

# Your Council

Working for Swindon

2020  
2021



**SWINDON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Introduction

Welcome to this year's council tax booklet which gives an overview of where the Council's money comes from and how it is used to serve Swindon and the borough's 220,000+ residents.

The figures opposite give a sense of the scale and breadth of council-delivered services.

Read on to find out how our efforts are paying off to ensure that Swindon continues to thrive and benefit from well-managed growth, investment and regeneration. This includes attracting millions of pounds of government funding and commercial investment in new homes, schools and roads.

We are proud that Ofsted rated our Children's Services as 'Good' last year. An ever-increasing level of demand for services to support our vulnerable children and adult social care means more of our budget is spent in these areas, accounting for over 80% of the Council's budget this coming year. We also have to meet the ongoing challenge of providing our services with less money which is why you will see your council tax bill going up this year.

In the following pages you can find out about the progress made by the Council last year towards delivering what we said we would back in 2015. I'd welcome your feedback on this booklet via this online survey: [smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ctaxbooklet](https://smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ctaxbooklet)

This booklet costs 14p per household to produce. Switch to digital bills today to reduce that cost. Visit [swindon.gov.uk/annualreport](https://swindon.gov.uk/annualreport) to find out more.

Email [customerservices@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@swindon.gov.uk) if you require this booklet in a different format.



Councillor  
David Renard  
Leader of the Council

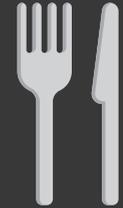
## A flavour of what we delivered last year



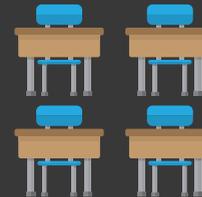
**Over 8 million**  
waste and recycling  
collections



**469** hours a week  
spent keeping the  
town centre, car parks  
and public toilets clean



**580** restaurants and  
cafés were inspected  
for good hygiene



**300** new school  
places created



Grittied over **7,000**  
miles of road



**5,543** school  
admissions managed



**1,320** planning  
applications  
determined



Fixed **6,257** potholes  
and damaged  
patches in roads  
and footpaths



Issued **1,804**  
licences  
for taxis

# Overview of the Council's budget

Our net budget for 2020/21 is £149.1m. This is funded by council taxpayers, a share of the business rates collected locally and government grants.

We use our budget to provide hundreds of services to the residents of the borough, some of which are seen daily, such as waste collections and road maintenance. Other services often go unseen, such as providing foster carers for children in crisis, caring for older people, carrying out food hygiene inspections and supporting rough sleepers.

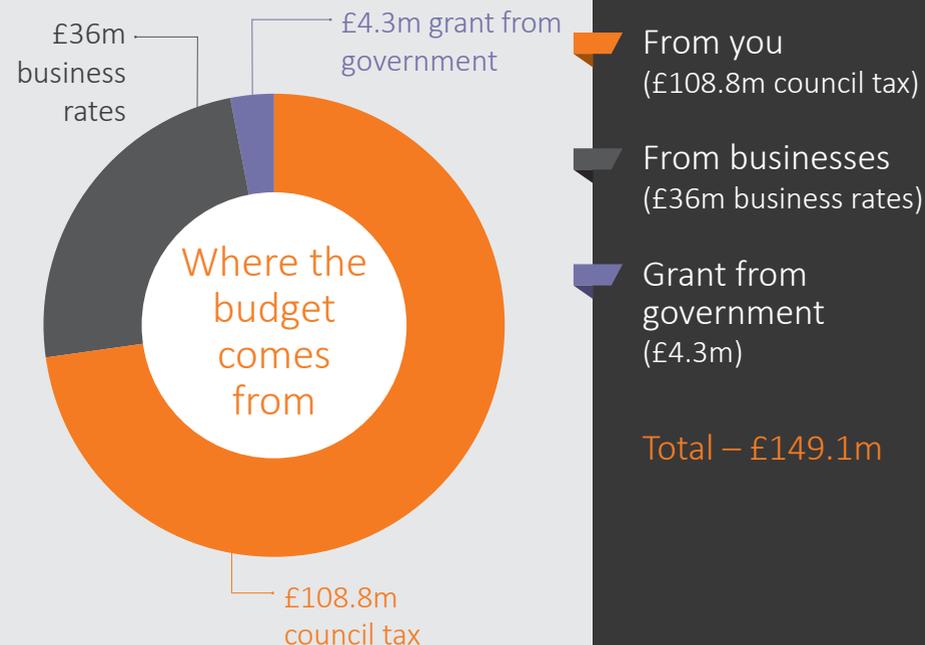
Over 80% of the budget this year will be used to help vulnerable adults and children. However, the demand for these statutory services continues to increase meaning a lot less can be spent on many services residents are used to.

In recent years the amount of money we get from government hasn't kept pace with demand and the rising cost of services. In recognition of the demand pressures facing local authorities, the Government has given councils an additional social care grant for 2020/21 and allowed councils to raise extra council tax through the adult social care precept you will see on your bill.

To keep our budget balanced, which is required by law, over the last two years we have saved £30m. We will have to save a further £11.3m in 2020/21 to keep our budget balanced.

This year's average council tax has increased by 3.99%. This includes a rise of 1.99% for general funds (which can be spent on any service) and 2% which can only be spent on adult social care.

For more detailed information on your bill please visit: [swindon.gov.uk/annualreport](http://swindon.gov.uk/annualreport)



# Budget Q&A – helping you understand local government finance

Have you ever wondered why we spend money on certain things and not others?

Local government finance can be complicated but we want to be as transparent as possible.

We asked local people what they wanted to know and here are the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions.

## Got a question about our budget?

Drop us an email at:  
[communications@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:communications@swindon.gov.uk)

## Why do you keep building more houses in the borough?

Swindon needs to build 20,450 new homes by 2036 to meet the demand of a growing population. House building targets are set by central government and we decide which sites are available to developers to build new homes. We make sure the right infrastructure is in place first. For example in Wichelstowe, we have led on making sure new roads and community amenities are in place to support thousands of new homes.

## Why don't you spend more repairing roads?

Funding for roads is partially given to us by government, while the rest comes from the money we have to allocate across all of our services. This means our spending on roads is limited. We maintain 500 miles of road and have just under £3m to spend repairing them in 2020/21. Councillors have also agreed to spend an extra £100k on repairing potholes.

## How can you afford to spend millions on some projects but then reduce other services?

The money we have to spend is split into two main pots which have very different rules on how they can be used:

### Capital funding

Many of our big projects receive external funding through grants, which we work to obtain from the government. This money is often paid as a one-off sum and can only be used on specific schemes. It cannot be used for other services. If we did not bid for this type of funding we would be unable to make these big improvements to Swindon.

### Revenue funding

Our day-to-day spending on other services comes from a separate pot of money. This is money raised from council tax, other charges (such as planning applications and garden waste collections) and government grants.

## Why don't you spend more money in my local area?

Many of the services we provide are required by law, such as caring for vulnerable adults and children which takes up over 80% of our budget. The rest of our budget is then spent on a range of different services which are either prioritised by councillors based on need or are split evenly across the borough, like waste collections. If you identify a priority in your area you can speak to your local councillor.

## Why aren't you investing more in the town centre?

When it comes to the town centre, we play an important role in bidding for government funding to improve local infrastructure and bringing local landowners together to get large investment projects underway. We help to facilitate and attract new investment into the town centre such as the new Zurich office block, while also working to keep it clean, safe and tidy to make it a welcoming place for people to visit.

# How you help change the lives of those most in need

When you pay your council tax, you are funding services which support vulnerable people across the town including the elderly, people with disabilities and children without families.

Without these vital safeguarding services, which we are required to provide by law, many adults and children would not be able to live their lives independently in a supportive environment.

Only a relatively small proportion of people need these services but they are incredibly important for those who depend on them. In 2019, your council tax helped to provide:



# 815

Children with additional needs given support and transport to school throughout the year.

# 322

Children, who have either lost or can no longer live with their parents, placed with foster families.

# 988

Older people given daily help to live independently at home.



# 1,601

People supported to return home from hospital.

# 2,158

Children and young people supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan to support their special educational needs.

# 888

Residential or nursing care placements provided for adults who are too vulnerable to live by themselves.

# Taking action to improve our environment

As your local council, we play a role in supporting central government to tackle some of the important environmental issues that affect us all today.

This includes encouraging local businesses and residents to change behaviour, and making sure the Council is as environmentally friendly as possible.

We have also committed to making the Council and all of its assets carbon neutral by 2030 which will be an important step in improving our environment.

On this page you will find some examples of how we are trying to improve Swindon's environment.



## Using solar energy to power the borough

Over the past five years we have encouraged investment in solar power across the borough.

We set ourselves a target to produce enough renewable energy every year to power the equivalent of every home in the borough. We are up to 97.5% of that target.

## Making our fleet sustainable

We are looking to replace our fleet of vehicles with sustainable alternatives. We've already brought in the first four electric vehicles to help reduce our carbon footprint.



## Powering our facilities through renewable energy

Our solar farm at Barnfield provides 60% of the energy needs of our waste processing plant, at Cheney Manor, which turns the borough's non-recyclable waste into an alternative to fossil fuels.



## Electric charging points as standard

We are looking to introduce a requirement for electric vehicle charging points to be installed as part of all new residential developments to help encourage electric vehicle use.



## Using LED lighting to save energy

We're replacing approximately 28,000 street lights which will reduce electricity usage by around 65%, saving us almost £800k per year.



# Regenerating our town centre

Our role in improving the town centre is to use land we own to encourage redevelopment, attract external investment for new development and influence how other landowners use town centre property.

Here are some of the ways we're doing that:

Artist's impression of Zurich's new office



## Major new office space

Leading employer Zurich is working with us to build a new state-of-the-art office in Swindon's town centre. This is part of a major development of the site opposite Debenhams.

## Turning Fleming Way into a transport hub

We're putting together a business case to turn Fleming Way into a town centre hub for national and local bus services, replacing the old bus station. We are in the next stage of bidding for a £25m grant and expect to hear later this year if we have secured this.

## A new theatre, art gallery and museum

We are proposing to build a new cultural quarter in the town centre to attract investment and provide Swindon with a top class cultural offer. Proposals include redeveloping the Wyvern Theatre and creating a new museum and art gallery. We're working with a range of experts, local businesses and community groups to explore how we can progress these plans.



Artist's impression of Fleming Way

## Bringing more people to the town centre

We have agreed a £17m development of the former Aspen House site, opposite The Savoy pub in Regent Street. It will be turned into a Premier Inn hotel, along with a steakhouse restaurant, to help bring this area of the town centre back into use.



# Protecting Swindon's heritage

We care about Swindon's rich heritage so we are working with landowners and investors to protect key heritage buildings. The Swindon Heritage Action Zone is bringing additional funding and expertise from Historic England to help us deliver these projects.

## Carriage Works

Over £6m is being invested into the former GWR Carriage Works, offering a modern office space for start-up businesses. The Royal Agricultural University will open a Cultural Heritage Institute there later this year.

## Health Hydro

We are investing £1.5m to upgrade the iconic Health Hydro on Milton Road.

## Corn Exchange

While we don't own the Locarno building, we have been in conversation with the owner over a number of years regarding the future of this Old Town landmark.

## Mechanics' Institute

We are bringing together local groups and heritage specialists to survey the building and work out how it can be brought back to life.



Mechanics' Institute  
Credit: Local Studies (Swindon Libraries)

# Keeping Swindon moving

## Wichelstowe tunnel

A tunnel is being built underneath the M4 to provide access to the housing development at Wichelstowe and to relieve traffic elsewhere. The tunnel, known as the Wichelstowe Southern Access, has been allocated £22.9m from the government.

## Improving Mead Way

Improvements will be made to increase capacity on Mead Way to reduce congestion and improve journey times in the local area.

## New Moonrakers junction

This summer, we will be making improvements to Moonrakers junction to reduce congestion following a public consultation last year.

To stay up-to-date with all of our road improvement schemes, sign up to Highways News at: [swindon.gov.uk/newsletter](http://swindon.gov.uk/newsletter)



# New Eastern Villages

The New Eastern Villages (NEV) development will see 8,000 homes built to the east of the A419, along with a new health centre, schools and leisure facilities.

We are investing £72.5m of government and developer funding to upgrade junctions in the surrounding areas to allow the development to go ahead.

This will increase the capacity of these junctions for the benefit of current and new residents.

## Stay up-to-date on progress

Work will begin this year to upgrade several junctions and you can stay up-to-date by signing up to our dedicated newsletter at: [swindon.gov.uk/nev](http://swindon.gov.uk/nev)

## White Hart junction

Improvements to this key gateway into Swindon include increasing the number of lanes on the roundabout and improving slip roads. We have received £29m of government and developer funding for this scheme.

## Piccadilly roundabout

Capacity will be increased at Piccadilly roundabout, on Dorcan Way, by the Messenger pub. Changes include wider roads on the approaches and improved road markings.

## Gablecross roundabout

This improvement scheme will involve making the roundabout larger and adding traffic signals to provide sufficient capacity to cope with existing and new demand. This scheme will receive £8m of investment from government and developer funding.

## A new link road

A proposed single carriageway road known as the Southern Connector Road would provide a sustainable link for about one third of the NEV residents. It will provide safe cycling, walking, road and public transport links to Swindon both for the NEV and nearby communities.

## Nythe Road junction

Oxford Road, between Greenbridge and White Hart roundabouts, will be widened at the Nythe Road junction. This will halve traffic queuing to improve air quality and reduce congestion.



# Swindon is recycling more

We have made it our mission to improve Swindon's recycling rate. Thanks to your dedication over the last year we have seen non-recyclable waste decrease across the borough, which is fantastic news.

**But we can't stop there.** In order to meet government targets we need you to continue recycling as much of your waste as possible and encourage your friends and family to do the same.



## Compulsory recycling to be enforced in 2020

Last year we made recycling compulsory in Swindon. This year, our Waste Wardens will be out providing support to residents who do not recycle. As a last resort, the team may be required to issue residents with an enforcement notice.

This booklet is made from 100% recycled paper. **Please recycle it after you have finished with it.**



## Food waste trial

We are trialling a weekly food waste collection to 11,000 properties across Swindon. Thanks to those taking part we have managed to recycle over 380 tonnes of food waste so far. A decision will be made later this year by Cabinet on the future of food waste collections in Swindon.

## Your recycling guide

Our website has plenty of useful resources to help you make the most of our waste and recycling services. If you aren't sure where to dispose of an item you can use our handy A-Z guide. For updates on the status of your missed recycling collections visit:

[swindon.gov.uk/bins](http://swindon.gov.uk/bins)



# Progress on our priorities

We are committed to making Swindon a fantastic place to live, work and play.

Significant progress is being made on realising our vision and priorities for Swindon. Visit [swindon.gov.uk/vision](http://swindon.gov.uk/vision) to find out more.

This is a snapshot of what we have achieved over the last year:

## Priority one

Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low-carbon economy.

### Building a new community in Wichelstowe

We are playing a key role in the 4,000 new homes being built at Wichelstowe. We also invested £2.5m in restoring part of the Wilts & Berks Canal and opened a new bridge which connects Waitrose to the new district centre. September 2019 also saw the opening of a new secondary school, The Deanery Academy.



### Improving Mannington roundabout

We made upgrades to Mannington roundabout to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion.

### Building affordable homes for vulnerable people

Our housing company built 14 new adaptable bungalows fitted with specialist equipment to help vulnerable adults to lead independent lives.



### Rejuvenating Wellington Street

This key gateway between the railway station and the town centre was transformed. Improvements included separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians and a new zebra crossing.

## Priority two

Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.

### Institute of Technology

We supported Swindon College with its successful bid to become an Institute of Technology which will provide high level technical training to more than 1,000 students every year.

### School results

Improvements were made in Maths and English among Swindon's GCSE students. In August, 64% of pupils attained a Grade 4 (equal to the old Grade C) or above in both subjects, compared to 61% in 2018.

### New schools

Last September, three new schools opened in Swindon, meaning we have secured over 300 new school places for children in the borough.

## Priority three

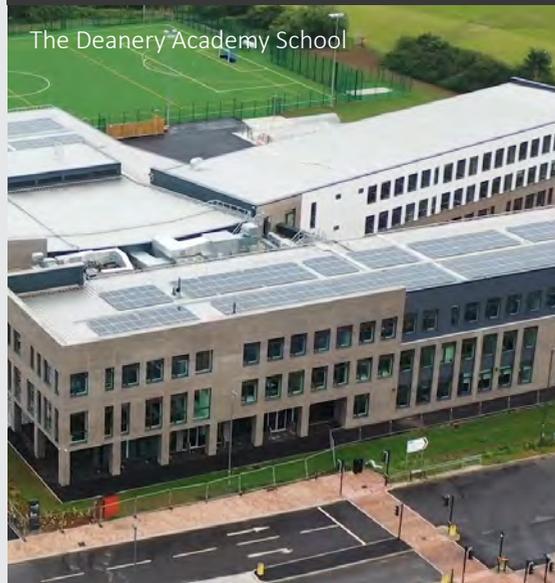
Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.

### Art on Tour

We launched a new touring art exhibition to bring some of Swindon's most treasured pieces of art to a wider audience.

### Collecting your household waste

Following improvements, we successfully completed 99.9% of the 6.8 million kerbside waste collections between April and December 2019.



## Priority four

Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

### Looking after older people

Our two care homes, Whitbourne House and Fessey House, were rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission.

### Good Ofsted rating

Ofsted judged our Children's Services department to be providing children and families in Swindon with a 'Good' service, replacing the previous 'Requires Improvement' rating from 2015.



## Support for rough sleepers

Over 25 rough sleepers have been supported back into accommodation as a result of our homelessness support programme. At our last count, the number of homeless people has reduced from 45 in November 2017 to 20 in November 2019.

## Beat the Street

The popular walking, cycling and running game Beat the Street returned in autumn 2019 and saw nearly 26,000 residents clock up an impressive 252,127 miles.

# Where your money goes

## Your council tax bill 2020/21

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### Where every £1,000 of your council tax goes

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Vulnerable adults .....	<b>£482</b>
Children, families and community health services .....	<b>£311</b>
Waste collections, country parks and tree maintenance .....	<b>£121</b>
Economy, skills and libraries .....	<b>£38</b>
Keeping people safe (including community safety, emergency planning and trading standards) .....	<b>£24</b>
Highways and buildings .....	<b>£22</b>
Planning, regulatory and heritage services .....	<b>£2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>£1,000</b>

The figures are provided for illustrative purposes. They do not include services provided through Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant or Public Health Grant as funding for these is separate to the general fund services. For further information, please search 'open data and transparency' on the Council's website.