

Council Tax 2021/2022

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Explanatory Notes: *These notes form part of your annual council tax bill. Statement from **Councillor Ian Brookfield**, Leader of the City of Wolverhampton Council:*



What a year we have all endured, when I wrote last year's statement, little did any of us know how much life would be changed by the tragic Covid-19 pandemic. I am proud of how our city has responded to the crisis, we have come together as one city and looked after our own throughout. Providing new services such as the emergency food hub at Aldersley, taking homeless people off the streets and setting up the Stay Safe Be Kind helpline were vital, but extremely costly. Therefore, I am pleased that Central Government has honoured its commitment to meet the costs of the emergency pandemic response. The reality is that the social and economic costs of Covid will be felt for years to come and on top of the £235 million of cuts over the past decade and with no certainty over future years' funding, our budget position over the medium term remains extremely challenging.

When Government calculates how much money they give to councils, their expectation is that we will raise council tax by the maximum amount possible – 1.99%, as well as the additional 3% levy to fund adult social care. Not doing so would mean making more cuts to essential services and being unable to deliver on your priorities. For those who pay full council tax, an increase of 4.99% means an additional £1.08 per week for the majority of households in the city (most Wolverhampton properties are in Band A). We are focussed on relighting our city and investing in your priorities: supporting people who need it most, creating more opportunities for young people, generating jobs and learning opportunities, growing our vital local businesses and stimulating vibrant high streets and communities. Brighter days are ahead for our city and I believe more than ever in our motto: 'out of darkness cometh light'.

How to contact us

Online: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk E-mail: council.tax@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Council tax enquiries: 01902 551166 Letter: PO Box 250, Wolverhampton WV2 1AX

Payments: 24 hour card payments can be made by

Telephone: 0800 180 4464 or Online at: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/make-payment

Information on how your council tax is spent along with leaflets from West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and TfWM are available at

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/how-your-council-tax-is-spent

Do you have any questions about your new bill?

Take a look at the FAQs at www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/council-tax-questions

About the Adult Social Care charge

In relation to the year beginning in 2016 and any subsequent year, 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.

Your council tax demand notice shows two percentage changes: one for the part of the overall change attributable to the adult social care precept, and one for the part attributable to general expenditure.

Can I claim council tax support?

The amount of any reduction depends on the money coming into your home, any savings you have, the number of people living in the property and their income.

If you are of pensionable age you may receive up to 100% reduction in your council tax bill.

People who are severely disabled, have severely disabled children or those who are single and aged under 25 without dependent children will receive a maximum of 88%. Everyone else will receive a maximum of 78%.

You can use our benefit calculator to see if you are entitled.

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/benefits

Charges on empty homes

Full council tax is payable on all property which is unoccupied. If you are the bill payer for a property that has been empty for 2 to 5 years, charges are 200% of the normal charge. If the property has been empty for 5 years or more, the charge increased to 300% of the normal charge from 1 April 2020.

If the property has been empty for 10 years or more, the charge increases to 400% of the normal charge from 1 April 2021.

There is no discount for properties needing or undergoing major repair.

How much does each household pay?

The amount you have to pay depends on the value of the property you live in, it does not matter whether you rent or own the property. There are 8 bands from A to H covering the cheapest to the dearest homes.

The council does not decide what band your property is placed in. If you have an enquiry about the council tax band of your property you need to contact the Valuation Office Agency at www.gov.uk/voa/contact.

If you have lived in your home for more than six months, you can only appeal against the band if part of your home has been demolished, or the physical state of the area where you live has changed.

I'm disabled; can I get a reduction in my council tax?

You may get a reduction in your council tax if you or someone living with you is disabled, and your home contains one of the following:

- A room which provides special facilities for the disabled person and which is mainly used by them.
- A second bathroom or kitchen provided for the disabled person
- Enough floor space for the disabled person to use their wheelchair indoors.

Where a property is in band A, the reduction is one sixth of the full band A charge. Where the property is in any other band, the amount of council tax payable is reduced to the next lowest council tax band.

Can I get a discount?

If you are the only adult living in a property you are entitled to 25% discount.

In most cases the full council tax is due if there are two or more people living in your home, but some people are not counted when deciding if your bill can be reduced.

These people include:

- Children under 18.
- Children over 18 for whom child benefit is still paid.
- School leavers who are between 'A' level exams and going to university or full time college (excluding those on a gap year).
- Certain youth training scheme trainees and apprentices.
- Foreign language students and their husband, wife or partner.

- People living permanently in a nursing home or hospital.
- People providing care to another person who is not their husband, wife, partner or child under 18.
- Persons with severe mental impairment as confirmed by a doctor and receiving certain state benefits.
- People in prison or detained in hospital under a court order, the Mental Health Act or the Armed Forces Act.
- People living in a bail or probation hostel, or a hostel for people with no settled way of life.
- Young people who were in the care of City of Wolverhampton Council (including those young people who received care outside the city but have since returned to live in Wolverhampton) and are aged over 18 but under 25.

Annexes - You may be able to claim 50% discount if you live in an annex and your relatives live in the main property. Please contact us for further information.

Is my property exempt?

Your property may be exempt from council tax if it is:

- Unoccupied because the occupier is permanently resident in a nursing home or hospital.
- Unoccupied because the previous occupier has moved to provide or receive care due to illness or old age.
- Empty property which cannot be occupied by law.
- Unoccupied after the occupier has died, and where probate was not granted more than 6 months ago.

- Repossessed by the bank or building society.
- Occupied solely by full time students and/or mentally impaired people.

If you have two homes, one of which is occupied in connection with your employment, the job-related dwelling will receive a 50% discount.

Appeals against council tax liability

You have the right to appeal against decisions by the council such as:

- Where you think you should not be liable to pay.
- Where you have not been awarded a personal discount or exemption that you think you are entitled to.

If you wish to appeal, you should write to the council tax office, stating the grounds for your appeal and enclosing any supporting evidence you have. You should continue to pay council tax whilst your appeal is being decided. If you win your appeal any council tax overpaid will be refunded to you.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you are having difficulty paying it is better to contact us as soon as possible to make an arrangement to pay, rather than receive further recovery letters and incur extra costs.

If you don't pay enough or if you miss a payment the Council will send you a reminder. If you don't bring your payments up to date and keep them up to date, you will get a summons to go to the Magistrates' Court. When a summons is issued, extra costs are added to the amount you owe. If you don't pay the full amount on the summons, the Council will apply for a

liability order through the Magistrates' Court with extra costs added.

If you still don't pay, the Council can:

- Send the debt to an Enforcement Agent who will charge you extra costs to collect the debt and may take your possessions or company assets to sell to pay your debt. As soon as the Enforcement Agent receives the debt to collect they will send you a notice and you will have to pay at least £75 fees. If the Enforcement Agent visits your property to collect the debt you will have to pay at least a further £235 fees.
- Have the money taken out of your wages, income support, job seekers allowance, employment support allowance, universal credit or pension credit.
- Apply for you to be made bankrupt.
- Apply for a charging order on your property.
- Take action to commit you to prison.

Data Protection and Data Matching

The Council is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you provide for the recovery of amounts due, and the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

For more information visit Privacy and Cookies available at www.wolverhampton.gov.uk