

How is your money spent? Your council tax explained

2015–2016

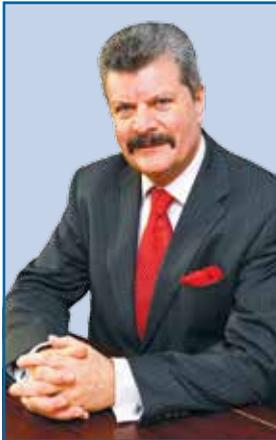
0% increase for
Hillingdon residents

7th
year
running



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk



Introduction from the Leader of the Council

Dear resident,

We are continuing to invest in the services which are most important to you despite a reduction in central government funding. Whilst other councils are forced to make reductions and cuts, our sound financial management means we are still able to invest millions in our ambitious improvement programme which continues year on year to maintain services and facilities.

I am pleased that we are able to offer financial respite for all residents by freezing the Hillingdon element of council tax until 2016 and until 2019 for those aged over 65. The vast majority of fees and charges, including parking charges, will also remain frozen until 2016.

Supporting our older residents remains a priority, with over 65s continuing to benefit from the free burglar alarm scheme, winter heater loans, free swimming sessions and lessons and free allotments. Over 80s also receive the TeleCareLine free of charge, which helps people maintain their independence at home.

We continue to ensure every child in the borough has a quality school place as close to where they live as possible with our £160 million primary school building and expansion programme, one of the largest projects of its kind in London. Fifteen primary schools received new facilities or additional classrooms for September 2014 and two brand new schools opened. Another new primary school is set to open in September. The focus of this programme has now also turned to secondary schools, with £150 million already earmarked for new buildings, classrooms and facilities.

In April 2014 our library improvement programme which refurbished or rebuilt each of the borough's 17 libraries concluded with the opening of the central library in Uxbridge. Residents continue to enjoy the upgraded facilities and extended opening hours with visitor numbers increasing by 30 per cent.

Investment in waste and recycling and increasing the frequency of garden waste and food waste collections led to the council's recycling rates reaching an all-time high of 52 per cent in 2014.

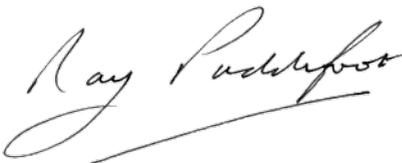
Whilst others reduce funding for roads and pavement maintenance, we will again invest £6 million to ensure our roads are in the best possible condition. We will also make borough wide car park improvements.

Our parks and open spaces were awarded 28 Green Flags in 2014 – more than any other local authority for the second year in a row. A further £1 million will be added to the budget for environmental and recreational projects this year.

Continued investment in sports and leisure – more than £50 million so far – has meant that residents are enjoying some of the best facilities in London. Work will start later this year on the new theatre and museum at St Andrew's Park, Uxbridge and there will be a new youth centre in Harefield. Ruislip Lido Boathouse will undergo refurbishment alongside two of Hillingdon's bowling clubs.

Supporting our town centres continues to be a focus with more than £11 million invested in improvements to Ruislip Manor, Northwood Hills, Harefield and Hayes. Work was completed in Ruislip Manor and Northwood Hills last year and now our attention is on Hayes, to offer more parking, lighting and new landmark features.

Although we are still in an economically challenging time, Hillingdon's planning and relentless commitment to strong financial management means the council is able to maintain its clear focus on putting its residents first and delivering value for money services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ray Puddifoot'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE
Leader of the Council

Your council tax

This booklet contains information about your council tax for the financial year beginning on 1 April 2015. 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 seventh 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	196.67	938.62	up to 40,000
B	865.61	229.44	1,095.05	40,000 to 52,000
C	989.27	262.22	1,251.49	52,000 to 68,000
D	1,112.93	295.00	1,407.93	68,000 to 88,000
E	1,360.25	360.56	1,720.81	88,000 to 120,000
F	1,607.57	426.11	2,033.68	120,000 to 160,000
G	1,854.88	491.67	2,346.55	160,000 to 320,000
H	2,225.86	590.00	2,815.86	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

Hillingdon Council 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 2015
- 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 per cent 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

A 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 zero per cent after six months. Thereafter the full council tax will be payable on the property.

A 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 reduction that you can receive is 80 per cent. 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 your request must be received in writing by 1 April. Where requests are received after 1 April, council tax will be payable in the number of months remaining up to and including March of the following year. 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. 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 seventh successive year (the ninth 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>2014-15 £'000</i>	<i>2015-16 £'000</i>
Gross expenditure on services	434,385	449,437
Service income (specific government grants, fees and charges)	-215,279	-232,172
Net expenditure on services	219,106	217,265
Corporate income (business rates, general government grants and use of balances)	-119,779	-115,766
Hillingdon's council tax requirement	99,327	101,499
Greater London Authority	26,685	26,904
Total council tax requirement	126,012	128,403

<i>Band D properties</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
Band D equivalent properties	89,248	91,200
Charge for Band D properties	£1,411.93	£1,407.93

Change in the cost of services for the year

Hillingdon's budget for 2015/16 includes £9.9 million 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 2015/16 budget from the 2014/15 budget is detailed in the table overleaf.

Development of 2015/16 budget from the 2014/15 budget

	£'000
Council tax requirement 2014/15	99,327
Decrease in central government funding	12,191
Growth in business rate income	-1,783
Inflationary cost increases	2,585
Increase in contingency	3,291
Savings and efficiencies	-9,907
Priority growth	1,000
Corporate adjustments	-5,205
Council tax requirement 2015/16	101,499

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

	2014-15 £'000	Change £'000	2015-16 £'000
Hillingdon's expenditure			
Central services to the public	9,474	-444	9,030
Cultural, environmental and planning services	39,707	819	40,526
Education and children's services	44,597	-941	43,656
Highways, roads and transport services	13,861	-60	13,801
Housing services	13,281	-968	12,313
Adult social care	80,426	1,117	81,543
Corporate and democratic core services	4,862	-244	4,618
Priority growth	2,252	-648	1,604
Capital financing costs	9,812	-474	9,338
London-wide charges and other levies	834	2	836
Total net expenditure on services	219,106	-1,841	217,265

Introduction

This guide explains how your council tax pays for Greater London Authority (GLA) services. The Mayor's seventh budget continues to deliver on his promise to reduce council tax and invest in London's infrastructure. For the fourth year running the Mayor is cutting the GLA's part of the council tax. This means it has fallen 28 per cent in real terms since 2008.

In the current financial climate the public sector must do more with less. This year's budget has required some difficult choices to be made while at the same time seeking to protect key services – 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 £295. A band D council taxpayer in the City of London, which has its own police force, will pay £86.13.

<i>Council tax (£)</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
MOPAC (Met Police)	214.52	-5.65	208.87
LFEPa (Fire Brigade)	52.42	-1.57	50.85
GLA and Olympics	29.79	3.28	33.07
TfL (Transport)	2.27	-0.06	2.21
Total (£)	299.00	-4.00	295.00

Investing in frontline services

The GLA budget will protect vital frontline services by:

- investing in frontline policing by maintaining officer numbers at or around 32,000 with an additional 2,600 officers deployed in local Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- ensuring the London Fire Brigade has sufficient resources to maintain attendance targets at incidents
- investing £22 billion to upgrade the Tube with the introduction of a 24 hour weekend service on key lines from September
- investing £913 million in cycling and £4 billion in London's roads
- 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
- delivering around 100,000 affordable homes over the Mayor's two terms
- creating up to 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 2015-16 with last year and the reasons for the changes. The increase in gross expenditure reflects the impact of additional investment in transport. Overall the council tax requirement has increased by £14 million due to the impact of London's growing population. The additional funds raised will be invested in services such as policing, fire services, apprenticeships and regeneration. Find out more about the budget on the GLA website www.london.gov.uk or call 020 7983 4000.

<i>How the GLA budget is funded (£m)</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
Gross expenditure	11,037	414	11,451
Government grants and business rates	-4,461	235	-4,226
Fares, charges and other income	-5,857	-507	-6,364
Use of reserves	68	-128	-60
Amount met by council tax payers (£m)	787	14	801

<i>Changes in Spending (£m)</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
2014-15 council tax requirement	787
Inflation	241
Efficiencies and other savings	-446
New investment to improve services	604
Other changes	-385
2015-16 council tax requirement	801

Environment Agency

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 5,200 kilometres 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 management of the risk of coastal erosion. The financial details are as follows.

Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee	2014-15 £'000	2015-16 £'000
Gross expenditure	63,731	74,750
Levies raised	10,500	10,700
Total council tax base	4,556	4,674

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 2015-16 we have included Grant Aided Expenditure on all Risk Management Authority Programs. The total local levy raised has increased by 1.99 per cent.

The total local levy raised has increased from £10,500,000 in 2014-15 to £10,699,500 for 2015/2016.

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 a two per cent decrease 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>2014-15 £'000</i>	<i>2015-16 £'000</i>
Gross operating expenditure	24,300	22,100
Gross operating income	(13,400)	(13,300)
Net service operating costs	10,900	8,700
Financing cost		
– debt servicing/repayments	0,700	0,600
– new capital investment	2,000	1,800
Total net expenditure	11,300	11,100

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, the Inner London Education Authority and the London Residuary Body.

For 2015-16, 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.

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

You can now access many council services online 24 hours a day at www.hillingdon.gov.uk. 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@hillingsdon.gov.uk

Council main switchboard
and out of hours service

 01895 250111

Adoption and fostering

 01895 277850

Environment and anti-social
behaviour

 01895 556000

Families' Information Service

 0800 073 4800

Fraud hotline

 0800 389 8313 (24 hours)

Hillingdon *First* card

 01895 556677

Hillingdon Social Care Direct

 01895 556633

Housing benefit and council tax
reduction enquiries

 PO Box 1120
Nelson
BB9 4FW

 0300 123 1384

Housing services

 01895 556666

Planning

 01895 250230

Registrars and electoral services

 01895 558250

School admissions

 01895 556644

Trading standards

 01895 250164

Putting our residents first – 24 hours a day

As part of our commitment to improve services for our residents, the council is continuing to increase the number of services you can access online 24 hours a day.

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

Visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/doitonline to register for these services. Click on the service you require and follow the link to register.

If you report an issue online, you will also be able to track the progress of your request.

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 on 0800 389 8313.

Putting our residents first



Our people

We are continuing to support our residents, creating thousands of high quality primary and secondary school places for children and offering free services for older people to help them stay active and independent.

Our built environment

With support from the GLA, the council is investing more than £11 million to improve Ruislip Manor, Northwood Hills, Hayes town centres and Harefield Village centre.



Our natural environment

Hillingdon has more Green Flag awards than any other local authority in the UK for a second year running, with 28. The council continues to invest in its green spaces and environmental projects throughout the borough.

Our financial management

Thanks to good planning and strong financial management, we are able to continue investing in the services important to you, including road and pavement improvements.

