for income and transfers from reserves. The income element comes from charges for services such as leisure centres, planning applications and pest control fees. These charges ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the running of those services and help to keep the Council Tax down. Last year we raised £4.1 million from these charges, more than we raised from the Council Tax.

We financed our net spending using local and national taxes as follows:



Our total income for 2007/08 from national and local taxes was £10.28 million.

As the chart below shows, 67% came from national taxes and business rates and 33% from Council Tax.

| How we paid for services | 2007/08 £000s |
|---|------------------|
| Local Taxes - Council Tax (District only) | £3,364 |
| National Taxes - Government grant | £994 |
| Business Rates - National pool | £5,922 |
| Total Income | £10,280 |



Day to day spending

Did we have anything left over?

We spent slightly less than we got in last year leading to a small surplus on our revenue account.

| Revenue account surplus | 2007/08 £000s |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cost of services | £9,863 |
| Income from taxes | £10,280 |
| Surplus for the year | £417 |

The surplus for the year was added to those from previous years to give a new balance of £5.188 million.

The Council has a duty under legislation to maintain a sensible level of working balances and reserves. We think the minimum safe level is £1.0 million.

This is why we plan to reduce the revenue account surplus to £1.0 million in a prudent fashion over the next five years. Using these reserves will mean smaller Council Tax bills for our residents than would otherwise have been the case.



Capital spending

What did we spend the money on?

We also spend money on improving and repairing our land and property so we can offer first class public facilities. Substantial amounts of money are also spent on grants to provide more social housing, to improve the quality of existing houses and to enable disabled people to live in their own homes. We have to account for this type of spending separately from the day to day running cost of services.

What we spent

2007/08
£000s

| | |
|--|-----|
| Improvements to Industrial Estates | 868 |
| Recycling and waste collection | 95 |
| Grants for social housing | 600 |
| Housing improvement and disabled facility grants | 780 |
| Leisure centre improvements | 293 |
| Improvement to village centres | 118 |
| Information technology and other services | 857 |

Total capital expenditure

3,611

How did we pay?

Some of the work is funded by government grants. Last year these grants totalled £755,000. The remaining £2.856 million came from the Council's capital reserves.



Our worth

What are we worth?

At the end of each financial year we draw up a balance sheet that represents how much South Staffordshire Council's land and buildings are worth, what is owed to others, what others owe us and how much cash we have:

| Net assets | 31 March 2008 £m |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Value of land and property | 16,872 |
| Cash in bank and cash investments | 22,605 |
| Money owed to South Staffordshire | 5,296 |
| Money owed by South Staffordshire | (15,471) |
| Total assets less total liabilities | 29,302 |



Council reserves

| | £m |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Capital reserves | £12,492 |
| Revenue reserves | £5,838 |
| Non-cash backed reserves | £10,972 |
| Total | £29,302 |

Our Commitments for 2008/2009

Aim One:

To be a Council which celebrates and improves South Staffordshire's distinctive environment.

We will implement an action plan to tackle air quality problems in South Staffordshire.

We will produce a further assessment in relation to the new AQMA (on the A5) and bring forward recommendations for actions to tackle air quality in this area.

We will complete a further 4 conservation area appraisals and produce management plans to address their findings.

We will produce an Open Space Strategy.

We will continue to develop the Local Development Framework including:

- Publish and consult on a preferred set of options for the Core Strategy
- Publish and consult on the potential issues and site options for Site Allocation and Policies DPD
- Publish and consult on a preferred set of options for Wolverhampton Airport Policy Area
- Progress Supplementary Planning Documents in support of the Local Development Framework, including a Village Design Guidance SPD
- Complete and publish an Employment Land Study

We will conduct a climate change adaptation study (due October 2008) to look at how we, as a District, have been effected by weather events in the past and how climate change will have an impact upon the District

We will use the results of a thermal imaging survey of the District to target support on energy efficiency measures as well as acting upon our own practices.

We will offer discounted prices for insulation for everyone in the District until the end of the year, but provide it free for anyone over the age of 70.

We will work closely with the fire service to help identify vulnerable households who are eligible for grant schemes for energy measures.

We will distribute more energy saving lightbulbs at events ie. the Great Wyrley Carnival.

Aim Two:

To be a healthy and safe District in which to live, work and visit

We will produce a revised Housing Strategy to address the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment as a sub-strategy of the Community Strategy.

We will inform the Sub-Regional Housing Market Assessment which is a study that better reflects housing markets and not just LA borders. This work is due for completion in early June and is undertaken in conjunction with Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell, Cannock and Telford. It should provide us with a clear picture of how housing markets operate across boundaries and provide further useful evidence for the Local Development Framework.

We will work with partners to develop an Extra Care Housing Scheme within the District.

We will continue to support victims of domestic abuse through the criminal justice system by continuing the advocacy support at Stafford and Cannock.

We will help to support a Co-located team to deal quickly and effectively with families and their children who are suffering domestic abuse.

We will launch a local service directory for practitioners who deal with families suffering domestic and sexual abuse.

We will continue to develop the Choice-based Letting Scheme.

Aim Three:

To be a prosperous District with thriving communities.

We will develop a benefit take-up strategy, including close working with external partners and providers in the delivery of the service.

We will complete the service review of the Commercial Development Service including the Economic Development function.

We will continue to work with partners to identify opportunities for affordable housing.

Aim Four:

To be a District which encourages and promotes lifelong learning opportunities.

We will develop the Flicks in the Sticks programme to deliver in a further 3 parishes in the District.

We will work with Staffordshire County Council's District Community and Learning Partnership arrangements to implement a programme of work to complement and maximise existing leisure and community based locality arrangements.

We will develop a leisure focused work plan around the 50+ market and integrate it into corporate planning.

We will formulate a new health and wellbeing team to deliver health promoting activities.

Aim Five:

To be a well managed Council and community leader

We will develop services according to local needs, ensuring that a high quality customer service is delivered that focuses on the customer's needs.

We will introduce the BECS (Benefits Electronic Claims System). This on-line benefits enquiry and claims system can speed up the process of making a claim for benefit, and will also give the customer an immediate estimate of the housing and council tax benefit they may be entitled to. The system will also be made available to registered social landlords and voluntary organisations so that they can help their customers directly with making a claim for Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

We will be adding e-procurement and the new budgeting tool called Collaborative Planning to our financial management system. We also plan a survey of managers to ask them what else they would like to have in terms of information.

We will amend our performance management to address the challenges presented by the new National Indicators.

We will continue to work with our partners to provide joined up seamless services with better referral systems between agencies.

We will map and wherever possible redesign our services so that they are delivered as efficiently as possible.

Do you have any...
Comments?
Queries?
Ideas?

if so please contact...

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