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Annual Report

...value for money

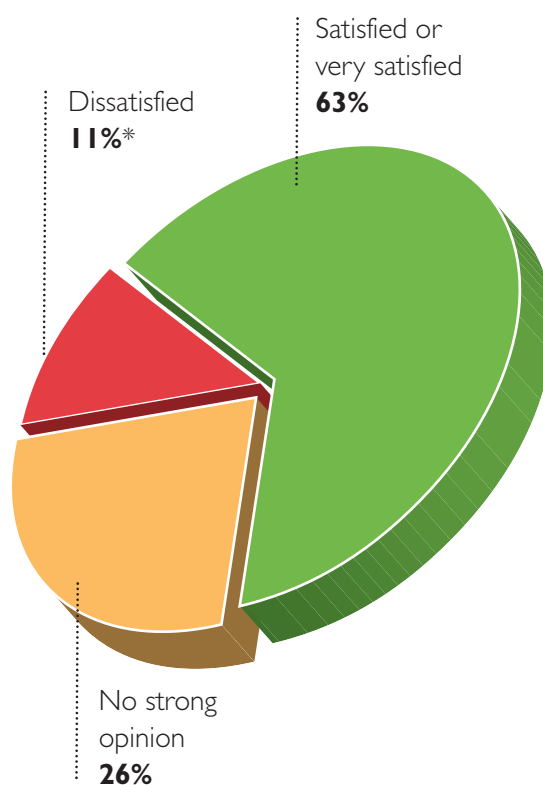


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Satisfaction summary

Our annual budget survey of residents showed how residents felt about our performance:



* lowest ever



Front cover:
Swimming classes
at the ever popular
Dursley Pool

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01453 766321 or email
customer.services@stroud.gov.uk



Foreword

Welcome to our annual report for 2010/11

2010/11 was a year characterised by uncertain economic prospects and the start of public spending cuts. Our Council has the largest cut in Government formula grant in England – 28% over two years. Because we plan well ahead we have avoided any 'knee jerk' reaction. Our continued drive to provide efficient and value for money services has also helped. But there are tough decisions to make over the next few years. Budget cuts in other public services are beginning to impact on our communities.

Despite this, we are pleased that public satisfaction with our services remains high and dissatisfaction is now at an all time low. Our value for money and efficiency rating amongst residents and businesses continues to rise. Whether we can sustain that into the future will be a big challenge.

Our concern for the job prospects of young people led us to provide more work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. For example, we have continued to sponsor Stroud College's engineering course. Working closely with business organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses, Stroud Chamber of Trade and the newly formed Vale and Valleys Business Partnership, we are focused on jobs and growth in the local economy.

Our largest regeneration scheme, the £33 million canal project, is progressing well. There is tremendous community involvement in the project and business confidence has also been boosted.

Our vision continues to be *"leading a community that is making Stroud District a better place to live, work and visit for everyone"*. This report illustrates how we are working closely with our communities to achieve this.



Cllr Frances Roden
Leader



David Hagg
Chief Executive

Achievements

A few milestones and achievements...



Youth Council celebrates ten years

Stroud District Youth Council celebrated ten years of achievements.

Over the past decade the Youth Council has supported a number of groups and individuals, including 'World Jungle', for their health and fitness initiatives and Stroud Range Fighting, who benefited from financial help for martial arts training equipment.

Community volunteers recognised

In July 2010 the Bisley Composting Scheme received The Queens Award for Voluntary Service. With over 100 members, the scheme ensures that around 50 tonnes of garden waste is transformed into compost each year. It saves villagers a round trip of 20 miles to the nearest household recycling centre and helps reduce waste going to landfill. The scheme was set up in 2006 with a grant from Stroud District Council and help from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. It was one of only 103 UK volunteering groups to receive the accolade this year.



In March 2011, the Council's annual Stroud Sport & Physical Activity Awards took place. The awards reward and celebrate local talent and commitment from coaches, officials, volunteers and clubs who make things happen. This year, 10 awards were presented, including the award for Young Volunteer of the Year to Rachel Briscoe for the Street Dance Club.

Park celebrates anniversary with another win



Stratford Park received its seventh Green Flag Award in recognition of its 'excellent use of green space, well-maintained facilities and high standard of safety and security.' As part of the 2010 celebrations for the park's 75th anniversary of coming into public ownership, it played host to the first standalone Stroud Festival of Nature, which drew in thousands of visitors.





Economy

Help local people and businesses recover from the recession and grow the local economy



Canal Restoration

Last year saw the first major works on the canal scheme since we took on leadership of the project. A new fixed bridge was built over the canal at Upper Mills (Stonehouse) and 1.6km of canal was dredged between Ocean and Ryeford. With this length of canal operational, the intention is for the Cotswold Canals Trust to begin pleasure boat trips later in 2011.

Further upstream, the refurbishment of Ryeford Double Lock was completed. This listed structure is one of only two double locks on the entire Cotswold Canals. The contract included the opening of 230m of canal above the locks, making the connection to the length restored by British Waterways in 2008.

Work began on the new bridge over the canal at Merrywalks. This was delayed by both flooding and freezing weather; but the success of the diversion scheme minimised the impact of this. The bridge named Stroud Brewery Bridge, is now open.

A total of 1km of towpath had been completed by the end of March. Work involves widening it to 2m wherever possible, making it fully accessible to walkers, cyclists, buggies and wheelchairs.

Apprenticeships & Work Placements

Two successful placements were made through Scout Enterprises, one is on-going, the other resulted in a permanent placement in Tenant Services.

Further successes include:

- Five 12 month apprenticeships placements filled.
- The British Legion Injured Soldiers Scheme funded a placement in the canal team.
- The work experience programme successfully accommodated 37 students from local schools and colleges, and has expanded to include internships and work experience to university students in addition to the year 10 & 12 secondary school placements
- A team of six mentors from across the Council has been involved with mentoring at Archway School through the Education Business Partnership Mentoring Programme



Economy (continued)

Focus On....

Cam Parish Council (Chapel Street development)

We gave Cam Parish Council part of our site at Chapel Street for the construction of a community building and parish council offices. Construction is due to start in Autumn 2011.



Dursley Town Centre

We contributed £170,000 for work to repave the area around the Market Hall in Dursley Town Centre, working in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and Dursley Town Council. The scheme was the subject of considerable consultation with local businesses and has been well received locally.



Stroud College (Engineering Centre of Excellence/Sustainable Development)

Following a meeting with Lord Drayson, our local MP and key employers including Renishaw, Delphi, and the Gloucestershire Training Group, a task group was formed to progress the creation of an Engineering Centre of Excellence/Sustainable Development at the college.

The first phase of this vision was the launch of two new engineering courses - the BTEC First Certificate in Engineering and the BTEC First Diploma in Engineering. The first group of students was successfully recruited for the courses in September 2010 and a launch event was held with Richard Noble MBE, local employers and sponsors. Employers have provided new state of the art engineering workshop equipment, expertise and finance. Our contribution was used for a 3D printer, a piece of equipment absolutely fundamental to the students' curriculum.

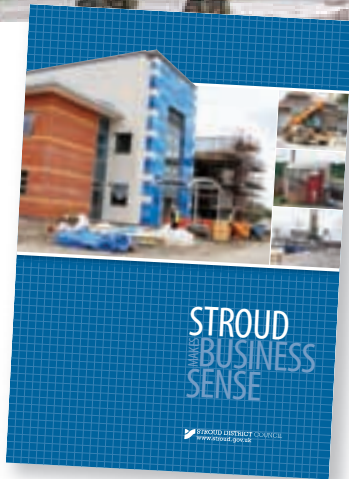
Community Learning Project (Stroud and Stonehouse)

The 'Opportunities Stonehouse' group which links local people with learning opportunities has acquired funding from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service via Stroud College. Our Tenant Services team has secured funding for a part-time member of staff to take forward the successful 'Home Pride' initiative, which teaches painting and decorating skills to tenants within their homes.



Sharpness Investment Prospectus

Sharpness is one of the key development sites now being marketed under 'Stroud makes Business Sense' which highlights opportunities for business investment in the district. British Waterways (BW) is currently working on a strategy that seeks to enhance the environmental quality of the docks and the surrounding area with a view to attracting further investment and more jobs.

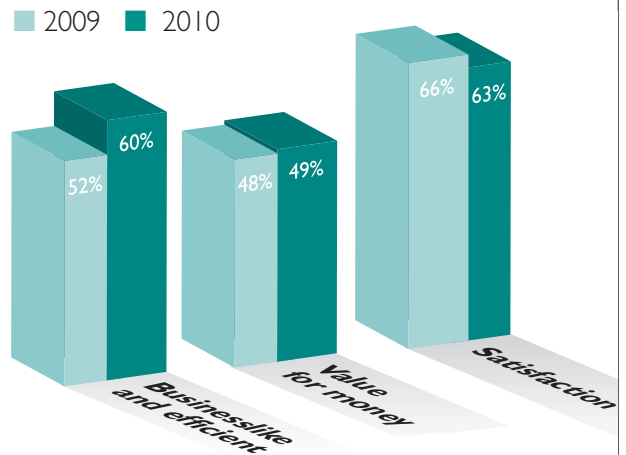


Brimscombe Port Designated Developer

Nine developers expressed interest in the port redevelopment and an outline planning application for mixed-use development was submitted. A shortlist of potential developers will be drawn up by late summer 2011, and monitoring of the scheme is being undertaken by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Performance

Our annual residents survey showed perceptions of the council's performance:



Satisfaction dropped by 3% but compared favourably to the last available national average figure of 45%... and dissatisfaction levels dropped to 11% - our lowest ever!

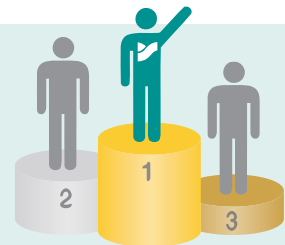
Investors in People new standard

We became one of only three in the country and the first Council in the South West to achieve the new Health and Wellbeing Standard for Investors in People (IiP) and retained the IiP standard for the eleventh year in a row. The Investors in People standard is the UK's leading people management tool to improve business performance.



Green award

Stroud District Council won the 2010 Green Energy Award for being the south west's Most Proactive Local Authority, at the South West Green Energy Awards. Our three-year Climate Change Programme called "Target 2050" and involvement in the Government's Pay As You Save pilot were highlighted as 'exemplar' projects.

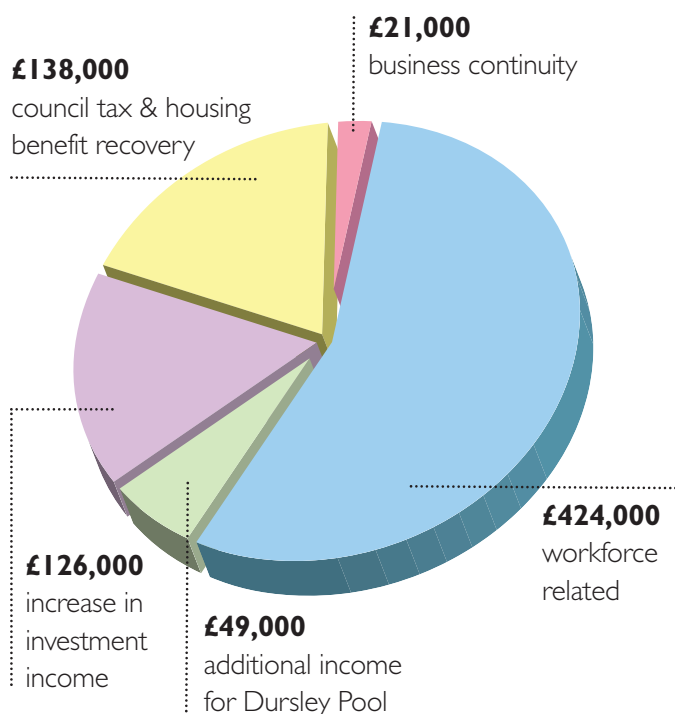


Resources

Provide value for money to our taxpayers and high quality services to our customers

Budget Savings

Approximately £758,000 was saved from:



Further savings have been identified and built into the budget for 2011/12.

Housing Repairs

Key improvements include:

- partnership contracts with Lovell from 1 Oct 2010 further reducing costs
- introduction of composite Schedule of Rates leading to less variation and more control
- introduction of Handy Person scheme for sheltered residents in partnership with Care & Repair



Council staff raised over £1,500 for local charities this year with dress-up and dress down days.

Workforce Plan

We have a four year workforce plan which aims to reduce staffing levels by 10%, whilst minimising redundancies and disruption to service delivery. All new or replacement posts are subject to a Systems Thinking review to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Car Park Review

We are reviewing our car parks and charges, and are consulting on our proposals. We are undertaking this review now to ensure that our car parking provision takes into account the needs of communities, whilst trying to balance the financial pressures on providing services. This should ensure that we provide value for money for the council tax payer.

The Council is seeking views on:

- which car parks we should continue to own and run
- introducing charging in Dursley, Nailsworth and Wotton-under-Edge.

Climate Change



Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change, recycle more and send as little waste to landfill as possible

Target 2050



Target 2050 is our strategy to address climate change through actions in the domestic, commercial and public sector. We are delivering this programme of work through a partnership with Severn Wye Energy Agency.


Some of the key achievements include:

- six public seminars on sustainable energy retrofitting;
- 30 domestic energy assessments were made resulting in 18 applications for a PAYS loan.
- installer network meetings were held. There are now 111 installers on our database.
- 35 free on-site surveys for businesses which spend £5,000-£50,000 per annum on energy were carried out.
- 93 businesses in total have received full support from the small and medium enterprises (SME) advice service.
- over £364,000 annual fuel cost savings have been identified from SME energy action plans, equivalent to a lifetime cost saving of over £3.59 million.

Carbon Reduction


We directly manage several public buildings and are the largest public landlord in Gloucestershire, providing almost 5,300 homes. We have carried out numerous energy efficiency projects resulting in a substantial reduction in carbon output (440 tonnes from 2007-2010) and considerable financial savings. Future projects include renewable energy installations at Stratford Park and Dursley Pool.

Despite an exceptionally cold winter in 2010/11 requiring us to use more heat for our buildings, our transport emissions fell, giving an overall reduction of 62 tonnes of carbon.



'Stroud installed more new renewable heat projects than any other district authority in the south west, with 101 projects totalling 0.76 MW.'

'... Stroud, the district with the highest number of installations and greatest installed capacity in 2010/ 2011, added 82 projects and 0.26 MW.'



Display Energy Certificate (DEC) Rating

A DEC Rating provides information on a building's annual CO₂ emissions as well as an energy consumption rating. The rating system is based on a scale from A – G, with A being the most efficient and G the least. Measures are planned for a number of sheltered housing schemes to reduce the energy consumption associated with communal areas and facilities.

Pay As You Save (PAYS)

As part of a Government scheme we approved 49 loans to the value of £450,000, helping to reduce fuel bills and carbon emissions.

Anaerobic Digestion

We have undertaken initial investigations into a privately funded plant. The innovation could potentially lead to a viable financial model based on linkages to an existing high energy/heat user within the district. Discussions have taken place with the county council as the waste disposal authority, which is responsible for granting planning permission and agreeing the disposal solution.

S2S Project

The Frampton on Severn "Solid to Sustainable" (S2S) project to convert both Council properties and private homes from solid fuel to ground source heat pumps was recognised for its environmental best practice. The project was awarded a 'Green Apple Award', which is an annual award in recognition of companies, councils and communities

carrying out projects that enhance environment.

Solutions such as ground source heat pumps, solar thermal, biomass, air to air and air to water heat pumps were installed in over 100 homes through funding from a range of sources including Target2050, the PAYS scheme and the Solid to Sustainable (S2S) project. Kingshill has been identified as the next area site for installation of air source heat pumps.

Source: Regen South West annual survey 2010/11. * compared to other councils in the south west ** compared to other councils in Gloucestershire

Affordable Housing

Provide affordable and decent housing



Housing Assets

The Housing Asset Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2010. It was agreed that future capital receipts from disposals of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets would be used for the provision of affordable housing or regeneration.



A Better Service

An action plan was implemented from July 2010 based around the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) standards. The new plan has been successful and the service will not now be subject to a formal inspection.

Good progress against the action plan and development of tenant led scrutiny with improved resident involvement have led to the TSA to state: *'You have transformed the level and breadth of tenant involvement and empowerment at Stroud to include new and innovative ways to involve tenants in the design, delivery and scrutiny of services.'* The TSA regard Stroud as a good example of how to make significant improvements in a short timescale.

Sheltered Housing Review

The review which determined how the Housing Service would be organised was approved by Council in December 2010. Implementation began in April 2011, with Supporting People funding remaining unchanged in 2011/12, with major changes anticipated in October 2012.

Self Financing

We are actively working on a self-financing proposal which links into other Government announcements related to affordable housing and Decent Homes funding, to develop a much stronger future position.

Woolaways Properties in Minchinhampton

Residents were consulted on options and outline proposals for the redevelopment of the properties. In December 2010 Cabinet approved a report to develop 35 new council homes on the site, with work anticipated to start in 2011.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Tenant services recognise the importance of tenant satisfaction to understand where the service is and to provide a benchmark for the future.

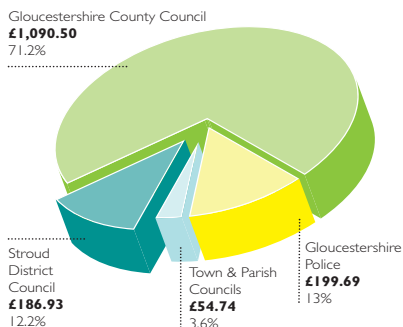
Tenant Services Annual Report

To find out more about how we are involving tenants in improving our service, watch our short film at www.stroud.gov.uk

Summary of Accounts

Financial performance...

We collect Council Tax payments and divide them between a number of public bodies. This is how the money was allocated in 2010-2011:



Stroud has kept the average annual increase in Council Tax to 2.3% per annum for the last 10 years. Residents' Council Tax funded just 9.7% of our full range of services. Our portion of the Council Tax for an average 'Band D' property was **£186.93** which is 12.2% of the total average bill.

What did we spend?

We spent a net total of £14.4 million providing services to the local community.

| | 2010-11 | £'000 |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Council & Democracy | 2,779 | |
| Culture, Sports & Tourism | 2,908 | |
| Environmental Services | 5,045 | |
| Highways & Transport | 651 | |
| Other Housing | 866 | |
| Planning & Development | 1,987 | |
| Other costs | 129 | |
| Net spend on services | 14,364 | |
| Other income, interest etc | -1,043 | |
| Transfer to Balances | 1,932 | |
| Total to be paid for | 15,253 | |

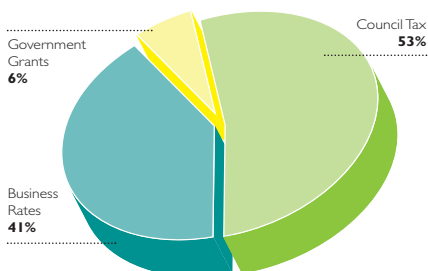
How did we pay?

We used local and national taxes to pay for these services and received one-off grants and transfers from balances.

These balances are now £4.379 million and are used to fund the council's forward financial plans.

As the chart shows, 53% of our net income came from local taxes and 47% from national taxes.

| | £'000 | % |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|
| Council Tax | 8,028 | 53% |
| Business Rates | 6,273 | 41% |
| Government Grants | 951 | 6% |
| Total | 15,253 | |



What are we worth?

The council's balance sheet represents how much Stroud's land and buildings are worth. It also shows what is owed to the council, what the council owes to others and how much cash we have:

| | £'000 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Land & Buildings | 277,955 |
| Investments & Cash | 16,583 |
| Money owed to council | 5,335 |
| Money owed by council | -8,143 |
| Total | 291,730 |
| Valuation & Financing of Assets | 277,133 |
| Usable Reserves | 14,597 |
| Total | 291,730 |

The majority of the land and buildings we own are council homes which are valued at £243 million. The usable reserves are earmarked to ensure that there is adequate funding for General Fund and Housing Revenue Account spending over a period of years. Reserves also support the capital expenditure programmes and ensure financial risks to its services are minimised.

Council Homes

As at 31st March 2011 we owned 5,216 homes in the district. Accounting for the repairs and maintenance and rental income on these properties is done within the Housing Revenue Account which is separate from all other council services.

| | £'000 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Council House Rents | 17,861 |
| Other Income | 2,114 |
| Total | 19,975 |
| Capital Expenditure | 5,077 |
| Repairs & Maintenance | 2,868 |
| Supervision & Management | 5,499 |
| Net Contribution to Government | 6,741 |
| Other Net Costs | 286 |
| Total | 20,471 |

The deficit of £496,000 in the year was transferred to the Housing Revenue Account balance which was £1,960,000 at the end of the year.

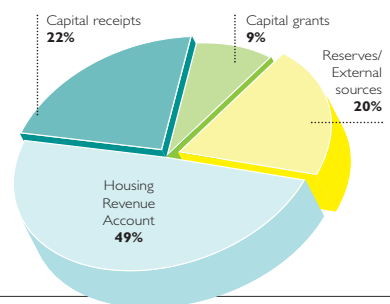
Longer Term Projects

We also spend money on buying, improving and repairing our assets so that they last us for many years to come and allow us to continue to provide good quality services. This 'capital' expenditure is accounted and paid for separately from the day to day provision of services.

| | £'000 |
|---|---------------|
| Climate Change | 441 |
| Renewable energy & energy efficiency | 441 |
| Affordable Housing | 5,077 |
| Improvements to council housing | 5,077 |
| Improvements to private houses | 545 |
| Support for affordable housing | 449 |
| Total | 6,071 |
| Resources | |
| Financial systems | 68 |
| Thin client, data storage and business continuity | 201 |
| Total | 269 |
| Economy | |
| Canal restoration project | 3,055 |
| Improvements to leisure facilities | 144 |
| Brunel Goods Shed | 30 |
| Dursley schemes | 206 |
| Building maintenance | 169 |
| Assistance to village halls | 9 |
| Contaminated land | 74 |
| Total | 3,687 |
| Total (rounded to nearest £'000) | 10,469 |

How did we pay for this?

| | £'000 | % |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Capital receipts | 2,263 | 22% |
| Capital grants | 975 | 9% |
| Reserves/External sources | 2,154 | 20% |
| Housing Revenue Account | 5,077 | 49% |
| Total Funding | 10,469 | |



DID YOU KNOW?

- Residents paid £3.59* each week for services provided by Stroud District Council in 2010/11.
- The refuse and recycling service is one of the council's largest contracts. It costs about 55p* each week.
- In 2010/11, we paid out over £30 million in Council Tax and housing benefits which was funded directly by government grant.
- The population mid year estimate 2009 for the Stroud District was 114,649.

* average household (Band D)



...value for money

 **STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
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