

Council Tax

2016 / 2017

The  Deal

Foreword by the Leader of the Council, Lord Peter Smith

Welcome to this year's Council Tax booklet.

Preparing the budget never gets any easier and this year's budget has been particularly difficult because of the changes to funding from Government. In last year's Autumn Statement Chancellor George Osborne gave all councils the option to increase Council Tax by two per cent to offset some of these changes and an extra two per cent adult social care precept to pay for the costs of an aging population - you can read more on page 15.

Over the last three years we've managed to freeze Council Tax while simultaneously slashing £100m from the budget. Over the next four years we'll have to save another £60m. It's not just us feeling the pinch, all Greater Manchester councils have been forced to raise Council Tax by two per cent to pay for the additional pressures of the elderly and vulnerable which is not being funded by Government. Most will also add to Council Tax locally to bridge their funding pressures - in some areas this will mean a four per cent rise altogether. The situation is similar across the country with a recent poll of councils showing that 86 per cent are planning to increase Council Tax this year, compared with 50 per cent in 2015.



In Wigan Borough we've decided to keep to our side of The Deal and have made the decision to freeze the rest of Wigan's Council Tax. This means Council Tax in Wigan will be lower than most other Greater Manchester boroughs - making us one of the cheapest places to live.

At the end of 2015 we launched a consultation asking you to tell us what you thought about our Deal for the Future strategy which sets out our priorities for the next five years. I'd like to thank those who took part - your feedback will help us to prioritise spending in the years to come. The results can be found in the spring edition of Borough Life, available here

www.wigan.gov.uk/boroughlife

The consultation also found that 81.6 per cent of you agreed with the principles of The Deal. I'd like to thank you for working with us to make Wigan Borough a better place to live, work and invest.

Lord Peter Smith of Leigh
Leader of Wigan Council

About Council Tax

Council Tax is a tax on residential dwellings, not people.

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 dwelling 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 2016/2017 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 six 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 03000 501 501 www.voa.gov.uk

For information about the council's income and spending visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/incomeandspending

Band	Band Value	Council Tax for 2016/17
A	Up to £40,000	£954.70
B	£40,001 - £52,000	£1,113.81
C	£52,001 - £68,000	£1,272.93
D	£68,001 - £88,000	£1,432.06
E	£88,001 - £120,000	£1,750.29
F	£120,001 - £160,000	£2,068.52
G	£160,001 - £320,000	£2,386.76
H	£320,001 and above	£2,864.12

Council Tax... what you get for your money

From bins to street lights, schools to recycling centres, you'll be surprised at just what you get for your Council Tax.

The council provides over 700 services to the residents of the borough and has the second cheapest Council Tax in Greater Manchester. From the moment you set foot outside your front door you'll be met by things paid for by your Council Tax and the chances are you won't even notice. Things like schools, street lights, transport for

disabled people, care homes for old people, roads and even school crossing patrols.

Your Council Tax also includes money for Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire Authority and Greater Manchester Public Transport.

On the page opposite, you can see how a Band A Council Tax bill breaks down in terms of costs and services.



Home help, day centres, support for disabled and vulnerable adult residents

£270.90 includes £10.86 Adult Social Care Precept



Roads and pavements, bins, street lights, recycling centres, leisure facilities

£211.70



Schools, teachers, youth services and caring for children

£195.01



Bus and rail services

£86.51



Police

£104.87



Support services including finance, legal, IT, councillors

£46.53



Fire Service

£39.18

Figures based on Band A property 2016/17 not including parish precepts.

Over 1000 residents took part in a consultation that covered a range of questions around the priorities and proposals for the council's vision for 2020 outlined in the Deal for the Future. The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 27th October.



74.5% of people agreed that freezing Council Tax for the last 2 years has benefited their household

We are one of only 2 local authorities in Greater Manchester that have previously frozen Council Tax and as such we are the second cheapest. Due to the savings Wigan Council has made through The Deal the council will continue to keep Council Tax low. Due to an increased demand in adult social care we will add the 2% precept to ensure that the most vulnerable residents are supported to be safe, independent and well.

81.6% of people agree with the principles of The Deal

Since its launch in 2014, the principles of The Deal have become firmly embedded. The council and its partners are adopting a new way of working. The Deal encourages people to take responsibility for themselves and their community.

94.3% support Wigan Council working together with health partners, community groups and families to deliver services and help individuals lead better, healthier lives and remain independent in their own home as long as possible

From April 2016 Greater Manchester will become responsible for a £6bn health and social care budget as part of the devolution. We are working with our partners to produce a locality plan for the borough.

90.7% of people agree that as many services as possible for residents and their families should be provided in a convenient location in their local area

By 2020 there will be a number of multi-purpose community hubs across the borough, connecting residents with a whole range of services and support that can be accessed at the heart of their community.

87.4% said yes, they agree that the priority for the council should be to provide support for those who need it rather than maintaining costly buildings

We have already reduced the number of buildings that we own and will continue to provide opportunities for the community to come forward to run some of these buildings and deliver services to their local areas.

42% of people said that services for protecting the elderly are a priority

Our pioneering work in adult social care and health will continue. This approach focusses on people's skills and talents, enabling people to connect with their communities, tackling social isolation and loneliness.

51.5% of people said that services for children are a priority

We are re-thinking how we deliver services for children. This is called the Start Well Delivery Model. We are committed to investing in services for children and young people. 90% of Wigan's schools are good or outstanding and we will continue to work closely with schools to improve the education they provide.

31.7% of people said that repairing and maintaining roads are a priority

Wigan's economic prospectus sets out our ambition to develop quality transport systems across, to and through the borough.



A variety of services were listed as a priority for the council by residents e.g. develop the economy

We will implement the economic prospectus that sets out our ambition to grow our economy, improve transport and infrastructure; support and protect vulnerable people; try to maintain frontline services wherever we can; invest in our communities; invest in children and young people services.



You said...
...We will

When you may not have to pay Council Tax

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

- Students,
- People under the age of 18, or
- 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 (no charge for 1 month); or
- Substantially unfurnished (no charge for 1 month); or
- Owned by a charity (exempt for 6 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.

Use your MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount to tell us 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 or provide personal care in either a hospital or home elsewhere.
- 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, had died and probate or letters of administration have not yet been granted (and for 6 months after).

Ways to pay less Council Tax

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%. We can also 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.
- Student nurses.

- Prisoners in detention (unless for non payment of fines or Council Tax).
- Students in full time education.
- Diplomats and members of international organisations with headquarters in the UK (and their non British spouses).
- Members of religious communities such as monks or 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.

Use your MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount to tell us if you think you qualify for a discount or reduction.

Council Tax for empty dwellings and second homes

When a dwelling first becomes empty

A dwelling that becomes newly empty will be given a maximum 1 month full exemption followed by a 25% discount for a maximum of 5 months.

Long term empty dwellings

Dwellings left empty and unfurnished for longer than 6 months, or have already been empty for between 6 months and 2 years, will be charged 100% Council Tax.

Empty Homes Premium

Long term empty dwellings that remain empty and unfurnished for longer than 2 years will attract an Empty Homes Premium. The premium will be an extra 50% charge in addition to the 100% charge for a long term empty dwelling.

Second homes

Dwellings that are unoccupied but furnished are classed as second homes. There is no discount for these dwellings. The charge for a second home is 100%.

If your property becomes empty, contact us straight away and we can tell you if you qualify for any reduction.

A property in need of, or undergoing, major repairs

If you own a property that is either in need of, or undergoing, major repairs you may be entitled to a reduction of 75% from your bill for a maximum of 12 months, or until the work is completed if that is sooner. You will be asked to provide evidence of the extent of the works required to render the property habitable. Only one major repairs reduction can be given for any period during which a property is continuously empty. Certain qualifying conditions apply for all reductions.

Use your MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount to tell us if your property has become empty.

Council Tax Reduction

The government provides us with some funding to help households on low incomes to pay their Council Tax bill. Wigan Council has two schemes:

1. The National Council Tax Reduction Scheme – pensioner households and households with children under 5

These households:

- Can apply for support
- Can apply for Second Adult Rebate if the only other adult living in the property is on a low income.
- Can apply for backdated support. This will only be awarded if there is good cause why the claim wasn't made from the earlier date.

2. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – working age households with no children under 5

These households:

- Can apply for support under our local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Will have their entitlement calculated using the national scheme but support will be reduced by 20%
- Cannot apply for Second Adult Rebate.
- Can only get support from the date a claim for reduction is made.

Who can apply for Council Tax Reduction?

To apply for Council Tax Reduction you must be the person whose name is on the Council Tax bill.

You may qualify if you are:

- On Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit;
- On Pension Credit, Guaranteed Credit and in some cases Saving Credit;
- Working and on low pay (including people who are self employed);
- On a low income. For example you might only get a retirement pension or be getting social security benefits like Incapacity Benefit;
- A working age household with capital / savings under £12,000; or
- A pensioner household, or household with a child under 5, with capital / savings under £16,000

How to apply

Register for MyAccount and apply directly to Wigan Council online at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount

You cannot make a claim for Council Tax Reduction through Job Centre Plus or the Pensions Service.

For more information about Council Tax Reduction visit www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction

If you rent your home you might also be entitled to Housing Benefit. For more information about Housing Benefit visit www.wigan.gov.uk/housingbenefit

Need help to make an application?

- If you are a Wigan and Leigh Homes tenant go to www.walh.co.uk/moneymanagement for information on how to access help and support.
- You can get help and use our online facilities at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.

- If you are a tenant of Arena Housing, Adactus Housing, or Riverside Housing, your landlord can help you fill in and check your benefit claim online.
- If you do not have access to a computer or are unable to visit us at any of the above places, contact us 01942 489002.

The following agencies can give advice about your application:

- Wigan Independent Advice Centre
01942 489984
- Citizens Advice
Tel: 0844 826 9713
Email: advice@wigancab.org
www.wigancab.org
- Age UK (for those over 50) Wigan
Tel: 01942 241972
Email: enquiries@ageukwiganborough.org.uk
www.ageukwiganborough.org.uk

These facilities are available to all customers:

- Access for wheelchair users at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.
- Browsealoud is available on our website to download so that you can have the information on our web pages read aloud to you.

Changes you need to tell us about

Tell us straight away if you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction and have a change in 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 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 entitlement. We may take court action against you.

Under Occupancy of Social Housing

If you rent from a local authority, a registered housing association or other registered social landlord, from 1 April 2013 the amount of Housing Benefit you get is based on the number of bedrooms your household needs.

The rules allow one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried);
- any other adult aged 16 or over;
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16;
- any two children aged under 10;
- any other child;

Tell us online by registering for MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount and click on our 'report a change in your circumstances' form.

You can get face-to-face help with any enquiry about a council service at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.

Complaints or compliments

Fill in an online form at www.wigan.gov.uk/contactus

- a non-resident carer;
- an overnight carer for children with disabilities;
- a child assessed as being unable to share a room due to a disability;
- qualifying foster carers; or
- an adult son or daughter serving in the armed forces but normally live at home as long as they intend to return home.

If you are classed as having one or more extra bedrooms your Housing Benefit may be reduced. If you under-occupy there will be a reduction in your Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit that has started to replace 6 existing benefits with a single monthly payment. Universal Credit will help you to be better off in work, start a new job or work more hours.

Universal Credit will eventually replace:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Get Online

If you don't have a computer at home, you can use one for free at your local library or Life Centre.

Free courses are available to help you get online and make the most of it. We can help you access the internet, introduce you to email and use online forms. Computers and the internet can help you:

- keep in touch with family and friends,
- manage your money,
- search for jobs,

To check if you are eligible visit www.gov.uk/universal-credit/eligibility

What's new about Universal Credit?

- It is 6 benefits in one monthly payment.
- If you have a partner you'll get one monthly payment for both of you.
- If you get help with your rent, this will be included in your monthly payment – you'll then pay your landlord yourself.
- You'll claim Universal Credit online.

If you don't have a computer at home, you can use one for free at your local library or Life Centre. You will have to pay your Council Tax from your monthly Universal Credit payment yourself.

- apply for Universal Credit and other benefits, and
- learn more about the things that interest you.

For more information and to get on a course contact us on 01942 489009 or go to www.wigan.gov.uk/getonline

For more information about money, benefits and where to get advice go to www.gov.uk

Beware

Need help with money or other problems? For information go to www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice

Avoid doorstep loan companies. Their interest rates can be extremely high.

Don't be excluded

Get in touch with those you owe money to as soon as you can. You can nominate a friend or representative to help you if you find it hard to manage it yourself.

In a crisis?

If you find yourself in a crisis our Local Welfare Support Advisors can help support customers to:

- access financial help and advice,
- gain appropriate referrals e.g. food parcels, white goods, and
- build self-reliance.

To speak to a Local Welfare Support Advisor ring 01942 705221.

Information about the Adult Social Care Precept

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has made an offer to adult social care authorities. ("Adult social care authorities" are local authorities which have functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, namely county councils in England, district councils for an area in England for which there is no county council, London borough councils, the Common Council of the City of London and the Council of the Isles of Scilly.)

The offer is the option of an adult social care authority being able to charge a "precept" of up to 2% on its council tax for the financial year beginning in 2016 without holding a referendum, to assist the authority in meeting expenditure on adult social care. Subject to the annual approval of the House of Commons, the Secretary of State intends to offer the option of charging this "precept" in relation to each financial year up to and including the financial year 2019-20.

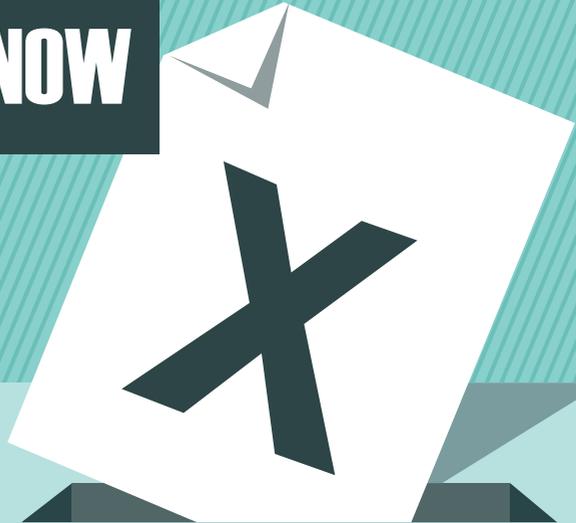
In relation to the financial year beginning in 2016 the Secretary of State has determined (and the House of Commons has approved) a referendum principle of 4% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care and 2% for other expenditure), for adult social care authorities. These authorities may therefore set council tax up to this percentage in 2016 without holding a referendum.

We can make the information in this booklet available in other formats and languages on request. Contact us at: Wigan Council, PO Box 100, Wigan, WN1 3DS. 01942 489001
Email: revenues@wigan.gov.uk

Printed March 2016

NO VOTE, NO VOICE

REGISTER NOW



**Local elections take place on Thursday 5th May 2016.
Make sure you are registered to vote.**

Registering is easy and you can apply online in just a few minutes.
All you need is your date of birth and national insurance number.

DEADLINE IS 18TH APRIL 2016

WWW.GOV.UK/REGISTER-TO-VOTE

The Deal