



St. Helens
Council

St Helens Council Annual Report 2018/19





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Introduction

Welcome to the St Helens Council Annual Report for 2018/19.

This report looks back over the financial year up to April 2019 and provides a summary of the work of St Helens Council during the period; what we have achieved, how we have managed the funding we received, and our priorities looking forward. I became Leader in May 2019, after the period covered by this review, so I thank the previous Leader Councillor Derek Long, relevant Cabinet Members and officers for their work during 2018/19.

The report shows that progress has been made in many areas in what continues to be uncertain and testing times for local government, with reduced budgets, uncertainty about the financial future, and significantly growing demand for the vital local services we provide.

One of our key responsibilities, and one of the most challenging, is to improve the quality of service provided for children and young people in the borough. Following the findings of an Ofsted Focused Visit of services within Children's Social Care we acted quickly, engaging national, regional and local agencies to implement a programme of improvement. This led to multi-million-pound investment and a wholesale review of structures, helping to start us on the journey of improving services for our most vulnerable children and young people.

2018/19 also saw a great deal of work undertaken at the wider organisational level. Feedback following our participation in a Local Government Association Peer Review provided a valuable external perspective on our relative strengths and areas for improvement, allowing us to reflect, refocus, and begin to develop a 'One Council' programme of modernisation. Over the coming year, as we implement the programme, we will renew our commitment to placing residents at the heart of all we do, and we will be focused on providing modern, effective, value for money services.

I would like to thank all our fantastic Council staff and our wider partners for their dedication and hard work over the year which has helped to achieve the many successes outlined in this report, and I look forward to our ongoing future collaboration.

Finally, as we look back over the year it is only fitting that we remember our former Chief Executive of 24 years Carole Hudson OBE who sadly passed away in November 2018. Carole was a wonderful servant and ambassador for both the Council and St Helens, and she is very much missed.

Councillor David Baines



Leader - St Helens Council



St Helens Council in Brief

Our Council is one of the six local Merseyside authorities that make up the Liverpool City Region. Situated strategically at the heart of the North West and central to the 'Northern Powerhouse', the borough also enjoys strong connections to Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire.

We provide the full range of local authority services to residents, businesses, schools and visitors to the borough, either directly or through commissioning or partnership arrangements.

The services delivered include a broad range of people-based services, such as care services for older people, vulnerable adults and people with disabilities, children's centres and early year's services, school support and improvement, support for children with special educational needs, fostering and adoption services, public health services, benefits administration, housing and homelessness support and libraries and leisure services. We also deliver many 'place' based services such as waste and recycling, street cleansing, licensing, planning and development permissions, environmental health and trading standards, maintenance of highways, footpaths, parks and open spaces, and many more.

Our Council is governed by 48 ward Councillors representing 16 electoral wards across the borough. At Full Council, all Councillors meet to debate and agree decisions on the Council's budget and policies. The Council is led by a Leader and supported by a Cabinet, with each Cabinet Member taking responsibility for a portfolio of Council functions and service areas. In addition, a series of committees, appointed by Full Council, undertake specific functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet. A Scrutiny Commission and series of dedicated Scrutiny Panels hold Cabinet to account by examining the overall performance of the Council and the decisions and actions taken by the Cabinet.

Our Council is managed by the Chief Executive and a senior management team of an Interim Assistant Chief Executive and three Strategic Directors covering three Departments.

The People's Services Department provides a broad range of statutory and non-statutory services for children, young people and adults as outlined above.

The Place Services Department provides a wide range of place-based services listed above, including Housing and Homelessness support as well as Libraries and Leisure services.

The Corporate Services Department provides a series of statutory functions and support services that add value and enable the effective running of the Council.

For further information on the Council's Political and Management structure please visit our website or see our Council Plan 2018/20.

For a detailed picture of St Helens and a wide range of facts and figures about its population and communities please visit our local information site info4St.Helens

info4St.Helens



RAINHILL LIBRARY HAS A GREAT TEAM WHO REALLY HELPED US SET UP OUR BOOK CLUB

WELL DONE ST HELENS COUNCIL FOR A VIRTUALLY RUBBISH FREE AREA!



THE COMMUNITY SPORT INACTIVITY SESSIONS ARE A PLEASURE TO ATTEND. THE INSTRUCTORS ARE FANTASTIC - SUPPORTIVE AND FUNNY. TO BE ABLE TO GO TO A CLASS AND NOT BE JUDGED ON YOUR SIZE OR FITNESS IS REFRESHING AND IT'S NICE TO SEE ALL DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS ATTENDING. THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE CONFIDENCE TO GET BACK INTO EXERCISING

A CARING COUNCIL

We continue to look at the development and delivery of our services through the eyes of our residents and customers and recognise the importance of improving the customer experience.

By listening and learning we aim to continually improve and provide the highest standards of service possible.

We always welcome feedback through our Contact Centre: contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk

Here is a small selection of the positive feedback we received during 2018/19:

PLEASE PASS ON MY SINCERE THANKS TO EVERYONE IN YOUR TEAM WHO HELP KEEP TAYLOR PARK SO NICE AND CLEAN, WITHOUT THEIR EFFORTS, THE PARK WOULD BE A RIGHT OLD MESS



RECENTLY THE STREET LIGHTS HAVE BEEN UPGRADED TO LEDS WHERE I LIVE - I WANT TO GIVE GOOD FEED-BACK WHERE IT'S DUE - THE LIGHTING QUALITY IS GREATLY IMPROVED

A HUGE THANK YOU TO THE COUNCIL TAX DEPARTMENT. AFTER UNDERGOING SOME AWFUL HEALTH ISSUES, THANKS TO THE SERVICE MY BILL IS NOW SORTED AND I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER HAVING SPOKEN TO STAFF AND UNTANGLED MY WEB OF UPSETS

PLEASE FORWARD OUR GRATITUDE TO THE LINE MANAGERS OF THE EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM. THEY EPITOMISE THE ETHOS OF MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION AND THEIR ASSISTANCE WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED. DETECTIVE INSPECTOR - MERSEYSIDE POLICE



TELEPHONED TO REQUEST REPLACEMENT RECYCLING BAGS AND BLACK BOX AS OURS WENT MISSING LAST WEEK.

THE LADY WHO DEALT WITH MY CALL WAS HELPFUL, FRIENDLY AND DEALT WITH MY PROBLEM REALLY EFFICIENTLY. EXCELLENT SERVICE 10/10



TO ALL THE WONDERFUL STAFF AT THE KERSHAW CENTRE THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR LOOKING AFTER MY MUM SO WELL - SHE TOLD ME MANY TIMES HOW LOVELY YOU ALL WERE TO HER. IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES OF CUTS AND UNCERTAINTY KEEP DOING WHAT YOU ARE DOING - IT IS SO VERY MUCH APPRECIATED

TO ALL THE CARERS ON THE REABLEMENT SERVICE THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL THE HELP AND SUPPORT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME OVER THE PAST 8 WEEKS - YOU HAVE BEEN AMAZING, SO KIND AND CARING

Making Things Happen

Delivering our priorities in 2018/19

Looking back, 2018/19 was a testing year full of challenge and change. However, our response has been positive and focussed. By continuing to collaborate closely with our partners and concentrating on what

matters most, we have made good progress against our 3 key objectives. The 150th anniversary of our borough also provided for a year of celebration, creating many great memories of which we can be rightly proud.



IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES

RECOGNISING AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT ON-GOING CHALLENGE IN CHILDREN'S AND ADULTS SOCIAL CARE, **WE HAVE CONTINUED TO ENSURE SUPPORT TO THE MOST VULNERABLE** IS OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. A NUMBER OF ACHIEVEMENTS ARE HELPING BRING POSITIVE CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT TO THE LIVES OF LOCAL PEOPLE:

- New ways of working through our award-winning 'St Helens Cares' are producing very positive results. We developed 'Contact Cares' a single point of contact for all care and support services in the borough and introduced a single care record allowing professionals to better access people's information to improve the care they receive.
- Three of our Adult Social Care Services - the Supported Living Service, the Reablement Service and Brookfield Support Centre - all received strong praise and a rating of 'Good' following inspection by the Care Quality Commission during the year.
- Decisive action was taken following identification of areas of significant weakness in our services for children in need. A Children's Improvement Board was set up to oversee an improvement plan.
- We created a new leadership team and provided significant additional investment to increase social work capacity to better support our vulnerable children.
- We launched a new Early Help strategy to ensure vulnerable families get the support they need to avert a point of crisis and avoid formal social care involvement. We also approved policies providing greater financial assistance to our local care leavers and foster carers.
- We developed a new School Effectiveness Strategy to support local schools to raise standards of education and the attainment of children and young people.
- We produced a prevention plan to tackle self-harm and suicide and strengthen the support available to children, young people and families. Media campaigns and events raised awareness and our Stay Alive app was launched to support people in crisis.

CREATING A BETTER PLACE

WE CONTINUED TO WORK WITH A WIDE RANGE PARTNERS TO PROMOTE OUR AMBITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND MAKE ST HELENS A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL. **SECURING GREATER INVESTMENT AND JOBS IN ST HELENS WILL BRING GREATER OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY FOR LOCAL PEOPLE, WHILST PROVIDING THE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE FUTURE COST OF DELIVERING VITAL PUBLIC SERVICES.**

ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- St Helens recorded the second highest growth in jobs in the North with an additional 4,000 employee jobs created. The rate of employment increased by nearly 3% during the year and is now higher than the North West average.
- Progress continued on the Town Centre redevelopment, including feasibility planning around a new Arts and Cultural centre. Plans were also drawn up to support the regeneration of our district centres.
- Good progress was made on improving our road infrastructure, with several major road engineering schemes including Windle Island, the Linkway and Elton Head roundabout either completed or nearly completed.
- Progress on developing Parkside into a strategic employment site continued with £23.8 million of funding secured through the Liverpool City Region for a link road.
- We established a year-long programme of events to mark the Liverpool City Region Year of the Environment 2019 and engage the community in making St Helens a greener and more sustainable place.
- Our programme of events to celebrate St Helens 150th anniversary as a borough was successfully delivered and St Helens was recognised as the 2018 Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture.



MODERNISING & IMPROVING THE WAY WE WORK

OVER THE COURSE OF 2018/19, WE CONTINUED TO DELIVER A PROGRAMME OF ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND PURSUE OUR **ASPIRATIONS OF BECOMING A THOROUGHLY MODERN AND EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION**, WHILST CONTINUING TO MEET ALL STATUTORY AND LEGAL DUTIES.

- Voluntary participation in a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review provided a valuable external perspective on the Council's relative strengths and areas for improvement, allowing us to produce our 'One Council' modernisation programme.
- We developed a new Organisational Development and People Strategy and Internal Communication Plan to empower and develop our workforce and improve staff engagement and communications.
- Our IT system modernisation programme continued, with much of the work focussed on improving the experience of our residents and customers when communicating with us around access to services and their delivery.
- Strong financial management practice continued with our external auditors concluding that the Council continued to offer value for money in the use of its resources. During the year we successfully delivered most of our identified savings.
- Our continued participation in the Liverpool City Region Business Rates Retention Pilot resulted in significant business rate gains, which enabled us to support our priority of improving children's services.





APRIL 2018

An awards presentation recognised 51 Healthy Living volunteers who are responsible for encouraging thousands of residents to adopt a healthier and more active lifestyle



MAY 2018

The 'Beating the Bounds 2018' challenge to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St Helens as a borough, saw participants undertaking a 42 mile sponsored walk around the borough boundary in aid of the local MIND charity



JUNE 2018

'St Helens Cares' won the 'Care and Health Integration' category at the Municipal Journal Achievement Awards



JULY 2018

Abbeyford Children's Home celebrated an 'outstanding' Ofsted report which praised the respite centre for the tremendous progress children make during their stays and the excellent quality of care provided by staff

Rolling back the year...
A SMALL SELECTION OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018/19



AUGUST 2018

St Helens welcomed the internationally renowned Lost Castles project with the building of the iconic 10th century Old Castle in Stuttgart a special tribute to 70 years of successful twinning with the city



SEPTEMBER 2018

The silent soldier campaign saw 24 silent Tommy soldiers installed across the borough to commemorate British and Commonwealth soldiers who served in the First World War



OCTOBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7						
14						
21						
28						

St Helens Libraries new digital Service BorrowBox was launched providing local library members round the clock access to thousands of ebooks



NOVEMBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4						
11						
18						
25						

Local businesses, social enterprises, and schools gathered for the inaugural Pride of St Helens Business Awards to celebrate and raise the profile of the borough's hardworking, innovative and enterprising business community



DECEMBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2						
9						
16						
23						

Council staff, children and Young people, and local businesses supported a charitable campaign which in 3 weeks raised over £7,000 and donated hundreds of gifts used to create festive hampers for local young people who had recently left care



JANUARY 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
13						
20						
27						

The borough was selected as a host venue for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup an achievement that will bring strong economic and community benefits



FEBRUARY 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3						
10						
17						
24						

The new and improved £19 million Newton-le-Willows station interchange was officially opened, with passengers benefitting from step free access to platforms, a bus interchange, and a new 400-space car park



MARCH 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3						
10						
17						
24						

A successful 18-month pilot saw funding for the PAUSE team renewed. The project aims to support women who have had multiple children taken into care and safely reduce the number of looked after children in St Helens

some further successes in 2018/19

FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE 2018/19

AREAS SHOWING POSITIVE PERFORMANCE



200,000 more visits to the Council's Sports and Leisure Centres, plus 58,000 attendees at Sports Development team supported events, courses and activities



Fewer delays in discharge from hospital each month compared to the regional average, consistently one of the top performing Councils in the North West



A further reduction in the numbers of people aged 65 and over admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care



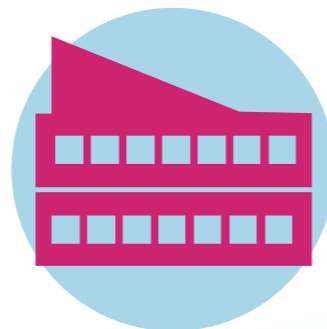
A total of 775 additional new homes built over the past year, with 116 long-term empty properties brought back into use or demolished as a direct result of local authority action



Another year of continued reductions in Green House Gas emissions, 19% down on the previous year



The number of people in employment rose above the regional average, with 74.1% of adults aged 16-64 working



Nearly 11,000m² of new build employment floor space completed during the year



Continued strong support for people with learning disabilities with 97% of adults in settled accommodation, significantly above regional and national averages



A continued reduction in the number of people aged 65+ admitted to A&E for falls



A clean and tidy place with 95% of land and highways assessed as having litter at an acceptable level



666 households assisted to reduce fuel poverty, a 33% increase on the previous year



Further information on performance can be found [here](#)





AREAS REQUIRING FURTHER IMPROVEMENT



Intensive work will continue to ensure children and young people's safeguarding and social care outcomes are improved



Working with schools, strong improvement in pupil attainment at all key stages is required, particularly at GCSE where results fall behind regional and national averages



Greater recycling of household waste is needed to meet targets and improve the environment



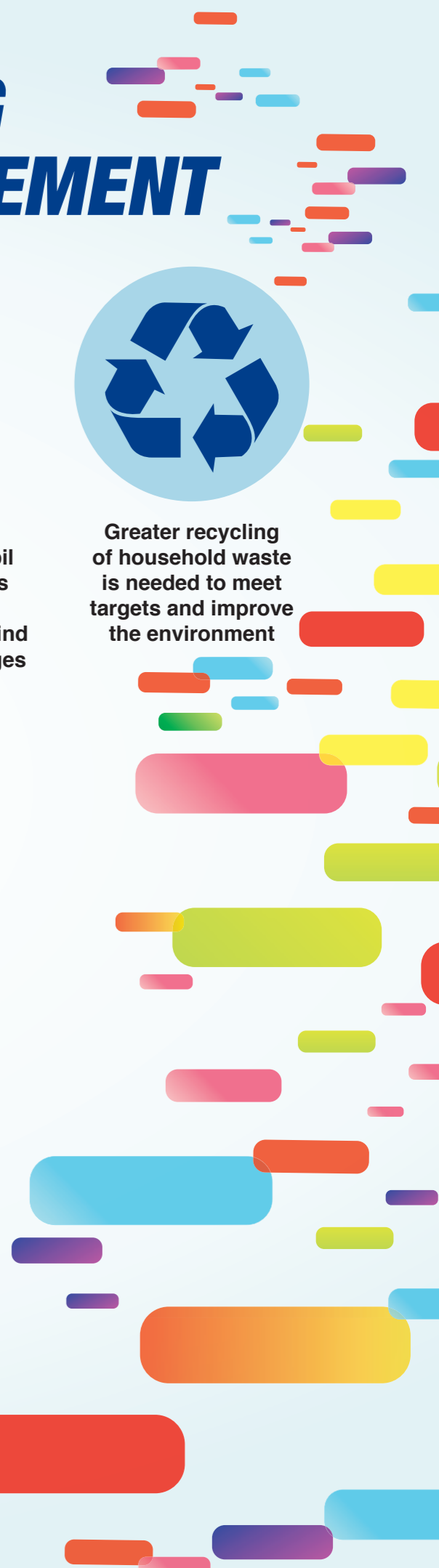
Wide health inequalities still persist in the borough, with health indicators - including for obesity, teenage pregnancy, use of alcohol, suicide and self-harm - lagging behind national and regional comparators



Reducing levels of domestic abuse and its impact on families and children remains a priority for action



Further work to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured through road traffic accidents



LOOKING *AHEAD*

Looking ahead into **2019/20** and beyond although there is much to be done, we are clear about the path we will take and remain committed to delivering an ambitious programme of modernisation within the Council and positive transformation across St Helens.

Key programmes of work include:

COUNCIL

Delivery of our One Council modernisation programme and the individual workstreams focussed on improving the following 8 areas:



Improving the customer experience



Improving the way we communicate with residents



Ensuring the effectiveness of our financial management



Making the best use of digital technology



Effectively managing and investing in our physical and land assets



Ensuring the effectiveness of our governance processes



Developing and supporting our workforce



Ensuring the effectiveness of performance management and data analysis

PEOPLE

- Deliver our Children's Improvement Plan and Early Help Strategy to transform children's social care services to ensure greater numbers of children and families receive early help, all children are adequately protected and safe from harm; numbers of looked after children are safely reduced and outcomes for care leavers are much improved.
- Develop St Helens Cares and the further integration of health and care services to meet the challenges of cost and demand and ensure greater numbers of people are supported to stay well for longer in their own community.
- Implement our School Effectiveness Strategy Continue to work with schools across the borough to improve educational outcomes for children and young people across all key stages and reduce the gap between vulnerable pupils and their peers.
- Work across Council departments and with partners to deliver the People's Board's new 3-year priorities of addressing domestic abuse, children and young people's confidence and resilience, adult mental health and cancer.



PLACE

- Gain approval for a new Local Plan to establish the borough's future planning priorities, adopting a 'Brownfield First' approach for housing, employment and retail site allocation.
- Develop a programme to support adults in work to develop their skills, enabling them to progress their careers and earnings and take advantage of the full range of opportunities presented by economic growth in St Helens.
- Progress a series of projects to increase sustainable economic growth and employment across St Helens including our strategies to rejuvenate St Helens Town Centre and local district centres, and the delivery of key employment sites including Parkside.
- Develop a revised community safety strategy to address issues of crime and disorder and make our communities safer places.

Summary of our Finances

Over the course of 2018/19 the Council continued to face significant financial pressures and risks, and saw a reduction in its general grant of £4.2m. However, the Council's strong financial management has allowed for the continued delivery of effective value for money services.

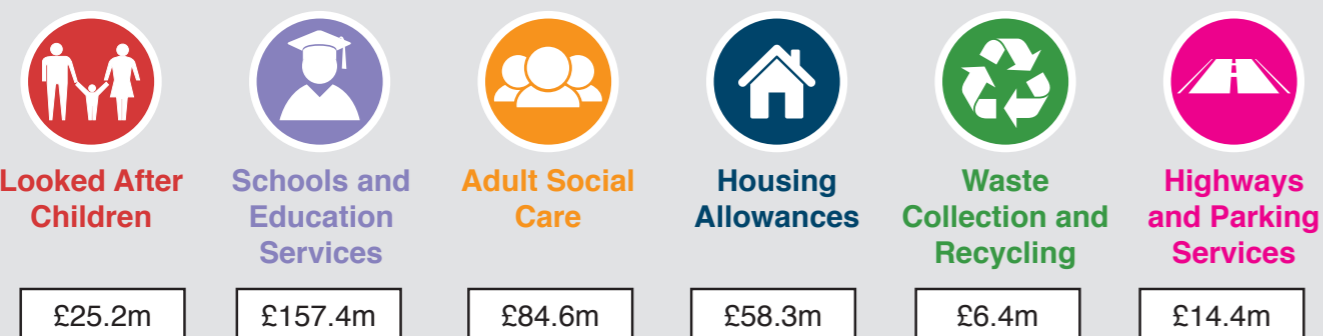
The Council continued to participate in the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rate Retention Pilot, which allowed the Council to retain 99% of its collectable Business Rates. This model of funding was first introduced in 2017/18 and it is subject to future national review.

Our Spending in 2018/19

During 2018/19 Council gross spend on delivering services was £436m; this was funded from council tax, retained business rates, fees and charges, general government grants and other specific grants and contributions.

	Gross Spend £000	Gross Income £000	Net Spend £000
People's Services Department (includes Children's and Adult Social Care, Schools, and Public Health Services)	277,534	(184,676)	92,858
Place Services Department (includes Planning, Economic Regeneration, Highways, Housing, Parks, Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities, Libraries, Waste Collection, Recycling, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Cemeteries and Crematorium)	81,523	(26,569)	54,954
Corporate Services Department (includes Central Support Services and Rent Allowances)	77,372	(62,084)	15,288
Net Cost of Services	436,429	(273,329)	163,100

Key Spending Areas



Where the money came from 2018/19





Capital Spending

During 2018/19 the Council spent £26.4m investing in the purchase, construction and enhancement of fixed assets and infrastructure, of which £17.3m was spent on highway and transportation schemes. This figure includes spend in year of £5.6m towards the £7.2m improvement works at Windle Island Junction. The total capital spend was financed from government grants and contributions, borrowing, capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets and contributions from revenue.

Capital Assets

At 31st March 2019 the Council owned capital assets in relation to land, buildings, infrastructure, vehicles, plant, furniture, equipment and heritage assets to a value of £476m.

Reserves and Balances

At the 31st March 2019 the Council held useable reserves of £87.6m (excluding schools). This includes general balances of £17.8m and other balances of £39.7m are set aside to promote specific projects, including ensuring the sustainability of Children's Services and the safety of children, developments to support economic growth, investment and employment opportunities, and other strategic priorities. Reserves of £30.1m were held to support future capital investment.



St. Helens Council

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