

Putting the Community First



Annual Finance and Performance Report 2007/08

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1. Introduction and foreword

Welcome to Barnet's Annual Finance and Performance Report for the year April 2007 to March 2008.

This report forms part of the Council's commitment to open and transparent reporting. We take the collection and reporting of finance and performance information very seriously and the Annual Report fulfils the Council's statutory obligation to publish outturn performance data against the national targets prescribed by Government.

The report sets out our achievements against the priorities we set for ourselves in the 2007/8 Corporate Plan and in so doing allows us to compare ourselves with others and to determine what changes need to be made locally to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our residents.

The Annual Report also provides the opportunity to highlight the work we have carried out with partners to make a real difference to our communities in Barnet and to give tax payers the chance to hold us to account where they feel we have more work to do.

The Council remains committed to delivering value for money to our residents. Despite a poor government financial settlement in 2007/8, rigorous budgeting meant we were again able to keep the Council Tax below the Retail Price Index rate of inflation.

We have worked hard to offer residents more choice and independence in the way social care is provided, increasing by 42% the number of people receiving Direct Payments from the Council. This means that 42% more people have the freedom to choose and to buy their own social care tailored to their own individual needs.

Our continuing investment in schools was recognised in our highest Ofsted rating yet with 84% of Barnet schools rated 'good' or

'better.' This is significantly higher than the national average.

Our 2006/7 Annual Residents' Survey told us that crime was a top concern for people in Barnet so we worked hard in partnership to address this and are pleased to report that in the last year there were 3275 fewer crimes committed in the borough.

The Council's achievements were recognised by the independent Audit Commission, which has awarded Barnet the highest possible 4 star rating. This means we are considered an excellent council and among the best in the country.

We will strive to improve even further in the coming year, delivering more choice and value for money services at the lowest possible cost to our communities. The Council faces a significant challenge in meeting the needs of its customers and is committed to expanding opportunities for customers to contact us and to taking our services to those that need it most.

In 2007/8 we saw greater detail and analysis in the regular monitoring reports to Cabinet Resources Committee. Later in this publication we detail the Council's consultation activity and I hope we can make further steps in reporting and engaging with Barnet.

As part of the Council's commitment to involving residents, we would welcome your views on this report. If you want to get involved please see section 7 on consultation.

Mike Freer
Leader of the Council,
Councillor



2. The Council's performance in 2007/8

The monitoring and reporting of our performance is important if we are to continue to do a good job for the residents of Barnet. By measuring specific areas of our work, we are able to assess how well we are doing, to compare our performance against previous years and against others and to identify areas for change and improvement.

We measure our performance through a series of targets, some which are set nationally by Government and others which are local targets, set by ourselves in consultation with partners and residents and based on a set of local priorities.

Each year the Council is judged under a programme of national assessment of local government carried out by the independent Audit Commission as part of an agreed performance framework. This year it said that Barnet is improving well and demonstrating 4 star overall performance. This is the highest star-rating available.



This assessment indicates the progress being made to achieve improvement. The Audit Commission found that:

- Our performance against most performance indicators improved and compared well with others
- We made good achievements in key priority areas. Our housing and adult social care services increased their overall ratings
- Educational attainment at all key stages remains above national expectations

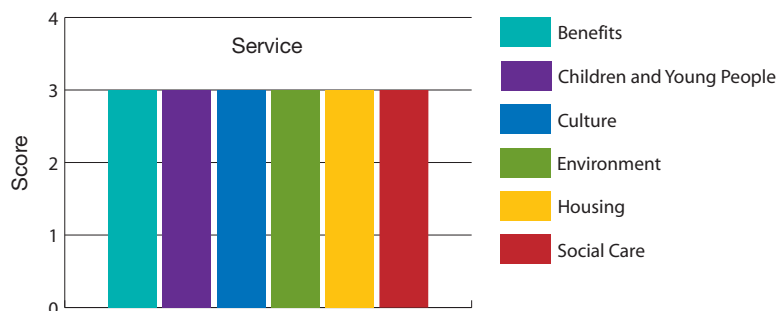
- Partnership working is having a positive impact in delivering wider community outcomes
- Crime has reduced with significant reductions in violent crime
- We continue to provide good value for money
- Plans for further improvement, including the new customer access strategy, are clear and focused on producing good results for residents
- Financial management and standing has improved and the Council is well placed to deliver further improvements

Performance against our corporate priorities

Alongside this programme of national assessment, we have our own system of performance management based on the things which matter locally. An integral part of this is the annual publication of the Council's Corporate Plan in which the Council sets out its priorities for the coming year. It is the central record of all our key targets.

This section sets out some of our key achievements for 2007/8 against the targets and priorities we set for ourselves in

How our main services perform



that plan and highlights some of our priority improvement initiatives for the coming year.

Supporting the vulnerable

We committed to:

- maximising the independence of older people and those requiring care and support.
- promoting choice in the provision of care.
- improving the quality, effectiveness, accessibility and customer satisfaction of housing and social care services.

In 2007/8:

- 447 people received Direct Payments from the Council, allowing them to buy their own social care. This is an increase of 42% and Barnet has the highest proportion of older people in London receiving Direct Payments.
- Our work to tackle homelessness has seen the number of people accepted as homeless drop by 12% in 2007/8.

In 2008/9 we will:

- work towards delivery of the Vision Programme for Choice and Independence in Adult Social Services by 2009/10, increasing choice and independence for vulnerable adults requiring support or care.
- complete the Homelessness Strategy and implement key actions from the Young Persons Homelessness Strategy by April 2009.

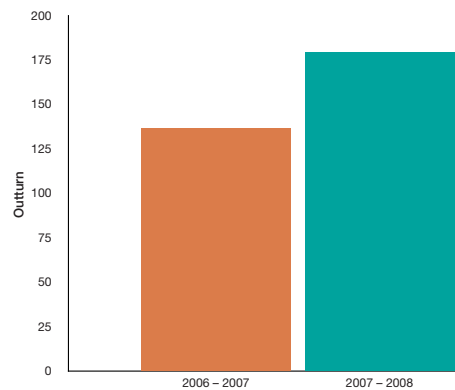
A bright future for children and young people

We committed to:

- ensuring that every school in Barnet is a good school
- ensuring that every child gets the best start to learning
- ensuring that we improve educational outcomes for children whose achievement is at risk

In 2007/8:

- OfSTED inspectors rated 84% of our schools as good or better, compared to 61 % of schools nationally. This is up from 78% last year.
- 60% of pupils achieved five or more good GCSE passes, including English and Maths, placing Barnet in the country's top 10 local authorities.



Adults/older people receiving direct payments per 100,000 population (over 18)



- nearly twice as many looked-after children achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades than the national average.

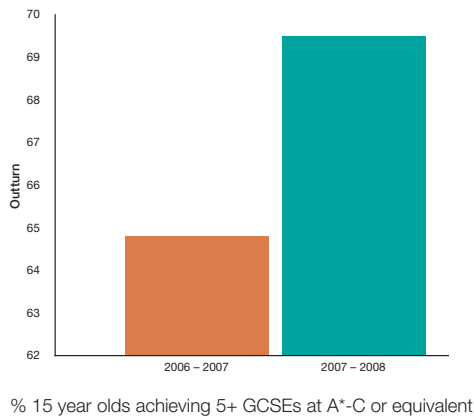
In 2008/9 we will:

- raise achievement by improving rates of progress
- increase access to education, employment and training
- minimise the risk to children of harm and neglect

Clean, green and safe

We committed to:

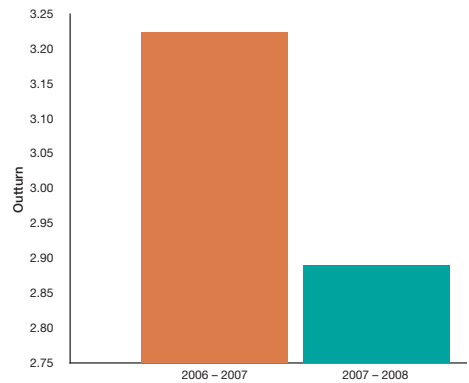
- further improving parks and green spaces across the borough by delivering our 'Premier Parks Strategy'
- delivering a Signature Street Cleansing Service, tackling litter, detritus and graffiti across the borough



- further improving waste management in Barnet by delivering a Waste Management strategy
- improving transport, traffic flow and the quality of the roads across Barnet
- reducing fear of crime and anti-social behaviour through effective working with our partners and the police

In 2007/8:

- we were awarded six prestigious Green Flags for excellent parks: Old Courthouse Recreation Ground, Victoria Park, Oak Hill Park, Friary Park, Hendon Park and Mill Hill Park. This is four more than in 2007.
- the Council more than exceeded its target in relation to reducing levels of litter and detritus and is squarely placed in the top quartile, one of the best in London at 9%. Fifty-six per cent of residents were satisfied with street cleansing in 2007/08. This creates an excellent platform for the Signature Cleansing launch year.



Violent offences per 1,000 population:
b) Robberies

- the Residents' Annual Survey advised that residents feel refuse collection is the highest scoring service area, with around three quarters (78%) of residents rating this service good to excellent. This is closely followed by street lighting (69%), recycling facilities (65%) and public transport (65%). In addition, Barnet Council is rated higher than London for refuse collection (9% higher)



- the London Mayor approved the Council's Local Implementation Plan which outlines how Barnet will comply with the London Mayor's Transport Strategy. This was approved in January 2008.
- we worked hard to keep the borough safe and reduce fear of crime. In 2007/8 a new CCTV scheme was implemented and we are pleased to report that we exceeded our target of reducing the number of people who feel unsafe.

In 2008/9 we will:

- work towards the delivery of a step change in waste management performance by reducing waste and increasing recycling and composting across the borough.
- increase the number of Green Flag parks to seven with the inclusion of Edgwarebury Park.
- begin review of anti-social behaviour strategy and implement action plan.

A successful city-suburb

We committed to:

- delivering the 3 strand 'Protect, enhance and grow' approach to include the regeneration of estates, Cricklewood, open spaces and town centres
- delivering housing growth in a sustainable way
- creating the conditions for a vibrant economy

In 2007/8:

- building work started on the Grahame Park regeneration project in the last year.
- the Colindale Area Action Plan encompassing 10 000 new homes and 500 new jobs was launched.
- the Brent Cross Cricklewood redevelopment plans won a prestigious London Planning Award.
- residents can now view all planning applications and submit comments on-line.
- Mill Hill East (Inglis Barracks) Area Action Plan approved for an autumn public inquiry to deliver 2500 new homes and 500 new jobs.

In 2008/9 we will:

- continue to implement the three strand 'Protect, enhance and grow' approach to making Barnet a successful city-suburb including working towards more low cost home ownership and developing opportunities and advice for people who wish to own their own home.
- continue work on our regeneration schemes:



West Hendon Estate

Milestone:

- determination of detailed planning application: March 2009
- start on site demonstration phase 1 – 8 houses: March 2009

Cricklewood, Brent Cross

Milestone:

- planning Development Forum completed and commercial terms finalised: March 2009

DollisValley

Milestone:

- development partner secured: March 2009

Stonegrove/Spur Road

Milestones:

- Sterling Avenue Phase one completed: May 2008
- commence first substantive stage of the scheme: March 2009

GrahamePark:

Milestone:

- first phase start on site: March 2009

Strong and healthy

We committed to:

- improving the health of the population in Barnet
- improving access to health services
- providing opportunities for people to participate in civic affairs
- providing good services which are perceived to be provided fairly to meet the needs of different sections of the community

In 2007/8:

- levels of childhood obesity have reduced.
- working with Barnet Primary Care Trust we exceeded our ambitious target for increasing the number of people giving up smoking in the borough's seven most deprived wards. Over 1,000 people have been helped to give up smoking in these wards. We have also achieved virtually 100% compliance with the smoke free legislation.
- we have worked hard to give Barnet residents a stronger voice and have increased involvement of members of the public in Council affairs through the Leader Listens and Resident forums.
- we are committed to ensuring equality for our staff and the Council has now adopted its first Single Equality Scheme.

In 2008/9 we will:

- prepare the borough to achieve excellent status under the new CAA framework by increasing organisational capacity to use data to better understand our communities, and by developing a Partnership Equalities Scheme with other Barnet public authorities.
- working with the PCT and other partners, such as the Police, Barnet Voluntary Services Council (BVSC), Brent Cross Shopping Centre and Barnet Homes, to tackle obesity, by increasing levels of physical activity



and promoting healthier eating, and to reduce smoking rates, in order to tackle the fatal diseases of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

- work with partners towards delivery of our Sports, Physical Activity and Physical Education Strategy.

More choice, better value

We committed to:

- providing customers with a choice of access to services and information
- delivering value for money across council services through better use of resources including our assets, staff and technology
- supporting and enable the development of the organisation and its staff to better meet the changing needs of the community

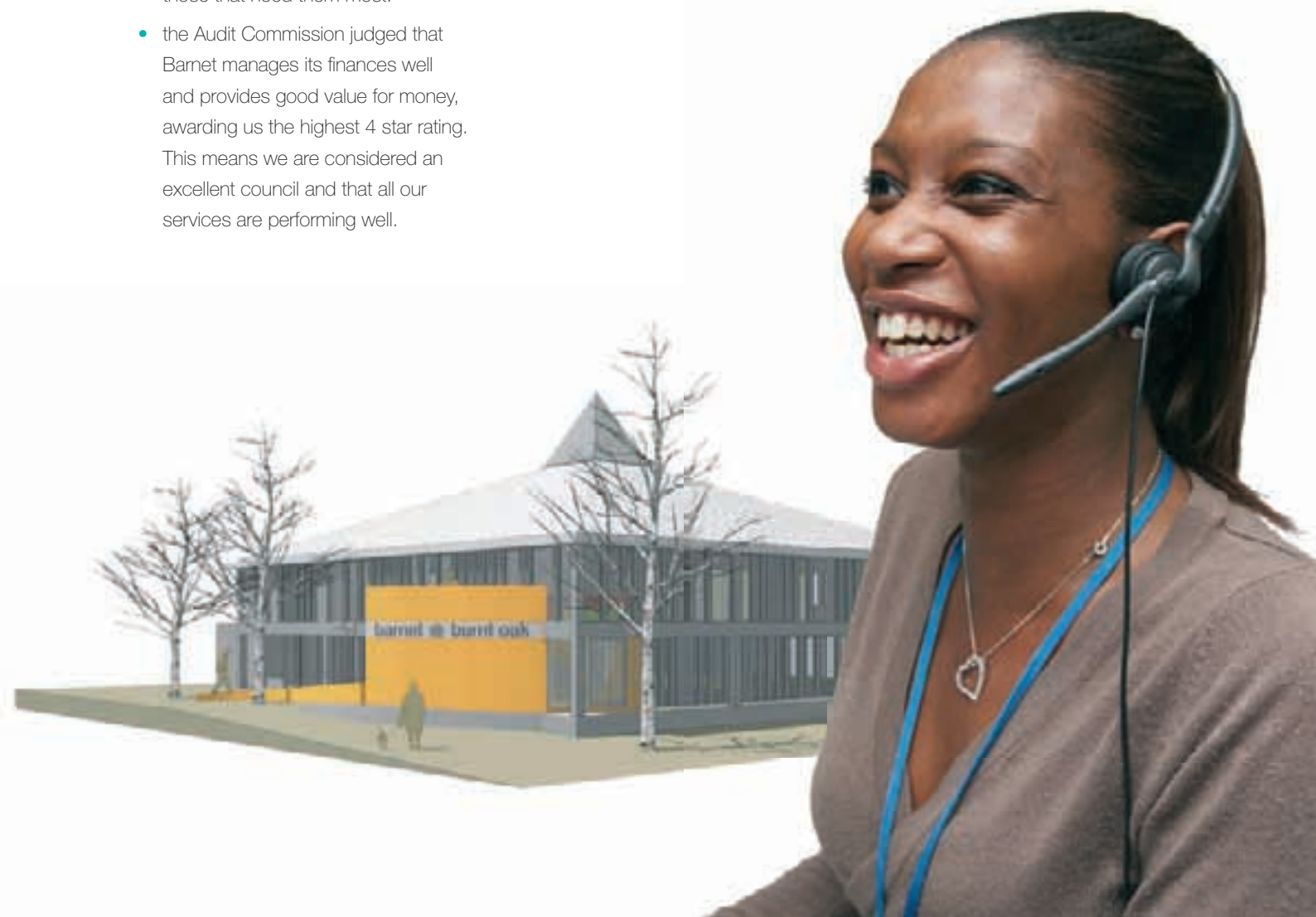
In 2007/8:

- we continued to meet the needs of our customers by taking our services to those that need them most.
- the Audit Commission judged that Barnet manages its finances well and provides good value for money, awarding us the highest 4 star rating. This means we are considered an excellent council and that all our services are performing well.

- we reduced the number of telephone numbers from over 400 down to between 7 and 10 to make it easier for customers to contact the services they need, when they need them.

In 2008/9 we will:

- open our new customer service centre in Burnt Oak in the summer of 2008.
- work towards implementation of a Customer Relationship Management system and co-ordinate customer services functions to enable us to better meet the needs of our customers.
- develop a consultation E-portal where residents can view all consultations done by the Council and our partners, access and take part in current consultation, sign up for future consultations and view the actions taken as a result of consultation.



3. Finance Summary

The Council approved its first formal Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in March 2007 which was based around a series of guiding principles on the authority's medium term financial health, the integration of service and financial planning, budgetary control and having suitable governance arrangements. The points below briefly identify the progress the Council has made in meeting those principles.

Medium Term Financial Health

- Increased general fund balances to £17.5m
- Identification of £8m of efficiency savings in delivering the 2008/09 budget in addition to achieved efficiencies of over £6.5m during 2007/08
- Supported the delivery of the Council's accommodation strategy and capital programme through the disposal of surplus assets generating £9m in 2007/08

Integrating Financial Planning with Service Planning

- Embedding of the Key Priorities Board which drives the reallocation of resources towards the Corporate Plan priorities through the delivery of the 2008/09 budget
- Undertaking value for money reviews of Council services
- Enhanced identification and monitoring of financial risks

Budgetary Control

- Regular financial monitoring reports to Members encompassing revenue, capital, debt, collection rates, creditors and prudential borrowing
- Reduction in the monies owed to the Council from £20m to £17m
- The establishment of £18m specific reserves to manage potential future financial risks

Details of the Council's spending for the year 2007/08 are set out in the [Statement of Accounts](#) available on the Council's website. Extracts shown below.

The figures used in this report are preliminary and are subject to scrutiny from external audit.

The Council classifies its spending into two categories – capital and revenue.

Capital expenditure is principally in respect of acquiring, constructing or enhancing physical assets (including buildings, roads and immovable equipment) which provide benefit to the authority over several years. In this instance, enhancement relates to works which are intended to lengthen the useful life of an asset, increase the open market value of the asset or substantially increase the extent to which an asset can be used in the delivery of services.

Revenue relates to the costs incurred and income generated from the day-to-day provision of the Council's services. It also incorporates the costs of maintaining the assets of the Council that enable it to continue to deliver services to the same standard.



i) Performance against budget and Council balances

The table below shows the Council's performance against its budget for the year 2007/08.

Service	Budget £'000	Actual Outturn £'000	Variance on latest Budget £'000
Adult Services	81,058	81,896	838
Children's Service	65,746	64,720	(1,027)
Corporate Services	45,595	35,011	(10,584)
Environment & Transport	20,377	20,365	(11)
Housing (non-HRA)	4,767	2,530	(2,237)
Planning & Environmental Protection	(106)	316	421
Service Total	217,436	204,837	(12,600)
Transfers from Balances	(326)	6,926	7,252
Grand Total	217,110	211,762	(5,348)

The balances

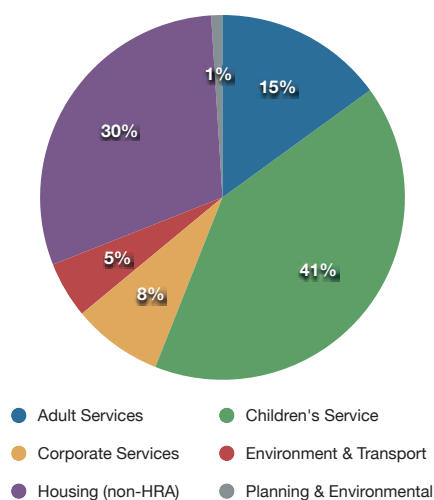
	General fund	Schools	Total
Bought Forward 1. April 2007	12,099	10,272	22,371
Outturn 2007/8	5,348	1,652	7,000
Carried Forward 1. April 2008	17,447	11,924	29,371

After the closure of the 2007/08 accounts, General Fund balances stand at £17.4m (an increase of £5.3m) and school balances at £11.9m. In addition, the Council has specific reserves of £18.6m. While this is a significant improvement on the position at the end of 2006/07, the level of balances remains a key consideration when setting the annual budget.

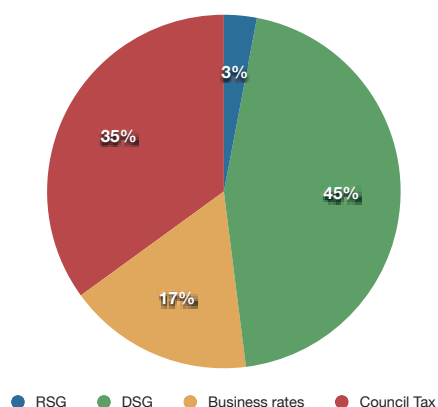
ii) Income and expenditure

The detailed statutory income and expenditure account outlining the Council's spending is set out in the Statement of Accounts which shows the majority of gross was on education, housing and social services. The gross expenditure totalled £789m and gross income £562m. (including Dedicated Schools Grant) to give a net expenditure of £227m.

The following graph shows the main areas of revenue expenditure:



A key aspect is that 65 per cent of expenditure is funded by government either through general or specific grants.



iii) The balance sheet

The balance sheet shows the financial position for the Council at a certain point in time. It indicates the Council's assets and liabilities as at 31 March every year. The assets include the value of council-owned land and buildings as well as the value of investments and monies owed to the Council. Liabilities include an assessment of money owed by the Council and borrowing

liabilities. The following table shows the balance sheet at the end of March 2008.

Notes to the Balance Sheet:

1. Revaluation reserve and capital adjustment account are not available to finance future expenditure. They represent accounting entries relating to the revaluation of fixed assets and the financing of capital expenditure
2. The Housing Revenue Account is a separate account that the Council is required by statute to maintain. It covers the authority's landlord responsibilities as a housing authority.
3. The Collection Fund is a statutory fund which accounts separately for the income relating to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates. The balance on the collection fund shown in the balance sheet represents the deficit on the fund as at 31 March 2008.
4. General balances are held to provide a margin of safety to deal with future unforeseeable events. Earmarked reserves are set aside to meet future year's expenditure for specific Council priorities. They include both capital revenue reserves. The balances and reserves are

iv) Housing Revenue Account

The Council provides in excess of 11,000 Council dwellings for its tenants. In 2007/08, £33m capital investment was made in order to bring the Council's housing stock up to the Decent Homes standard. Since 1 April 2004, the management of all the Council's housing stock was transferred to Barnet Homes

31 March 2007 £'000	Fixed assets	31 March 2008 £'000
1,090,000	Council dwellings	1,086,000
467,140	Other land and buildings	485,940
174,539	Vehicles, equipment and other FA	229,042
219,911	Investments	261,352
25,433	Intangible Assets	0
61,080	Debtors	60,116
1,591	Stocks and works in progress	363
18,391	Imprest accounts and school balances	19,584
2,058,085	Total assets	2,142,397
(210,500)	Long term borrowing	(212,376)
(104,180)	Creditors	(138,826)
(242,634)	Pension liability	(191,461)
(106,121)	Other liabilities	(131,943)
(663,435)	Total liabilities	(674,606)
1,394,650	Total assets less liabilities	1,467,791

Ltd, an 'Arm's Length Management Organisation' (ALMO) wholly owned by the authority. A statutory account which shows the income and from and expenditure on the provision of the Council housing is shown below. Other services are charged to the general fund.

	2007/08		2006/07	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income				
Rents for dwellings. Garages, etc	(44,275)		(42,677)	
Charges for services and facilities	(6,293)		(7,129)	
Total Income		(50,568)		(49,806)
Expenditure				
Expenditure on services		30,238		29,484
HRA Subsidy payable		10,054		9,331
Depreciation and impairment		42,549		21,201
Debt management expenses		27		31
Provision for bad debts		483		330
Total expenditure		83,351		60,377
HRA share of corporate and democratic core etc.		45		115
Net cost of HRA services		32,783		10,571
Interest payable		2,142		1,386
Adjustment for premium on debt		378		378
Interest income		(213)		(320)
(Surplus)/deficit on HRA services		35,135		12,130
Statement of movement on the Housing Revenue Account balance				
Deficit for year on HRA services		35,135		12,130
Impairment reversal		(22,522)		(3,484)
Transfer to/(from) Major Repairs Reserve		(11,923)		(9,777)
EIR interest cost on stepped loans		(19)		0
		671		(1,131)
HRA revenue balances				
HRA revenue balances		£'000		£'000
HRA balances at the beginning of the year		(4,835)		(3,704)
(Surplus)/deficit at the year end		671		(1,131)
HRA balance at the year end		(4,164)		(4,835)

v) Council Tax

The Council acts as a precept for the Greater London Authority and collects Council Tax on their behalf as well. This is where part of the money collected goes to and funds services such as the police, fire and transport. It also goes towards tackling climate change and funding projects such as the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Barnet's part of the Council Tax pays for Council services. In 2007/08 it increased by 3.9 per cent and in 2008/09 it is projected to increase by 3.5 per cent.

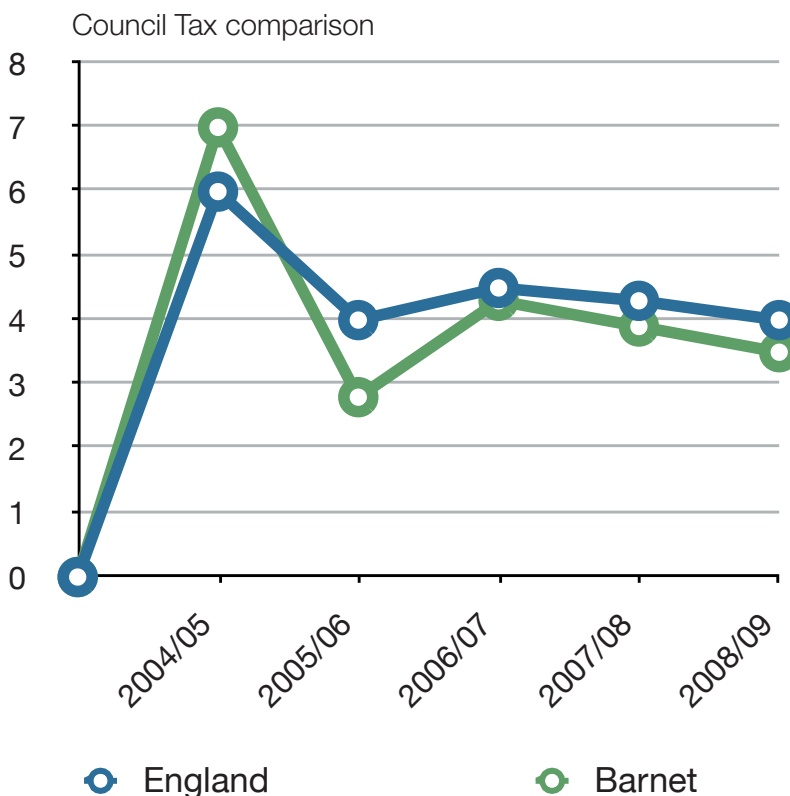
As the table below shows, the increase in Council Tax has reduced from the previous year and the Council has not only set targets to reduce that further but also to maintain that reduction to 3.5 per cent over the next three years.

Although Barnet is working to reduce its increase in Council Tax, its rise of 3.5 per cent for 2008/09 compares favourably with the national average of 4 per cent.

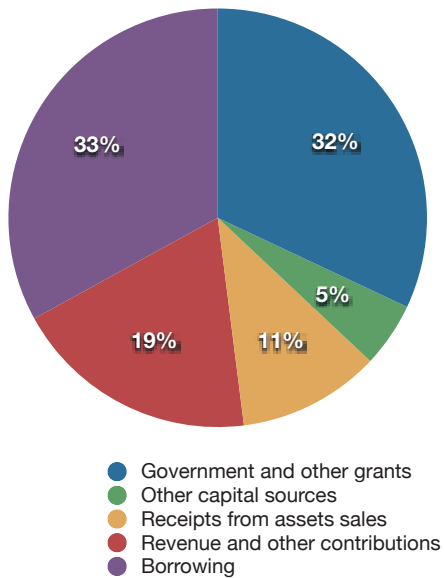
vi) Capital projects

Over the last 12 months, the Council has continued its investment in areas such as schools modernisation, bringing its housing stock up to the decent homes standard, improvements to the highways and enabling major regeneration programmes. The commitment to modernising the authority has also continued with the further development of technology and working practices. This has made the day-to-day running of services more efficient across the authority.

The graph below demonstrates how the Council is able to secure financing in order to carry out its projects. Loans and borrowing remain the main means of capital financing, providing 33 per cent of the £87 million raised in 2007/08, followed by grants which include government grants. Other sources include capital receipts, which are proceeds from the sale of existing fixed assets (such as buildings).



Revenue contributions include the major repairs allowance and other capital sources included contributions from private developers.



In addition to the delivery of the schemes mentioned above, the Council has in the last 12 months undertaken some major programmes of work. The two most high profile of these are the Primary Schools Capital Investment Programme (PSCIP), a major undertaking to rebuild some of the most 'in need' primary schools in the Borough as identified in the school's asset management plan, and the rebuild of East Barnet Secondary School. The Council has also successfully installed two bridges on Aerodrome Road. This will improve access to the Colindale Regeneration area for pedestrians and cyclists, enable the provision of an east-west bus link and ease congestion at the Aerodrome Road/A41 junction.

A breakdown of the £87.7m capital expenditure is detailed below:

Service	£'000
Childrens' Services	15,418,327
Housing and Social Services	44,806,114
Environment and Transport	17,468,174
Corporate Services	10,010,100
Total	87,702,714

Some of the major capital schemes the Council spent money on during the 2007/08 financial year included:-

- In excess of £6m invested in modernisation and redevelopment of schools
- £9.6m used to improve the Borough's Highway infrastructure including major road repairs, minor maintenance to roads and pavements, implementing traffic management and safety schemes
- Over £4m spend on Housing regeneration projects and a further £26m on repairs and improvements to Council dwellings

This year saw the further enhancement of the process to approve the capital programme for 2008/09 and beyond. The business case process now embraces the principles of whole life costing, whereby each scheme was required to produce a business case which identified the contribution to corporate priorities, potential options for the scheme, risks associated with its implementation, sources of financing and both the short and medium term revenue impact. This ensured that the approved capital programme was both in line with the objectives of the authority and affordable, without a significant impact on Council Tax.

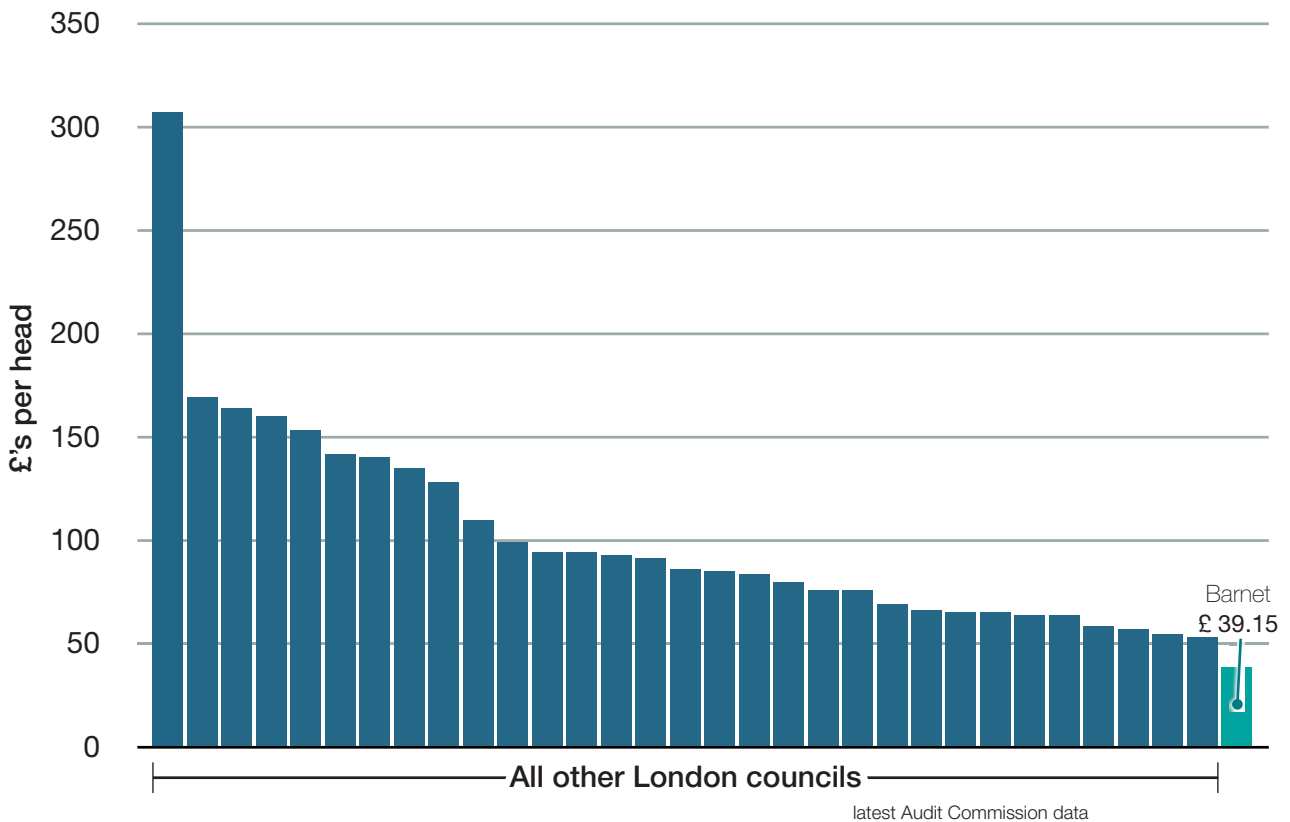
Value for Money:

The 'Use of Resources' assessment judges how well local authorities are using their money. The Audit Commission awarded the Council a 3 star rating which means we are performing well.

Value for Money (VfM) is the term used to assess whether or not an organisation has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it acquires and/or provides, within the resources available to it. It not only measures the cost of goods and services, but also takes account of the mix of quality, cost, resource use, fitness for purpose, timeliness and convenience to judge whether or not, when taken together, they constitute good value.

The Council is committed to delivering VfM as an integral part of service delivery to the community. An agreed programme of work supports the capture and monitoring of activity that drives good value services.

London Local Authorities Central Services and other total £'s head



latest Audit Commission data

4. Corporate Governance

We define Governance as 'The highest standards of *transparency, integrity* and *accountability* in the way in which the Council and its partners operate, embodied in a set of rules and procedures.'

The primary governance framework is the **Constitution**. This is the key document by which the Council operates to ensure its governance arrangements are lawful, efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Much of the content of the constitution is required by law but there are some parts which have been introduced at the discretion of the Council.

Internal Audit and Ethical Governance, Democratic Services & Scrutiny, Legal Services, Electoral Registration and Emergency Planning are the services in the Council's infrastructure and its decision making that ensure good governance through a series of activity.

- The Corporate Anti Fraud Team (CAFT), continue to assist the Council in protecting the public purse through the facilitation of sound strategies, procedures and controls in the prevention, detection, investigation and deterrence of fraud and corruption.
- The Internal Audit Service is responsible for the effective review of the adequacy and effectiveness of all procedures and controls in place relating to risk management and internal control throughout the Council's activities.
- Internal Audit gave satisfactory assurance on the corporate governance arrangements in the Council. The audit compared the Council's corporate governance arrangements against a revised national framework.
- An audit of the risk management function provided satisfactory assurance that the development of corporate risk management is progressing adequately.
- Annual review of the Constitution embodying changes required as a consequence of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- Working Group of Members established by Council to review and make recommendations as to the future shape of Scrutiny.
- Expansion in size of Standards Committee, approval of revised terms of reference and recruitment of new Independent Members in response to introduction of "Local Regulation".
- Approval and implementation of new Code of Conduct for Members.
- Approval of arrangements for Annual Governance Statement
- Approval of requirement for Legal Services Annual Report to Scrutiny
- Exceeded target of 88% return of electoral registration forms
- Governance arrangements for the Local Strategic Partnership embedded in the Constitution

5. Public Services in Barnet

Much of the work we do is in partnership and we are committed to working more efficiently and more effectively with all our partners. The success of the Council rests on its leadership role in bringing together all partners including other public services, the voluntary and community sector and the business community. This work is co-ordinated through the Executive Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which is chaired by the Leader of the Council and brings together the most senior leaders from the main agencies that deliver public services in the Council. The governance arrangements for the LSP have recently been agreed, and clarify that as the LSP is a non-statutory body, any targets it agrees or commitments it makes must be formalised through the Council's Executive and/or the decision making processes of the other LSP members.

The Council also co-ordinate a series of partnerships relating to more specific issues, such as adult health and social care, community safety, and children and young people, to ensure partners are working together to improve the quality of life for the people of Barnet.

These report to the LSP and have a similar governance status.

The Council also makes arrangements to engage with the community, including holding a Civic Network twice a year to bring together the widest range of organisations in Barnet to help shape future strategy.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Council, through the LSP, has to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy which is a plan for how partners will work together to tackle the most important social, economic and environmental issues in their area.

Barnet's Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Barnet: A First Class City Suburb', has just been updated. It sets out a shared vision for Barnet in 2018 and contains four themes:

- Investing in children and young people;
- Safer, stronger, and cleaner Barnet;
- Growing successfully;
- Healthier Barnet (including older people).

Each of these is supported by more detailed ambitions.



6. Local Area Agreement

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the local priorities agreed between central government and the local area, including the local authority and other key partners.

LAAs help to join up public services more effectively and allow more flexibility for local solutions to local issues by simplifying some central funding arrangements.

The Council, with its partners, signed a new Local Area Agreement on 30 June 2008 with Central Government. Our Local Area Agreement, together with our Sustainable Community Strategy, sets out our vision and delivery priorities for Barnet.

Barnet's LAA focuses on the issues that contribute most to Barnet being a successful city-suburb, both those that build success for all and those that tackle disadvantage for a small number of people who are unable to share in that success.

Each of the targets selected for the LAA includes targets for improvement for the next three years. These also form the basis of the Action plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.



7. Our Approach to the Environment

Environmental policy

The Council has now published its Environmental Policy which sets out the organisation's overall direction in relation to environmental performance. The policy acknowledges that the Council has considerable responsibilities towards the local environment and that global issues, such as climate change, need to be tackled through action at the local as well as regional, national and international level.

The policy sets out the Council's commitments to environmental performance through its own activities and highlights where it can use strong community leadership and influence to encourage key stakeholders to adopt similar environmental standards. The policy sets out five following priority areas:

- Strong community leadership
- Prevent waste, increase recycling
- Efficient use of resources, including energy & water
- Sustainable travel
- Sustainable procurement

In support of the delivery of its Environmental policy, the Council is developing a Sustainable Procurement Policy, introducing guidance for the consideration of the policy and the environmental impact as part of decision making processes and continuing its town centre outreach events.

Energy Saving Trust

To support the delivery of its Environment Policy the Council signed up to a work programme including an appraisal by the EST. This appraisal assessed the Council's strategic approach, its services, its own estate and community leadership. A cross-service workshop was held and a draft Action Plan produced for the Council's comments and consideration.

Environmental footprint

The Council will work towards reporting its carbon footprint from its direct operations. Initially this will utilise the carbon emission data gathered from managing energy / fuels bills and outsourced services and will provide a basis for adopting a broader and more sophisticated assessment.



8. Moving Forward 2008/9

This year the Council has risen to the challenges set by our residents by improving from a 3* to a 4 * 'excellent' score in our independent assessment by the Audit Commission.

The Council must now build on this progress and we still have work to do. We will continue to work with residents, businesses and our partners to sustain Barnet's success and we will work to deliver value for money through high quality services at the lowest possible cost to our communities.

Barnet's Corporate Plan for 2008/9 – 2011/12 sets out how we will go about improving our services over the next four years. The corporate priorities set last year continue with one amendment to emphasise our commitment to ensuring Barnet excels as a successful city-suburb.

- **A bright future for children and young people:** improving the quality of life of all Barnet children and young people
- **Clean, green and safe:** ensuring all our neighbourhoods are safe, clean and green places to live
- **Supporting the vulnerable:** supporting vulnerable adults to live independent and active lives

- **Barnet- a successful city-suburb:** protecting and enhancing the best of Barnet while growing through successful regeneration and sustainable development
- **More choice, better value:** providing community leadership, community choice and higher quality services at the lowest possible cost

Further details in relation to the council's objectives for 2008/9 can be found at www.barnet.gov.uk/corporate-plan. The Corporate Plan is available as a web-only version, in line with the council's commitment to better value and environmental sustainability.



9. Consultation

In continuing to improve services and making Barnet a first class suburb the Council is committed to involving and consulting people who live and work in the borough on how best to do this.

How can you get involved?

The Council runs a **Citizens' Panel** comprising 1,000 randomly recruited residents to represent Barnet's adult population. The panel is used to explore residents' views on the Council and its services and their experience of living in Barnet. Those on the panel take part in up to four surveys a year. We are proud of the borough's diverse communities and their contributions to making Barnet an excellent place to live. We want to engage with all our residents and to ensure that all communities and all faiths are represented in our consultation. We are particularly working to involve those groups of residents under-represented in our previous consultation and now run a Black Minority and Ethnic Panel as well as a Disability Panel.

Residents have many other opportunities to engage with the council. Leader Listens offers residents to chance to share their views and concerns with the Leader of

the Council and residents can attend the Residents' Forums held several times a year in each of the borough's three constituencies.

Organised groups can attend the Civic Network which meets twice yearly to bring together a wide range of organisations and help shape future policies on the big issues affecting the borough and young people (under 19) can also join Barnet's Youth Board. This is used by the Council and other public services to get views on the needs of young people.

You may be asked for your views as part of the Annual Residents Attitude Survey which is run by a market research company on behalf of the Council and interviews a representative sample of borough residents.

If you would like more information about Barnet consultation, please go to [Barnet Online – Consultations](#)

This year, residents were involved in helping the Council and its partners design and improve a wide spectrum of service provision. Below are just a few examples of how we involved you and acted on and your views:



Develop our new Customer Care Access Point at Burnt Oak Library

To demonstrate our commitment to providing customers with the services they need through the channels that suit them best, we will be opening a new customer service centre inside the existing Burnt Oak Library site, offering residents the services they require locally.

We consulted extensively on this in autumn 2007. You told us you wanted increased opening times at the library and service centre allowing access to services when it is convenient for you.

You also told us that you wanted more computers available for internet access and some more flexible space for individual or group study as well as new and improved library stock that more closely matched the needs of those people who used the library. The young people consulted gave us some good ideas about the design, the look and the feel for their area of the library.

Residents were keen to see some of our partner organisations operating more locally and as a result of negotiations the Citizens Advice Bureau will open at the new service centre on a weekly basis.

Design our new contract for our recycling services

The Council is working on a new contract to provide recycling collections from residents' homes from October 2008. As part of this major project, we consulted with residents via our Citizens Panel on their views on how we could expand the service to include collections of plastic bottles and cardboard. The views gathered are now informing the design of the new service.

Through the Leader Listens you informed us of your local concerns and we acted on them

The Leader Listens' events are designed to improve the way Barnet engages with residents. In 2007/08, residents from various wards of the borough raised issues



concerning planning, traffic and parking, CCTV, transport, highways, parking etc. These actions were dealt with accordingly by various service areas within the Council.

Inform our improvement plan for our public footpaths and bridleways in the borough

The Council is developing an improvement plan for public rights of way in Barnet. As part of this project we consulted with residents via our Citizens Panel to help us understand how much residents use public footpaths and bridleways and the issues that limit enjoyment of them. In particular responses from the disability panel helped highlight the significant role facilities such as car parking or toilets can have in allowing some residents to enjoy the countryside. These results have been fed into the council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Young people told us their views on bullying and how the council should be tackling this issue

Barnet Youth Board organised a youth festival in June 2007, with an anti-bullying theme. Over 100 young people attending the festival were asked about their views on bullying, and the results were fed back to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board and the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board. The information gathered will inform strategic work to tackle bullying.

Through out the year young people were actively involved in how to spend funding on youth projects

Involving young people in decisions about service delivery can lead to more efficient use of funding, as well as services that young people really want to use. The young people on Barnet Youth Bank have allocated over £350k funding for youth projects over the last year. Some projects are referred by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Panel whilst many others are proposed by young people themselves with the Youth Bank choosing proposals that they think will best meet local needs.



Older people and their carers informed us of changes or improvements they would like to the services provided to them

Staff from Adult Social Services ran a number of group discussions with users and carers across a variety of subjects in the past year. Carers had the opportunity to discuss the support they receive, highlighting specific needs which we will use to inform the way we provide social care in the coming years.

Within the older people's service the training that we arranged for 30+ older people on effective consultation have proved beneficial: Those who undertook the training



are becoming more confident in their ability to take on more responsible roles with some even participating in the panel that evaluated tender bids and later awarded a contract for support services to a new extra care sheltered housing development.

Landlords told us how they want to be involved in the future

The Landlords' Forum for private sector landlords was launched on 19 March 2008 with over 100 landlords attending. The purpose of the event was to discuss how the council engages with them. Prior to the Forum meeting, a newsletter was sent to the landlords that included topics impacting them such as the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and the New Local Housing Allowance. The newsletter was very well received and it was agreed that further newsletters would be sent prior to each Forum meeting. Feedback from the Forum will feed into the Private Sector Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Empty Homes Strategy."

Annual Residents Survey

As well as the Citizens' Panel we commission an Annual Residents Survey each year, which gives the Council a broad understanding of residents' views and their experience of the services the Council and other partners provide. This enables us to track changes over time and to compare how we are doing against other London councils. The results are used to improve service delivery and to plan changes. An experienced independent research company conducts the survey with a representative sample of 1000 Barnet residents in the street or in their homes.



The results of the latest survey showed:

- 70% of the 1000 residents surveyed agreeing that the Council is doing a 'good job'.
- 88% of residents surveyed are satisfied with their local neighbourhood though fewer feel the Council is doing a better job than a year ago.
- Compared with London, Barnet is rated significantly higher for its refuse collection, and satisfaction with services have improved year on year for public transport, repair of roads, street lighting, and repair of pavements.
- The top three concerns for residents are: crime (although lower than the rest of London), Council Tax, litter and detritus.
- Compared with London, more residents feel informed and fewer have difficulty getting through on the phone. Further analysis showed that polite, friendly responses from Council staff had the biggest impact upon on how residents rate us doing a 'good job' overall.
- The survey also interviewed 260 young people: Crime remained a top concern along with anti-social behaviour and bullying
- Of all services, public transport received the highest rating amongst young people and social services for children has seen a significant increase in satisfaction amongst young people year on year.

Budget Consultation: Budget Simulator

The Council is committed to enhancing customer engagement and giving residents in Barnet a stronger voice. As part of this endeavour we published an on line, internet- based Budget Simulator which allowed the public to view the potential impact of budget decisions on priority services and to give their feedback on the council's budget decisions.

A total of 466 residents responded to the consultation and whilst 61% wanted a decrease in Council Tax, half of respondents indicated that they did not want any change in the proposed service. Community Safety remained a top concern for Barnet residents.

The Council will continue to consult with customers, seeking your views about how you would like us to invest resources and prioritise the services we offer.

As we begin the 2009/10 budget planning process with our partners we will once again consult residents and businesses in Barnet through the Budget Simulator early in the new year.

10. Data Quality

The Council uses a wide range of performance data to manage its services and report to the public on how well it is doing. The data is also used by government inspectors to make judgments about the Council and its services. It is therefore crucial not only to the Council but also to our residents, our partners and our auditors that the information we report is accurate and well evidenced.

Audit Arrangements:

The data published within this Annual Report was assessed by our external auditors in the summer of 2007. This was done as part of a wider assessment of the Council's arrangements for ensuring data quality. The Council was judged to be 'performing adequately' and responded by taking steps to further improve its data quality.

To reinforce the importance of timely and accurate reporting of information, we ran a workshop for staff and external partners at the start of the financial year as part of an ongoing training programme. The Council has also developed a formal policy setting out standards for data quality and for integrating this data into key processes such as risk management and staff appraisals.



11. Risk Management

The Council is committed to ensuring it delivers targeted value for money services and investing in modernising facilities such as schools. All of this work requires the entire management of the risks involved in managing services and delivering projects.

The Council does this by ensuring services have robust and efficient risk management strategies. In 2007/08, the Council reviewed and promoted its Risk Management Strategy and continued to deliver risk management training to Members and Council officers.

The Council regularly monitors and challenges service risk management, assessing the likelihood of corporate risks occurring and their potential impact on service delivery.

Corporate Priority	Objective	Risk Type	Risk Description
A successful suburb	Deliver the Three Strands approach of Protect, Enhance and Grow	Reputation	Deterioration in the quality of the suburbs, for example, a lack of enforcement or attention to quality of design
Clean, green and safe	Delivering waste reduction through waste management	Operational	Inability to achieve Government targets leading to financial penalty.
Clean, green and safe	To reduce the fear of crime.	Reputation	The fear of crime by members of the community remains high causing damage to the Authorities reputation.
Strong and healthy	Delivering equality of service to all residents	Strategic	Differential needs of communities poorly understood or not addressed, thereby leading to poorer outcomes and missed targets.
Supporting the vulnerable	Maximise the independence of older people and those requiring care or support.	Operational	Insufficient range of social care services provided with poor choice of access and ineffective management of the change process.
Supporting the vulnerable	Deliver the Housing Strategy to increase the availability of affordable housing and provide real alternatives to homelessness.	Strategic	Low cost home ownership products developed that are not in demand or affordable
More choice, better value.	Better outcomes for the Community through effective partnerships	Operational	Ineffective governance arrangements for partnerships. Poor services delivered through partnerships and low levels of satisfaction. Partnerships are not accountable, do not add value and objectives are not met.
More choice, better value.	Maximise residence satisfaction levels	Operational	Perception remains that "the Council doesn't do enough for people like me", and our lead over other London boroughs continues to erode.
A successful suburb	To ensure strategies are in place to optimise regeneration delivery as quickly as possible and rehouse short life tenants into permanent homes	Financial	Housing market downturn delaying regeneration implementation resulting in increased temporary accommodation and costs to the Council plus fall in tenant satisfaction.

Corporate Priority	Objective	Risk Type	Risk Description
More choice, better value	Set Council Tax increases for 2009/10 in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and maintain adequate reserves and balances.	Financial	Financial risks arising from Council activities and projects, and factors outside the Council's control (eg, Government grant levels and litigation).
A bright future for children and young people	To provide better primary school accommodation to schools identified as being in a poor state of repair.	Financial	The project becomes unaffordable due to construction inflation rising higher than the proportionate increase in land value
More choice, better value	To ensure that our pay and grading system provides a transparent and fair mechanism in terms of remuneration and non-pay benefits	Financial	Failure to deal with pay and grading issues can have financial implications to the council in terms of claims under equalities legislation
More choice, better value	To meet the existing and future strategic challenges facing the council.	Strategic	Should the programme take a route which then fails the risk is that we no longer provide excellent services to citizens and customers and that our reputation as an excellent authority would be damaged

12. Best Value Performance Plan

The Best Value Performance Plan

is the statutory document required from all councils by central government. It provides information on Council performance against nationally prescribed indicators.

The requirements for the BVPP are changing, giving councils greater freedom as to how they report back on performance. The Council's Annual Report is our document for reporting locally on performance. The tables below set out performance against the statutory indicators as required in this transitional year between the old and new regulations.

Progress against the targets in these performance tables is monitored through the corporate performance framework. This framework relies on the robustness of data quality. Relevant service directors, partnership leads and their representatives are responsible for the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of data in relation to their targets. The BVPP will also be used in future Scrutiny Committees to help inform future Council decisions.

