

# Council Tax in Wigan 2010-11



my  
council

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We can make this information available in other formats and languages on request. Phone 01942 828624.

[www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltax)



# How to contact us

**Council Tax Offices:**  
**Moore Street East, Whelley,**  
**Wigan WN1 3DS**  
 Open 8:45am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. You can now phone us from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 8am to 12:30pm Saturday.

On the first Thursday of every month, Council Tax staff are available to speak face to face, to help you with any Council Tax queries you may have on the following dates at The Life Centre, Leigh Town Hall from 10am to 2pm.

Please note we do not have a letterbox at these offices for you to deliver letters out of hours.

1 Apr 10	5 Aug 10	2 Dec 10
6 May 10	2 Sep 10	6 Jan 11
3 Jun 10	7 Oct 10	3 Feb 11
1 Jul 10	4 Nov 10	3 Mar 11

Service	Phone number	Email
Council Tax	01942 828696 Fax: 01942 828655	revenues@wigan.gov.uk
Business Rates	01942 828632	businessrates@wigan.gov.uk
Housing and Council Tax Benefits enquiries	01942 828644	benefits@wigan.gov.uk
Benefit Fraud line	0800 3286340	benefits@wigan.gov.uk
Card payment line	0800 1695878	
Recovery of arrears	01942 828700	
Textphone (for hard of hearing)	01942 828725	
Pay a council bill	www.wigan.gov.uk/payments	

## Complaints

Contact us direct at the above address, or write to our Customer Services Team, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN. Phone: 01942 404402. Email: [complaints@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@wigan.gov.uk) or visit [www.wigan.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

# A message from our Chief Executive



Dear householder

In the wake of the worst recession in living memory, we've worked extra hard this year to keep the Council Tax rate pegged as low as possible. To do this, we're aiming to make considerable savings - up to £7million a year over the next three years. There are areas where we must make savings and where we are looking for opportunities to increase income.

But we are listening to you and ensuring that we concentrate on maintaining those front-line services that you value and depend upon, whilst committing extra resources to helping the most vulnerable members of our community. So, whilst we are looking to make savings in areas such as fleet management and other transport costs, we understand that we need to provide more services for an

increasingly ageing population, invest more in waste recycling facilities and move away from environmentally damaging - and costly - landfill.

In the wake of the Baby P case Wigan Council, like others across the country, will commit extra resources into children's services, with particular regard to children in care and the transition from childhood to adulthood for children in care. This extra investment is predicted to rise by nearly £4million, with a further £2.5million for services for older people.

You can find out more about our priorities for investment and spending for the next three years on our website at [www.wigan.gov.uk/performanceinformation](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/performanceinformation)

**Joyce Redfearn**

Chief Executive, Wigan Council

# About Council Tax

Council Tax is a tax on buildings, not people. It only applies to properties used by people as their homes. Each year we send a Council Tax bill to every domestic property in the borough, whether it's a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette, mobile home or houseboat. Each property is put into one of the eight bands below, based on what it would have cost to buy on the open market on 1 April 1991.

Every year we set the Council Tax for each band. The amounts for 2010/11 are below.

The band given to your property is on the front of your bill. The Valuation Office Agency decides the band not us. You can appeal against your property's band if:

- You have moved into the property in the last 6 months; or
- There has been a change in the building or physical state of the local area.

You can contact them at Valuation Office Agency, Manchester Valuation Office, Portland Tower, Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LD. Phone 0161 245 4200

Band	Band value	Council Tax for 2010/11
A	Up to £40,000	£912.44
B	£40,001 to £52,000	£1,064.51
C	£52,001 to £68,000	£1,216.58
D	£68,001 to £88,000	£1,368.66
E	£88,001 to £120,000	£1,672.80
F	£120,001 to £160,000	£1,976.95
G	£160,001 to £320,000	£2,281.10
H	£320,001 and above	£2,737.32

Additional parish precepts apply to properties in the parishes of Haigh and Shevington

## When you may not have to pay

You won't have to pay if only the following people occupy your property.

- Students,
- People under the age of 18,
- People who have a severe mental impairment and would otherwise be liable to pay Council Tax.

You may not have to pay for a limited time if your property is not occupied because it is:

- newly built and not yet occupied (exempt for 6 months); or
- substantially unfurnished (exempt for 6 months); or
- owned by a charity (exempt for 6 months); or
- undergoing or needing structural alteration or major repair (exempt for up to 12 months).

You may not have to pay for any of the following types of properties even if they are occupied.

- Armed Forces accommodation.
- Visiting forces accommodation.
- An annexe such as a 'granny flat'.
- Occupied by someone who has diplomatic, commonwealth or consular privilege or immunity.

Please let us know if you think you qualify for an exemption.

Certain conditions may apply.

You may not have to pay for your property whilst it is:

- left empty by the owner or tenant, who was the last occupier, and who has moved to receive personal care in either a hospital or home elsewhere;
- left empty by the owner or tenant, who was the last occupier, and who has moved to provide personal care to another person;
- repossessed by a mortgage company;
- empty because occupation is forbidden by law;
- waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion;
- the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee;
- left empty by a student owner who lived in it immediately before leaving to study elsewhere;
- an empty caravan pitch or houseboat mooring;
- unoccupied because the last occupier, who was also the owner, has died and probate or letters of administration have not yet been granted (and for 6 months after).



# Ways to pay less

The full Council Tax bill assumes that there are 2 or more adults living in a property. If you are the only adult living in your property your bill can be reduced by 25%. If no one lives at your property your bill can be reduced by up to 50%. We can also now consider local discounts for other reasons as well. When we work out if you are entitled to a discount we don't count these people:

- Children under 18
- People over 18 that still qualify for Child Benefit
- 18 or 19 year olds who leave school after 30 April are not counted until 1 November of the same year
- People with a severe mental impairment
- Apprentices
- Youth Training Trainees
- Care Workers
- Carers

- People in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels that provide a high level of care
- Resident hospital patients
- Prisoners in detention (unless for non payment of fines or Council Tax)
- Students in full time education
- Student nurses
- Diplomats and members of international organisations with headquarters in the UK (and their non British spouses)
- Members of religious communities such as monks and nuns

Certain qualifying conditions apply.

## People with disabilities

If you, or a person that lives with you, has a disability you may qualify for a reduction. Your home

will need to have an extra bathroom, kitchen or other room that is used mainly to help with the person's disability. You can also qualify if the disabled person uses a wheelchair in the home. If you qualify we will work out your Council Tax charge again using the valuation band below the one your property is in. Please let us know if you think you qualify.

### Long term empty properties

Council's can decide to reduce the discount to less than 50%, or give no discount at all, for unfurnished properties that no one has lived in for six months or more. Wigan council has decided that the discount for long term empty properties will stay at 50% but we could reduce this in future years.

### Second homes

Councils can also decide to reduce the discount on furnished second homes to as little as 10%. The discount for second homes has been 10% for a number of years now in Wigan.

### Changes in circumstances

You must tell us about any changes in your circumstances that might affect your Council Tax charge within 21 days of that change.

### What to do if you think we have got something wrong

If you think you are not the person who should pay or we have wrongly refused to give you a discount, exemption or reduction, you must write to us and tell us. We will look at it again. If you still don't think we have got it right, or have not heard from us within two months, you can write to:

**The Valuation Tribunal,  
3 Mawdsley Street, Bolton,  
BL1 1JZ.**



My Council...  
keeps me informed

## How your Council Tax is calculated

We have the equivalent of 96,208 Band D residential properties in the Wigan borough.

This is called our Tax Base. We need to make sure that we raise enough income from our Council Tax to pay for the services we provide and to make sure we have enough to pay the police authority,

the fire authority and the other levying bodies that we collect Council Tax on behalf of.

The figures below show how we work out how much the Council Tax should be for a Band D property.

### Money needed

Money we, and our levying bodies need to fund services	£2,551.45
Precept for Greater Manchester Police Authority	+ £144.33
Precept for Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Authority	+ £52.65
<b>TOTAL (A)</b>	<b>£2,748.43</b>

### Income we get

Deficit from our Collection Fund	- £3.49
Money for each Band D equivalent property from the government by way of Revenue Support Grant	+ £175.39
Money from the Business Rates pool per Band D equivalent property	+ £1,207.87
<b>TOTAL (B)</b>	<b>£1,379.77</b>

Amount of Council Tax we need to charge for a Band D property (Total A minus Total B) **£1,368.66**

There will be a small additional charge for properties in the parishes of Haigh and Shevington. At Band D, £11.89 for Haigh and £33.69 for Shevington.

# About our Benefits Service

There are two types of benefit you could claim:

- 1 Main Council Tax Benefit
- 2 Second Adult Rebate

## Which one should you claim?

You can claim **Council Tax Benefit** if you are:

- on Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, or Employment Support Allowance;
- on Pension Credit, Guarantee Credit and in some cases Savings Credit;
- working and on low pay (including people who are self employed); or
- on a low income.

For example, you might only get a retirement pension or be getting other social security benefits, like Incapacity Benefit. If you rent your home, you might also be entitled to Housing Benefit.

**Second Adult Rebate** is another way to help you pay less Council Tax. It is not based on the money you have but on the money other people who live with you have. These people are called 'non-dependants'. They could be a relative or friend but not a partner. You could get Second Adult Rebate if they are on a low income or Income Support.

## How to make a claim

- **If you claim Income Support, income-based Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance**, you can claim Council Tax benefit through your Job Centre Plus.
- **If you claim Pension Credit** you can claim Council Tax benefit through the Pension Service.
- **If you are on a low income you can claim** by filling in one of our claim forms and giving us the proof we need to assess your claim.

## Need help to make a claim?

Here are some ways you can get help.

- See page 1 for details of how to contact us.
- You can also get help at our Wigan and Leigh Homes office as long as you fill in a consent form.
- You can get help at The Life Centres at Marsh Green and Leigh Town Hall. The Civic Centre in Millgate, Wigan has enquiry facilities.
- If you are a tenant of Arena Housing, Adactus Housing or English Churches Housing and Riverside Housing, your landlord can help you fill in and check your benefit claim.
- Your local library may be able to help.
- The following agencies can give advice about your claim:
  - Wigan Independent Advice Centre - 01942 324851
  - Citizens Advice - 0844 826 9713
  - Age Concern for those over 50 - Wigan 01942 241972  
Leigh 01942 607337

We have the following for all our Council Tax and Benefit customers:

- Access for wheelchair users.
- An induction loop to help you if you are hard of hearing and staff who can use basic sign language if you are deaf. We can arrange other support services and equipment to help you if you are disabled. We use typetalk and you can contact us in this way.
- Browsealoud software is available on our website to download so that you can have the information on our web pages read aloud to you.
- An interpreter who we can contact to speak to you in your own language if English is not your first language.
- If you find it difficult to leave your home, we can send someone to visit you to help you fill in forms or to give help or advice.
- Phone lines to other council departments.
- A textphone for people who are hard of hearing - 01942 828725.

- Our website address is [www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits)  
You can download a benefit application form.
- You can work out how much benefit you may be entitled to by using our on-line benefits calculator at [www.quickcalc.co.uk/wigan](http://www.quickcalc.co.uk/wigan)

## Changes you need to tell us about

Tell us straight away if you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and have a change in your circumstances.

If you do not tell us about a change as soon as it happens, you could lose benefits or we could pay you too much benefit and you will probably have to pay it back. **It is an offence not to tell us about any change in circumstances that affects your benefit. We may take court action against you.**



## Income and spending

Where the money comes from	2009/10	2010/11
Government Grant	£24.2m	£16.9m
National Business Rates	£104.8m	£116.2m
Council Tax	£128.7m	£131.7m

Where the money goes	2009/10	2010/11
Wigan Council Services	£221.7m	£229.0m
Shevington Parish and Haigh Parish	£0.1m	£0.1m
Greater Manchester Police Authority	£12.9m	£13.9m
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority	£4.9m	£5.1m
Greater Manchester Passenger Transport	£19.6m	£20.7m
Direct Revenue Financing	-£2.7m	£2.5m
Contribution to/from reserves	£1.2m	-£6.8m
Deficit on Collection Fund		£0.3m

What Wigan Council spends the money on	2010/11
Adult Health and Wellbeing	£76.1m
Building Stronger Communities	£3.0m
Children, Young People and Families	£60.1m
Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing	£70.6m
Audit, Governance and Improvement	£14.7m
Capital Charges	£4.4m
Environment Agency Flood Defence Levy	£0.1m

## Why do we need more money this year?

We need £3.6m more money this year to allow for inflation. We are spending £15.6m more on services but we are meeting this extra expenditure by increased efficiency savings of £6.9m and the use of council funds of £6.8m so that we can keep the increase in the Council Tax that Wigan Council needs to fund its services to just 1.2%. The overall increase in the Council Tax this year, taking into account the increases Greater Manchester Police Authority and Greater Manchester Fire and

Rescue Authority need to fund all their services, is 1.9%.

## Ways we are trying to save money

All councils must measure and report the value of efficiency savings they have achieved since April 2008. An efficiency saving occurs when the cost of an activity falls, but its effectiveness is not reduced. The table below shows the actual value of efficiency savings at March 2009 and forecast to be achieved by the end of March 2010.

	by 31/3/09	by 31/3/10
Wigan Council	£6.03m	£19.36m
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority	£1.53m	£4.89m
Greater Manchester Police Authority	£26.89m	£35.51m

The table below shows the value of gains forecast to be achieved by March 2010 for the average band D dwelling and compares that with the average figure for similar authorities across England:

	Saving per band D dwelling	National average for similar authorities
Wigan Council	£202	£227
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority	£6	£4
Greater Manchester Police Authority	£45	£54

# What you get for your money

We are one of the largest local authorities in the country, with more than 139,000 residential properties and a yearly gross budget of over £740m.

This is funded from grants, fees and charges amounting to £490m. The remaining funding comes from central government and Council Tax. We use this money to pay for essential services like education, refuse collection, police and child protection.

We deliver over 700 services for less than \*£3 a day.

Some, such as refuse collection, are high-profile; others, for example social care, are less visible but for many people absolutely essential.

You won't access every council service every day; there are some services we hope you never have to depend upon.

Here's a taster of our activities.

- Community safety - e.g. alleygating
- Activities for teenagers - such as X-Zones and sports development
- Countryside, parks and open spaces
- Economy and employment - supporting businesses, creating jobs
- Education and skills - Connexions and skills shops
- Facilities for children - such as children's centres
- Health - for example health schools
- Leisure and recreation - sports centres and play areas
- Street cleaning
- Transport - tackling congestion

You can see the full extent of what we do online at [www.wigan.gov.uk/valueformoney](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/valueformoney)

\* Typical number of services delivered by metropolitan councils (LGA).  
Daily Council Tax rate for Band A Wigan properties 2010/11 = £2.50

We're also looking to the future. We want Wigan Council to be the best at delivering innovative customer services that are:

- owned by our customers;
- easy to access;
- available when you need them, via a method that suits you; and
- delivered to a standard that exceeds expectations.

You can find out more at [www.wigan.gov.uk/wiganischanging](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/wiganischanging)



## Getting involved

You can get involved and influence decisions by joining our:

- Citizens' Panel - receiving questionnaires three times a year.
- Discussion panels - informal discussions on issues and possible solutions on a range of topics.
- Readers' Panel - receiving draft information and commenting on its content and layout, and
- taking part in telephone and online surveys and discussions.

This year we are hoping to involve residents in shaping the Wigan life centres.

For more information about joining these panels, please phone 01942 487361, email [ppiteam@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:ppiteam@wigan.gov.uk) or visit our web pages at [www.wigan.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

## Our targets and how we did

Our most important performance measures are the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, and paying the right benefits at the right time to the right people. During 2008/09 we aimed to collect 96.8% of the Council Tax due and 96.5% of the Business Rates due. We collected 96.3% of Council Tax and 97.1% of Business Rates.

It was widely publicised that the recession hit Wigan hard. The number of households getting Council Tax benefit went up by 2%. Our Council Tax collection rate is still above the average for Greater Manchester and the metropolitan authorities. Business Rates collection was expected to fall because of the removal of the empty rate exemption and the credit crunch. Nationally, Business Rates collection fell last year by 1% but Wigan only dropped by 0.6%. The government reinstated the exemption from empty rates for 2009/10 for small businesses but the credit crunch and the 5% increase in Business Rates charges for 2009/10 is likely to impact on

the collection result for 2009/10.

We aim to review 55,000 existing benefit claims per year. We reviewed 55,836 claims between 1 April 2009 and 31 January 2010, which is already 836 above our target. We aim to process new benefit claims and changes in circumstances within 17 days. As at 31 January 2010 we were processing claims in 18 days. We are confident we will reach our target by the end of March. Performance is improving as the year progresses.

If you visit our Council Tax offices we aim to see you within 5 minutes of your arrival. We met this target for 100% of those who visited us in 2008/09. We aim to answer your letters within 10 working days of receipt. Between 1 April 2009 and 31 January 2010 we achieved this.

In November 2009 our services were awarded the Charter Mark, the country's top award for excellent public service, for the sixth year running.

## Information about you

We must ensure we collect and process your personal data in a way which complies with the Data Protection Act. Our Council Tax team will keep your information confidential and make sure it is secure.

We will use Council Tax information to build up a picture of the services you request and use it to develop more customer focussed services by using our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Your information will be used to:

- assess liability for Council Tax;
- administer Council Tax accounts including: keeping and updating records; checking eligibility and applying discounts and exemptions to accounts;
- processing payments;
- recovering unpaid Council Tax;
- preventing and detecting fraud and other crimes where necessary.

We are under a duty to protect public funds and so, where the law allows us, we may disclose your personal data information to other internal council departments or third parties for these or related purposes. These may include bailiffs, tracing agents, debt collection agencies, the courts, the police, HM Revenue and Customs, the Audit Commission (re NFI), the Department for Work and Pensions, your employer, the council's Benefits Service, the Valuation Office Agency, Wigan and Leigh Homes, and other local authorities.

For further information on NFI see our website at [www.wigan.gov.uk/nfi](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/nfi) or contact the council's Legal and Democratic Division on 01942 827030.

# We need your help

We value your opinion and we are always looking for ways to improve our service. If you have contacted us recently about Council Tax, Business Rates or Benefits it would help us if you would take a few minutes to complete this brief survey. Send it back to us at Council Tax Offices, Moore Street East, Whelley, Wigan WN1 3DS.

## What did you contact us about?

- Council Tax
- Benefits
- Business Rates
- Card payment line

## How did you contact us?

- By phone
- By letter
- In person
- By email

## How did you rate our service?

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
Council Tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business Rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Card Payment Line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Your comments:

**Thank you for your feedback.**