

Council Tax 2020/21



Update - 2 April 2020

I know that receiving a bill for your Council Tax during the Coronavirus pandemic is not something many of you will welcome. I want to add a few words to the message I wrote for this booklet a few weeks ago, to explain why it is necessary.

We are required by law to send out the bills once a year to start the process of collecting the money that goes towards the cost of services provided by the Council and the Greater London Authority. Your tax helps with the cost of things like the Police, Fire Brigade, TfL and flood defences, as well as Council services.



I know this is a challenging time for many people, but all of us are working together to manage the pandemic. We are providing care for vulnerable people, including making sure they have food, people leaving hospital and vulnerable young people. At the same time, we are working to maintain the essential services on which we all rely at a time when many staff are not available due to sickness or self-isolation.

Help is available if you are facing financial difficulties, using the link below. We are working to make payments under the special schemes set up the government , as well by seeing how we can help residents who tell us they are in financial difficulties.

It's clear from the response to our call for volunteers and the public support for all those that care for us, that people understand the importance of working together and helping those who need it. That is what we are doing, as well as planning for the time when the pandemic will be over, and life starts to return to normal again.

Finally, if you, or someone you know, has no support from family, friends or neighbours, please ask them to call the Bexley Coronavirus helpline on 020 3045 5398. It's open from 8am to 8pm every day and we will do everything we can to help them.

www.bexley.gov.uk/coronavirus

Stay safe and well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Teresa O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE
Leader of the Council

Making a difference

We have had another successful year. I hope you can see that we are working hard to ensure the borough continues to be an excellent place to live.

We recently completed the roll-out of the new wheelie bins residents told us they wanted. I have had lots of good feedback about them, and we have already started to see an increase in the weight of waste people are recycling.

This year we heard that we were London's number 1 borough for recycling for the 15th year running. Thank you for helping to make this happen. Your support helps makes money available for other vital services, as well as improving our environment.



During the year, we demolished the old Blockbuster store to make way for the new community cinema, library and residential development in Sidcup town centre.

In the north of the borough, we saw the start of work on the new Thamesmead Library. We completed the major improvement work along Harrow Manorway. We also celebrated winning Lottery funding to complete the renovation of the old Erith Library.

Over the past twelve months we organised a range of popular and successful events. They included our Ageing Well day and our Apprenticeship evening. Then there was our annual Book Buzz Festival, the Summer Reading Scheme and the London Youth Games. Not to mention a Royal Visit to Crayford and Hall Place & Gardens to commemorate the centenary of Alcock & Brown's transatlantic flight

Every day, Council staff deliver vital services to more than 250,000 people who live in the borough. These include the social care services that account for most of our spending. You can find out more about where our money comes from and how it is spent over the following pages.

We take our responsibilities to local people very seriously. We work hard to keep our costs down and to find new and better ways to do things.

Population changes and increasing demand for some services are pushing our spending up. But we never forget that we are spending your money.

I hope you agree that Bexley continues to be a green and pleasant place to live. A place that people are happy to call home, to bring up children – and stay as we grow old.

Your home is also our home. Whatever the changes and the challenges we face, we will always aim to do the best for our borough and the people who live here.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Teresa O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single stroke.

Councillor Teresa O'Neill OBE
Leader of the Council

Council Tax for 2020/21

Bexley's Council Tax requirement will result in a Council Tax for band D property with two residents of £1,744.64 in 2020/21.

A comparison of Bexley's and the Greater London Authority's Council Tax for 2020/21 with last year is shown in the table below.

Taxing Authority	2019/20	2020/21	Change
London Borough of Bexley	£1,358.37	£1,412.57	3.99%
Greater London Authority	£320.51	£332.07	3.61%
Total Tax at Band D	£1,678.88	£1,744.64	3.92%

Valiation Band	Range of Values	2019/20	2020/21
A	Up to and including £40,000	£1,119.25	£1,163.10
B	£40,001 - £52,000	£1,305.80	£1,356.94
C	£52,001 - £68,000	£1,492.35	£1,550.79
D	£68,001 - £88,000	£1,678.88	£1,744.64
E	£88,001 - £120,000	£2,051.96	£2,132.34
F	£120,001 - £160,000	£2,425.07	£2,520.04
G	£160,001 - £320,000	£2,798.16	£2,907.74
H	More than £320,000	£3,357.76	£3,489.28

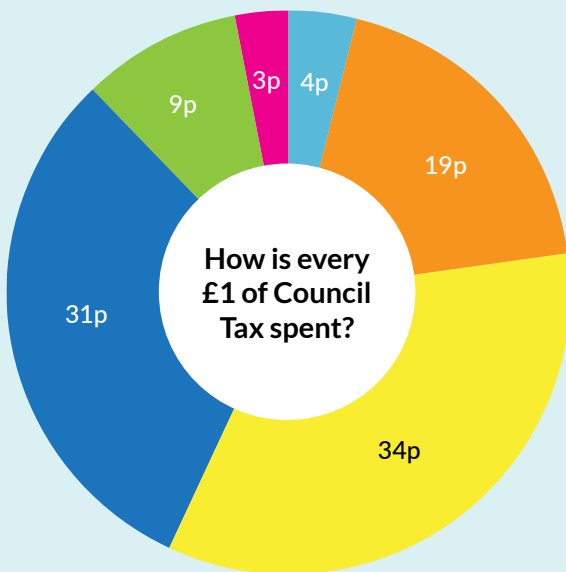
Bexley's Budget and Council Tax Requirement 2020/21

	2019/20			2020/21		
	Spending £m	Income £m	Net Spending £m	Spending £m	Income £m	Net Spending £m
Chief Executive Directorate	9.364	(6.384)	2.980	9.348	(6.563)	2.785
Children and Education	48.431	(11.756)	36.675	47.231	(12.032)	35.198
Adult Social Care and Public Health	69.372	(20.701)	48.671	83.878	(37.089)	46.789
Places, Communities and Infrastructure	79.494	(33.230)	46.264	77.664	(34.260)	43.404
Finance and Corporate	126.054	(106.679)	19.376	125.194	(107.173)	18.021
Schools DSG	80.960	(80.960)	0.000	72.600	(72.600)	0.000
Spending on Services	413.675	(259.710)	153.966	415.915	(269.718)	146.197
London-wide payments and levies			8.114			8.226
Net Financing Costs			9.800			10.600
Contingency Provision			2.700			2.884
Centrally Held			0.000			5.845
Net Spending to be Financed			174.580			173.752
Income from Business Rates and Revenue Support Grant			(49.450)			(45.177)
Other Core Grants			(9.655)			(11.902)
Use of Reserves, Balances and Collection Fund Surplus			(4.972)			(0.533)
Amount to be met from the Council Tax			110.503			116.140



What we spend

In 2020/21, the Council is expecting to raise £116m from Council Tax income and here is how we expect to spend the money.



- Chief Executive Directorate
- Children and Education
- Adult Social Care and Public Health
- Places, Communities and Infrastructure
- Finance and Corporate
- London-wide payments and levies



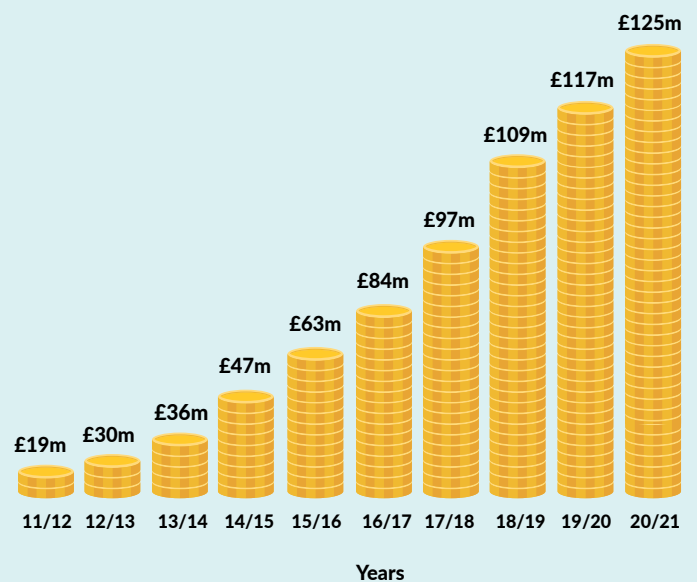
Changes since last year

	£m
Net reduction in Spending on Services	(7.769)
Demographic increases and Inflation	5.845
Increase in Net Financing Costs	0.800
Increase in Contingency	0.184
Reduction in Income from Business Rates Retention	4.273
Increase in Other Core Grants	(2.247)
Increase in London-wide payments and levies	0.112
Reduction in Use of Reserves, Balances and Collection Fund Surplus	4.439
Increase in Council Tax Revenue	5.637



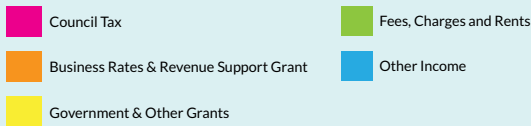
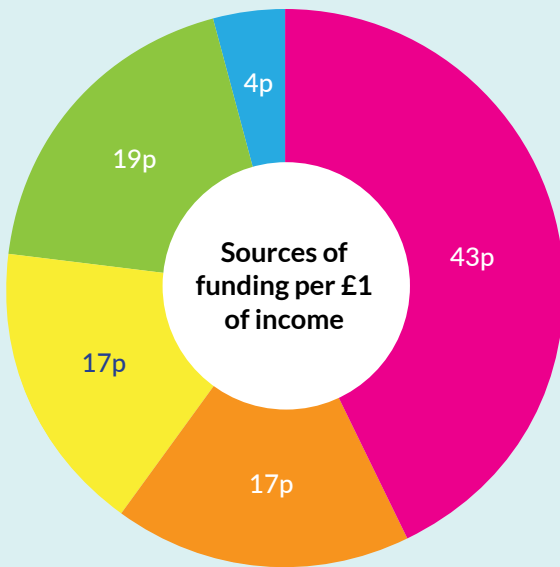
What we have saved

The Council has a good track record for financial management. Savings of around £125m between 2011 and 2020 mean that the Council is in a position again to set a balanced budget.



How is it paid for?

Council Tax is just one of the Council's sources of income.



Adult Social Care Precept

The Secretary of State 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.)

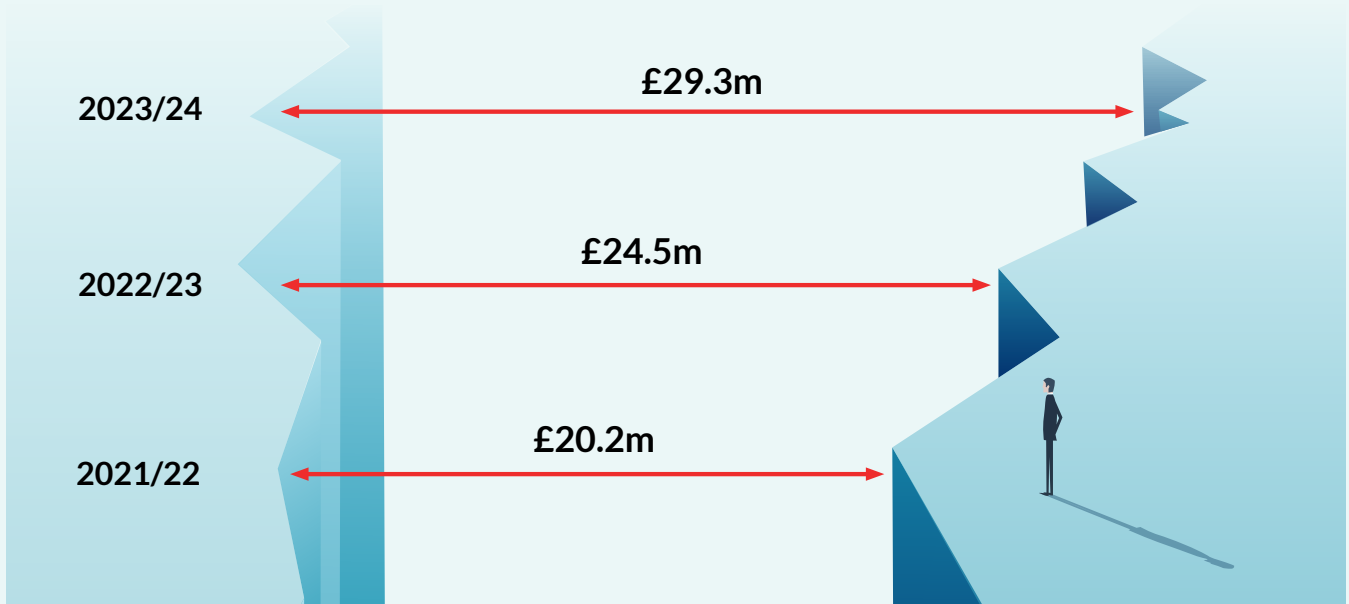
The offer was the option of an adult social care authority being able to charge an additional "precept" on its council tax without holding a referendum, to assist the authority in meeting its expenditure on adult social care from the financial year 2016-17. It was originally made in respect of the financial years up to and including 2019-20. If the Secretary of State chooses to renew this offer in respect of a particular financial year, this is subject to the approval of the House of Commons. The 2020/21 increase in council tax includes an additional 2.00% Adult Social Care Precept.

The future budget gap

The Council has set a balanced budget for the 2020/21 financial year, however there are many challenges ahead. The forecasted budget gap is set to reach £29.3m by 2023/23 due to forecasted reductions in Government funding and increased spending pressures. There continues to be increasing spending pressures in a number of key services, including Children's Social Care, Homelessness, Adult Social Care and families approaching the Council for support who have no access to the wider benefit system - known as No Recourse To Public Funds. The uncertainty around the state of the economy over

the next few years will also have an impact. With prospects of increasing inflation, the amount we pay for services is expected to increase and the current low interest rates means that the income we receive from our investing money continues to be lower than anticipated.

Our challenge is to continue to provide good quality and affordable public services, while balancing our income and spending.



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 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 Committees recommend through the Environment Agency a local levy.

Environment Agency Southern Region

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 3540 kilometres of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the area of the Southern 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:

Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee		
	2019/2020 000s	2020/2021 '000s
Gross Expenditure	£59,910	£88,214
Levies Raised	£1,417	£1,488
Total Council Tax Base	1,842	1,867

A change in the gross budgeted expenditure between 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 by this committee has increased by 5.0%

The total Local Levy raised has increased from £1,416,876 in 2019/2020 to £1,487,720 for 2020/2021.

Environment Agency Thames Region

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 5200 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:

Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee		
	2019/2020 '000s	2020/2021 '000s
Gross Expenditure	£100,146	£101,860
Levies Raised	£11,577	£11,807
Total Council Tax Base	5,085	5,163

A change in the gross budgeted expenditure between 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 by this committee has increased by 1.99%

The total Local Levy raised has increased from £11,576,942 in 2019/2020 to £11,807,323 for 2020/2021.

Greater London Authority

Introduction

The Mayor of London's budget for the 2020-21 financial year is built around his vision of a city where nobody is left behind, and opportunities are open to all. It supports London's future growth and economic success, building on our city's thriving economy, extraordinary creativity, tolerance, diversity and openness to the world.

This year's budget will provide resources to improve the key services Londoners need. This includes delivering more genuinely affordable homes, keeping transport fares as low as possible and tackling toxic air pollution and the climate emergency. The budget also provides resources to support jobs and growth, help rough sleepers, invest in youth services and make London a fairer and cleaner place to live. Moreover, it provides extra resources from council tax and business rates for the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Brigade to keep Londoners safe. Over £100 million in additional funding is being provided by the Mayor to the police, for violence reduction initiatives and to improve opportunities for young Londoners. This will help offset the ongoing impact of the reductions in government funding over the last decade.

Council tax for GLA services

The GLA's share of the council tax for a typical Band D property has been increased by £11.56 (or 22p per week) to £332.07. The additional income raised will fund the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade. Council taxpayers in the City of London, which has its own police force, will pay £79.94.

Council Tax (£)	2019-20	Change	2020-21
MOPAC (Metropolitan Police)	242.13	10.00	252.13
LFC (London Fire Brigade)	53.00	2.28	55.28
GLA	23.38	-0.69	22.69
TfL (Transport)	2.00	-0.03	1.97
Total	320.51	11.56	332.07

Investing in frontline services

This budget will enable the Mayor to fulfil his key priorities for London. These include:

- making transport more affordable. Single bus fares, single pay as you go fares on the Tube and DLR and Santander cycle hire scheme charges have been frozen again in 2020. This will save travellers around £40 million this year. The bus and tram one hour Hopper fare introduced by the current Mayor will also continue;
- continuing to tackle London's housing crisis, using £4.8 billion of funding to support starts of 116,000 new affordable homes by 2022;
- ensuring the Metropolitan Police have the resources they need to tackle violent crime – the Mayor has funded 1,300 additional police officer posts from locally raised council tax and business rates revenues;
- tackling the underlying causes of crime, with £25 million of extra funding to support disadvantaged young Londoners access positive opportunities and constructive activities that allow them to make the most of their potential as well as providing £34 million extra for new violence reduction initiatives;
- protecting vulnerable children and women at risk of abuse and domestic violence;
- tackling the climate emergency through the creation of a new £50 million Green New Deal for London fund;
- providing enough resources to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to ensure that first and second fire engines arrive at emergency incidents, on average, within six and eight minutes respectively. The Mayor is also providing resources to rollout a transformation programme so that the LFB can implement the recommendations of the Grenfell fire inquiry. This includes investing in the new vehicles and equipment required;
- working with London boroughs to maintain existing concessionary travel and assisted door to door transport schemes. This includes free 24 hour travel for the over 60s, the disabled, armed forces personnel in uniform and eligible war veterans and protecting the Taxicard and Dial a Ride schemes. Discounts on travelcards are also available for apprentices;
- increasing capacity and introducing new trains on the London Underground and working to complete the Elizabeth line (formerly Crossrail), the Northern line extension to Battersea Power station and the Overground extension to Barking Riverside as soon as possible. The Mayor will also maintain the Night Tube and Night Overground services;

- investing £2.3 billion in Healthy Streets by 2024 to fund projects to enable more walking and cycling across London. The Mayor will also expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the North and South Circular roads in autumn 2021 to tackle local air pollution;
- making public transport more accessible for everyone. By 2024 nearly 40 per cent of tube stations are expected to be step free. All new Elizabeth line stations will be step free; and
- funding projects to bring Londoners together, promote arts, sports and culture including honouring London's host city commitments for the UEFA 2020 football championships, help tackle inequality, improve the environment, and boost London's economy. The Mayor is providing funding for around 1,000 cultural and community events across London and for the planting of thousands more street trees over the next year.

Summary of GLA budget

The following tables compare the GLA group's spending for 2020-21 with last year and set out why it has changed. The GLA's gross expenditure is higher this year. This is mainly due to the impact of extra investment planned by the Mayor in transport, policing, adult education and the fire service as well as additional business rates receipts being paid over to the Government to support local services elsewhere in England. Overall the council tax requirement has increased because of the extra funding for the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade. There has also been a 1.6 per cent increase in London's residential property taxbase. Find out more about our budget at: www.london.gov.uk/budget (tel: 020 7983 4000).

How the GLA's budget is funded (£ million)	2020-21
Gross expenditure	13,365.9
Government grants and retained business rates	-5,486.6
Fares, charges and other income	-6,787.3
Use of reserves	-81.1
Amount met by council taxpayers (£m)	1,010.9
Changes in spending (£ million)	2020-21
2019-20 council tax requirement	960.6
Inflation	244.8
Efficiencies and other savings	-150.8
New initiatives	512.1
Other changes (for example fares revenue and government grants)	-555.8
Amount met by council taxpayers (£m)	1,010.9

Help with rent and Council Tax

If you are on a low income and having problems paying your Council Tax, you can apply for the Council Tax reduction scheme.

Anyone of working age is required to pay a minimum of the first 20% of their Council Tax bill, although pensioners will still be able to receive maximum support.

If you think you may qualify for help with paying your Council Tax then you can claim online at www.bexley.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

Self Service computers are available at local libraries and Erith Town Hall.

If you wish to spread your payments over 12 instalments instead of 10 please contact us as soon as you receive the new Council Tax bill.

If you wish to seek financial advice from an independent body there are a number of organisations who can provide advice such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Christians Against Poverty, New Community Debt Advice Service, Step Change Debt Charity and Shelter. Further details are available on the Council's website www.bexley.gov.uk/counciltax



The credit union is a not for profit financial co-operative that is open to residents and fully supported by the Council. Members can make regular savings and take out small loans.

More information can be found at: www.gbcreditunion.com or by ringing 020 8855 4344

Win prizes, help good causes

In its first five months, the Bexley Community Lottery has raised more than £20,000 for local community groups.

More than 50 local people have won a cash prize across all the weekly prize draws to date.

Lottery tickets cost just £1. Of this 60p directly supports local community groups who are signed up to the lottery, and the remainder goes towards prizes, VAT and admin costs.

To register as a good cause, or to play, please visit

www.bexleycommunitylottery.co.uk



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