If you require this leaflet in another language or format please ring the number below:
0151 606 2020

Arabic
واذا ارد تم نسخة من هذا الكتيب في لغة اخري ا وفي شكل آ خر
اتصلوا بتلفون رقم المؤفر بادناه

Bengali
এই পত্রিকার অনুলিপি ভিন্ন কোন ভাষায় অথবা অন্য কোন আকারে প্রয়োজন হলে, অনুগ্রহ করে সরবরাহকৃত টেলিফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন

Chinese
如果你需要這份小冊子在另一種語言或不同的格式，請聯繫提供的電話號碼

Hindi
"अगर आपको इस दस्तावेज की प्रतिलिपि अन्य भाषा में अथवा भिन्न प्रारूप में चाहिये तो कृपया उपलब्ध टेलिफोन नंबर पर संपर्क करें"

Polish
Jesli potrzebujesz te ulotke w innym jezyku lub w innej formie prosze zadzwonic na zalaczony numer.

Punjabi
"ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ

Somali
" Haddaad rabtid nuqul ee warqadaan oo luqad kale ku qoran ama qaab kale, fadlan la xiriir lambarka taleefon lagu siiye.

Urdu
اگر آپ کو اس کتابچے کا ترجمہ کسی اور زبان میں یا کتابچہ کسی اور طرز
میں درکار ہے تو فراہم کردہ ٹیلیفون نمبر پر رجوع کریں۔

To find out more about Council services:
- Visit www.wirral.gov.uk
- Call us
- Call in to a One Stop Shop

www.wirral.gov.uk

545AUG08PJ

WIRRAL

ANNUAL REPORT
2007/2008

I am very pleased to introduce Wirral Council's Annual Report for 2007- 2008.

Steve Foulkes
Wirral Council Leader

01 Council Leader Review

The Council is working hard to continually improve our services and ensure that we provide value for money. I am proud of what we achieved last year and some of our key areas of progress are detailed in the Chief Executive's report later in this publication. There is however much still to do and throughout the past year we have been focused on planning for the future.

Wirral is a borough with enormous potential, but I don't have to tell you that it is also a place of sharp contrasts. It has some of the most affluent wards in the country and some that rate among the most deprived.

Many residents enjoy an excellent quality of life, with good leisure facilities, an attractive coastline and countryside, good quality housing, good schools and high levels of employment. For some, the picture is very different, with pockets of high unemployment, low skills levels, poorer quality housing, unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour and high levels of ill health.

We are committed to tackling the issues that we face while capitalising on the tremendous opportunities and assets we have. In looking forward we have therefore agreed a new Corporate Plan for the Council that is based on the following vision:

Our vision is of a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential.

Our aim is to build an area founded on a strong, vibrant economy with high levels of employment. We want to end deprivation, working to narrow the gap in education, employment, health and housing both within and between our communities.

As part of all this work a shared Wirral identity will be established. This is one identity that draws together all the borough's urban, rural and costal communities.

All this will be achieved through a 'can-do' Council that aims to deliver first class services, which are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of local people.

Building on the success in our priority areas that are covered by the Chief Executive's report we developed the vision. We believe that our vision and objectives will make the area a more prosperous and equal Wirral, where all communities and people thrive and achieve their full potential. You will find details of how we will achieve these objectives at the end of this report.

I hope you find this Annual Report useful and I look forward to reporting to you again next year on the continued progress we are committed to delivering for the people of Wirral.

To deliver our vision of Wirral we will focus on the five objectives that will guide how we invest our resources and prioritise how we work.

1. To create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral

2. To create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment

3. To improve health and well being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society

4. To raise the aspirations of young people

5. Create an excellent Council

> Growing Wirral's economy is crucial to the future prosperity of the Borough.

Steve Maddox
Wirral Council - Chief Executive

Chief Executive - Delivering on our objectives

During the year I met more than 300 local businesses to consult them on the development and implementation of our new Investment Strategy that will guide our economic development over the next decade. Full employment and enterprise strategies are also now in place.

The majority of the new Working Neighbourhoods Fund will be directed towards improving the economic prosperity of Wirral in line with the aims of the Investment Strategy.

While continuing to deliver on a wide range of services for residents, focus was placed during the year 2007/2008 on five key areas of activity. The next section details our progress against those priorities.

> The percentage of young people taking part in organised youth activities increased from 55% to 61%

Children and young people

Wirral schools are forging ahead with ever-improving exam results providing a solid future for the area.

The gap at Foundation Stage between the lowest achieving 20% of pupils and the rest shows a reduction of 6% and there is a three year upward trend between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and maths. We have also reduced the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their fellow students. GCSE results are well above the national average, with passes at A-C up 4.5% to 62.2%, and at A level, the average point score increased by 32 points, with a rise of nearly 80 in the numbers of pupils sitting A levels.

Initiatives such as a Boys' Writing Network helped Wirral's teenage boys re-engage with English and similar initiatives have boosted the numbers studying sciences. The percentage of young people taking part in organised youth activities increased from 55% to 61%.

Nearly 90% of 16-year-olds stay on in school or college or go into employment. However the numbers of young people not engaged in education, employment and training is an important challenge, and reducing these numbers is a priority.

Last year Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service was named as one of the best in the country by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, and there were more than 4000 enrolments on adult and family learning courses. Wirral has a high number of looked after children and safely reducing this number is a priority for the Council. Together with our partners we are focusing on early intervention to support more children in our community.

The rate of children adopted or made subject of a special guardianship order remains low. However during the year we were successful in recruiting foster carers and this has contributed to improved placement choice and a high proportion of looked after children living in family placements.

Our Beacon year for Positive Youth Engagement was successful with local authorities from across the country attending the open day.

Good practice was shared through the IDEA website and associated publications. Wirral has since been working closely with peers in Knowsley and Liverpool to help develop youth engagement after obtaining funding through the Cabinet Office.

> Nearly 90% of 16-year-olds stay on in school or college or go into employment

Community Engagement

Residents' views are very important to us and we encourage local people to have an input into shaping the services that their Council provides for them. We have a good record in fully involving our residents in aspects of our work and believe that this is vital to maintaining a vibrant local democracy.

Twice a year 5,000 of our residents undertake a survey for us. Feedback from these postal surveys is used in the development of policies, strategies and service reviews. We also use it to measure levels of public satisfaction with specific services.

We also take part in more in-depth interaction with residents through our area forums.

Youth forums have also been in existence for some years for each parliamentary constituency to provide young people with the opportunity to influence issues ranging from local facilities to transport.

The establishment of an Older People's Parliament in Wirral has provided our older people with a forum to debate and influence the issues which matter to them.

Wirral residents have a unique opportunity to decide how the council should spend money in local areas in a new initiative called You Decide. £260,000 has been allocated to this project and each area forum will be able to 'buy' council services based on its assessment of local needs.

> "Youth forums provide young people with the opportunity to influence issues ranging from local facilities to transport."

Community safety

Wirral has the lowest rate of recorded crime in Merseyside. The rates of burglaries, violent crimes, robberies and vehicle crimes continue to fall and are among the lowest in the country. Public confidence is rising, resulting in a reduced fear of crime.

Wirral's Anti-Social Behaviour Team focuses on the themes of prevention, enforcement and resettlement. It includes seconded officers from Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Family Support Unit and is supported by a dedicated Community Safety Solicitor.

Our Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy aim to tackle alcohol abuse and reduce alcohol-related crime. Working with young people is a recognised strength in Wirral, with a Beacon Status Award for Positive Youth Engagement.

In March 2007 Wirral was selected by the government as one of 40 'respect' areas, as part of the current drive against anti-social behaviour. Many initiatives have been developed, including the Youth Respect Team aimed at preventing and reducing anti-social behaviour by young people. Wirral's Respect Bus visits public places where local residents can get advice from a number of specialists on topics ranging from abandoned cars to youth nuisance.

Increasing the levels of reporting of domestic violence requires continued focus.

Mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate non-police recording of domestic violence incidents. Training has been provided to all agencies in Wirral including community and voluntary sector organisations. Greater reporting enables repeat victims to be identified earlier and for targeted support to be provided.

Road safety continues to be a key priority of the Council. The number of people killed and seriously injured on Wirral's roads has fallen significantly over the past three years. Initiatives started during the year include Bring Accidents Down 2 Zero, which sees 20mph signs erected on residential streets to encourage drivers to slow down – without a formal speed limit reduction.

Customer services

The Council has established a Customer Access Strategy that aims to make it as easy as possible for customers to contact us and for us to deal with enquiries as quickly as possible. However customers get in touch with us we aim to resolve enquiries first time – although some issues need to be referred to specialist staff – and provide a consistent and high quality service.

Improving customer service is a top priority and we have made good progress. Wirral residents can access Council services in a number of ways including through our network of local One Stop Shops. During the year we increased staffing during lunchtimes in One Stop Shops and extended opening hours.

Our network of One Stop Shops is complemented by seven library information points, which offer initial advice and information on different services .

We have continued to develop services with partner organisations including Merseyside Police, Wirral Primary Care Trust, Department for Work and Pensions, Wirral Partnership Homes, Merseytravel and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

We relaunched the Council's website to make more information available electronically and provide some of our most popular services online. We have also improved the telephone system in the Streetscene call centre so that customers can select the nature of their enquiry.

This directs the call to staff with the correct skills and knowledge leading to quicker, more accurate responses. More than 75% of customer enquiries were resolved the first time that they contacted us.

> “Improving customer service is a top priority and we have made good progress.”

Streetscene and waste

Some of the most dramatic service improvements made during the year were in the way that we deal with household waste. Wirral was one of the worst authorities in the country for recycling, now we are one of the best.

A new environmental Streetscene service contract for all waste and street cleaning has been instrumental in delivering the improvements in service. 94% of Wirral homes are now recycling their waste through the green and grey bin scheme.

During the year the percentages for both recycling and composting more than doubled, an improvement that has continued. The household waste recycling rate rose from 9.1% to 20.9% and the total tonnage of household waste recycled rose from 5% to 10.7%.

A pilot scheme to roll out the recycling scheme to schools took place during the year and this will now be extended to all schools. The scheme will also be expanded to cover flats and other multi-occupancy buildings.

Residents and businesses regard clean streets as extremely important to their quality of life. We have a dedicated Streetscene call centre to ensure queries and problems are dealt with promptly.

Cleaning of roads and pavements is carried out by Biffa and involves emptying public bins, litter picking, sweeping and mechanical brushing and sweeping of roads. The condition of Wirral streets has also improved markedly. Our street cleaning indicators has improved beyond our targets and a recent residents survey shows increased satisfaction with both the amounts of litter on our streets and the service to remove it.

People

Wirral Council's biggest asset is it's people. With over 12,500 staff we are the borough's largest employer. Without our staff we would be unable to provide the huge range of Council services which are available to Wirral residents and businesses. We encourage staff and career development as a key part of building employee engagement and we are keen to train and develop our staff. This has been reflected in our achievement of Investors in People status.

Equality & Diversity

Wirral council is committed to delivering all of its services in a fair and equal way. It is also developing an inclusive recruitment and selection procedure aimed at creating a strong and diverse workforce. This two-pronged approach ensures that we work towards removing barriers to our services and actively promote and support diversity in the workplace. This mission will be carried out in close working relationship with our partners on the Local Strategic Partnership.

We have adopted a Single Equality Policy and Strategy, which incorporates our race, gender and disability equality schemes. This also includes our commitment to equality regardless of sexual orientation, age and religion or belief. The Council is working towards level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by 2009, having achieved level 2 in 2007.

Climate Change

The Council has signed the Nottingham Declaration and developed our own climate change action plan. This will ensure we become more energy efficient, reduce our energy consumption and fuel costs and protect local people from the threats posed by our changing climate. Wirral Council's carbon footprint has reduced through the year and the additional initiatives introduced in 2007/08 are leading to a 22% CO^2 reduction against our baseline which is ahead of the target set.

We have joined the CRed Carbon Reduction Scheme which seeks to achieve a 60% reduction in Carbon Emissions by 2025 and established a Sustainability Unit to drive further energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives, and to work with businesses and the community to raise awareness of the urgent need to reduce Wirral's carbon footprint. This will be done by working with our local partners to take action to reduce carbon emissions and to sign up to the CRed target.

“ ”

The Council continues to strive to promote and enhance all aspects of financial management and successfully managed its finances during 2007- 08.

Ian Coleman BSc, CPFA
Director of Finance

Finance Director's Statement

The Council's Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the Accounting Code of Practice.

This document provides a brief review of the financial performance for the year 2007/08.

Revenue

The Council spent £2.5m less than budgeted for in 2007/08. The services experiencing greatest pressures were care services for both adults and children, where demand exceeded resources. Careful management of the Council's cash flow and capital funding helped deliver savings which more than offset overspending on specific services.

Capital Expenditure

This is money spent on purchasing, upgrading or improving assets such as buildings and roads. The distinction from revenue is that the Council receives the benefit from capital expenditure over a longer period of time. The Council spent £73m on capital schemes in 2007/08.

Balances

At the end of the year, the Council had balances of £11m. These will be used to help reduce the level of Council Tax rise in 2007/08. The Council continues to strive to promote and enhance all aspects of financial management and successfully managed its finances during 2007-08.

It retains a prudent level of balances to meet any unforeseen events and faces future challenges in keeping Council Tax affordable while continuing to support the quality and improvement of local services.

External auditors are required to give an opinion that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council. The auditors gave this opinion of the accounts for 2007/2008.

Further details of the Council's finances are set out in its audited statement of accounts available on the council website, www.wirral.gov.uk, click on A-Z and select Annual Accounts.

-->

Highlights from the 2007-08 accounts are given below:

Wirral Council Annual Report 2007/2008

Revenue Spending

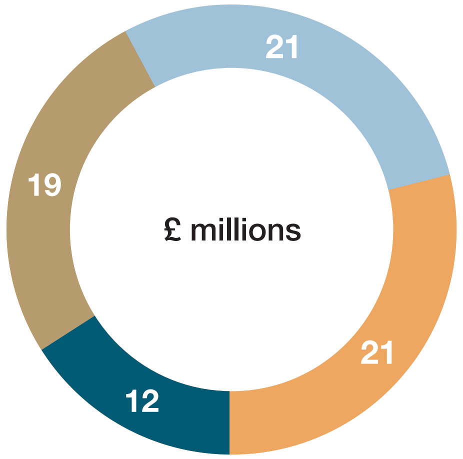
The Revenue Account below shows the cost of running Council services for the year ending March 31 2008.

Spend	£000
Central Services to the Public	5,347
Court and Probation Services	434
Cultural, Environmental and Planning	73,976
Education	44,141
Highways, Roads and Transport	32,253
Housing Services	5,935
Social Services	121,065
Corporate and Democratic Core	4,479
Non Distributed Costs	7,979
Total Cost of Services	**295,609**
Less interest, pension and capital items	35,561
Amount to be met from Government Grants and Council Tax	
	260,048
Financed by:	
Council Tax	119,338
Council Tax Surplus from previous year	430
General Government Grants	25,272
Non-Domestic Rate Pool	114,643
	259,683
General Fund balance brought forward	11,480
Use of General Fund Balances for the year	365
Surplus on General Fund carried forward	**11,115**

Of this £11m surplus, some £4m will be used to set the Council Tax and budget for 2008/09.

Capital Spending

Capital spending is on purchasing, upgrading and improving assets that provide benefit over a period of longer than one year. Most of this is spent on renewing and improving schools and housing in the area, in addition to improving roads as and a number of other buildings.



Regeneration
Other Services
Technical Services
Children and Young People

The main source of funding for capital spending is Government Grants. They provided £44m towards the total spending of £73m. The balance was met from a combination of borrowing and the use of capital receipts generated from the sale of surplus assets.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet shows what the Council owns and is owed. It presents an overall view of the financial position at 31 March 2008.

Assets	£000
Buildings, Land and Other Assets	719,335
Investments	78,620
Cash and Bank	5,660
Money owed to the Council	144,961
Total Assets:	**948,576**
Liabilities and Financing:	
Money owed by the Council	73,998
Borrowing	287,217
Government Grants	201,460
Distributable Reserves *	104,440
Non Distributable Reserves	281,461
Total Liabilities and Financing	**948,576**

* Distributable Reserves comprises of:	
Capital Receipts Reserve	10,535
Reserves – General	66,753
Provisions – General	17,257
Balances	9,895
	104,440

At the end of the year the Council had borrowing of £287m at an average rate of 5.83% over an average life of 26 years.

A Glossary of Terms

Capital Assets
Land, buildings and other property that yields a benefit to the Council that is greater than one year

Capital Expenditure
Expenditure on capital assets

Capital Receipts
Income from the sale of capital assets

Council Tax
Council Tax is charged on all domestic properties in the Council's area and varies according to which band the property has been placed in.

Government Grant
The amount paid by the Government to support the Council's annual budget. Made up of revenue support grant and a share of business rates.

General Fund
The fund to which all the Council's revenue expenditure is charged. Expenditure on the general fund is met from the Council Tax and Government grants.

Reserves
These are balances in hand which have accumulated over previous years and are held for defined purposes. The level and purpose of reserves is regularly reviewed.

Revenue
Income and Expenditure relating to the day-to day running costs of the Council.

Did you know

The Council's assets include:

104 schools and nurseries
44 residential homes and day centres
41 libraries and community centres
38,000 street lights

Longer Term Plans

The Council through its work with the local strategic partnership continues to develop the Sustainable Community Strategy. This sets out a strategic, long term vision for the borough. The Council, in consultation with its partners, has developed an action plan which will be delivered through the Local Area Agreement. The aim is to enhance the quality of life in local communities by improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

In 2007/08, the Council agreed a vision and Corporate Plan for 2008-2011. The plan identifies the area's priorities, reflecting the needs and desires of the local people, and the Council's objectives for the next three years. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy forms a key element of the Corporate Plan by indicating the key resources and principles that will shape the Council's budget for 2009 to 2012.

The Council is committed to allocating resources to local priorities and keeping Council Tax increases to a minimum. To this end, we have invested in an ambitious change programme to secure better procurement procedures, improve access to our services and make efficiencies through the use of information technology. Council Tax levels for 2008/09 increased by 3.66%. This was below the 5% maximum level set by Central Government and as a result the average Band D Council Tax rose to £1,379. This means, Wirral has gone from having the 4th highest Council Tax in the country to having the 242nd highest.

> "The Council is committed to allocating resources to local priorities and keeping Council Tax increases to a minimum."

Budget 2009/10

The Council faces a difficult financial situation due to the level of support it receives from Central Government and the increasing demands on our services. The budget process for 2009/10 is already underway. Departments are examining their services to identify ways of improving value for money and efficiency and this will continue through the coming months. In December 2008, the government will confirm how much government grant the Council will receive in 2009/10 and the Council will finalise its budget proposals. Cabinet and full Council will consider the proposals in February and March 2009.

Wirral Council produces the following documents that relate to its plans and finances. Copies of all of these documents are available on the Wirral website. Go to www.wirral.gov.uk and enter the name of the document in the 'quick search' box at the top of the page.

Annual report
This gives a review of Council activities over the last 12 months. It also gives a brief overview of spending during the period and balance sheets at the end of the period.

Corporate Plan
This document set out the Council's corporate strategy and direction for the next five years.

Statement of Accounts
This gives a detailed view of the Council's financial accounts for the last financial year.

'Your Council Tax Explained'
This booklet is issued annually in March with Council bills. It sets out the Council's plans for the coming year.

If you would like to give any feedback on this Annual Report please contact:

Jenny Spick
Finance Department
Treasury Building
Cleveland Street
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 6BU

e-mail: jennyspick@wirral.gov.uk

Strategic Objectives	Aims for 2008 – 2013	Priorities for Improvement 2008/09
To create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral	Increase investment and encourage new developments Improve rate of business start ups and support local businesses to grow Increase GVA by increasing employment opportunities and matching skills to employers' demands Reduce worklessness Ensure the sustainability of our cultural, leisure and tourism assets	Reduce worklessness Increase enterprise
To create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment	Increase levels of recycling Reduce our carbon footprint Create exemplary levels of street cleanliness Reduce number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents Deliver HMRI programme and achieve housing decency standards Reduce alcohol related crime Reduce levels of anti-social behaviour Conserve the borough's natural and built heritage and increase civic pride and public participation	Increase levels of recycling Reduce the council's carbon footprint Reduce number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents
To improve health and well being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society	Narrow the mortality gap on Wirral Promote greater independence and choice Reduce the number of falls for elderly people Encourage healthy lifestyles and participation in fulfilling activities Improve support for those with mental health problems Tackle domestic violence Tackle all forms of alcohol and drug induced harm	Promote greater independence and choice
To raise the aspirations of young people	Raise overall educational attainment, particularly lower achieving young people Reduce numbers not in employment, education or training Safely reduce the number of looked after children Reduce childhood obesity Increase numbers going to university, especially from disadvantaged	Raise overall educational attainment, particularly lower achieving young people. Safely reduce the number of looked after children
Create an excellent council	Improve the use of the Council's land and assets. Create a sustainable and stable budget providing value for money Improve the council's budgeting process to fully reflect its priorities Improve accountability, accessibility and openness and involve those who use our services in their design and delivery Improve partnership working with the public, private and voluntary sectors	Improve the use of the Council's land and assets Create a sustainable and stable budget, providing value for money Improve the Council's budgeting process to fully reflect its priorities