Your Services, Your Halton

A guide to Council Tax and Business Rates 2016/2017

www.halton.gov.uk
Working efficiently for you

Dear Resident,

Government budget cuts continue to bite hard, with Halton yet again facing unfair and savage reductions to its budget in the year ahead.

The scale of cuts in Government grant funding has been unprecedented. This year, the grant the Council receives from Government will be reduced by a further £6million (10%) – equivalent to a cut of £48 for every person living in Halton. We estimate that Halton’s Government grant funding will have been reduced by £63million (61%) or £500 per person, over the ten years between 2010 and 2020.

Government grant funding is essential for a borough like Halton, which has high levels of deprivation and therefore a high demand for council services.

I must stress to you that we are doing all we can to limit the impact of these cuts, trying as far as possible to protect those services that support the most vulnerable in our community.

However in some areas, such as adult social care, services are coming under particular pressure. Over recent years, due to a number of factors, like other councils across the country, we have seen a huge rise in demand for adult social care services and as result, costs have escalated. We estimate, in Halton, that there is now a shortfall of £4.2million in funding for these essential services.

Acknowledging this widespread problem, this year, the Government will allow Councils to increase council tax by up to a further 2% - this has been called the Social Care Precept. While this is welcomed, the increase will only generate £0.8million towards the £4.2million shortfall.

Therefore, we must find other ways to fill the significant budget gap we face.

We know that Halton is a well-managed Council which has demonstrated strong financial management. We continue to challenge everything we do and spend to identify efficiencies and savings.

However, we have reached a point where we can simply no longer afford to run all of our services at the same level as we have done previously.

You may have already noticed some changes like reduced library opening hours; less litter picking; alternate bin collections and charging for some services that have previously been free. We have also reduced our workforce, reduced staff pay, terms and conditions and made arrangements to share services with neighbouring councils. Over the coming year we will be consulting with the community about more specific changes to services.

It is with this complex and challenging backdrop that we have had to take the difficult decision to increase Council Tax this year by 1.9%, in addition to the full 2% Social Care Precept increase.

We know that this places further burden on already stretched household budgets, however, we do not see any alternative.

These are difficult messages to have to give, and I must thank local people for their continued support during these testing times.

We know that many of you will have friends, neighbours and family that rely on Council services in their everyday lives - please be reassured that we are working tirelessly to ensure we do whatever we can to continue to offer this essential support.

Cllr Mike Wharton
Executive Board Member - Resources

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

From 1st April 2014, Halton Borough Council became part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, which is a strategic body charged with overseeing certain functions on behalf of, and in partnership with, the five Merseyside councils and Halton. The Combined Authority has particular responsibilities for regeneration, employment and skills, housing, and transport. In respect of these particular responsibilities Halton will not however be fully integrated within the Combined Authority until 2018.
About this leaflet

This leaflet contains important information about your Council Tax bill, how your money is spent, what your bill is for the coming year and different ways to pay.

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on:

- The value of your property based on values at 1 April 1991; and
- Your personal circumstances

For a property that is in Band D (a ‘typical’ property for the UK) the tax is £1,484.06 made up of the following:

- Halton Borough Council charge £1,226.89
- Halton Borough Council £24.08
- Police Authority charge £161.23
- Fire Authority charge £71.86

Total £1,484.06

* The Council Tax attributable to Halton Borough Council includes a precept to fund adult social care.

Details of how properties are ‘banded’ are shown below. A full table of tax for each type of property and parish is below.

### Range of valuation bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Up to and including £ 40,000</th>
<th>£40,001 - £ 52,000</th>
<th>£52,001 - £ 68,000</th>
<th>£68,001 - £ 88,000</th>
<th>£88,001 - £120,000</th>
<th>£120,001 - £160,000</th>
<th>More than £320,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Up to and including £ 40,000</td>
<td>£40,001 - £ 52,000</td>
<td>£52,001 - £ 68,000</td>
<td>£68,001 - £ 88,000</td>
<td>£88,001 - £120,000</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>£40,001 - £ 52,000</td>
<td>£52,001 - £ 68,000</td>
<td>£68,001 - £ 88,000</td>
<td>£88,001 - £120,000</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>£52,001 - £ 68,000</td>
<td>£68,001 - £ 88,000</td>
<td>£88,001 - £120,000</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>£68,001 - £ 88,000</td>
<td>£88,001 - £120,000</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>£88,001 - £120,000</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>£120,001 - £160,000</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>£160,001 - £320,000</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>More than £320,000</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What you will pay in 2016/17

#### Council Tax charges 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Halton</th>
<th>Hale</th>
<th>Moore</th>
<th>Daresbury</th>
<th>Preston</th>
<th>Sandymoor</th>
<th>Halebank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>989.38</td>
<td>1,015.81</td>
<td>998.58</td>
<td>1,006.99</td>
<td>1,007.53</td>
<td>1,006.33</td>
<td>1,009.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1,154.27</td>
<td>1,185.11</td>
<td>1,165.00</td>
<td>1,174.82</td>
<td>1,175.45</td>
<td>1,174.04</td>
<td>1,178.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1,319.17</td>
<td>1,354.41</td>
<td>1,331.44</td>
<td>1,342.65</td>
<td>1,343.37</td>
<td>1,341.77</td>
<td>1,346.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1,484.06</td>
<td>1,523.71</td>
<td>1,497.86</td>
<td>1,510.48</td>
<td>1,511.29</td>
<td>1,509.48</td>
<td>1,514.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1,813.85</td>
<td>1,862.31</td>
<td>1,830.72</td>
<td>1,846.14</td>
<td>1,847.13</td>
<td>1,844.92</td>
<td>1,851.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,143.64</td>
<td>2,200.91</td>
<td>2,163.57</td>
<td>2,181.80</td>
<td>2,182.97</td>
<td>2,180.36</td>
<td>2,188.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2,473.44</td>
<td>2,539.52</td>
<td>2,496.44</td>
<td>2,517.47</td>
<td>2,518.82</td>
<td>2,515.81</td>
<td>2,524.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2,968.12</td>
<td>3,047.42</td>
<td>2,995.72</td>
<td>3,020.96</td>
<td>3,022.58</td>
<td>3,018.96</td>
<td>3,029.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making it easier to pay your bill

You can pay your Council Tax by direct debit, card, cash, cheque or online.

Your Council Tax bill is normally payable by ten monthly instalments, however if you wish to pay over 12 months, please contact us by 15 April. If you become liable part way through the year or receive a bill after the start of the year your instalments will be reduced accordingly.

Details of the monthly instalments for the current year are shown at the bottom of your bill. You may pay fortnightly provided the monthly amount is paid in full by the due date.

We’re here to help. If you have difficulty in paying your Council Tax, please call us immediately, we will make an arrangement to help you clear the debt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment Method</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Debit</td>
<td>Monthly installments starting 1st, 10th, 20th or 28th April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half yearly</td>
<td>1st installment due 15th April, 2nd installment due on or before 1st September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Payable on or before 15th April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debit/credit card</td>
<td>Payment can be made over the telephone using most major debit / credit cards. Please note that a surcharge of 2% will be made on all credit card payments however no charge will be made for the use of debit cards. Please call the automated payment line on 0303 333 4300 (open 24hrs, seven days a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Payment can be made online at <a href="http://www.halton.gov.uk">www.halton.gov.uk</a> You will need to have your account reference number to hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheque</td>
<td>Please pay in person at any Halton Direct Link, or send by post to Halton Borough Council, Revenues &amp; Benefits, PO Box 223, Widnes WA8 2DA Please make your cheque payable to Halton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>Pay by monthly installments starting 15th April using one of the payment kiosks located at any Halton Direct Link (see last page for locations) Please do not send cash through the post.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The easy way to pay. If you already pay other bills by direct debit, you will know how simple it is. With direct debit there is no more queuing, postage and you have the peace of mind knowing your bill is being paid on time. You can set up your direct debit by calling us on 0151 511 7771, or in person at any Halton Direct Link, just remember to have your bank details with you. We will confirm details of your direct debit within three working days. As well as being simple and safe for you, paying by direct debit helps us keep costs down too, therefore helping to keep the Council Tax as low as possible.

Having problems paying? We’re here to help –

If you have difficulty in paying your Council Tax, please call us immediately and we will make an arrangement to help you clear the debt.
A guide to Council Tax

Council Tax is payable on most homes. How much you pay, before benefits and discounts, depends on the “banding” of the property. A ‘typical’ house in the UK is one that was valued at 1 April 1991 at between £68,000 and £88,000 and so is in tax ‘band D’. Houses with lower values are put in bands A to C and pay less tax, while those with higher values are put in bands E to H and pay more tax.

The band of your house and the amounts you pay are shown on your bill.

Are you paying too much?

The Council Tax bill for each band assumes that there are at least two adults living in each property. If there is only one adult, a 25% discount will be given.

Any person over 18 years old is counted as an adult. The following people may not count when we look at the number of adults who live in a property:

- Full time students, student nurses and Youth Training trainees
- Patients resident in hospital
- Anyone being looked after in care homes
- Anyone with a severe mental illness
- Anyone who lives in a hostel or a shelter
- 18 and 19 year olds still at or just left school
- Care-workers working for low pay (Less than £36 per week)
- Anyone caring for someone with a disability who is not a spouse, partner or child under 18
- Diplomats and visiting services staff
- Members of religious communities (monks & nuns)
- People in prison (except those in prison for non-payment of Council Tax or fine)
- Annexes occupied by members of the main household’s family, or used as part of the main dwelling are entitled to 50% discount

Your bill will show if you are entitled to a discount. If none is shown but you think you could be entitled to one, call us immediately on 0151 511 7771.

Help if you are disabled

If you, or someone living with you, need a room, an extra bathroom, kitchen or extra space in your property to meet special requirements arising from a disability you may be entitled to a discount.

Your bill may be reduced to that of a property in the band immediately below the band shown for your property. If you are already in band A, the lowest valuation band, you may still qualify for a reduction of 1/9th of band D charge.
Should you be paying Council Tax?

Owners of empty properties will be liable for Council Tax.

Some properties that have no one living in them may be exempt if they:

- are unfurnished (exempt for up to four weeks)
- are owned by a charity (exempt for up to six months)
- are left empty by someone who has gone to prison
- are left empty by someone who has moved in order to receive personal care in a hospital or a home or elsewhere
- are left empty by someone who has moved to provide personal care to another person
- have been left empty by students
- are waiting probate or letters of administration to be granted (and for up to six months after)
- have been repossessed
- are the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee
- are empty because no one is allowed to live there by law
- are waiting to be lived in by a minister of religion
- are unoccupied granny annexes
- are made up of a pitch or a mooring which is not occupied by a caravan or a boat
- are solely occupied by students, under 18's, or severely mentally impaired people.

Properties that require, or are undergoing, major repair are entitled to 50% discount for a maximum of 12 months.

Properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished are entitled to 100% discount for 4 weeks followed by 25% discount for a further 22 weeks as long as they remain unoccupied. The period taken into account starts from the date the property became unoccupied and is not affected by a change of ownership.

Long term empty properties and second homes are subject to 100% charge. Some second homes may still be eligible for 50% discount where the owner is required to live elsewhere in job related premises e.g. pub landlords, caretakers, members of armed forces in family accommodation. If you fall into one of these categories, please contact us on 0151 511 7771.

Properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than two years are subject to a 50% empty homes premium.

A billing authority also has discretion to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable for situations that are not covered by national discounts and exemptions. This can be used in individual cases or to determine classes of case in which liability may be reduced.

If you think your property may be exempt, please contact us on 0151 511 7771.
How to appeal

You may only appeal against the band your home is in if one of the following applies:

- The property has significantly changed in value because of demolition or adaptation work or because of a change in the area such as a major new road next to the property
- You start or stop using part of the property as a business, or the balance between domestic and business use changes
- The Listing Officer has altered a list without a proposal having been made by a taxpayer
- You become the taxpayer of the property for the first time (you must appeal within six months)

Making an appeal does not allow you to withhold payment of your bill.

If you wish to appeal, you should contact the Listing Officer, The Valuation Office Agency, 17th Floor 53 Portland Street Manchester M1 3LD Tel: 03000 501501

You may also appeal if you consider that you are not liable to pay Council Tax, or you believe there has been a mistake in calculating your bill.

If you wish to appeal on these grounds, you should contact Halton Borough Council in writing.

If your appeal is successful, you will be entitled to a refund of any overpaid tax. If you think your property may be exempt please contact the Council Tax team on 0151 511 7771.

Important information about your Council Tax data

Under section 6 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, we must participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise.

This means Council Tax data will be provided to the Audit Commission for NFI and will be used for cross-system and cross-authority comparison for the prevention and detection of fraud.

The data Halton Borough Council holds in respect of your Council Tax account will be used for cross-system and cross-authority comparison purposes for the prevention and detection of fraud.
Are you entitled to Council Tax reduction?

Over 35% of people who are entitled to claim money off their Council Tax bill are missing out – could you be one of them?

You do not have to be unemployed to claim Council Tax reduction. If you are in work but on a low income, Council Tax reduction could pay some, or all, of your Council Tax bill.

Housing Benefit

If you pay rent for your home and are on a low income, you may also qualify for help towards paying this too. You may be able to get Housing Benefit if you are on other benefits, work part-time, or work full-time on a low income.

How much will you get?

If you are eligible for housing benefit and/or Council Tax reduction, the amount you receive will depend on how much you have to pay in rent/Council Tax and your circumstances. This includes:

- Your income (and partner’s income if you have one)
- Your savings
- The number of children that live with you
- Other people in your household
- If you or someone in your family has a disability

Second adult rebate

You may also be able to reduce your Council Tax bill if you live with someone who is on a low income and you would normally be entitled to a single person discount if they were not living with you. The rebate is based on the income of any second adult that lives with you, not on your income or savings.

How to claim

If you are unsure if you will qualify, you should make a claim to find out. For expert advice, leaflets and application forms, contact our Benefits Service:
In person – at any Halton Direct Link
By telephone – 0151 511 7772
By email – benefits@halton.gov.uk

You will find more information about benefits on our website www.halton.gov.uk/benefits
Don’t delay, report today!

If you receive Council Tax reduction and/or housing benefit, you should tell us immediately if your circumstances change. Things you need to tell us about include:

- A change in your income, including the type of income or the amounts you receive
- A person moving in or out of your home, including additions to your family
- A child leaving school, or further/higher education
- A change in the income of anyone living in your home, other than yourself or your partner

It is important that you tell us about these changes so that you do not miss out on benefits you are entitled to, or that you do not receive benefits you are not entitled to. If you receive more than you are entitled to, we may claim the money back by taking it off future payments, or by sending you a bill.

Maximise your income – claim it or lose it

Every year the Welfare Rights Service helps residents of Halton to claim over £2.5 million in welfare benefits.

This is money that people are often unaware they are entitled to. Much of this money is not “means tested”, but depends on your state of health and will not affect any other benefit entitlement.

Our Welfare Rights Service can help in a number of ways:

- Benefit check – a free and confidential benefit check to maximise your income and advise and apply for any welfare benefits you may be entitled to
- Appeals – help in making an appeal against a decision for any welfare benefits, where you have refused or think the decision is wrong
- Money advice – free and confidential advice and debt management to help you with your finances

To contact the Welfare Rights Services call 0151 511 8930.
How the money is spent

The calculation of the amount of Council Tax is based on the spending requirements of Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Police Authority, Cheshire Fire Authority and, if appropriate, the relevant Parish Council.

The Council’s spending (known as the ‘Budget Requirement’) is planned to be £98.460m. Schools are funded by a specific grant known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) The following chart demonstrates how the budget requirement is split over each of the Authority’s services.

**Budget Requirement by Service 2016/17**

- **Education Services including DSG 59.6%**
- **Adult Social Care 20.8%**
- **Highways, Roads & Transport 4.7%**
- **Cultural, Planning and Environmental Services 11.7%**
- **Other Services 3.2%**

Local Government Settlement Funding Assessment (which incorporates Revenue Support Grant & Top-Up Grant) and a contribution from the Collection Fund (Business Rates Retention & Council Tax), is deducted from the Budget Requirement to give the ‘Council Tax Requirement’.

Council Tax is calculated by reference to the number of equivalent band D properties in Halton, which is 32,948 (called ‘The Tax Base’) and is expressed as a charge per band D property. Charges for other bands are then arrived at using a set ratio (see Council Tax Charges on Page 3 for details of all the band charges).
Halton’s band D charge is £1,250.97 and is calculated from the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016/17 £</th>
<th>2015/16 £</th>
<th>Difference £</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross expenditure</strong></td>
<td>304,971,363</td>
<td>314,972,845</td>
<td>-10,001,482</td>
<td>-3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(less) Income</td>
<td>206,511,400</td>
<td>213,520,844</td>
<td>-7,009,444</td>
<td>-3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUDGET REQUIREMENT</strong></td>
<td>98,459,963</td>
<td>101,452,001</td>
<td>-2,992,038</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(less) Settlement Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Support Grant</td>
<td>22,250,580</td>
<td>28,261,409</td>
<td>-6,010,829</td>
<td>-21.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Up Grant</td>
<td>7,511,156</td>
<td>7,449,080</td>
<td>62,076</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Fund Contribution</td>
<td>27,481,267</td>
<td>27,092,791</td>
<td>388,476</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>57,243,003</td>
<td>62,803,280</td>
<td>-5,560,277</td>
<td>-8.85</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The band D charge is calculated by dividing the above Council Tax Requirement by the Tax Base.

**Band D Council Tax Charge Calculation:**

\[
\frac{41,216,960}{32,948} = \£1,250.97
\]

The aggregate band D charge for Halton is made up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016/17 £</th>
<th>2015/16 £</th>
<th>Difference £</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton’s Band D Charge</td>
<td>1,250.97</td>
<td>1,204.01</td>
<td>46.96</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Police Authority’s Band D Charge</td>
<td>161.23</td>
<td>156.23</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fire Authority’s Band D Charge</td>
<td>71.86</td>
<td>70.46</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Council Tax Band D Charge</strong></td>
<td>1,484.06</td>
<td>1,430.70</td>
<td>53.36</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, properties in the parishes will be liable to pay an extra charge to cover the parish needs. The 2016/17 Tax Base, Precept, and Band D charge for each Parish are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Tax Base</th>
<th>Parish Precept</th>
<th>Band D Charge</th>
<th>Band D Charge</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hale</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>26,131</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>39.65</td>
<td>24.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>4,498</td>
<td>4,416</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>13.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daresbury</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>26.42</td>
<td>26.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Brook</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>9,150</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>27.23</td>
<td>26.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halebank</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>15,350</td>
<td>13,625</td>
<td>30.76</td>
<td>27.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandymoor</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>24,556</td>
<td>15,566</td>
<td>25.42</td>
<td>16.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total precept</td>
<td></td>
<td>83,885</td>
<td>62,107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
Non-Domestic Rates

Non-Domestic Rates, or business rates, collected by local authorities are the method by which those who are liable for non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements, local authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally.

This money, together with revenue from council tax payers, revenue support grant provided by the Government and certain other sums, is used to pay for the services provided by Halton Borough Council and other local authorities in your area. Further information about the business rates system, including transitional and other reliefs may be obtained at www.gov.uk.

For 2016/2017, the Government has set the standard non-domestic rating multiplier at 49.7 pence per £ of rateable value and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier will be 48.4 pence.

Valuation of Property

All rateable values are provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), which is a division of HM Revenue & Customs. More detailed information on the valuation of properties can be obtained by visiting their website at www.voa.gov.uk. For further details, you can e-mail the VOA at: ratingnorthwest@voa.gsi.gov.uk , write to the Agency at Redgrave Court, Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 7HS or call them on 03000 504000

Please note that you must pay in accordance with the instalments shown on your bill, pending any appeal against the rateable value for the property.

Empty Property Rates

The rating liability of empty property is presently 100% of the occupied rate due, once the initial exemption period has expired. The exemption is three-months for offices, shops and other non-industrial properties and six-months for industrial premises, such as factories, workshops and warehouses.

The Government reduced the threshold for the exemption for empty properties in 2011/12 and only vacant premises with a rateable value below £2,600 qualify for this exemption. This condition will continue to apply for the 2016/17 financial year.

You should not hesitate to contact the non-domestic rate team on 0151 511 8932 or email business.rates@halton.gov.uk, should you require any further information on any rating matters.

Contact the Team

You should not hesitate to contact the Non-Domestic Rate Team on 0151 511 8932 or by email at business.rates@halton.gov.uk, should you require any further information on any rating matters.

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 6500 kilometres of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the area of the North West 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:

**North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015/16 000’s</th>
<th>2016/17 000’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>£80,544</td>
<td>£75,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Levies Raised</strong></td>
<td>£3,711</td>
<td>£3,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Council Tax Base</strong></td>
<td>£1,995</td>
<td>£2,039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 local funding for local priorities and contributions for partnership funding the Regional Flood and Coastal Commitees recommend through the Environment Agency a local levy.

A change in the gross budgeted expenditure between the years reflects the programme of works for both capital and revenue needed by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to which you contribute. The total Local Levy raised has increased by 2.0%.

The total Local Levy raised has increased from £3,710,760 in 2015/2016 to £3,784,975 for 2016/2017.

For further information you can visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk or contact the Customer Help line: 08708 506 50, Incident Hotline: 0800 80 70 60, Floodline: 0845 988 1188.
Worried about money?

If you have lost your job, are working less hours, or just struggling to pay your bills because of growing debt, we are here to help you. Our advisors can give you practical help, advice on managing your debts, money saving tips, benefits advice and ways to deal with other financial problems. Give us a call today on 0303 333 4300.

Looking for work?

If you are unemployed, at risk of redundancy, looking for a career change or you think you need to improve your skills, there is a range of help at hand.

Our Adult Learning team offers courses to improve English, Maths and ICT skills - visit www.halton.gov.uk/adultlearning or call us on 0303 333 4300.

The Halton Employment Partnership Award is a programme aimed at enhancing your job prospects by combining employability skills with sector-specific training.

The course is delivered in two parts. During the first two weeks you will cover:

CV and letter writing, job search and job applications, interview skills, IT for work, team working, communication and assertiveness, setting goals and action planning, time management.

The following two weeks offer you the opportunity to access sector specific training in Customer Care, Hospitality & Leisure or Retail. The course also includes achievement of a Health & Safety Certificate.

For more information call 0151 511 8931, visit www.halton.gov.uk/hep or email: hep@halton.gov.uk.

Halton People Into Jobs can offer a wide range of support to help you get back to work if you are unemployed, visit www.halton.gov.uk/hpij or call 0303 333 4300.

Other sources of help include:

Citizens Advice Bureau (www.citizensadvice.org.uk t: 08451 304055) can give you advice on managing your finances and any tax issues.

StepChange (www.stepchange.org t: 0800 1381111) is a charity that provides confidential free counselling and money management advice.

The National Debtline (www.nationaldebtline.co.uk t: 0808 808 4000) provides free debt advice and support.

Contact details:

Council Tax:
Tel: 0151 511 7771
Email: council.tax@halton.gov.uk

Business Rates:
Tel: 0151 511 8932
Email: business.rates@halton.gov.uk

Benefits:
Tel: 0151 511 7772
Email: benefits@halton.gov.uk

Cheshire Police Authority
Tel: 01244 614003

Cheshire Fire Authority
Tel: 01606 868484

You can also write to:
Strategic Director – Policy & Resources
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QF
One of the most important features of my role is to set the budget for policing in Cheshire.

I need to fund the police to keep Cheshire a safe and prosperous county, and to make it hostile to those who commit crime.

The budget enables the police to prevent and reduce crime, support victims and ensure that there are enough frontline officers to keep communities safe.

In December, the Chancellor announced that he would protect police budgets after a number of years of cuts. To do this, however, the Chancellor expects all police and crime commissioners to make up the shortfall in Government grants by increasing the police share of council tax. This is what I will do. As one of the lowest spending areas of the county, I am able to increase the average council tax by about 10p per week.

By increasing the police share of council tax by 10p per week, Cheshire Constabulary will be able to increase frontline policing by an additional 70 police officers in the coming year. It will be able to invest more in tackling some of the most horrendous sexual crimes, domestic violence and child abuse crimes. And it will be able to put more resources into tackling new issues facing the public – like cybercrime and the threat of extremism.

For 2016/17 financial year, the budget for Cheshire Constabulary will be £192.5million.

I have consulted widely with Cheshire residents and businesses. I am proud of your response, and your willingness to pay a modest increase in your council tax to ensure that Cheshire can continue to be one of the safest counties in the country.

I want to reassure the people of Cheshire that this Constabulary is one of the most cost-effective in the county – only last autumn the independent police watchdog, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary judged Cheshire as ‘outstanding’ for efficiency.

I will be ever vigilant in scrutinising the Constabulary’s spending to ensure that every pound it spends is focused on protecting the people of Cheshire.
The key priorities in the budget are:

- An additional 70 frontline police officers in our communities, bringing the total number of Cheshire police officers to 2,053 by March 2017, helping protect the public of Cheshire
- Further investment in the Constabulary’s public protection team to tackle sexual crimes and domestic abuse, as well as new threats like human trafficking and modern-day slavery
- Further strengthening the Constabulary’s Taskforce, which includes our roads policing unit, to deter and identify organised criminal gangs and those involved in drug crime
- Maintaining my commitment to PCSOs, to ensure that visibility and public engagement is maximised
- Continued investment in technology, including tablet computers, to enable officers to spend more time in local communities
- Increasing the ways the public can access the police (online, local contact points, face to face), including more police community bases in remote locations, ensuring officers are accessible where and when you need them.
- Importantly, the capacity and flexibility to respond to national threats of terrorism and cybercrime

Council tax bands for policing

Cheshire residents currently pay one of the lowest levels of council tax for policing in the country. The Home Secretary has given Police & Crime Commissioners with such low levels of council tax the freedom to raise it by £5 per annum, the equivalent of 3.2% for Cheshire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>Band</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>107.49</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>197.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>125.40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>232.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>143.32</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>268.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>161.23</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>322.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016/17 police precept by council tax band

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government grants</th>
<th>Council tax</th>
<th>Other income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding (£)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government grants</td>
<td>106,248,525</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council tax</td>
<td>58,159,430</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>28,131,736</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Want to know more

- Follow me on Twitter: @CheshirePCC
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/cheshirepcc
- PCC Alert: Register online
- Website: www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk
- Telephone: 01606 364000
All change to protect the future

All of Cheshire Fire Authority’s four new fire stations will be fully operational within the next 12 months as part of a major programme to ensure the organisation can continue to protect local communities in the future.

The new stations will improve overall average emergency response times but changes in how some of them are crewed will help the Authority make some of the £5.1 million in savings it currently expects to have to achieve over the next four years.

Further efficiencies will come from plans to collaborate closely with Cheshire Constabulary and deliver the majority of support services from a single, shared headquarters site by April 2018.

In addition, a major public consultation will start in September 2016 as the Authority sets out further potential efficiencies to its frontline emergency services.

For 2016-17 savings of just under £1 million are required, with almost all of the money coming from cuts to support service budgets. In addition, the Authority is increasing its Council Tax level by 1.99% which means that the amount for a Band D home will be £71.86 – an increase of £1.40 a year or 2.7p per week.

The new stations at Alsager, Penketh, Powey Lane near the M56 and Lymm – where the iconic circular building will also incorporate a state of the art training and safety facility – are expected to cost just under £17.5 million. All of the funding is being met from central grants and a dedicated reserve established by the Authority.

In addition, the Authority’s capital programme for 2016-17 includes:

- £1,143,000 for four new fire engines
- £814,000 on new cutting gear used by crews to rescue people from road traffic collisions
- £154,000 to replace two boats, trailers and vehicles which respond to floods and water rescues
- £76,000 to replace and upgrade defibrillators on all fire engines.

More details about how the Authority aims to protect local communities are set out in ‘Making Cheshire Safer’. This annual publication, also known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2016-17, is on the Service’s website.
Over half of all fires in the home start in the kitchen – stay safe by following our tips:

- Always clean the grill pan after use to stop fat and oil building up
- Never leave cooking unattended
- Make sure that you have a working smoke alarm
- Don’t start cooking if you have had alcohol or are really tired
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from grills and hobs
- Watch out if you are wearing loose clothing.

Sign up to our messaging system to get vital information about major incidents and issues in your area.

The Alert System is a completely free two-way community messaging system which allows you to receive key messages from the Service by text message, email or phone.

To register go to the Service’s website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/MyAccount - and put in your home or work postcode or that of a relative and choose the alerts you want.
Cheshire Fire Authority

The Fire Authority manages the local fire and rescue service on behalf of the community. It comprises 23 councillors – eight from Cheshire East, seven from Cheshire West and Chester, five from Warrington and three from Halton.

Representing Halton
Cllr Phil Harris
Cllr Stef Nelson
Cllr Rob Polhill

Meeting dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed 15</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 21</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 7</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 15</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 26</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All meetings are open to the public, start at 10.30am and are held at the Service Headquarters in Winsford.

All reports and minutes are on the Service’s website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Facts and figures

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service operates:
• 25 Fire Stations
• 4 Community Safety Centres
• 3 Community Fire Protection Offices
• A Headquarters and training facility.

The Authority provides a 24 hour service to just over 1 million people and employs some:
• 643 operational staff
• 238 community safety and other support staff.

Fire budget 2016–17

The Fire Authority has agreed that a budget of £42.1 million is required to provide a fire and rescue service to the communities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington areas for 2016–17.

A total of £25.54 million will need to be raised from local Council Tax, which is equivalent to £71.86 for each Band D dwelling. This is a rise of 1.99%, or 2.7p a week for a Band D home.

The budget equates to a cost per resident of just 81p per week.

Queries about this leaflet should be sent to: Head of Finance, CFRS Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ
t: 01606 868700 e: feedback@cheshirefire.gov.uk
# Estimated expenditure and income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016–17 £m</th>
<th>2015–16 £m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay related expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-pay expenditure</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget requirement</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# How the budget compared with last year

The Fire Authority budget requirement for 2016–17 is £42.1 million compared with a budget of £42.4 million for last year. The reasons for the 0.7% decrease in the overall budget are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£m</th>
<th>% increase (decrease)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last year’s budget</td>
<td>42.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay and price inflation</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential growth</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiencies and Savings</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
<td>(2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRMP &amp; Financing adjustments</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>42.09</td>
<td>(0.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other includes: Allocation of second homes precept, section 31 grants and collection fund adjustments

# Where the money will come from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£m</th>
<th>£ Per Resident</th>
<th>£ Band D Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This year’s budget</td>
<td>42.09</td>
<td>42.09</td>
<td>118.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Government funding assessment and collection fund adjustment</td>
<td>(16.55)</td>
<td>(16.55)</td>
<td>(46.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Council Tax</td>
<td>25.54</td>
<td>25.54</td>
<td>71.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Halton Direct Link
All together - a better way

We are here to help you however you choose to contact us:

In person

If you would like to speak to one of our expert advisors face-to-face you can visit us at Halton Direct link. You will find us at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Halton Lea Shopping Centre</th>
<th>Widnes Brook Street</th>
<th>Granville Street Runcorn Library*</th>
<th>Ditton Library Widnes*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:30 – 16:45</td>
<td>9:30 – 16:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>9:00 – 17:30</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
<td>10:00 – 16:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9:00 – 13:00</td>
<td>9:00 – 13:00</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These are the opening times of the Direct Link desks at the library. Click here for library opening times.

Call us

If it is more convenient for you to use the telephone, then just call our contact centre on 0303 333 4300 we are open 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday.

Whichever way you choose to get in touch, our expert staff will be there to help. They are fully trained to help with Council Tax queries and payments, benefits advice, street lighting repairs, pest control, waste management enquiries and much, much more.

If they cannot help you directly themselves they will ensure your query is passed on to the correct person and that you receive a prompt response.

Visit our website

Don’t forget that our website www.halton.gov.uk has lots of useful information about council services, our borough, facts and figures, what’s on and other local news.

You can also pay your Council Tax online or email us with your questions and comments.

If you do not have access to the internet at home or work, you can use the internet for FREE at one of our libraries or any Halton Direct Link.