Sunderland City Council

Council Tax 2008–2009

How much you pay...
Where your money goes...

Sunderland City Council

Need a hand paying your Council Tax?

One free phone call is all it takes to find out if you can save money on your Council Tax.

We could take the weight off your shoulders...
Call free on **0800 633 5853**

Sunderland City Council

Your Council Tax bill ... what it means

This booklet gives you important information about what your Council Tax bill means. It sets out what you need to pay and tells you how the money will be spent.

Council Tax makes up just 13% of the City Council's overall budget.

Council Tax is one of the ways the council raises funds to pay for over 600 different services for all 280,000 people who live in the city, as well as funds for police, fire, transport and many other public services that ensure the city thrives and flourishes.

We take pride in listening and responding to what people want and then delivering value for money, high quality services.

Residents have told us what their priorities are, in consultation, in research and in person talking to council officers and members and these views have been taken into account in setting a budget for 2008–2009 that has the emphasis on efficiency without cuts in service or quality.

Last year, as well as delivering services efficiently and effectively to keep the city going, there were some great achievements: opening three new schools, progressing our plans to deliver six new or refurbished secondary schools, building the new Sunderland Aquatic Centre, opening the Southern Radial Route, helping more older people stay in their own homes for longer, and developing strong international relationships with the USA and China to improve the economic prosperity of the city... and we were involved in projects which created 3,000 new jobs.

This year's budget builds upon that success and includes more spending on the key services and activities that residents have told us are important.

If you would like more information or wish to give us your comments call 0191 520 5555 or email enquiries@sunderland.gov.uk.

Cllr Robert Symonds
Leader of the Council

Ged Fitzgerald
Chief Executive

Delivering services for a better future

Creating a better future for everyone in Sunderland

Your Council Tax pays for the many services the City Council provides for children, families, older residents and young people and contributes to developing a city where people can have a healthy, safe and prosperous future.

We are working towards improving the things that residents tell us are important: ensuring cleaner, greener and safer neighbourhoods, reducing crime, improving educational achievement, caring for the environment, providing cultural activities for all, regenerating the city and creating jobs.

Cleaner, greener, safer neighbourhoods...

We are providing quality services that help make good neighbourhoods – and improving the things that make neighbourhoods even better, such as better recycling and street lighting, maintaining roads, footpaths and grounds and responding quickly to problems like graffiti and anti-social behaviour. We're also helping to reduce crime, making Sunderland one of the safest cities in the North, but we want to continue making sure people feel safer in their homes and across the city.

Some of the projects that will have an extra focus next year include:

- Increased and better recycling facilities to keep reducing landfill waste to ensure that by 2010 at least 30% of all our domestic waste is recycled and that we have a plan in place for a more cost effective and environmentally friendly long term solution
- Addressing littering, rubbish and environmental crime including fly-tipping whenever this occurs resulting in better cleanliness and greater pride in neighbourhoods
- Introducing energy-saving improvements into all schools and council buildings to continue to cut the council's carbon emissions by 10% by 2010 – and save money
- Introducing mobile CCTV cameras to help track crime and provide evidence for prosecutions
- Continuing campaigns and activities to reduce crime and promote the safe aspects of living and working in Sunderland

Giving children and young people a better start...

Your Council Tax also goes towards providing 116 schools and 17 children's centres, as well as the playgrounds, youth clubs, sports facilities, parks and activity programmes for young people across the city. We completed the £11m refurbishment of Oxclose Community School and opened two new primary schools at Easington Lane and Highfield last year. The first phase of the £120m Building Schools for the Future programme will improve secondary schools across the city – giving young people a better learning environment and access to improved facilities. This resulted in the best A level results in Tyne and Wear last year. It means that our young people are better equipped for their futures than ever before and even more of them will have the chance to go on to university, work or vocational training.

Further plans for the coming year include:

- The first of three Academies will open in Pennywell, catering for all ages, in September 2008. It will operate from existing school buildings for the first year. The new Academy building and two more Academies at Hylton Red House and Castle View will open in 2009
- Construction is underway on two more new primary schools at Hetton Lyons and Southwick. Hetton Lyons School will open later this year with Southwick School opening in 2009
- Under the first phase of the Building Schools for the Future programme, work will begin on six secondary schools which include Washington, Biddick and St. Robert of Newminster Schools as well as the three Academies
- All 17 secondary schools will run activities before and after school hours by 2010, extending opportunities to the whole community

Improving health and providing extra care for those who need it...

We look after the needs of all older people and people with disabilities so they can remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible. This includes innovative services such as 'Telecare', which gives 15,000 older, vulnerable people the security of knowing help is nearby, 'direct payments' for people to choose the care they need and opening joint facilities with NHS Primary Care Centres to give people easier access to health and Wellness services.

In addition this year we will:

- Progress three new 'Extra Care' schemes for older people and vulnerable adults with integrated community and care facilities at Silksworth, Hetton and Washington, with the first at Silksworth opening this year
- Make it even easier and more affordable for people who are less well off to join in leisure, sport and Wellness activities
- Increase the number of people currently using Wellness Centres to continue to reduce levels of cancer, heart and circulatory disease and stroke
- Open a new Wellness Centre at Sunderland Aquatic Centre in April 2008

Something for everyone to enjoy...

Council Tax also helps pay for the huge variety of cultural and leisure facilities and activities on offer in the city. It contributes to running the city's libraries, leisure centres, art galleries and museums – and the Sunderland Empire Theatre – as well as looking after the parks, beaches and open spaces and creating events for people to enjoy throughout the year.

So some of the extra things planned for next year include:

- Opening Sunderland Aquatic Centre and building two new swimming pools at Hetton and Silksworth
- Improving our parks including developing six new play areas and major work at Herrington Country Park
- Securing World Heritage Site status for the twin monastery of Wearmouth Jarrow celebrating our history while also helping to improve the city's economy – bringing more visitors to the city and increasing its international profile

Building a better city and creating more jobs...
Our planning, engineering, regeneration and business investment expertise is supporting the ongoing regeneration programme for the whole city. New development including roads, schools, homes, leisure facilities and business continues. Last year for example we completed the Southern Radial Route and restored the historic heart of the city in Sunniside. Sunderland Aquatic Centre will open in April 2008.

We have developed and are managing high quality office space to help small to medium size businesses at the evolve Business Centre at Rainton Bridge in Houghton-le-Spring. Further proposals at Rainton Bridge will potentially bring 4,000 new jobs.

While we have an unrivalled reputation for bringing businesses to invest in the city, supporting business – whether that is helping world leaders like Nissan, Nike, Citifinancial and EDF or the many smaller businesses that make Sunderland's economy thrive, is a vital part of everyday business for us.

Providing grants and training are some of the ways the council encourages business in the city.

New projects for next year include:

- Turbine Park at Washington which is expected to bring 4,000 new jobs
- Completing The Place, in Sunniside, a £6m arts and business centre for local people

Making it all easier for you...
You have told us that you want us to make it easier to access council services. We have made a number of improvements and we'll continue to listen and respond to what you tell us you want. You can contact the council and get services in a number of ways. We have eight Sunderland Customer Service Centres and three more will open in Ryhope, Washington and Doxford this year. You can contact us by phone on 0191 520 5555 – if our trained contact staff can't help you directly they will make sure you get someone who can. And you can use our eight on-street kiosks or our website – www.sunderland.gov.uk or write a letter if you prefer to Sunderland City Council, PO Box 100, Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, SR2 7DN

Sunderland Customer Service Centres

Sunderland Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre

Bunny Hill Customer Service Centre, Hylton Lane

Grangetown Customer Service Centre, 86 Ryhope Road

Hetton Customer Service Centre, Welfare Road

Highfield Customer Service Centre, Fordfield Road

Houghton Customer Service Centre, 74 Newbottle Street

Sandhill Customer Service Centre, Grindon Lane

Shiney Row Customer Service Centre, Chester Road

Financial information

Legislative requirements demand that certain financial information must be included with the Council Tax bill for the City Council, the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and the Northumbria Police Authority in a prescribed format and this is set out on pages 12 to 14 of this booklet.

Other financial information has also been included to help show next year's spending on council services and the income it receives. In relation to the Council Tax, information is included on how it compares to other councils, and also sets out the main factors, such as the level of funding from the Government, the views of residents and some of the major spending issues, which have been considered in setting the budget for the council for 2008–2009.

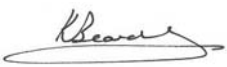
The council's accounts are subject to detailed scrutiny and audit by independent external auditors. In addition, the auditors also assess how well the council uses its resources and achieves value for money.

The council's accounts continue to receive an unqualified opinion by the council's external auditor.

With regard to the council's use of resources assessment, the council was awarded the top rating of 4 stars for the second consecutive year which places the council as the highest rated council in Tyne and Wear.

The Council Tax bill, included with this booklet, shows the amount you are required to pay for council services, and also includes the amounts to help fund both the Fire and Rescue and Police services.

There are various ways to pay Council Tax and these are explained in full on the back of the bill along with information on how you may be entitled to claim Council Tax Benefit, and thereby reduce the amount payable. The free phone number for all benefit enquiries is 0800 633 5853.



Keith Beardmore
City Treasurer

What you pay

Normally the person living in the property will be responsible for paying Council Tax if it is their main home and they are over 18 years of age.

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on the value of your home. More valuable properties pay more Council Tax.

Each home is placed in a valuation band based on what your home was valued at in 1991.

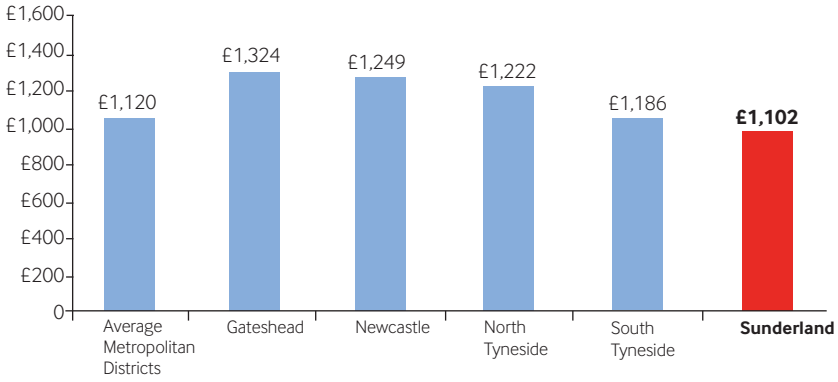
The table below sets out the Council Tax levels for 2008–2009 for Sunderland for each valuation band. Your Council Tax bill states the band that applies to your dwelling.

Valuation Band	City Council Tax level	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Tax level	Northumbria Police Tax level	Total Council Tax level
	£ P	£ P	£ P	£ P
A	759.25	47.74	52.18	859.17
B	885.79	55.70	60.88	1,002.37
C	1,012.33	63.65	69.57	1,145.55
D	1,138.87	71.61	78.27	1,288.75
E	1,391.95	87.52	95.67	1,575.14
F	1,645.03	103.44	113.06	1,861.53
G	1,898.12	119.35	130.45	2,147.92
H	2,277.74	143.22	156.54	2,577.50

How does Sunderland's Council Tax compare?

In recent years, Sunderland has consistently had the lowest Council Tax in the Tyne and Wear area and last year was the lowest in the North East region. This compares favourably with the average for Metropolitan District Councils throughout the country and reflects the prudent approach the council has taken in setting the Council Tax each year.

Band D Council Tax levels for 2007–2008 for the City Council (excluding Fire and Police)

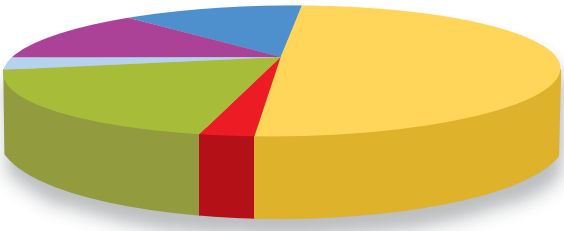


The indications are that for 2008–2009 the amount you pay in Council Tax will again be the lowest in Tyne and Wear and for the North East region.

Where the money will come from in 2008–2009

The council provides a wide range of services including schools, caring for the elderly, collecting rubbish and providing leisure facilities. The cost of running and maintaining the day-to-day services provided by the council is called Revenue Expenditure.

The Council Tax you pay forms only part of the funding to pay for these services. The chart below shows that over half of the money comes from the Government and the remainder from Council Tax and income received from users of council services.



- Council Tax £91.2m 12.8%
- All Other Income £93.1m 13.1%
- Capital Charges* £22.3m 3.1%
- Specific Government Grants £353.2m 49.7%
- Revenue Support Grant £18.5m 2.6%
- Redistributed Non Domestic Rates £132.9m 18.7%

Total Income £711.2m

* Capital charges amounting to £22.3m are included in gross expenditure and income in accordance with the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice. This is a notional charge that has no impact on the level of Council Tax.

Funding from the Government

Central Government funding has a major bearing on the budget which the council sets each year. Central Government provides support in the form of Revenue Support Grant and Sunderland's share of Business Rates (Non Domestic Rates) which are collected and pooled nationally, and then redistributed.

For 2008–2009 Central Government support to Sunderland will increase on a cash basis by 2.73%. The council's total budget requirement provides for increased spending of 3.89% in order to avoid the need to cut back on services and enable improvement in specific areas. The council has drawn on some of its available balances both to fund these improvements and to limit the increase in Council Tax.

How residents help set the budget

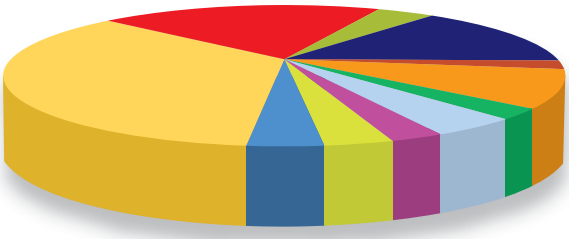
Consultation on the budget has taken place with stakeholders and Sunderland residents who make up the citizen's panel 'Community Spirit'.

The council regularly consults on a range of service and policy issues using two distinct approaches: surveys asking panel members to rank spending pressures in priority order and focus groups to ascertain more detailed views of residents.

The feedback from all consultations undertaken has been taken into account when setting the budget, with additional resources being invested in services in accordance with the priorities established through the consultation and where they were needed.

Where the money will be spent on services for 2008–2009

The chart below shows what the council plans to spend on its services in 2008–2009.



- Adult Services £110.3m 15.5%
- Children's Services £282.0m 39.7%
- Highways £28.9m 4.1%
- Planning and Economic Development £23.0m 3.2%
- Levies £18.1m 2.5%
- Recreation and Tourism £29.8m 4.2%
- Capital Financing £24.6m 3.5%
- General Fund Housing Services* £101.7m 14.3%
- Contingencies £14.4m 2.0%
- Other Services £61.3m 8.6%
- Refuse Collection, Disposal and Environmental Health £17.1m 2.4%

Total Revenue Expenditure: £711.2m

* This excludes council housing costs as this service has transferred to Gentoo (formerly Sunderland Housing Group) and mainly consists of Housing Benefit payments.

The major issues in setting the 2008–2009 budget

The budget for next year has been prepared taking account of increases in costs for pay awards and price increases including the impact of single status, specific contract price increases and in respect of utilities and increased costs of waste disposal, principally due to landfill tax.

During the budget process, the council has used balances of £4.049m together with efficiency savings of £2.466m in order to enable spending pressures to be addressed and to allow for some additional investment in high priority services whilst limiting the increase in the Council Tax.

The cost of services

In addition to services provided by the council, other bodies including the Northumbria Police Authority and the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority also provide services which the council must take into account. The table below gives a summary of the net cost of these services for 2008–2009 and how the Council Tax for Band D is built up.

Last Year 2007–2008 £m	Summary net cost of services	This Year 2008–2009 £m	Band D Council Tax £ p
87,740	City Council (including Levies)	91,151	1,138.87
5,568	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	5,731	71.61
5,941	Northumbria Police Authority	6,265	78.27
99,249		**103,147**	**1,288.75**

In addition Hetton Town Council levies a precept of £50,268. This is equivalent to a Band D charge of £12.39 but is only paid by the residents of the Parish of Hetton Town Council.

The budget information relating to the council, its Levying Authorities and its Precepting Authorities (the Northumbria Police Authority and the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority) must be included in this leaflet and further details can be found on pages 12 to 14.

Cost per head of population

The table below shows the total cost to each person in Sunderland of services provided by the council and Precepting Authorities after taking account of the income received from Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates.

	Total Budget Requirement £	Revenue Support Grant £	Business Rates £	Collection Fund Surplus £	Net Budget Requirement £
City Council	818.20	(72.38)	(431.27)	(1.78)	312.77
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	53.93	(3.94)	(28.32)	(0.16)	21.51
Northumbria Police Authority	200.12	(90.27)	(85.36)	(0.16)	24.33
Total	**1,072.25**	**(166.59)**	**(544.95)**	**(2.10)**	**358.61**

Budget information

Sunderland City Council budget information

Last Year 2007–2008				This Year 2008–2009		
Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	Net Expenditure £m		Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	Net Expenditure £m
278.8	224.3	54.5	Children's Services	282.0	223.1	58.9
105.8	47.9	57.9	Adult Services	110.3	44.4	65.9
27.1	9.4	17.7	Highways	28.9	10.7	18.2
21.7	14.0	7.7	Planning and Economic Development	23.0	14.7	8.3
28.5	3.1	25.4	Recreation and Tourism	29.8	2.8	27.0
3.3	0.7	2.6	Environmental Health	3.5	0.8	2.7
12.4	1.1	11.3	Refuse Collection and Disposal	13.6	1.2	12.4
100.2	96.6	3.6	Housing (Non Council Housing Costs)	101.7	97.9	3.8
58.5	40.7	17.8	Other Services	61.3	41.7	19.6
25.3	0.0	25.3	Capital Financing Costs	24.6	0.0	24.6
661.6	**437.8**	**223.8**		**678.7**	**437.3**	**241.4**
13.0	-	13.0	Contingencies - General	14.4	-	14.4
-	2.8	(2.8)	Interest on Balances	-	2.8	(2.8)
-	2.9	(2.9)	Transfer to/(from) Reserves and Balances	-	5.8	(5.8)
-	19.2	(19.2)	Capital Charges	-	22.2	(22.2)
674.6	**462.7**	**211.9**	**TOTAL EXPENDITURE**	**693.1**	**468.1**	**225.0**
			Levies			
		17.5	Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority			17.9
		0.1	Environment Agency - Flood Defence			0.2
		229.5	**TOTAL BUDGET REQUIREMENT**			**243.1**
		20.3	Less Revenue Support Grant			18.5
		121.0	Redistributed Non Domestic Rates			132.9
		0.5	Collection Fund Surplus			0.5
		87.7	**NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT**			**91.2**
		10,786	Total number of employees			10,698

Explanatory Notes

The Net Budget Requirement is £91.2m with planned gross expenditure at £693.1m (£711.2m including levies) and gross income of £468.1m. The net increase in the total budget requirement is £13.6m, details of which are shown in the table opposite.

Borrowing liabilities outstanding at 31st March 2007 were £200.2m (of which £19.5m is on behalf of other public bodies such as the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority).

	£m
Inflation and increased costs	6.8
Increase in levies	0.5
Change in service levels	21.9
Increase in other income	(0.9)
Increase in specific government grants	(9.4)
Change in use of reserves	(5.4)
Efficiency savings	(2.4)
Change in use of balances	2.5
	13.6

Precepts and levies – Budget information

Your Council Tax bill is made up of a number of elements besides the council's budget requirement. These include levies and precepts that the council is legally required to collect on behalf of other organisations. For Sunderland City Council these organisations are:

Levying Authorities

Environment Agency	Last Year 2007–2008			This Year 2008–2009		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Flood Defence	11.8	10.2	1.6	9.2	7.5	1.7
Transfer to / (from) reserves			(0.3)			(0.2)
Levy			**1.3**			**1.5**

Change in levy (Total Budget Requirement) between years is attributable to:	**£m**
Change in inflation and levels of service	0.1
Use of reserves	0.1
	0.2

Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority	Last Year 2007–2008			This Year 2008–2009		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Tyne Tunnels	8.2	13.6	(5.4)	5.5	15.3	(9.8)
PTA	4.3	0.0	4.3	4.3	0.7	3.6
Grant to Nexus	95.8	0.0	95.8	99.9	0.0	99.9
	108.3	**13.6**	**94.7**	**109.7**	**16.0**	**93.7**
Transfer to Reserves			2.5			9.9
Total Budget Requirement			**97.2**			**103.6**
Less Rail Grants and Miscellaneous Grants			29.8			34.2
PTA Levy			**67.4**			**69.4**

Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:	**£m**
Reductions	(0.9)
Inflation and other cost pressures	0.3
Contribution to reserves	4.7
Increase in income	(2.4)
Increase in Grant to Nexus	4.7
	6.4

Precepting Authorities

Northumbria Police Authority	Last Year 2007–2008			This Year 2008–2009		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Police General	313.6	47.5	266.1	323.7	49.4	274.3
Contingencies			4.0			3.5
Total Budget Requirement			**270.1**			**277.8**
Less:						
Police Grant			107.6			108.8
Use of Balances			0.0			0.0
Total Net Police Expenditure			**162.5**			**169.0**
Less Revenue Support Grant			18.7			16.5
Business Rates			111.7			118.5
Collection Fund Surplus			0.2			0.2
Net Budget Requirement			**31.9**			**33.8**

Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:	**£m**
Inflation and other changes	5.0
Variation in quantity / quality of service	2.8
Change in other income	(0.1)
	7.7

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	Last Year 2007–2008			This Year 2008–2009		
	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m	Gross Cost £m	Gross Income £m	Net Cost £m
Fire Service	61.5	6.7	54.8	65.0	7.8	57.2
Emergency Planning	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0
	62.0	**7.2**	**54.8**	**65.5**	**8.3**	**57.2**
Contingencies			2.0			0.9
Use of Balances			(0.3)			0.0
Total Budget Requirement			**56.5**			**58.1**
Less Revenue Support Grant			4.9			4.2
Business Rates			29.0			30.5
Collection Fund Surplus			0.2			0.2
Net Budget Requirement			**22.4**			**23.2**

Change in Total Budget Requirement between years is attributable to:	**£m**
Inflation and other changes	1.3
Increase in pension costs	0.3
	1.6

Sunderland City Council

Need a hand paying your rent?

One free phone call is all it takes to find out if you can save money on your rent.

We could take the weight off your shoulders...
Call free on **0800 633 5853**

IT'S YOUR SUNDERLAND...

...you **can** influence the decisions that affect you.

VOTE

Make sure you're on the electoral register

FILL IN A SURVEY

Lots of organisations ask for feedback on their services

JOIN IN

Every year the City Council invites residents to join a citizen's panel to give their opinions

TALK

to your local councillor

CONTACT

the City Council direct

DISCUSS

Let local organisations know your views by attending their meetings

To find out more about how you can have your say telephone 0191 520 5555 or go to www.sunderland.gov.uk/influence

Sunderland City Council

If you require copies of this booklet in an alternative format or language please contact 0191 520 5555.

This booklet is printed using vegetable-based inks on 100% recycled paper containing 80% post-consumer waste. Please recycle in your Kerb-it box or at your nearest paper bank. For more information on kerbside collections or details of your nearest paper recycling facility visit www.sunderland.gov.uk/recycling.

ce14393