

How is your money spent? Your council tax explained

2014–2015

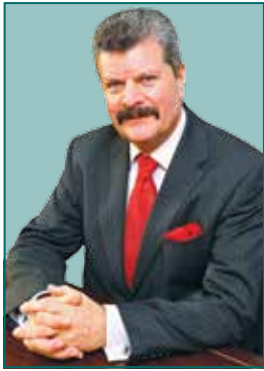
0% increase for
Hillingdon residents

6th
year
running



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk



Introduction from the Leader of the Council

Dear resident,

In Hillingdon, despite the massive challenge we face from government funding reductions and at a time when others are cutting back, we have continued to invest in services that matter most to you as sound financial management and planning are now the norm at your council.

I am particularly pleased that we have been able to make provision for a freeze in council tax for older residents for a further five years until 2019 as well as pledge extra help for all residents with no increase in the council tax until at least 2016. All resident fees and charges, including parking charges, will also stay frozen until 2015.

We also continue to support our older residents with our free burglar alarm scheme, winter heater loans, free swimming and the Brown Badge scheme for the over 65s. From April this year the over 65s will also benefit from free swimming lessons and allotments and we continue to provide free travel in London through the Freedom Pass. Additionally, we have invested extra money in TeleCareLine so that we can reduce the age of free access from 85 to 80.

With the re-opening of Highgrove Pool last year, we completed our £50m investment in sports and leisure and now have some of the best facilities in the capital.

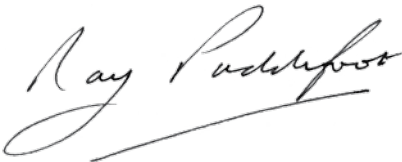
Our multi-million pound enhancement of Ruislip Lido, including the new state-of-the-art Woodland Centre, means visitors to this popular beauty spot are benefiting from much improved facilities.

We are investing in the largest school building and expansion programme in London, to ensure every child in the north, south and middle of the borough has a primary school place near to their home and the best possible start in life.

We have invested record amounts in road maintenance this year, including £6.2m for road resurfacing, and our parks and open spaces were awarded 24 Green Flags – the most of any council in the UK.

Whilst other councils are closing their libraries and reducing opening times, with the re-opening of the Central Library in Uxbridge in April, we will have rebuilt or refurbished every one of our 17 libraries across the borough and more residents of all ages are visiting them.

We recognise that the years ahead are likely to be financially challenging for all local authorities, but in Hillingdon having built record levels of financial reserves and with our businesslike management of the council we are confident that we will be able to continue to put our residents at the heart of everything we do delivering excellent value for money services and facilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ray Puddifoot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the text.

Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE
Leader of the Council

Your council tax

This booklet contains information about your council tax for the year beginning on 1 April 2014. It tells you how much you will pay, how the money will be used and how much goes to other organisations such as the Greater London Authority (GLA), which is headed by the Mayor of London.

Every house in the country receives a council tax bill. Whether you live in a house or a flat, own your own house or rent, everyone has to pay council tax which helps to pay for the nearly 800 services that Hillingdon Council delivers for local people – everything from schools, leisure centres, youth centres, children’s centres and libraries to our waste and recycling, parks, keeping you safe, services for the elderly and housing.

Once again, by putting our residents first we are working hard to keep your council tax as low as possible and for the sixth year running, we have once again frozen council tax in Hillingdon. This table shows the amount you will pay for Hillingdon Council’s services and how much you will pay to the GLA, which includes the police and fire service.

<i>Property band</i>	<i>£ Hillingdon</i>	<i>£ GLA</i>	<i>£ Total council tax payable</i>	<i>£ Range of values</i>
A	741.95	199.33	941.28	up to 40,000
B	865.61	232.56	1,098.17	40,000 to 52,000
C	989.27	265.78	1,255.05	52,000 to 68,000
D	1,112.93	299.00	1,411.93	68,000 to 88,000
E	1,360.25	365.44	1,725.69	88,000 to 120,000
F	1,607.57	431.89	2,039.46	120,000 to 160,000
G	1,854.88	498.33	2,353.21	160,000 to 320,000
H	2,225.86	598.00	2,823.86	more than 320,000

Valuation of properties and valuation banding appeals

All homes, including houses, flats, mobile homes and house boats must pay council tax. Every property is placed in a valuation band for England by the Listing Officer at the Valuation Office Agency (for HM Revenue and Customs).

Your council tax bill shows which band your property is in based on the expected sale price as at 1 April 1991. If you have a query about the banding of your property or wish to appeal against it, please contact:

 **The Listing Officer**
Council Tax South
Valuation Office Agency
Second Floor
1 Francis Grove
Wimbledon
London
SW19 4DT

 **VOA Centralised Switchboard: 03000 501 501**

 **ctsouth@voa.gsi.gov.uk**

Council tax appeals

You can appeal against your council tax if you think:

- you are not the resident or owner.
- your property is exempt.
- there has been a mistake in calculating your bill.

If you want to appeal, you must tell us in writing, giving the reasons why you are appealing.

You must continue to pay your council tax while your appeal is being dealt with. We will refund any money that you have overpaid if your appeal is successful.

Discounts for the over 65s

The London Borough of Hillingdon offers all of our residents over-65 years of age a council tax discount, if:

- you, or your partner, are 65 or over on 1 April 2014
- you are living in a property in the London Borough of Hillingdon and responsible for paying the council tax.
- you do not receive a council tax reduction.

If you think you may be entitled to the over 65s discount and it is not already shown on your bill please contact us on 0300 123 1384.

Are you entitled to a reduction?

In some cases, you may be entitled to a reduction. If you are the only adult living in a property, you may be entitled to a 25 per cent discount. We work out your council tax based on at least two adults living at the property. However, some people are not counted for council tax purposes, which may entitle you to a reduction even if you do not live alone. These are:

- full time students, student nurses, apprentices (earning less than £195 a week) and youth training trainees.
- 18 and 19 year olds who are in, or who have just left, a course of education for the period 1 May to 31 October.
- patients in hospital and people looked after in a care home.
- people who are severely mentally impaired.
- those staying in certain hostels or night shelters.
- care workers on low pay working for charities.
- people caring for someone with a disability who is not a spouse, partner or child under 18 years of age.
- members of visiting armed forces and certain international institutions.
- members of religious communities (monks and nuns).
- people in prison (unless sentenced for non-payment of council tax or a fine).
- if your property has an annexe that is occupied by a relative, you may be entitled to a 50 percent reduction in the amount of council tax you have to pay.

If you think you qualify please contact us on 0300 123 1384.

Discounts for empty homes

100 per cent discount will be applied to a property that is empty and substantially unfurnished, including newly built property for up to six months (Prescribed Class C). The discount is reduced to 0 per cent after six months. Thereafter the full council tax will be payable on the property.

100 per cent discount will be applied to a property that is undergoing major repair work or is being structurally altered for up to a maximum of 12 months (Prescribed Class D). Thereafter the full council tax will be payable on such property.

Second homes and furnished properties which are not used as your sole or main residence will attract a 25 per cent discount.

The council will only award such reductions for empty properties after the position has been verified by an inspection and such discounts will not be granted retrospectively. It is important therefore to advise the council as soon as your property has become empty.

Exemptions

The following properties are exempt from council tax:

- previously occupied and owned by a charity (exempt for up to six months).
- was last occupied by someone who has gone into prison (unless sentenced for non-payment of council tax or a fine).
- was last occupied by someone who has gone into hospital or a nursing home to receive personal care.
- where probate or letters of administration are awaited (exempt for up to six months after either have been granted).
- where occupation is prohibited by law.
- is waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion.
- where the previous occupier has moved elsewhere (other than hospital or care home) to receive or provide personal care through old age, disability, illness or mental disorder past or present, or through alcohol or drug dependence.
- is owned by a full time student and was their last sole or main residence.
- has been repossessed.
- where the liable person is acting as a trustee in bankruptcy.

Exemptions also apply to:

- student halls of residence, forces' barracks and married quarters, a caravan pitch or mooring not in use and an unoccupied annexe which is part of a single dwelling.
- property where the liable person is a member of (or has a relevant association with) visiting armed forces, or is a visiting non-UK citizen entitled to diplomatic privileges or immunities.
- property where all residents are full time students or is occupied by person(s) under 18, or those severely mentally impaired.
- an annexe of an occupied dwelling which is occupied by a dependent relative.

Certain conditions may apply to discounts or exemptions. Please contact the council tax office for further details.

If your council tax bill shows a discount, the council has made the assumption that you are entitled to the discount for the period covered by the bill. If this assumption is no longer correct as your circumstances have changed, or you know that they will change during the period covered by your bill, please let us know. You are required to let the council know in writing within 21 days of realising that you are no longer entitled to a discount. A failure to do this without a reasonable excuse could lead to a £70 penalty.

If you are unsure whether your change of circumstances will affect any entitlement to discount, please contact us for advice.

People on a low income

If you are on a low income you can apply for council tax reduction for a discount on the amount you have to pay. If you qualify for reduction it is your right to receive it. The level of reduction will depend on the size of your family, your savings, your income and the amount of council tax. The maximum that you can receive is 80 per cent of your council tax. If you are receiving Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, or Employment Support allowance you will have to pay 20 per cent of the council tax due. This could be more if you have non-dependant adults living with you. More details of the council's local council tax reduction scheme can be found at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/counciltax.

Couples

If you are married or living with someone as husband, wife or same sex partner you will normally be jointly responsible for the council tax bill. Only make one claim for council tax reduction, which will be assessed on your joint income.

Capital limit

If you or your partner has savings of more than £16,000 you will not be entitled to council tax reduction. For couples the £16,000 applies for each claim not for each person. However, if you are receiving the guarantee part of the pension credit there is no savings limit.

Non-dependents deduction

Your council tax reduction will be affected if you have someone other than your partner or dependent children living in your household. The amount will depend on the person's gross weekly income. You can find out how much council tax reduction you may be entitled to by using the council tax reduction calculator at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/counciltax.

People with disabilities

You may be entitled to a reduction in your council tax bill if your home has certain features which are essential (or of major importance) to the wellbeing of a disabled person who lives there. These are:

- a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) used mainly by a disabled person (for example for storing dialysis equipment or a ground floor bedroom in a property with two or more floors).
- an additional kitchen or a bathroom (with bath and/or shower, not just a toilet and wash basin) for use by the disabled person.
- extra space inside the property to allow for the use of a wheelchair.

If you are eligible, your bill will be reduced to that of a property in the valuation band immediately below the actual band of your property.

How to pay

Council tax is usually paid in 10 instalments from April to January or you can apply to pay in 12 instalments. If you wish to do so for 2014-15 your request must be received in writing by 1 April 2014. Where requests are received after 1 April 2014, council tax will be payable in the number of months remaining up to and including March 2015. Details of the different payment methods and contact information are at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/counciltax.

What do I get for my money?

The council delivers nearly 800 different services which directly benefit local residents and the borough of Hillingdon. These services are funded through a combination of grants from central government, a share of local business rates and your council tax. The amount to be raised from council tax is known as the council tax requirement.

Further information about the council's budget and services can be found at www.hillingdon.gov.uk

This year's council tax

For the sixth successive year (the eighth for those aged over-65) Hillingdon's element of council tax will not increase and the Greater London Authority's element of council tax will decrease by 1.3 per cent.

<i>Amount to be raised by council tax</i>	<i>2013-14 £'000</i>	<i>2014-15 £'000</i>
Gross expenditure on services	676,619	564,252
Gross income (business rates, central government funding)	-579,298	-464,925
Hillingdon's council tax requirement	97,321	99,327
Greater London Authority	26,496	26,685
Total council tax requirement	123,817	126,012
Band D equivalent properties	87,446	89,248
Charge for Band D properties	1,415.93	1,411.93

Change in the cost of services for the year

Hillingdon's budget for 2014/15 includes £12.8m savings and efficiencies, which allows council tax to be held at 2009/10 levels (2007/08 for those over-65) despite significant reductions in central government funding over the same period. The development of the 2014/15 budget from the 2013/14 budget is detailed in the table overleaf:

Development of 2014/15 budget from the 2013/14 budget

	£'000
Council tax requirement 2013/14	97,321
Decrease in central government funding	6,987
Increase in retained business rate revenues	-2,880
Inflationary cost increases	2,529
Increase in contingency and service pressures	10,428
Savings and efficiencies	-12,802
Priority growth	2,500
Corporate adjustments and movement in collection fund	-4,756
Council tax requirement 2014/15	99,327

The split of costs between the council's different services is shown below

	2013-14 £'000	2014-15 £'000
Hillingdon's gross expenditure		
Central services to the public	8,452	8,296
Cultural, Environmental and Planning Services	48,539	50,392
Education and Children's Services	314,326	218,853
Highways, Roads and Transport Services	27,451	27,286
Housing Services and Benefits	180,094	165,288
Adult Social Care	76,600	71,955
Corporate and Democratic Core Services	6,364	6,622
Priority growth	1,800	2,414
Capital financing costs	12,151	12,312
London-wide charges and other levies	842	834
Total gross expenditure	676,619	564,252

Introduction

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, is committed to leading a transparent administration. This guide explains how your council tax pays for Greater London Authority (GLA) services. His sixth budget continues to deliver on his promise to reduce council tax and invest in London's infrastructure. For the third year running the Mayor is cutting his part of the council tax. This means it has fallen 24 per cent in real terms since 2008. He is also on course to meet his commitment to reduce it by ten per cent in cash terms during his second term.

In the current financial climate the public sector must do more with less. This year's budget has required some tough but necessary choices to be made while at the same time protecting the key services Londoners expect from the Mayor – safer streets, investment in transport infrastructure and affordable housing.

Council tax and budget information

The GLA share of the council tax for a typical band D property has been reduced to £299.00. A band D council taxpayer in the City of London, which has its own police force, will pay £84.48.

Council Tax (£)	2013-14	Change	2014-15
MOPAC (Met Police)	216.92	-2.40	214.52
LFEPA (Fire Brigade)	49.87	+2.55	52.42
GLA and Olympics	33.88	-4.09	29.79
TfL (Transport)	2.33	-0.06	2.27
Total (£)	303.00	-4.00	299.00

Investing in frontline services

The Mayor has put value for money at the very heart of his administration and has controlled costs tightly as well as ruthlessly cutting out waste. His budget will protect vital front line services by:

- investing in frontline policing by maintaining officer numbers at or around 32,000;
- ensuring the London Fire Brigade has sufficient resources to maintain attendance targets at incidents;
- investing £22 billion to upgrade the Tube and deliver both Crossrail and the Northern line Extension;
- improving cycling safety, upgrading London's road network, and introducing up to 600 new buses;
- in partnership with London boroughs maintaining existing concessionary travel schemes in full, including free 24 hour travel for the over 60s, the disabled and eligible war veterans with discounts on travelcards for apprentices;
- supporting local businesses and high streets to promote job growth and enhance the public realm;
- delivering 42,000 homes a year for hardworking Londoners and;
- creating 250,000 apprenticeships by 2016 and promoting the London Living Wage.

Summary of GLA budget

The following tables compare the GLA group's spending for 2014-15 with last year and the reasons for the changes. The reduction in gross expenditure reflects the impact of savings and efficiencies made within the GLA group. Overall the council tax requirement has increased by £8 million which has been invested in policing, fire services, apprenticeships and regeneration. Find out more about the budget on our website: www.london.gov.uk (tel: 020 7983 4000).

<i>How the GLA budget is funded (£m)</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>2014-15</i>
Gross expenditure	11,243	-206	11,037
Government grants and business rates	-5,108	647	-4,461
Fares, charges and other income	-5,303	-554	-5,857
Use of reserves	-53	121	68
Amount met by council tax payers (£m)	779	8	787

<i>Changes in Spending (£m)</i>	<i>2014-15</i>
2013-14 council tax requirement	779
Inflation	123
Efficiencies and other savings	-349
New investment to improve services	473
Other changes	-239
2014-15 council tax requirement	787

Environment Agency South East Region

The Council Tax (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations 2011

The Environment Agency is a levying body for its Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Functions under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Environment Agency (Levies) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 5,200kms of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the area of the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. Money is spent on the construction of new flood defence schemes, the maintenance of the river system and existing flood defences together with the operation of a flood warning system and the management of the risk of coastal erosion. The financial details are:

	Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee	
	2013-14 £'000	2014-15 £'000
Gross expenditure	74,688	63,731
Levies raised	10,500	10,500
Total council tax base	4,471	4,556

The majority of funding for flood defence comes directly from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). However, under the new Partnership Funding rule not all schemes will attract full central funding. To provide matching funding the Agency may seek funding from County and Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities and London Boroughs in the form of a Local Levy. The Local Levy is shared on the basis of Band D equivalents between all contributing bodies within the Committee Area.

Changes in the Gross Budgeted expenditure between the years both reflects the impact of the Government Spending Review and national prioritisation of projects. For 2014-15 we have included Grant Aided Expenditure on Risk Management Activity Programmes. The total Local Levy raised has increased by 0 per cent.

The total Local Levy has remained the same in 2014-15 as 2013-14 at £10,500,000.

Lee Valley Regional Park is a unique leisure, sports and environmental destination for all residents of London, Essex and Hertfordshire. The 26 mile long, 10,000 acre park, much of it is formerly derelict land, is partly funded by a levy on the council tax. This year there has been no increase in this levy. Find out more about hundreds of great days out, world class sports venues and award winning parklands at: www.leevalleypark.org.uk

<i>Budget/Levy Changes</i>	<i>2013-14 £'000</i>	<i>2014-15 £'000</i>
Gross operating expenditure	20,600	22,000
Gross operating income	(11,500)	(13,400)
Net service operating costs	9,100	8,600
Financing cost		
– debt servicing/repayments	0,600	0,700
– new capital investment	1,800	2,000
Total net expenditure	11,500	11,300

Further details on how this budget is spent and the amount each council contributes can be found at www.leevalleypark.org.uk

London Pensions Fund Authority

The London Pensions Fund Authority (LPFA) raises a levy each year to meet expenditure on premature retirement compensation and outstanding personnel matters for which LPFA is responsible and cannot charge to the pension fund. These payments relate to former employees of the Greater London Council (GLC), the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) and the London Residuary Body (LRB).

For 2014-15, the income to be raised by levies is set out below. The Greater London levy is payable in all boroughs, the Inner London levy only in Inner London Boroughs (including the City of London). The figures show the total to be raised and, in brackets, the percentage change on the previous year.

	£'000	Change
Inner London	13,065	(0%)
Greater London	10,318	(0%)
Total	23,383	(0%)

Putting our residents first – 24 hours a day

As part of our commitment to improve services to our residents, the council is continuing to add new services online.


You can already renew library books, report potholes, manage your *HillingdonFirst* card and ask for more recycling bags online, and more services are being added all the time.


Registering for these services is simple. Visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk, click the 'do it online' tab at the top of the page and follow the instructions. Once you have registered, you will be able to log-in 24-hours a day.

By reporting it online you will also be able to track the progress of your request.

You can now access many council services online 24 hours a day. However, if you need to speak to someone, below is a list of council services


Useful numbers


 London Borough of Hillingdon
Council Tax
PO Box 1091
Nelson
BB9 4EU

 0300 123 1384


 counciltax@hillington.gov.uk

Housing Benefit and Council Tax
Reduction enquiries


 PO Box 1120
Nelson
BB9 4FW

 0300 123 1384


Housing Services

 01895 556666


Environment and anti-social
behaviour

 01895 556000


Anti-social behaviour

 0800 694 0240


Hillingdon Social Care Direct

 01895 556633

Racial Harassment

 0800 694 0240 or
01895 556000


School Admissions

 01895 556644


Planning

 01895 250230


Registrars and Electoral Services

 01895 558250


Hillingdon *First* Card

 01895 556677


Fraud hotline

 0800 389 8313 (24 hours)

Council main switchboard

 01895 250111

Out of hours service

 01895 250111

Tackling fraud

Hillingdon Council is committed to tackling council tax fraud and will investigate all cases. Every time someone commits fraud, it adds to the costs that we all have to pay. You can help us to detect fraud by telling us if you suspect someone is committing fraud.

If you have information about possible council tax fraud, please contact the council's Fraud Hotline 0800 389 8313.

Putting our residents first



Our people

We are continuing to support our residents throughout their lives, building extra school places for children and offering free services to older people to help them stay active and independent.

Our built environment

We are the only council to have refurbished or rebuilt all our libraries, with Uxbridge Library due to reopen in April.



Our natural environment

We now have more Green Flags than any other local authority in the UK, with 24. We continue to invest in our green spaces, with enhancement work on Ruislip Lido now complete.

Our financial management

Through continued work to manage our finances, we are able to keep investing in the services important to you, including keeping the borough clean and green.

