

Annual Report 2012

Making a Difference



Ste**venage**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Performance Management Framework

Stevenage Community Strategy

The Community Strategy sets out how the Local Partnership will work together to deliver improvements to meet the needs of the community.

Stevenage Borough Council Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's approach to meeting the needs of the community and delivering improvement to ensure we continue to provide good value for money services.

Corporate Improvement Programme

Guided by the Corporate Plan priorities, the Corporate Improvement Programme sets out how and when improvement action will be achieved. Progress is monitored on a quarterly basis.

Performance and Development Meetings

Set out how individuals contribute to delivering improvement and good value for money services for the community.

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Message

from the Leader of the Council,
Sharon Taylor



The past 12 months have seen some great achievements for Stevenage, many of which have been delivered co-operatively by working with our partners, local groups and organisations, and Stevenage residents.

- We joined some original New Town residents to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first New Town homes at Broadview in Pin Green.
- You said, we did... Our residents told us that they wanted to use compostable bags for their food waste recycling – so we negotiated the change with our recycling plant.
- We've worked in partnership on a range of activities at the beautifully restored Town Centre Gardens, which have already scooped two fantastic awards.
- Outline plans for a new town centre have been agreed, so we can now begin to look at how they can best be delivered.
- The athletics facility at Ridlins End has seen improvements and has been identified as an Olympic training venue for the 2012 games.

You'll see as you read on that 2012/13 looks to be just as rewarding for Stevenage, particularly with the number of exciting and high-profile events going on over the Summer.

- We are honoured that Her Majesty The Queen has chosen to visit the town as part of her tour of the country to mark her Diamond Jubilee year.
- Stevenage will join in the lighting of beacons across the country in honour of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee.
- The Olympic Torch will travel through the town on its way to the Olympic venue for the start of the 2012 games.

These all present wonderful opportunities to raise the profile of Stevenage.



Message from the Chief Executive, Nick Parry

Our staff have continued to provide great service to our customers in the midst of another year of changes to how we deliver our services.

- We now share a number of our services with other Hertfordshire councils, which has helped us to meet our savings targets this year and will contribute to future years' savings too.
- The management of Stevenage Homes has been brought back into the council following central government changes.
- We won the GovMetric Council of the Year award for our excellent customer service.

Last year we told you of our plans to develop a new Corporate Plan from 2012. Since we published the Annual Report 2011, we have launched the Co-operative Council aimed at giving more power to individuals, communities and councils to influence how services are delivered at a local level. This has given us the opportunity to take more time in reviewing our Corporate Plan so that we can get it right, shaping it to consider the requirements of local people in a way that is most appropriate for the town.

This is just a snapshot of what we have achieved this year – you'll find many more achievements as you read on, including information on what we aim to deliver next year.

Introduction

A year of co-operative working



Cafe Choice Logo

What is the purpose of the Annual Report?

We set out our approach to meeting the needs of the community in our Corporate Plan, Making a Difference 2008-2013. This Annual Report tells you about what we have achieved in the last twelve months to deliver the Corporate Plan and how well we have performed. It also gives an indication of what we expect to deliver next year. These achievements are contributing to delivering our ambitions and priorities for the town, which are shown on page 3.

What happens when the current Corporate Plan finishes in 2013?

We are now working towards delivering a new Corporate Plan from 2013, which will be focused on expanding our co-operative approach even further and will set the basis for our future activity.

How has the council been working co-operatively?

On each page of our priorities in this Annual Report, you will see a star 'key' to show you which of our co-operative principles we have been working towards. Each arm of the star represents one of our co-operative principles and clicking on these will let you see a description of them.

We launched our co-operative principles in January 2011 but this is not a new approach for Stevenage – we have always worked co-operatively with our communities to shape and deliver services.

Our new Corporate Plan from 2013 will formalise our co-operative approach to providing services that are:

- Community designed – include genuine input from our communities, in some cases handing over their design to communities
- Community led – focused on our communities and users, reflecting their needs and priorities and in some cases are led in terms of involvement and delivery
- Community delivered – services that are delivered by our communities and citizens, rather than by the council.

Stevenage Borough Council is a proactive member of the Co-operative Council Network – a forum for local authorities to share ideas and best practice in the ways of providing services that give communities power and a real say over the ways in which they are run.

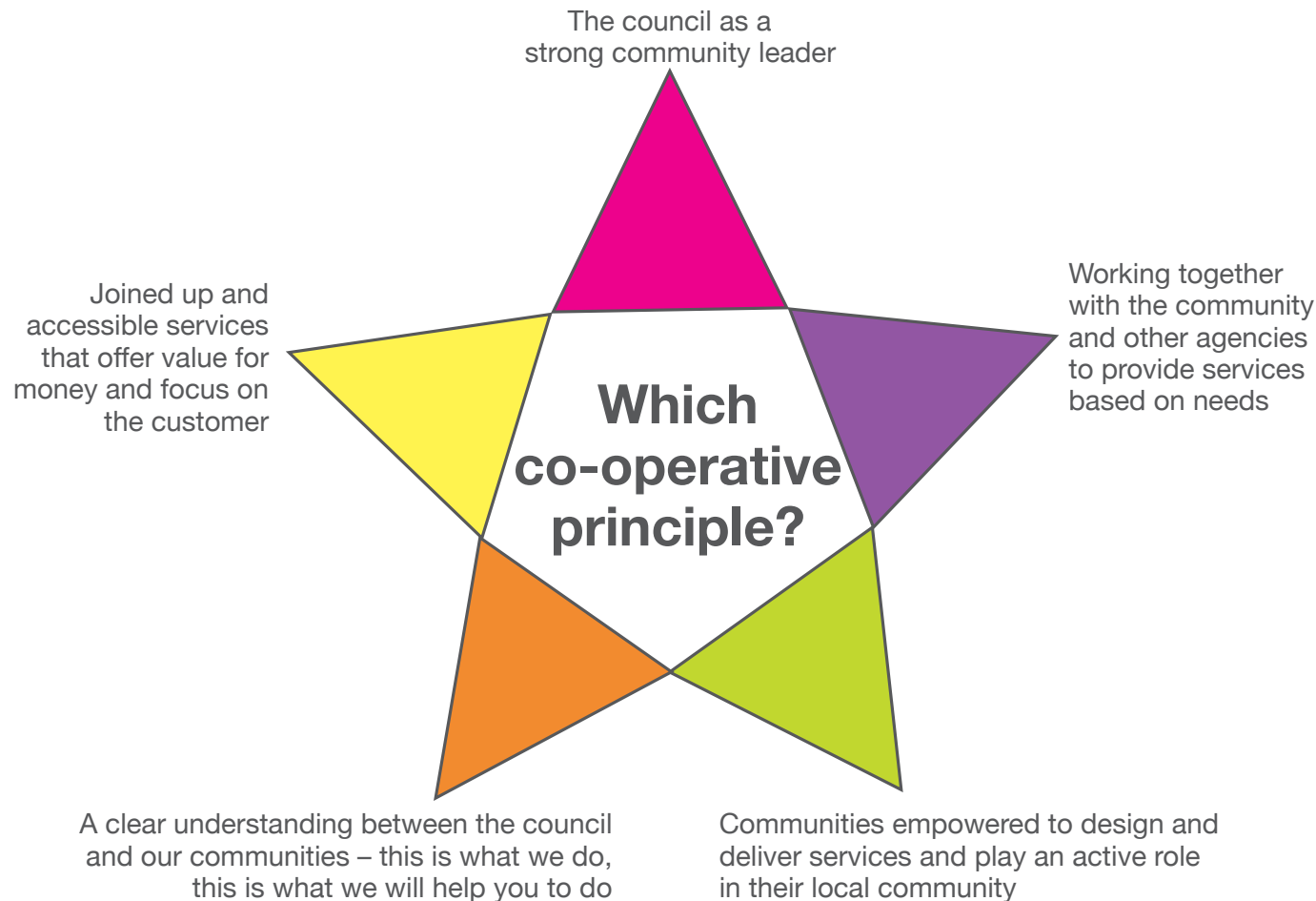
All of our continuing activity demonstrates our commitment to working co-operatively with local organisations, communities and residents to meet the needs of our town.

Introduction

A year of co-operative working



What are the Co-operative Principles?



What can residents and the community expect from the council's co-operative approach?

Our aim is for Stevenage to be a town where services are co-produced between the council and our communities. We want to be a council that provides support and empowers our local communities, to ensure that all residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to get involved.

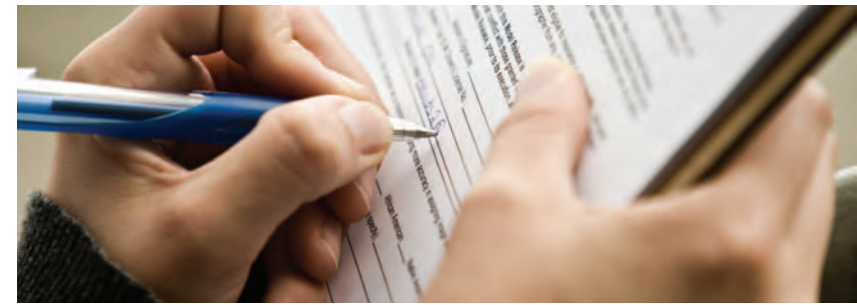
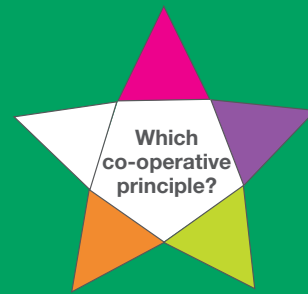
A co-operative council has many characteristics, some of which are:

- A shared vision with the community and transparency of decisions
- Knowing the specific needs of the community
- Community choice – services that meet the needs of the community
- Services that are personalised and community based.

Our new Corporate Plan from 2013 will identify the focus and approach of our co-operative activity in future. To be sure that we are engaging our communities and taking their views into account, we carried out a town-wide survey in early 2012 and will use the results to inform our Corporate Plan.

Shape our community

Encourage community involvement



What did we do this year?

- Gave all of the town's councillors a local community budget that can help support local groups and fund projects.
- Held lots of consultation events this year including:
 - Two Café Choice events – at Stevenage Day in June and in the town centre in December.
 - 'Your Choice, Your Voice' community conference – inviting residents to tell us what they think of council services, and help shape the budget for the next few years.
 - A town-wide survey sent to around 4,000 homes seeking views on the council's services and how we can improve and develop them.
- Sought the views of the voluntary and community sector to help inform our approach to supporting them.
- Surveyed more than 400 businesses in the town to get a clear understanding of their views around supporting local community groups.
- Carried out senior management workshops to understand more about our customers and their needs.
- Explored ways of involving members of the community in the council's Scrutiny process.
- Supported the formation of the independent Stevenage Community Network – for local voluntary and community groups to be a strong voice in the town.
- Invited members of the Youth Council to a Question Time-style event, where they aired their views to a panel that included our Council Leader and the Police Chief Inspector.

- Invited four young people to take over council senior roles including the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council on national Take-Over Day.
- Worked with SoStevenage to support YMCA Space Stevenage – a free drop-in space in the town centre.
- Used Chronicle magazine to explain the 'seven simple steps' for residents to have their say on planning applications on our website.

We asked Stevenage residents to tell us what they think of their local neighbourhoods, and...

- 53% of Stevenage residents tell us that they believe people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Since 2008 we've seen a 12% increase in residents feeling that they can influence local decisions which is now 37%.

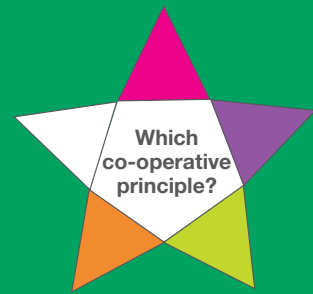
- More than half (53%) of Stevenage residents tell us they feel that they belong to their neighbourhood.

By continuing to work co-operatively with our communities, we aim to increase the positive views people express of living in Stevenage.

Our business survey showed that many businesses would like to do more to help voluntary and community groups. Next year we will look at how we can help the business, community and voluntary sectors work together more co-operatively.

Shape our community

Encourage community involvement



What do we aim to do next year?

- Carry out an independent review of customer engagement for our housing services, and implement its recommendations.
- Work co-operatively to host the high-profile events going on in the town this year, including:
 - Olympic Torch Relay
 - The Queen's visit to Stevenage
 - Jubilee Beacon lighting as part of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee tour and celebrations.
- Work with our SoStevenage partners to deliver a range of community projects.
- Agree a two-year programme of consultation activity using a variety of tools to promote our co-operative approach.
- Look at ways of helping the business, community and voluntary sectors work together more.
- Appoint a Youth Mayor for Stevenage.
- Set up a citizens' panel – a pool of people who we can consult regularly with.
- Work with the town's Councillors to seek residents' views on how they would like to be involved in the council's Scrutiny process.
- Support the work of the Stevenage Community Network to give the voluntary sector a voice in the town.

We are keen to know what you think about how we can engage our communities in the services we provide to residents. You can email us at consultation@stevenage.gov.uk, tweet us at StevenageBC or write on our Facebook wall.

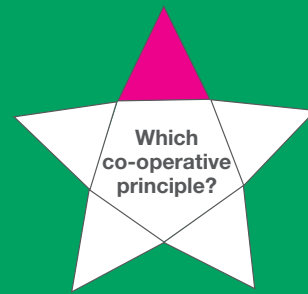


The Scrutiny process

At Stevenage, we have 7 Development and Scrutiny Committees that mirror the Executive portfolios. Each is made up of 7 councillors who scrutinise internal and external services and decisions taken by the Executive and assist in developing Council policy.

Shape our community

Improve the image of Stevenage



Our town-wide survey showed that...

- a large majority (80%) of residents are satisfied with Stevenage as a place to live
- 47% of residents continue to speak highly of Stevenage as a place to live.

We aim to increase the satisfaction our residents express by working co-operatively to enhance the lives of people living in the town.

What did we do this year?

- Attracted lots of positive media coverage at the unveiling of a commemorative street sign celebrating the 60th anniversary of the first New Town homes in Pin Green.
- Stevenage and its residents featured in national and regional media, including the first episode of BBC1's The 1952 Show and a BBC4 documentary called The Great Estate: The Rise & Fall of the Council House.
- Improved our residents' magazine, Chronicle, to make it more accessible to a wider range of community organisations across the town.
- The council's Facebook and Twitter profiles continue to grow, enabling us to engage with a wider than ever number of residents. We now have more than 1,000 followers on Twitter.
- Published our new corporate style guide, to help ensure that all of our publications, vehicles, signs, and clothing promote the council's brand and corporate identity.
- Consulted our Readers' Panel to provide comment and critique on various council publications prior to them being published.

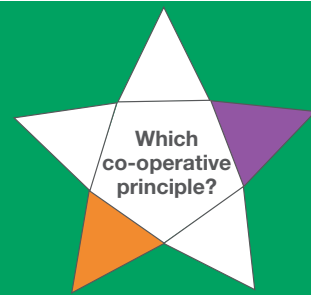
What do we aim to do next year?

- Promote Stevenage's involvement in national events during 2012 – including the Olympic Torch Relay and The Queen's Diamond Jubilee – in order to raise the town's profile.
- Achieve more widespread and positive publicity for Stevenage Borough Council's co-operative activities.
- Carry out an independent review of customer involvement in shaping our housing services, and implement its recommendations.
- Publicise opportunities for residents, businesses and partners to take part in consultation activities.
- Investigate and develop opportunities for wider use of social media, and continue to promote these to council officers and Members.
- Ensure that our residents' magazine continues to be distributed to all households in Stevenage and is accessible to all parts of the community.

More and more residents are satisfied with the way the council runs the town - this has risen from 54% at the start of our Corporate Plan in 2008 to 66% this year.

Regenerate Stevenage

Have a growing town and economy



What did we do this year?

- Adopted Interim Planning Policies to operate until our new Local Plan is approved.
- Worked with the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and GlaxoSmithKline to deliver high quality buildings and future business opportunities for the town.
- Our Building Control Surveyors were involved in supervising the design and building work on the co-location of Marriotts and Lonsdale schools onto one new site, and the new building and part refurbishment of Nobel School.
- Participated in 'Invest in Stevenage' - a marketing campaign aimed at attracting new investment to the town, both local and from abroad. More information can be found on the website www.investinstevenage.gov.uk
- Increased occupancy at the Business and Technology Centre by 13% this year and the survival rate of businesses there has improved to xx% (result expected July).
- Led by example, offering council work placements and apprenticeships, focused on harder-to-reach groups such as young people and those with a disability.
- Piloted a free-parking scheme for 3 months in the St Georges multi-storey and Primett Road South car parks on Saturdays, aimed at helping hard-pressed shoppers and traders.

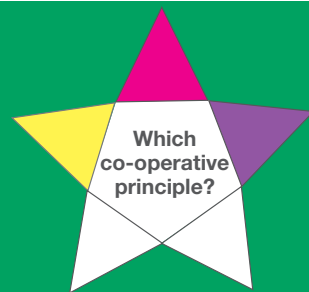
What do we aim to do next year?

- Consult with residents and local communities as we begin developing a new plan to guide future developments in the town.
- Investigate innovative ways to use the council's assets to promote regeneration.
- Publish planning guidance to preserve and enhance the seven Conservation Areas in the town.
- Work with our neighbouring councils to explore opportunities to extend the town.
- Seek public opinion on the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.
- Work with a private partner to build 100 new homes at Hertford Road – more than half of these will be affordable homes.
- Agree how we will involve the community in our future planning work.
- Support any neighbourhood plans developed by the community.
- Use the results of the free-parking scheme pilot to see if this is a cost-effective way of encouraging more people to visit the Town Centre and Old Town.
- Create more apprenticeships opportunities in the council.

- Despite the current economic climate 3% of residents tell us that they think job prospects have got better in their local area over the last three years.
- Since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008 we have delivered 1,122 additional homes across the town – 22% more than our combined target.

Regenerate Stevenage

Develop a modern vibrant town centre



What did we do this year?

- Resolved to approve the outline plans submitted by Stevenage Regeneration Ltd for a £250m redevelopment of the Town Centre.
- Restored the Town Centre Gardens and reopened them in time for the Summer season.
- Encouraged volunteering by working with local residents who help look after the Town Centre Gardens.
- Worked with North Herts College on the design and planting of seasonal bedding displays in the Town Centre Gardens.
- Worked with local residents and community groups on a number of events in the Town Centre Gardens.

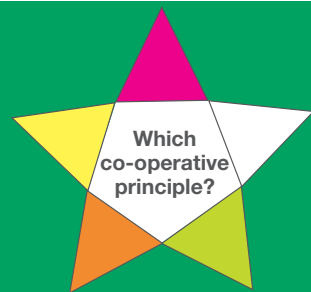
We received two prestigious awards for the Town Centre Gardens – a Green Flag and ‘Best Conservation & Heritage’ title at the Landscape Institute Awards.

What do we aim to do next year?

- Consider fresh options and agree a way forward to deliver the regeneration of the Town Centre having regard to current and future economic conditions.
- Begin work to procure a new development partner to deliver the Town Centre Regeneration.
- Retain a Green Flag Award for the Town Centre Gardens.
- Work with partners to increase the range of events in the Town Centre Gardens even further.
- Re-brand and re-launch the Indoor Market.

Regenerate Stevenage

Revitalise neighbourhood centres



- 23% of residents now tell us that their neighbourhood has got better over the last two years - an increase of 12% since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008.

What did we do this year?

- Improved the environment at the Glebe, the Hyde and Burwell Road neighbourhood centres following consultation with local residents.
- Asked the local community for their views on Archer Road neighbourhood centre and how they would like to see it improved.
- Made significant improvements to Peartree Park Pavilion using £300,000 funding from Sure Start provision for Early Years Education.

What do we aim to do next year?

- Explore fresh options to bring forward the regeneration of some of our neighbourhood centres.
- Agree the options for the development of Archer Road neighbourhood centre.
- Consider the potential for seeking external funding to improve the physical fabric of the buildings and public realm within the Town Centre Conservation Area.
- Explore opportunities to improve more neighbourhood centres across Stevenage.

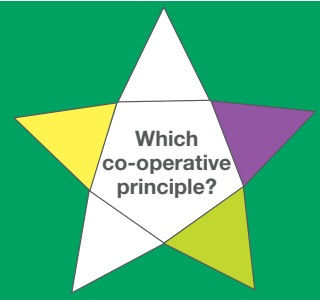
Neighbourhood centres at the Glebe, the Hyde and Burwell Road now have new paving, bins, benches, lighting, canopies and signage, making the areas safer and more attractive.

Improvements at Peartree Park Pavilion have included a new main entrance, a new secondary entrance and a large double-height space that can be opened up into a large play area.

We had a positive response to our Archer Road development questionnaire

Create sustainable communities

Provide quality affordable housing



What did we do this year?

- After taking into account independent research and the views of our tenants and leaseholders, our Stevenage Homes service was integrated with the council in December 2011.
- Won a Building Futures award and an International Green Apple Award for our eco-friendly homes at Cotney Croft & Peartree Way.
- Provided new affordable homes at Almonds Lane and Weston Road for 42 families on our housing waiting list. Work also began on-site to build 55 new affordable homes at Hertford Road.
- Worked co-operatively with partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau to prevent more than 325 households from becoming homeless.
- Prevented an additional 25 families from becoming homeless using our Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Set up a Homelessness Prevention Fund for community and voluntary organisations who help prevent homelessness.
- Provided funding to some of our partners to assist their work in preventing homelessness in Stevenage.
- Continued to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for people made homeless.
- Worked with private landlords to help more than 200 people into privately rented housing.
- Continued to review our approach to providing affordable homes including how we can provide a range of different affordable housing.

- Began working with partners to build a new hostel and additional affordable homes at Ditchmore Lane.
- Began working with North Herts District Council to set up a forum for private landlords.
- Helped people to understand their entitlement to financial support and manage their household finances better.

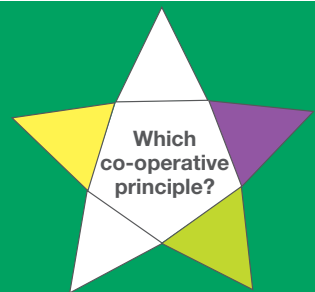
Focussing on our priority of providing quality affordable homes...

- More and more of our tenants are happy with the housing service we provide – this has risen from 77% in 2009 to 82% this year.
- Since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008 we have delivered 476 affordable homes against a final target of 432.



Create sustainable communities

Provide quality affordable housing



- Almost three quarters (72%) of our council homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard compared with 52% at the start of our Corporate Plan in 2008.

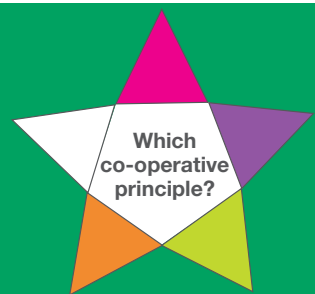
What do we aim to do next year?

- Make improvements to more council homes in the town.
- Publish our approach to providing housing services in the town.
- Develop a plan for managing the council house rents we receive from tenants, and how these are reinvested.
- Issue a new plan for how we will work to prevent homelessness in Stevenage.
- Begin a review of how we allocate housing to those on the waiting list.
- Look at proposals for new council housing to be built in Stevenage, for the first time in over 30 years.
- Set up a Housing Commission to oversee and inform the council's approach to housing management, including how we engage with tenants and leaseholders.
- Work co-operatively with local banks to introduce the First Step mortgage scheme – helping struggling first time home buyers to buy a home of their own in Stevenage.

Properties that are available to rent are now advertised on a weekly basis so that our housing service is more efficient and can house people more quickly.

Create sustainable communities

Keep the town safe



- In our recent town-wide survey, 86% of residents told us that they feel safe in the day. 29% said that they feel unsafe in their local area after dark which is an improvement of 9% since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008.
- We've seen a reduction in complaints in the town centre since it was made illegal to ride a bicycle through no cycle zones.

What did we do this year?

- Worked with our partners on a number of schemes:
 - A 'Crime Car' drives around hot-spot areas during school holidays to prevent criminal behaviour.
 - Youths and older people competed in a 'Wii Olympics' event to help bridge the generation gap.
 - Members of Operation Night Owl assess reported problem areas to identify ways to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Successfully took court action against those who have breached noise abatement notices.
- Organised a stand in our Customer Service Centre during Domestic Violence Awareness Week to offer advice and promote the Herts Sunflower helpline 08 088 088 088.
- Tackled the issue of people cycling in the town centre, with the aim of making pedestrians safer.
- Worked in partnership with Stevenage Haven to launch a night shelter service to protect the homeless during severe winter weather conditions.
- Agreed to continue to fund PCSOs through 2012 and 2013.
- Published a SoSafe newsletter in the summer and delivered it to all Stevenage properties.
- Included good news stories in Chronicle, on Facebook and Twitter, and in press releases to the media to promote positive feelings of safety.

What do we aim to do next year?

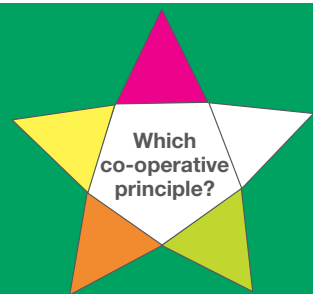
- Continue to work closely with our Community Safety partners to deliver our key priorities.
- Carry out a Community Action Day to engage residents and Councillors in improving their local areas to help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Work with SoStevenage partners to raise awareness of domestic violence, particularly male victims and the 17-24 year old majority group of victims and offenders.
- Deliver a campaign to promote positive images of Stevenage youth, including a SoSafe newsletter aimed at young people and posters displayed in bus stops across the town.
- Work with partners to raise awareness of alcohol issues in the town.

Our key community safety priorities are to:

- tackle antisocial behaviour
- reduce violent crime
- tackle robbery, burglary and motor vehicle crime
- tackle criminal damage including deliberate fires
- manage offenders
- tackle drugs and alcohol misuse
- improve feelings of safety

Create sustainable communities

Maintain a clean and green environment



What did we do this year?

- Negotiated with the council's recycling plant for residents to be able to use compostable bags, to make food waste recycling that bit easier.
- Began looking into the opportunities to invest in cost-effective energy-efficiency initiatives on properties owned by the council.
- Worked in partnership with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust and a number of volunteers to deliver the Wild Stevenage project. Events have included wildlife and bat walks, hedge planting, and pond improvements.
- Launched the Green Space Volunteer scheme in Spring 2011 attracting a number of volunteers.
- Joined the Herts Sustainability Forum and attended the first official meeting in January 2012.
- Council staff and Members gave up their time to clean up the Oval Neighbourhood Centre. An unused piece of land was transformed into a community garden and will be used by a local children's centre to host a garden club.
- Included wildlife related tips and ideas in our residents' magazine, Chronicle.
- Council staff volunteered to tackle a number of overgrown gardens across the town.
- Piloted a new service where households register to receive monthly email reminders of when their refuse and recycling collections are due for the following month.

Fairlands Valley Park achieved a Green Flag Award for the third year running.

What do we aim to do next year?

- Introduce integrated teams to carry out street cleaning and grounds maintenance across the town.
- Deliver a range of activities with different groups of residents as part of our Wild Stevenage Project.
- Provide training opportunities for our Green Spaces volunteers.
- Continue to review the refuse collection and recycling service that we offer and enhance it where possible.

We asked Stevenage residents to tell us what they think of Stevenage, and...

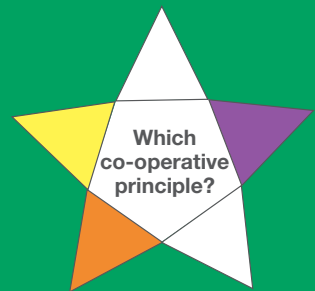
- 82% of Stevenage residents continue to be satisfied with parks and open spaces in the town.
- Almost three quarters of Stevenage people are satisfied with our household waste collection (72%) and recycling (74%) services.
- 62% of residents are satisfied with the cleanliness of streets.

The Herts Sustainability Forum is a county-wide group that allows sharing of ideas on environmental issues and policies. It has a number of task groups to make sure it covers all environmental issues facing the county.

New text message alerts advise residents when their normal refuse and recycling collections will be disrupted.

Create sustainable communities

Help provide leisure and health services



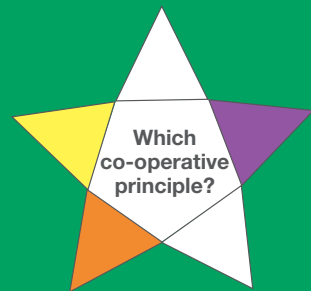
96% of children who use the council's play services tell us that they enjoy them.

What did we do this year?

- Spread our annual Health Action Day over two days this time:
 - More than 60 professional stalls gave advice to residents on improving their health and fitness.
 - An Aquathlon was run in partnership with the British Heart Foundation.
 - Free taster sessions were held at Stevenage Leisure facilities.
- Worked with SoStevenage to support the construction of a high ropes course in Fairlands Valley Park. The course provides a challenging outdoor adventure space for all ages. You can book by calling 01438 353241 or visit www.stevenage-leisure.co.uk for more information.
- Signed up more than 500 people to the Smokebusters scheme and held Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service sessions in the council reception two afternoons a week.
- Began a programme of work to safeguard and improve the wellbeing of children in Stevenage.
- Held an Open Day at Fairlands Valley Park in July 2011.
- Provided funding for Crossroads Care Hertfordshire North to help support schemes for Stevenage carers.
- Ran a course to provide teenage parents with training, qualifications and personal development such as parenting skills.
- Improved the athletics facility at Ridlins End including resurfacing the track to ensure future competition opportunities can be held.
- Worked with Bedwell Rangers Football Club to secure Football Foundation funding to improve the playing pitches at Ridlins End Playing Fields.
- Improved support to children under 5 and their families in 4 of our children's centres by increasing the number of county council staff working directly with them.
- Delivered a range of improvements to the town's allotment sites in partnership with Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association.
- Consulted with young people to help us design a Parkour facility at King George V Playing Fields. Parkour involves moving through the environment by vaulting, rolling, running, climbing and jumping using different obstacles available.

Create sustainable communities

Help provide leisure and health services



What do we aim to do next year?

- Work in partnership to reduce adult and childhood obesity in the most deprived families.
- Expand the play service to include holiday play schemes at Bedwell and Symonds Green and investigate the possibility of a new play centre in Bedwell.
- Promote attendance at our play centres to help develop children's life skills and healthy living.
- Hold another Open Day at Fairlands Valley Park.
- Improve the toddler play facilities at Peartree Park and King George V Playing Fields.
- Work with the Toddler Group Initiative to increase awareness of the support available to baby and toddler groups in Stevenage.
- Use funding from the Football Foundation to improve the pitches at Ridlins End Playing Fields.

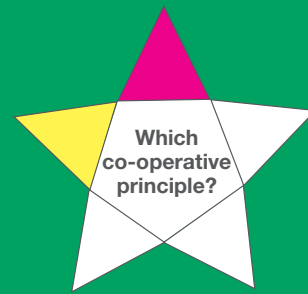
Smokebusting success!

- 92 smokers were referred to Stop Smoking Services.
- 857 children have been protected from the harm of second hand smoke.
- Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Services received 145 referrals for home fire safety checks.

The Smokebusters Scheme, championed across the region by our Council Leader, and across the town by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Older People, has received national recognition and has been used as a model across Hertfordshire.

Move towards excellence

Support and develop our people



This year we increased the number of apprenticeships on offer – demonstrating our commitment to providing opportunities for our staff to develop.

What did we do this year?

- Continuously reviewed staff skills through our appraisal process. In addition:
 - A number of staff have attended training sessions that we have offered on managing change, wellbeing and IT skills. We also helped 46 of our environmental services staff obtain Level Two NVQs.
 - Support was provided for the staff that are now working in partnership with other local councils, and induction training provided for those that have transferred to the council as part of the housing service integration.
- Significantly reduced staff sickness absence to below the average for all employment sectors, and well below the Local Government average.
- Continued to explore ways of working co-operatively with other councils in how we deliver our support services.
- Supported the health and wellbeing of our staff through a range of activities including staff training and promotion of the range of information and advice that is available.
- Held development days throughout the year for Councillors, management and staff to build and maintain their skills.
- Continued to work with staff and trade unions as part of our work to harmonise pay scales and grades across the council.

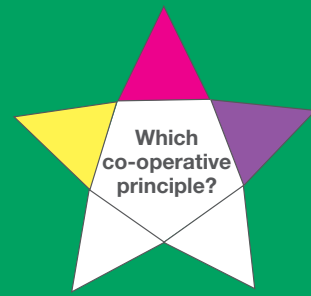
What do we aim to do next year?

- Support staff going through organisational change, particularly those affected by the integration of housing services and partnership working with other councils.
- Continue to work towards the introduction of new pay and grading arrangements for staff.
- Develop our approach to ensuring we get the best out of our staff, from senior managers to apprentices.
- Continue to provide development programmes for Councillors, management and staff, including a refreshed induction programme for new staff and Members.
- Set out our approach to encouraging staff and resident volunteering and to promoting ethical ways of working.

Staff sickness absence has fallen significantly for the second year in a row and is now below public sector averages.

Move towards excellence

Promote equality



We continue to meet the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

In addition, almost three quarters (74%) of our residents tell us they are treated fairly by local services - we hope to build on this by continuing to work co-operatively with our communities and local groups.

What did we do this year?

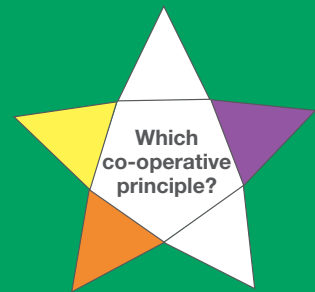
- Consulted with the community to develop our Equality and Diversity Action Plan to 2014.
- Recently refurbished the council's website with the aim of making it easier to use and accessible to all users.
- Took part in Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day as part of the council's commitment to listening to the views and needs of children and young people.
- Delivered training to staff, managers and councillors to make sure they have the knowledge and understanding of equality issues needed for their role.
- Continued to be an active member of the Hertfordshire Diversity Network – sharing learning and best practice with other districts and identifying opportunities to work together.

What do we aim to do next year?

- Continue our activity to promote the importance of treating all people fairly – in the community, within the council and in the services we deliver.
- Improve the equality information we collect about customers contacting us through the Customer Service Centre to make sure our services are accessible to people from different equality groups.
- Support the development of equality groups such as the Stevenage Seniors' Forum, the Inter-Faith Steering Group and Stevenage Disability Network.
- Work co-operatively with the independent Stevenage Inter-Faith Steering Group to help deliver their multi-faith event planned for November 2012.

Move towards excellence

Maintain customer focus



6,043 customers completed the GovMetric survey and the high level of satisfaction that they fed back resulted in us winning the GovMetric Council of the Year award.

What did we do this year?

- Won the GovMetric Council of the Year Award 2011. GovMetric helps us to capture feedback from customers by asking them to rate the service we have provided them on the website and through the Customer Service Centre.
- Received the Customer Service Excellence Award for our housing service. Stevenage Homes were commended for having a customer-focused culture and a high standard of customer involvement.
- Launched a new council website in August. Customers have given us positive feedback and told us that they like its new appearance and find it easy to navigate.
- Reviewed the customer-facing service provided by our Environmental Services team. Workshops were held with operational staff and managers and we offered customers the opportunity to give us feedback on our website information.
- Allocated time for staff in the Customer Service Centre to be given regular training to keep improving the service we provide to our customers.

What do we aim to do next year?

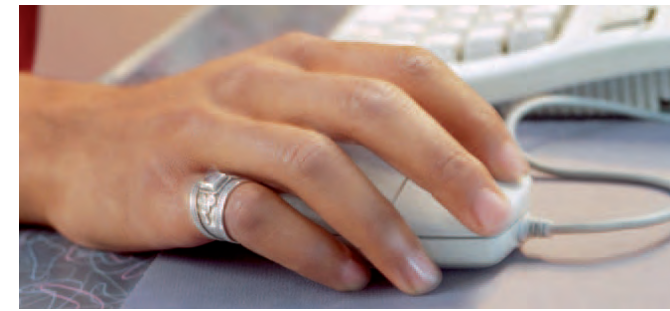
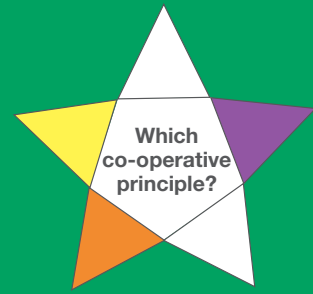
- Improve access to services through the Customer Service Centre and on our website.
- Use the feedback we receive from our customers more effectively, including complaints, compliments and general comments.
- Continue to review the customer-facing services that the council provides.

Our Customer Service Centre staff assisted 55,730 walk-in customers and answered 201,776 telephone calls during 2011/12.

Did you know that if you type your address into the 'Find' section on our website, you can see when your next five waste collections are, and if they are for refuse or recycling.

Move towards excellence

Use resources effectively



What did we do this year?

- Delivered further efficiency savings totalling £730,000 to maintain a balanced budget and to deliver a Council Tax freeze.
- Improved value for money for the housing service through its re-integration with the council.
- Took on housing debt from central government – this will allow us to keep all of the council house rents we receive from tenants in future to invest back into housing.
- Worked co-operatively with 6 other councils to implement a single Internal Audit shared service, including the County Council who is acting as the lead authority.
- Consulted with staff and delivered a new shared service for Housing Benefits and Local Taxation with East Herts Council. This is expected to deliver significant savings across both councils.
- Investigated options for sharing support services with East Herts and North Herts councils which has suggested that each council can make significant savings.
- Started work to ensure that we have ‘the right assets at the right cost’.
- Made Direct Debit facilities available for all the council’s commercial customers.

What do we aim to do next year?

- Prepare for the Localisation of Business Rates including an enhanced engagement with the business sector.
- Design and consult on a new Council Tax Support Scheme that will mitigate the effects of the increased reductions in government funding.
- Review staff structures in the council so that we continue to provide an efficient and good value for money service to our customers.
- Consult with staff and agree the plans for working co-operatively with other councils to share support services.
- Continue work to review the retention and disposal of council assets.
- Encourage all commercial customers to pay by direct debit, making it mandatory in the longer term.



Measuring our Performance



We use a number of performance measures to monitor delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities each year. Some of these are drawn from questions asked in our Residents' Survey which we completed in 2012 – these results have been included in boxes on each priority page. As no survey is planned for 2012/13, this is the final year of reporting performance for these measures against our Corporate Plan, Making a Difference 2008-2013. The remainder of the Corporate Plan measures are included in the following tables.

You can find more information on these performance measures such as targets and descriptions on our website www.stevenage.gov.uk.

Shape our community

Encourage community involvement

How did we do on...?

Number of people participating in corporate consultation exercises

As a result of the inclusion of consultation carried out for housing services, we consulted with 3,653 people this year - significantly exceeding our target of 1,300.

Ensuring we consult with people from minority groups

percentage of black and minority ethnic communities participating in corporate consultation

Respondents to our consultation activities included 11% of residents from black and minority ethnic groups, exceeding our target by 3%.

percentage of people with a disability participating in corporate consultation

To be provided (target 18.5%)

How about next year?

This measure is changing from 2012/13 and will include consultation activity carried out across the organisation. Our target to consult with 1,000 people in 2012/13 reflects the activity that we have planned.

From 2012/13 this measure will change to include consultation activity carried out across the council, but will not include participants of drop-in events such as Cafe Choice. We will continue our target to engage with 8% of people from all equality groups and backgrounds.

We look to maintain our target of consulting with 18.5% of people with a disability in 2012/13. However this will be reviewed following the release of national Census data.

Shape our community

Improve the image of Stevenage

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Increasing the number of press releases we issue	We issued 122 press releases last year - slightly above our target.	We have increased our target to 130 as this will include press releases associated with our recently integrated Housing service from 2012/13.
Increasing the percentage of press releases published in the media	Almost all (93%) of the press releases that we issued were published - significantly above our target of 75%.	We will continue to target our press release content in order to encourage media interest and aim for 80% of our press releases to be published. Next year we aim for 92% of our media coverage to be positive or neutral.
Increasing the percentage of media coverage that is positive or neutral	Only 2% of media coverage portrayed the council negatively, exceeding our target by 8%. This reflects our continued approach to working co-operatively with local communities.	
Percentage of residents surveyed who feel well informed about the services and benefits the council provides	This was a statutory measure captured in the national Place Survey, which the Government abolished when it came to power in May 2010. Since our work to keep residents well informed is routinely addressed through various aspects of the council's work, we have chosen to remove this measure from 2011/12.	N/A

Regenerate Stevenage

Have a growing town and economy

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Providing additional homes each year (net)	We've worked co-operatively with developers to provide 300 new homes across the town - 35 more than we had planned to deliver.	We aim to provide 213 additional homes next year.
Offering support to new small businesses (1-10 employees) so that they are successfully trading after 12 months (%)	Result expected July 2012	By continuing to support new small businesses over the coming year, we aim for xx% to be successfully trading after 12 months. Our activity will include holding a 'Beat the Competition' event and a Jobs and Skills Fair.
Maintaining a supply of ready to develop housing sites	We can currently identify 4.5 years of housing land supply.	Our aim is always to have 5 years of housing land supply identified and we will work towards this in 2012/13.

Regenerate Stevenage

Develop a modern, vibrant town centre

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Determining the outline planning application for the town centre	The original plans for the Town Centre Regeneration were revised to take into account the impact of economic downturn. As a result, the target for granting planning permission of the revised plans was deferred to 2011/12. We achieved this in January 2012.	Now that the plans have been agreed and it has been resolved to grant planning permission, we can begin to work with private sector development partners to deliver the redevelopment of the town centre as soon as possible.
Beginning on-site construction of town centre	As a result of the revised plans to regenerate the town centre, work on-site was not planned to start in 2011/12.	Consideration is currently being given to procuring a new private sector partner for the regeneration of the town centre. This is expected to take 12 months and so work on-site for the new town centre is planned to begin as part of the new Corporate Plan from 2014/15.
Percentage of shoppers who think the town centre has improved	57% of residents think the town centre has improved - slightly more than our target of 55%.	We will maintain our target of 55% in 2012/13.

Regenerate Stevenage

Revitalise neighbourhood centres

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Meeting our milestones in the Neighbourhood Enhancement Programme	We aimed to complete the Enhancement Programme by March 2012. The work was actually completed in June 2012.	N/A

Create sustainable communities

Provide quality affordable housing

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Delivering more affordable homes (gross)	We have delivered the 42 affordable homes that we had planned to this year.	In 2012/13 we plan to complete a further 150 affordable homes.
Reducing the percentage of non-decent council homes	We achieved our target of having 72% of our council homes meet the government's Decent Homes Standard. This is a significant improvement compared with 52% at the start of our Corporate Plan in 2008.	By the end of 2012/13 we aim to have three quarters of our council homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard.
Local authority tenants surveyed who are satisfied with landlord services	More and more of our tenants are happy with the housing service we provide - this has risen from 77% in 2009 to 82% this year.	The next tenants' survey is due to be carried out in 2013/14.
Helping households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service/s and for whom housing advice casework resolved their situation	Our housing advice service has prevented 360 households from becoming homeless this year, which exceeds our target by 23. This is also a significant increase compared with the 7 households we helped at the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008.	In the current economic climate we will look to maintain the current target in 2012/13.
Reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation per year	We were unable to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation this year. The current recession has made this a particularly challenging target to achieve.	Due to the continuing economic downturn the council is looking to maintain current performance.

Create sustainable communities

Keep the town safe

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Working in partnership to reduce criminal damage per 1,000 population	Criminal damage has reduced in the last year from 17.1 incidents per 1,000 population (which was our target for this year) to 13.5. We've already exceeded our original Corporate Plan target for 2013 of 21.11	Our partnership has set a target of 16.75 incidents per 1,000 population in 2012/13. This takes account of the anticipated impact of the current economic situation.

Create sustainable communities

Maintain a clean and green environment

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Keeping the streets and environment clean: - percentage of litter falling below an acceptable standard - percentage of detritus falling below an acceptable standard - percentage of unacceptable levels of graffiti - improved street and environmental cleanliness - fly-tipping - percentage of unacceptable levels of visible fly posting	We met or exceeded all of our targets for reducing the visual impact of litter, graffiti and fly-tipping: - litter falling below an acceptable standard - 2% - detritus falling below an acceptable standard - 4% - unacceptable levels of graffiti - 2% - we continue to meet the highest level for reducing fly-tipping.	Our targets for next year take into account seasonal changes throughout the year: - litter falling below an acceptable standard - 3% - detritus falling below an acceptable standard - 10% - unacceptable levels of graffiti - 2% - continue to meet the highest level for reducing fly-tipping.
	We did not achieve our target in 2011/12. Our continued aim is to have no unacceptable levels of fly-posting each year.	Most fly-posting promotes events around the town and we are taking action to limit the impact of this.
Reducing household waste (kgs per household) that isn't recycled	Results expected July 2012	TBC
Sending more household waste for reuse, recycling and composting (%)	Results expected July 2012	TBC

Create sustainable communities

Help provide leisure and health services

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Increasing the number of 16-24 year olds participating in at least 30 minutes of activity three times per week	This measure changed during the year to report the number of 14-25 year olds taking part in regular exercise. The result of 3,359 was near to our target of 3,415 young people.	In 2012/13 we will continue to measure the number of 14-25 year olds taking part in regular exercise and aim to increase this to 3,628.
Encouraging more adults aged 45+ to participate in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport and active recreation	5,415 people aged over 45 took part in regular exercise this year against a target of 5,448 - an increase of more than 2,000 people since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2008.	Our aim is to encourage a further 440 people aged over 45 years to become more active.
Increasing the number of people participating in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport and physical activity at least three times per week	38,744 people in Stevenage take regular exercise - 30 more than our target and an increase of almost 900 people since 2009.	Our staff will continue to encourage more people to take regular exercise and aim to increase this to 39,001 next year.
Increasing the number of play sessions for 5-15 year olds offered by the play service	991 play sessions were attended by 5-15 year olds last year (against a target of 1,000).	We aim to increase attendance to 1070 in 2012/13.
Percentage of child customers satisfied with play services offered	We exceeded our target with 96% of children who use the council's play services telling us that they enjoy them.	We continue to target satisfaction levels of at least 92%.

Move towards excellence

Support and develop our people

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Reducing the number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence	Council staff sickness absence is now at an all-time low at just 7.14 days. This is below our target of 8 days and is also below the public sector average.	Following the integration of Stevenage Homes in December 2011, the council now has more staff. We have taken this into account when we set our target for 2012/13 of 8 days, which is still below the public sector average. In 2012/13 we will continue to achieve a target of 0.44% for each of these measures.
Lowering rates of employees retiring early (excluding ill-health retirements) as a percentage of the total workforce in pension scheme	We make every effort to redeploy staff during organisational restructures and as a result we had no early retirements this year.	
Lowering rates of employees retiring on grounds of ill health as a percentage of the total workforce	None of our staff retired on the grounds of ill-health in 2011/12. We have the use of an occupational health service to support the health and wellbeing of our staff, and the tightening of the Local Government Pension Scheme has also affected the eligibility of ill-health retirements.	

Move towards excellence

Promote equality

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Meeting the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government		We continue to meet the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local Government, as planned.
Ensuring that new and existing staff are offered equal opportunities within the council	percentage of top-paid 5% local authority earners that are women	24.32% of the highest council earners are women - organisational restructures have meant that we did not reach our target of 32%.
	percentage of top-paid 5% local authority earners from an ethnic minority community	When we surveyed the 5% highest paid council earners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18.92% declared that they are from an ethnic minority community (target 14.29%) • 8.11% informed us that they have a disability (target 10.71%).
	percentage of top-paid 5% local authority earners who have a disability	
	percentage of local authority employees declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition	6.14% of council staff declared that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition - 1.62% above our target.
	percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities	A recent survey of our staff showed that 11.62% are from ethnic minority communities, which is slightly lower than our target of 11.73%.
		We will continue our work to reach 'Excellent' by 2014.
		We aim for 35% of our top 5% highest council earners to be women.
		We aim to maintain our targets in 2012/13.
		Our target of 4.86% of council staff declaring that they meet the disability definition reflects the organisational change and restructures affecting staff across the council.
		We are committed to providing opportunities for employment to all members of the community and so are increasing our target to 12.06% in 2012/13.

Move towards excellence

Maintain customer focus

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Resolving customer complaints within target	<p>We exceeded all of our targets for resolving complaints by deadline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days - 97% - Stage 2 complaints within 15 working days - 100% - Stage 3 complaints within 20 working days - 100%. 	<p>Our aim is to maintain the following targets for next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stage 1 complaints resolved within target - 97% - Stage 2 complaints resolved within target - 97% - Stage 3 complaints resolved within target - 95% <p>The review of our customer feedback system will be used to inform future years' targets in our new Corporate Plan from 2013.</p>
Answering calls to the Customer Service Centre within 20 seconds	<p>A working group of staff and Members reviewed overall performance of the Customer Service Centre in 2011/12. Recognising the high levels of customer satisfaction received for our telephony service (above target at 94%) and the high levels of demand, a short-term reduction in target was agreed. Due to the continued high demand for services we answered 64% of customer calls within 20 seconds against a target of 70%.</p>	<p>We are carrying out a customer survey in June 2012 to establish what they feel is important in the way we deliver customer services. Our target is currently 65% for 2012/13 but the survey is likely to result in new measures and targets for customer services in the future.</p>
Serving walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre within 20 minutes	<p>88% of our walk-in customers were served within 20 minutes against a target of 92%.</p>	<p>We aim to achieve our target of 92% in 2012/13 subject to the outcomes of our customer survey mentioned above, which may result in changes to this measure.</p>
Reducing avoidable contact with customers	<p>We beat our avoidable contact target of 30%, achieving 26.87%. This means that fewer customers contacted us last year to chase progress or clarify information they have received from the council.</p>	<p>We continue to target avoidable contact at 30% or less.</p>

Move towards excellence

Use resources effectively

How did we do on...?		How about next year?
Meeting our targets for making savings	TBC	TBC