

Basildon District Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2008



Contents

3	Foreword
5	Priorities 2007-8
7	Environment
9	Community
11	Regeneration
13	Heritage
15	How the Council works?
16	Excellence Through Partnership
17	Performance summary
18-23	Finances

Foreword

It has been a successful year for Basildon District Council after a good report from the Audit Commission which said our services are improving at a better rate than the average council. This report looks at our record over the past year, 2007-8, picks out some of the highlights and draws attention to our priorities in the year ahead.

We want people to feel proud of their district because of the strong sense of community, the attractive environment and our successful regeneration projects that are improving our quality of life. We are working hard to provide value for money, clean streets, better housing and town centres fit for the future. However, we cannot do it on our own. We work with a range of partners whose efforts will help shape our success and with the people of the district, to whom we are accountable and to whom this report is directed.

2009 marks 60 years since Basildon new town was created. It's been a period of immense change. People have been born, grown up and had families of their own. Over the years, we have sought to serve and protect those who live here and we will continue to do our very best over the next 60 years.

Leader of the Council

Malcolm Buckley



Chief Executive

Bala Mahendran



“

Compared to London, Basildon is like Heaven. It has all the shops and services you could want and there's so much peaceful countryside, which I am glad the council is fighting to preserve.

”



Shyam and Angelin

Bluebells at Norsey Wood

Norsey Wood has one of the largest concentrations of Bluebells in Essex - a real ancient gem.

Priorities 2007-2010

The Council's three main priorities between 2007-10 are:

Environment

The Council wants people to walk down clean streets and look up at buildings untarnished by graffiti. We want residents to recycle more and we will provide them with the tools to do that. We want to collect your rubbish with as little hassle as possible. We will also do our best to tackle climate change by being as green as we can be. We are also doing our best to protect the district's environment.

Community

The Council is improving our community facilities. We've just opened the George Hurd Centre, a day centre for the elderly, and we are planning to open the Sporting Village in Gloucester Park. We want the community to help us make decisions by taking part in consultations and telling us what they think. We are supporting community cohesion by ensuring people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities. We are also doing our best to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, having already seen a 27 per cent reduction in crime over the last three years.

Regeneration

With the help of our partners we are undertaking one of the biggest and most exciting regeneration projects in the country. Despite the national financial worries, work on various projects is well under way. These include the regeneration of Basildon town centre, Wickford town centre, Laindon and Pitsea, better Council housing, the Sporting Village and the Wat Tyler Heritage Centre. A note of caution, it won't all happen overnight but you will begin to see the shoots of change in the next few years.

Value for Money

All three of the above themes are underpinned by a drive to achieve the greatest value for money. This helps to keep Council tax levels low, whilst further improving quality services for our citizens, businesses and partners.



James Hendry at Barleylands Depot

A further 41,150 households were added to the green waste collection scheme during 2007-8.

Environment Highlights

Five per cent increase in collection rates for recycling, meaning a third of all domestic waste is now saved from landfill.

Satisfaction with litter, fly tipping and graffiti levels improved across the district over the past year.

Basildon achieved one of the highest satisfaction rates with its refuse service in Essex. This was helped by the introduction of free special waste collections across the district and the pink sacks increasing their capacity to take yoghurt pots and plastic cups.

£440,000 of funding for children's free play was achieved from the BIG Lottery Fund, helping to refurbish two major playgrounds in the district and provide a children's play ranger scheme during the school holidays.

Free play enables the child to choose and personally direct the play activity they take part in, and is crucial to social development.



Harry & Kim

“

Recycling in the area is really good. I am able to put it right outside my gate in the big green bins and have it all collected on the same day.

”

Basfest '08

A record of 40,000 people from across the district and beyond attended the Basfest in July.



Community Highlights

In May 2008, the new George Hurd Centre opened in Basildon providing activities, advice and support to elderly people across the district, as well as new space to local community and voluntary groups.

The work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has led to a 27 per cent reduction in crime over the past three years.

Last year saw the Towngate Theatre stage its first pantomime in 10 years. The show was a great success and tickets for Cinderella 2008-09 are selling fast.

Basfest 2008 saw the event reaching new heights with record attendances over the weekend. Large numbers of community groups took part, and there was top quality entertainment across the main stage, events arena and community stage. Even bigger and better events are being planned for next year.

“

I think it's great the Towngate is a fully working theatre once again. It's a great community asset that has something for everyone, and the community productions they stage are a terrific way to engage with young people who live in the district.

”



Chanelle



The Icon

Next to Basildon train station, it consists of 121 modern and stylish flats, and New Campus Basildon.

Regeneration Highlights

The regeneration of Basildon town centre has taken major strides forward this year. Homes at the Icon have been finished and this is also the current home of New Campus Basildon, a new learning experience for 16 to 19 year olds. A new £80 million town centre campus funded by the LSC will open in 2012.

Morello Quarter behind the train station is well under way, as is a £2 million programme of improvements throughout the town centre paid for by English Partnerships.

Wickford town centre plans are gathering speed, and a developer is due to be announced to undertake the £120 million regeneration by early 2009. A brand new pool, health centre, fitness suite and library are set to be delivered.

Outline planning permission was given to the new Sporting Village in Gloucester Park. The facility, which will feature an international 50 metre pool and Gymnastics Centre has also been listed as an official pre-games training camp for 2012. This project has been made possible by partner contributions from Essex County Council, the PCT, the CLG and English Partnerships.

The first stages of Pitsea's regeneration have also begun, led by the Chalvedon and Barstable academy. The regeneration of Wat Tyler Country Park, where a new visitor centre is in mid construction, is set for a summer 2009 opening.



Barry

“

I like living in Basildon but have to say the town centre is looking a little tired. But I was impressed with the plans for the regeneration of the area, and if it all comes together as planned it's going to be for the better.

”

Wat Tyler Country Park
St. George's Day celebrations.



Our heritage

Basildon is a lively and thriving district which lies in the southern part of Essex, 30 miles east of London. Covering some 42.5 square miles, the district includes the towns of Basildon, Billericay and Wickford. Some 65 per cent of the district is green space with 42 wildlife sites covering 850 hectares.

Basildon is the largest district in the East of England Region and the Council serves a population of approximately 169,600 people. The main areas of employment are engineering, retail, distribution and financial services.

The 60th anniversary of the birth of Basildon new town will be marked in 2009. This will provide an opportunity for the Council to celebrate all that has happened in the district over the past 60 years and let people know what the future holds.

Basildon is the second biggest employment zone in the Thames Gateway, outside of Canary Wharf.

“

Since we moved here in 1962, Basildon has grown tremendously in size and it now has far more facilities.

”



Ronald and Maureen Jones



The Basildon Centre

The new fully operational reception area and customer services centre.

How the Council Works

Basildon Council has 42 councillors representing 16 wards.

After the elections in May 2008, the Conservative group led by Cllr Malcolm Buckley the Council Leader, has 29 seats, the Labour group led by Cllr Lynda Gordon, has 10 seats, and the Liberal Democrats led by Cllr Geoff Williams, has three seats. The chairman of the Council is Cllr Frank Tomlin for the electoral year 2008-9.

Councillors have a duty to represent their wards and the residents within them, and to deliver good quality, value for money services across the district.

The full Council has responsibility for making decisions on strategic policy, Council tax levels and our budget. The Cabinet is made up of 10 councillors, and is responsible for developing policies to deliver the Council's priorities within the set budget, and ensuring services perform to expected levels.

Eight Members of the Cabinet have specific areas of responsibility as outlined below:

- Leader of the Council, Democratic and Corporate Services – *Cllr Malcolm Buckley*
- Deputy Leader, Property and Community Safety – *Cllr Tony Ball*
- Resources – *Cllr Phil Turner*
- Regeneration and Green Issues – *Cllr Stephen Horgan*
- Leisure and Arts – *Cllr Kevin Blake*
- Community – *Cllr Andrew Baggott*
- Environment – *Cllr Terri Sargent*
- Customer Services – *Cllr Richard Moore*

Cllr Lynda Gordon and Cllr Ben Williams are both members of the Cabinet, without portfolios representing opposition parties.

Council committees deal with a range of matters such as planning and licensing. The Overview and Scrutiny committee, plays a key role in informing the decision making process.

For more information on the Council, councillors and the various committees, visit our website at www.basildon.gov.uk and take a look at our Council pages.

Management

Nine hundred and fifty people work for the Council with the Chief Executive, Bala Mahendran, leading the way through these exciting times at Basildon. The top management team consists of two directors, Mick Nice and Doug Smith, and eight Heads of Service each responsible for a specific area of activity.

Excellence Through Partnership

As our world evolves and social issues become more complex, it is increasingly important for us to work in partnership with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Basildon Council is the leading member of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which works with a variety of agencies from across all three sectors to improve services for the public.

The LSP aims to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy, which is a document that outlines the aims for the district for the next generation. Basildon's LSP also has a regional responsibility to deliver the 14 priorities set out in the Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Our Chief Executive, Bala Mahendran, is chairman of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) this year. The CDRP has enjoyed much success in the past year, announcing a 27 per cent reduction in crime across the district in the past three years.

The LAA is a joint project between Essex's thirteen LSPs, with the aim of looking at and delivering projects from a regional perspective, encouraging more joined-up working and enabling more effective practices.

Basildon Renaissance Partnership is the body responsible for coordinating regeneration across the district. Basildon Renaissance Partnership will be working with the Council to deliver the physical regeneration projects across the district.

Both Basildon Council and Basildon Renaissance Partnership are partnered with the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership. Thames Gateway is the body overseeing all the regeneration in the Thames Gateway area from London to Southend. Basildon falls into the heart of this region and is the business hub of the Thames Gateway, the largest regeneration project in Europe.

Housing and Communities Agency (formerly English Partnerships) is the national regeneration agency, and Basildon has signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Housing and Communities Agency, setting out a joint approach to regeneration.

Performance Summary

The next few pages will outline our performance over the past year, in line with our priorities, Environment, Community, Regeneration and Value for Money. We will look at how well we are providing effective services for the citizens and businesses of Basildon.

Highlights

Our Direction of Travel assessment, carried out by the Audit Commission, was very positive for the Council, concluding that our services are “improving across a number of areas”.

The Audit Commission also stated that our “overall rate of improvement is above average”.

A brand new one-stop-shop focusing on excellent customer services opened on the ground floor of the Basildon Centre in May. Following this, our customer services were awarded a commendation at the Local Government Achievement Awards.

The Council and its partners are focussed on improving the quality and value of all services for citizens and businesses in the district, and has challenged its existing ways of working over the past year – emerging as a stronger, leaner and more efficient organisation.

The Council tax increase was set at 4.468 per cent - staying well below the 4.9 per cent target we set ourselves. This was made possible through increased financial control, exceeding our efficiency targets and a greater focus on value for money.

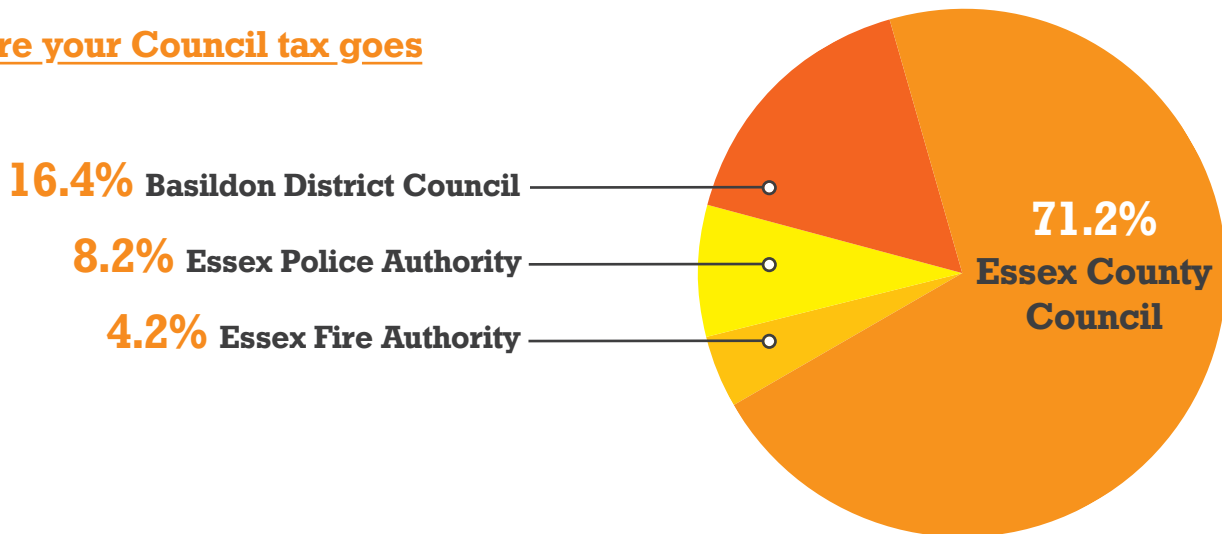
The speed of processing new benefit claims increased dramatically, and is now one of the top performing benefits departments in the country.

Finances

Set out below is a summary of finances for 2007-8, showing our sources of income and how this has been spent.

Only 16p of every pound of Council tax you paid in 2007-8 came to us.

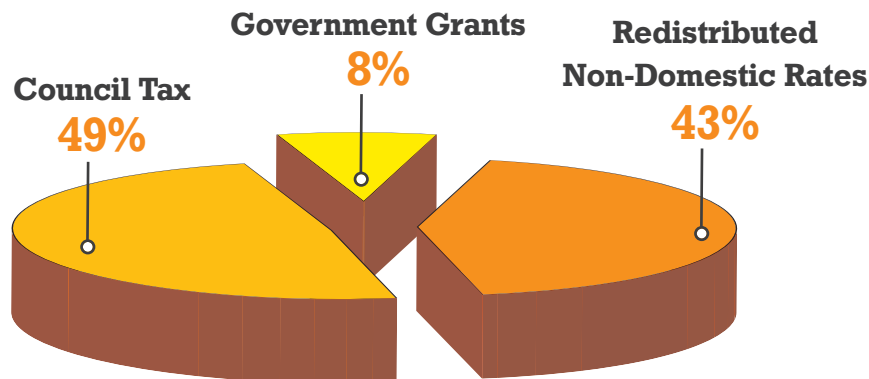
Where your Council tax goes



Our income

Our non-service income total in 2007-8 was £29.9 million. Less than half of this was from Council tax, with the rest coming from central government in the form of grants

Non-Service Income Sources For Basildon



Council Tax	£14.6 million (49%)
Redistributed Non-Domestic Rates	£13.0 million (43%)
Government Grants	£2.3 million (8%)
TOTAL	£29.9 million

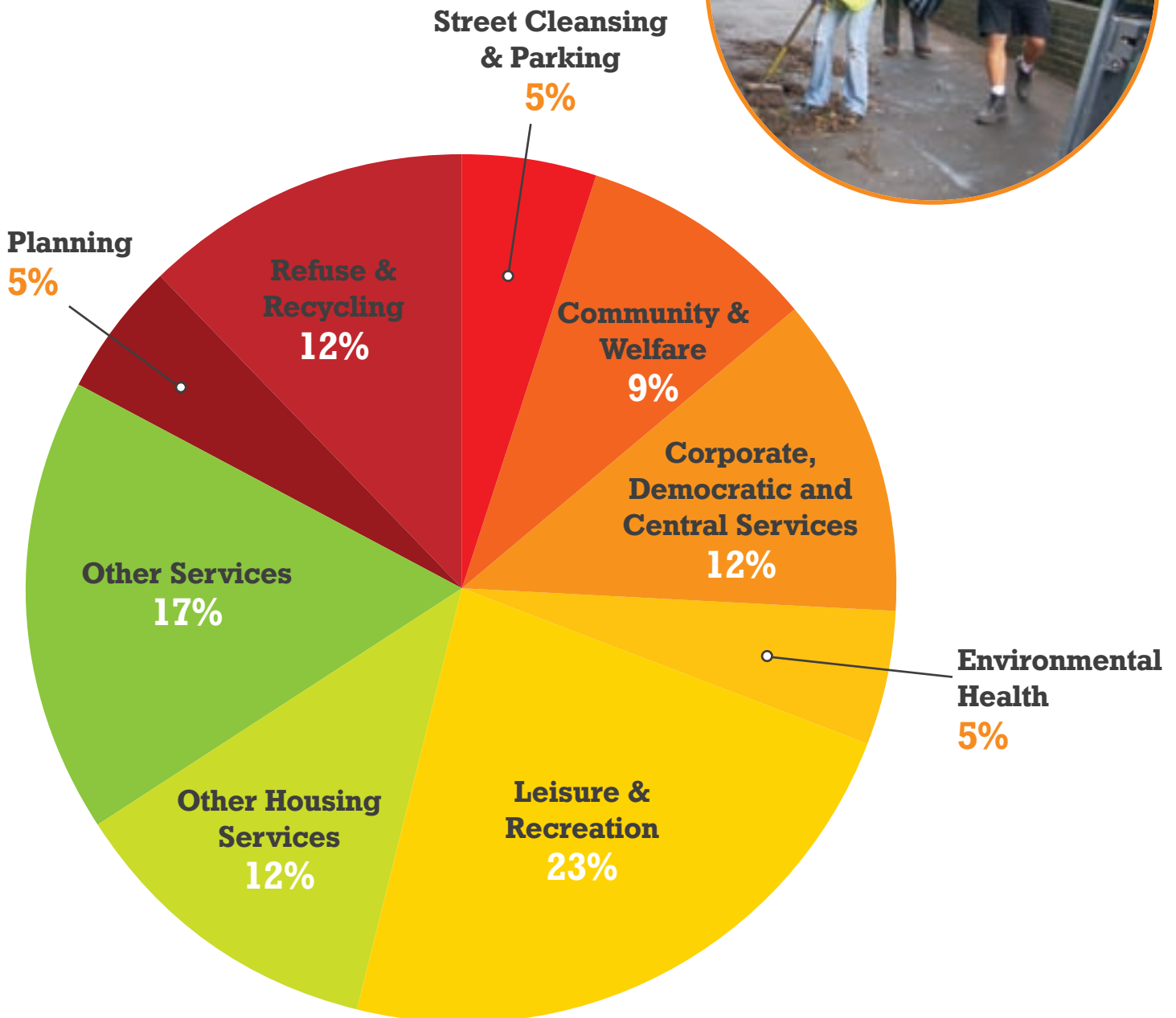
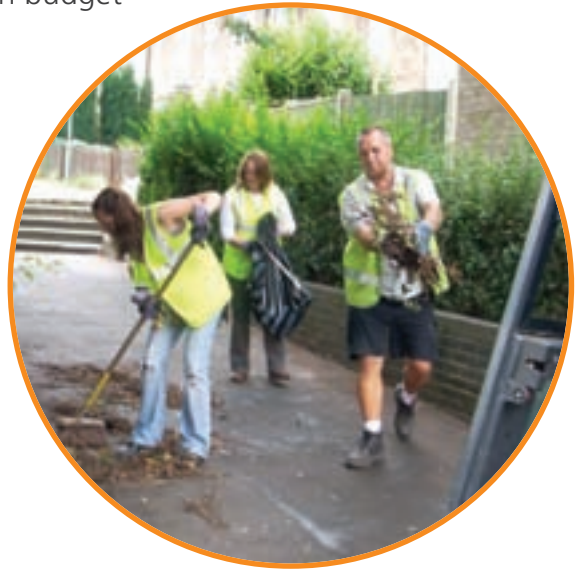
Where Does the Money Go?

For the year 2007-8, our budget was set in line with our corporate priorities.

Set out below is a graph demonstrating where the £34.5 million budget was spent on services in 2007-8.

Analysis of Net cost of General Fund Services

(includes income raised by the services)



Expenditure Breakdown

The table below outlines day to day spending including salaries, repairs, and transport, essential to the effective running of the Council's services. It also includes any income generated from the services themselves.

	£000s
Community & Welfare	3,112
Corporate, Democratic and Central Services	4,300
Environmental Health	1,576
Leisure & Recreation	8,001
Other Housing Services	4,140
Other Services	5,863
Planning	1,660
Refuse & Recycling	4,148
Street Cleansing & Parking	1,741
NET COST OF GENERAL FUND SERVICES	34,541
Less:	
Housing Revenue Account	(6,297)
Transfers from reserves	(64)
Interest earnings	(1,069)
Add:	
Parish Town Council precepts	281
Technical adjustments (cost of capital, pensions etc.)	367
NET OPERATING EXPENDITURE	27,759
Less non service income received	(29,892)
NET GENERAL FUND SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	(2,133)

Capital Expenditure

Money spent on buying, improving or upgrading assets, mainly land and buildings, is referred to as capital expenditure. This type of spending must be treated separately from the running of day to day services. This is because the benefit of capital expenditure will be received over a longer period of time.

The Council spent £16 million on its land and property assets in 2007-8. This is how it was spent:

	£000s
General Services	
The Sporting Village and Wat Tyler Heritage Interpretation Project	628
Improvements to buildings, play areas & open spaces	1,813
Neighbourhood & town centre improvements	895
Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	962
Other	628
	4,926
Council Housing	
Improvement of the Housing Stock undertaken by St Georges Community Housing	9,047
Other	633
	9,680
Housing General Fund	
Disabled Facilities Grant	716
Private Sector Decent Homes Grant	665
	1,381
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	15,987

Capital Expenditure Continued...

Capital expenditure was financed from the following:

	£000s
Borrowing	3,971
Major Repairs Allowance - Stock Improvements	8,016
Capital receipts from asset sales	1,249
Capital contributions	1,210
External funding of major projects	1,227
Other	314
TOTAL	15,987

Council Housing

Known as the Housing Revenue Account, this summarises income and expenses associated with the provision of Council housing. There is no contribution from Council tax towards expenditure.

Income	£000s
Council house rents	(40,275)
Other income	(4,840)
	(45,115)
Expenditure	
Repairs & maintenance	9,621
Supervision & management	13,711
Depreciation of assets	12,996
Other costs	2,490
	38,818
Net Cost of HRA Service	(6,297)
Interest payable	9,678
Technical adjustments	(3,910)
	5,768
TRANSFER TO HRA RESERVES	(529)

**The Council owned 6,578 houses and bungalows and 4,936 flats at 31 March 2008.*

Balance Sheet

This shows the financial position of the Council or more simply what the Council is worth as at 31 March 2008.

Income	£000s
Buildings and land owned by the Council	794,691
Stock	341
Money owed to the Council	23,186
Cash and investments	4,516
Total Assets	822,734
Borrowing	(135,597)
Money owed by the Council	(22,003)
Provisions for future spending	(3,750)
Other	(295)
Liability related to pension scheme	(60,833)
NET VALUE OF ASSETS	600,256

Revenue reserves

The Council has a legal duty to maintain an appropriate level of General Reserves. This account shows the level of the Council's Revenue Reserves as at 31 March 2008.

	£000s
General Fund	5,129
Housing Revenue Account	2,091
Earmarked Reserves*	
General Fund	7,871
HRA	529
TOTAL RESERVES	15,620

**These are reserves set aside for specific items such as insurance arrangements, replacement of IT facilities and other contingencies.*

A full glossary of the financial terms used in the report is available on the Council's website

2008-9

Following another successful year at Basildon, we are now looking to the year ahead with anticipation. The past year is one we can all be proud of at Basildon, here's to our exciting future.

Contact details for Basildon District Council

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Basildon Council

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