

Birmingham



Budget for Birmingham 2014/15 Council tax help and information notes



Message from the Leader of the Council	3
Budget and council objectives	4-5
How budgets are put together	6
Spending	7
Detailed council tax figures	8
Environment Agency Midlands Region	9
Council tax – help and information	10-11
Help and information for visually impaired people	11
Council tax bands	12
Council tax reductions	13
Exemptions	14
Council Tax Support	15
Help and advice	16
How to pay	17
Don't fall into the debt trap	18



A message from the Leader

Local government is undergoing fundamental change as Birmingham faces unprecedented Government cuts. As a result of these grant cuts and other pressures we have had to identify a further £85.7 million of cuts in our budget for 2014-15, on top of the £375 million already made between 2010 and 2014.

Next year we will have to make even bigger cuts – currently estimated at more than £200 million. The average cut in spending power (as defined by the Government) for 2014/15 across England will be £71.44 per dwelling. In Birmingham it will be £145.33. Spending power relates to the total income the council gets, including government grant, council tax and business rates.

The city council has been making radical changes to the way we work and achieving significant efficiency savings for several years, under both this political administration and the last. It is inevitable that next year we will have to make hard decisions about which optional services to stop providing altogether, and we may even find it difficult to maintain statutory services to the standard expected.

We consulted with the public over our budget for 2014-15 and conducted a comprehensive programme of service reviews. Your views were collected and considered and everything helped shape this year's financial planning.

We are required by law to meet our statutory obligations and to balance the books. But given the current climate, we shall be asking tough questions of Government as to what exactly we are supposed to be providing and how, given the scale of the cutbacks.

Our consultation process is ongoing. The 'Standing Up For Birmingham' campaign encourages the people of Birmingham to tackle this funding crisis together. We need more partnership working. We need to build strong relationships with our thriving business community, third sector and voluntary groups. And we need to tap into the pride we all have in our great city, and make it greater still despite the challenges ahead.

Our priority is to protect the vulnerable and ensure the continuation of essential services. We also want to build a future for Birmingham that sees us leading the way towards a new period of growth, stability and opportunity for all.

Councillor Sir Albert Bore,
Leader of the Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Bore', written over a circular blue stamp or seal.

Budget and council objectives

A future council

Birmingham City Council has undergone the most extensive service review it has ever conducted, with more residents than ever before participating. The aim is to make significant savings. Changes in how services will be delivered are reflected in the budget plans for 2014-15.

The core mission of the city council is to work together to create:

A fair city: where people are safe, healthy and not living in poverty.

A prosperous city: where businesses flourish, where people have education and training and where unemployment is low.

A democratic city: where people have more say in local decision-making.

Birmingham City Council's priorities

It is critical the council prioritises how it uses diminishing resources. In the year ahead the focus will be on:

- Protecting the most vulnerable citizens of the city from the impact of cuts. Priorities are children, young people, and social care for adults with substantial or critical needs.
- Protecting the highest priority services and delivering them more efficiently. Priorities include essential environmental services such as refuse collection.
- Taking forward the policy development programmes most critical to our goals.
- Continuing to work towards our objectives and getting the most from the significantly reduced resources available.

A new structure with new goals

The council is committed to changing the way it delivers its services and will **work with others** to seek new providers and **work differently** by joining services. This is to ensure provision is focused on the 'whole person' or 'whole place' rather than requiring people to access lots of different services.

During 2014-15 the council will be creating a new streamlined structure of three directorates – **People, Place and Economy**.

People: supporting children, young people and families, helping disabled people, older people, education and public health

Place: delivering localisation and clean, green and safe neighbourhoods

Economy: bringing jobs to Birmingham and helping local people access them

Council Tax

There will be a rise of 1.99 per cent in the city council's element of the council tax for 2014-15. Central Government offered a grant to councils who freeze their council tax at the current levels for 2014/15, but if the Council takes this grant rather than increase council tax, it will end up with around £1.7m less income in 2014/15 and each year after this. If the Government was to continue to offer a freeze grant in similar circumstances in future years, the negative impact on Council income would get greater and greater. So freezing council tax means more savings would need to be found elsewhere.

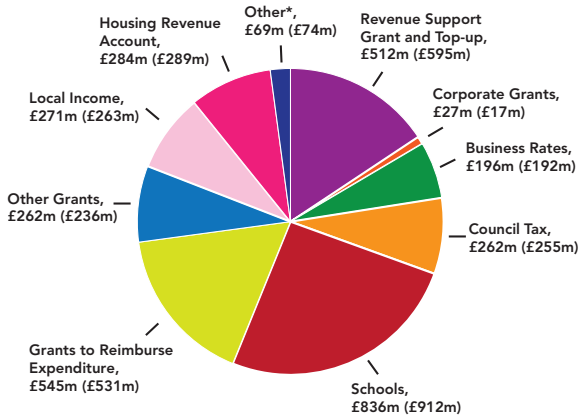
The new service review process 2014

As with last year's process, Birmingham City Council will engage in a public dialogue on the initial findings of new service reviews now being commenced, before the formal public consultation on the 2015-16 budget takes place at the end of the year. For more information on the consultation process please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/budgetviews

How budgets are put together

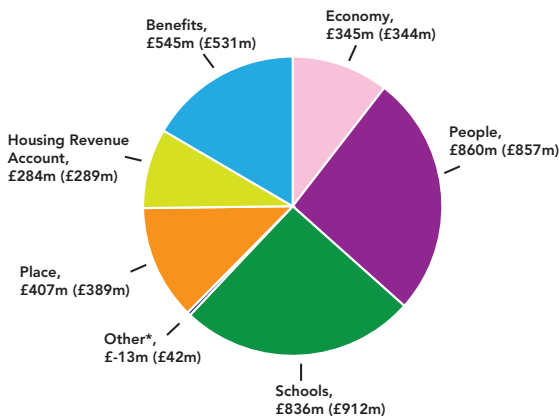
Revenue expenditure involves spending on the day-to-day running costs of the council, e.g. employees, premises, supplies and services.

Where the money comes from 2014/15 – Total £3,264m (£3,364m) (Adjusted 2013/14 figures in brackets)



* Other includes: Use of Reserves & Balances and costs recovered by charging capital accounts

Where the money is spent 2014/15 – Total £3,264m (£3,364m) (Adjusted 2013/14 figures in brackets)



* Other includes: Corporately Managed Budgets and Use of Reserves & Balances

Spending

SPENDING	Adjusted 13/14 £m	14/15 £m	% change
Gross Expenditure	3,363.660	3,264.027	-2.96
Less Revenue Support Grant and Top Up	-595.050	-511.707	-14.01
Less Business Rates	-191.717	-195.762	2.11
Less Other Income	-2,321.835	-2,294.828	-1.16
Charge to council taxpayers	255.058	261.730	2.62
Divided by the taxbase (Band D property equivalents)	229,025	230,432	0.61
Council tax for City Council services (Band D)	£1,113.67	£1,135.82	1.99
For each £1 million change in gross spend Band D council tax would be affected as follows:	£4.37	£4.34	

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council estimates gross expenditure in 2014/15 of £87,811 (£87,842 in 2013/14). It has estimated that its net expenditure will be £52,868 (£46,823 2013/14) which it is levying as a precept in 2014/15, equivalent to £41.76 per property in Band D (£41.40 for 2013/14). Its charge will be made only to council taxpayers in the parish. For each £1,000 change in gross spend, 2014/15 Band D council tax would be affected by +/-£0.79.

HOW SPENDING HAS CHANGED FROM 2013/14

	£m
CITY COUNCIL GROSS EXPENDITURE 2013/14 WAS:	3,364
School Expenditure & Funding	-76
Housing Revenue Account	-5
Budget issues and policy choices*	36
Savings*	-79
Benefit Expenditure	14
Other	10
CITY COUNCIL GROSS EXPENDITURE 2014/15 IS:	3,264

* in addition some pressures and savings relate to income and so do not affect gross expenditure

Council tax

HOW COUNCIL TAX HAS CHANGED FROM 2013/14

	£m
CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT 2013/14 WAS:	255
Revenue Support Grant and Top Up	83
Budget issues and policy choices*	38
Savings*	-86
Corporately Managed Budgets	-6
Changes in Corporate Grants	-10
Movement in Reserves	-10
Other	-2
CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT 2014/15 IS:	262

* includes pressures and savings relating to income that do not affect gross expenditure

	2013/14	2014/15	% change
Council tax for City Council services (Band D)	£1,113.67	£1,135.82	1.99
Fire and Rescue Authority precept	£52.82	£53.87	1.99
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner	£102.43	£104.47	1.99
Gives a total council tax (Band D)	£1,268.92	£1,294.16	1.99

Detailed council tax figures

Council tax 2014/15

Band	City Council	Fire and Rescue Authority	West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner	Total	New Frankley in Birmingham	
					Parish Precept	Parish Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
A	757.22	35.91	69.65	862.78	27.84	890.62
B	883.42	41.90	81.25	1,006.57	32.48	1,039.05
C	1,009.62	47.88	92.86	1,150.36	37.12	1,187.48
D	1,135.82	53.87	104.47	1,294.16	41.76	1,335.92
E	1,388.23	65.84	127.69	1,581.76	51.04	1,632.80
F	1,640.63	77.81	150.90	1,869.34	60.32	1,929.66
G	1,893.04	89.78	174.12	2,156.94	69.60	2,226.54
H	2,271.65	107.73	208.94	2,588.32	83.52	2,671.84

Environment Agency Midlands Region

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

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

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 4,855 kilometres of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the areas of the Severn and the Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (2,486 and 2,369 respectively). 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:

Severn Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

	2013/14	2014/15
Gross expenditure	£10.546m	£9.421m
Levies raised	£1.064m	£1.064m
Total council tax base (Band D property equivalents)	865,000	885,000

Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

	2013/14	2014/15
Gross expenditure	£34.320m	£37.677m
Levies raised	£1.936m	£1.936m
Total council tax base (Band D property equivalents)	1,634,000	1,658,000

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

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

The total Local Levy raised has remained the same in 2014/2015 as 2013/2014 at £3.000m (£1.064m & £1.936m respectively). Birmingham's share in 2014/15 is £0.269m.

Council tax – help and information

Council Tax – help and information

If you have any difficulty understanding this part of the leaflet or you want more help with your council tax you can:

Go to the website at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/council-tax

You will find information about council tax, along with forms you can use to ask questions about your account, or to tell us about changes in your circumstances. Please quote your account reference number, if you have one, when contacting us.

Text phone: 0121 303 1119 (Registered users only)

Write to: Birmingham City Council, Economy Directorate, Revenues Department, PO Box 5, Birmingham B4 7AB

Fair Processing Statement – Customer First

Any personal data held by Birmingham City Council, in relation to your council tax or business rates bill, will be held in full compliance with the legal obligations as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and in accordance with the council's privacy policy. A copy is available at any council library or on the Birmingham City Council website: www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy

Birmingham City Council will incorporate the names and addresses held in the council tax and business rates systems into customer services systems. This is in line with the privacy policy.

Changes in circumstances

You are required by law to inform the council if there is a change that affects your council tax charge, for example, if you receive a discount or exemption and the conditions no longer apply. This could be where you are not the only person in your property aged 18 years and over and therefore no longer qualify for a single person discount. You should also advise us if you change address, or if a different person should now be liable to pay the bills.

You must inform the council's revenues and benefits team immediately of any change in your circumstances. Failure to do so, without reasonable excuse, could result in a financial penalty.

You can do this by visiting www.birmingham.gov.uk/changeincircs

Council tax – help and information

If you wish to claim Council Tax Support or if you are claiming Council Tax Support and have a change in your circumstances that you wish to report, you can do so by accessing the Birmingham City Council website:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits

Help and information for visually impaired people

Please telephone 0121 303 1113 to register for our large print services. We can provide you with information relating to your council tax bill in large print, audiotape or Braille.

Council tax bands and liability

Council tax is the way in which Birmingham City Council receives some of the money it needs to provide local services. The amount you pay is based on the value of your property. There are eight bands set by the Government. Your band is shown on your council tax bill.

Band	Property value	Band	Property value
A	Up to and including £40,000	E	£88,001 – £120,000
B	£40,001 – £52,000	F	£120,001 – £160,000
C	£52,001 – £68,000	G	£160,001 – £320,000
D	£68,001 – £88,000	H	More than £320,000

Appeals against banding

You can appeal against the banding of newly occupied properties, or properties which have had a major change in structure, or use of facilities. It is not possible to appeal on the grounds of general changes in the property market, or if an appeal has been made before.

The property value is based on 1991 prices.

If you have any questions concerning the banding of your property contact:

The Listing Officer, Council Tax West, Valuation Office Agency, Overline House,
Central Station, Blechynden Terrace, Southampton, SO15 1GW
Telephone: 03000 501501. Website is www.voa.gov.uk

Council tax liability

The person liable to pay council tax is the person who first fits one of the descriptions listed below, starting with one and working through to six. More than one person can be held liable if they are on the same level. Husbands and wives, or partners, are usually jointly liable. In some cases, the owner of a property will have to pay the council tax, rather than the residents (e.g. houses in multiple occupation, care homes or nursing homes).

1. Resident owner
2. Resident leaseholder
3. Resident statutory or secure tenant
4. Resident with a licence to occupy
5. Resident aged 18 or over
6. Owner

Appeals against liability

If you think that you are not the person who should have to pay council tax, see help and information on pages 10 and 11.

You should not withhold payment of your council tax if you are waiting for a decision on whether your banding or liability is correct or whether you are entitled to Council Tax Support.

Council tax reductions

People with disabilities

If your home has special facilities for someone in your household who is disabled, it may be possible to get your bill reduced. You may be able to get a reduction if, for example:

- You have a room needed by the disabled person for a special purpose (e.g. dialysis equipment)
- You have an extra bathroom or kitchen for the disabled person
- There is enough floor space for someone who uses a wheelchair within the home

You will need to complete an application form to receive this reduction. Please call us on 0121 303 1113 for an application form.

Annexes occupied by a relative

From 1 April 2014 a discount of up to 50% can be awarded where a relative is occupying an annexe and a charge is payable.

You will need to complete an application form to receive this reduction. Please call us on 0121 303 1113 for an application form.

Personal discounts

The full bill is only payable if there are at least two adults living in the property. In certain circumstances you may be entitled to a reduction:

- If you are the only adult aged 18 years and over living in your property you can apply for a 25% discount

Some people are not counted when looking at the number of adults in a property.

The main categories are:

- Full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- People caring for someone living in the property who has a disability, and who is not their spouse, partner or child aged under 18 years
- 18 and 19 year olds who are at, or who have just left, school or college
- Patients resident in hospital
- People who are being looked after in care homes
- People in prison (except those in prison for non-payment of council tax or a fine)

For further information, or to make an application, please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/discounts-and-exemptions-form

Exemptions

Exempt properties

Some properties are exempt from council tax.

For a full list please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/exemptions

However, the main categories are:

- A property left unoccupied by a person detained in custody
- A property left unoccupied by patients now resident in a hospital or care home
- A property left unoccupied because the owner or tenant has died, for a maximum of six months after probate has been granted
- A property left empty by people receiving care
- A property left empty by people providing care
- A property left empty by someone who is now a full-time student living elsewhere
- A property occupied solely by full-time students, or by some non-British dependants of students
- A property left empty by a bankrupt
- A vacant caravan pitch or boat mooring
- A property occupied only by people aged under 18 years
- An unoccupied annexe which cannot be let separately without a breach of planning control
- A property occupied only by people who are severely mentally impaired (including the liable person)
- Certain properties occupied by diplomats
- An annexe occupied by an elderly or disabled relative

You will need to complete an application form to receive any reduction or exemption.

For further information, or to make an application please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/discounts-and-exemptions-form

Where a property has been empty and unfurnished for a period of two years a council tax charge of up to 150% may be applied

Council Tax Support

Why should I claim Council Tax Support?

Council Tax Support is money off your council tax bill. This means that your bill could be reduced. Council Tax Support can be paid in addition to any other reductions in your bill.

Claimants of working age (other than those listed below) will have their Council Tax Support assessment based on a maximum of 80% of their council tax liability.

Claimants will have their Council Tax Support assessment based on 100% of their council tax liability if the:

- Claimant or their partner is a pensioner
- Claimant or their partner is entitled to a disability premium, severe disability premium, enhanced disability premium or disabled child premium
- Claimant or their partner is entitled to employment support allowance and receives a qualifying disability related benefit
- Claimant or their partner qualifies for a carer's premium
- Claimant or their partner receives a war disablement pension, war widow's pension or war widower's pension
- Claimant or their partner has a dependent child under six

You may still qualify for Council Tax Support even if:

- You are working
- You have other income such as a works pension or a private pension
- You have savings, unless these are more than £16,000

How much can I get?

The amount of Council Tax Support you get depends on your individual circumstances and takes account of any income you (and that of a partner, if you have one) get from working, pensions, benefits and tax credits, any savings over £6,000 and your household circumstances including any other people who live with you.

The people who live with you other than your partner and dependant children are called non-dependants. For every non-dependant that lives with you there could be a reduction in the overall amount of Council Tax Support that you are awarded.

Help and advice

Some people might not know how to claim, others might think it is too complicated. If you have not claimed Council Tax Support, but would like to know if you are entitled to it, you can find out further information about this at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits

If you already get Council Tax Support, you do not need to make a new claim.

Your Council Tax Support will be taken off your bill. If your circumstances change you must tell us immediately as this could affect your Council Tax Support entitlement.

For more information on the Council Tax Support scheme, go online to www.birmingham.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

Other benefit changes

The Government has introduced major changes to a number of benefits through the Welfare Reform Act. If you have been affected by these changes and you need help and guidance please visit our webpage www.birmingham.gov.uk/welfarereform

Benefit fraud – Help us stamp it out

Do you know anyone committing benefit fraud or any other type of fraud against the council? Anyone wishing to report a suspected benefit fraud should call, in confidence, the Local Authority Fraud Hotline on **0800 854 440 (0800 328 0512 Textphone)**, or write to NBFH, PO Box 224, Preston, PR1 1GP

How to pay

Please note that your payment date is the 1st of the month and on 1st of the month thereafter, commencing in April, unless you pay by Direct Debit when you will have a choice of payment dates.

Monthly direct debit payers have the choice of paying on 8th, 15th, 21st or 28th of the month. You can also pay by direct debit if you pay yearly or half yearly. Your payment dates will be 1 April 2014 and the balance by 1 October 2014.

Direct debit is the easiest way to pay, and you are protected by the direct debit guarantee. If you would like to pay your council tax by direct debit, it could not be simpler. Just call us on 0121 303 1113, advise us of your chosen payment date and provide us with your relevant details. We will do the rest.

Online – Visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/council-tax where you can make payment by debit or credit card.

By telephone using debit / credit card – Call 0121 464 2001 to make payment on the 24-hour automated payment system.

If you pay by any of the following methods, you must allow five days for your payment to reach us.

Payment card – If you have a payment card, you can take this to any post office. If you pay by cheque at the post office you must make it payable to 'Post Office Counters Ltd'. You can also pay at any shop displaying the PayPoint or PayZone logo – only cash is accepted at these outlets.

By post – to Birmingham City Council, Economy Directorate, Revenues Department, PO Box 5, Birmingham B4 7AB. Cheques / Postal Orders should be made payable to Birmingham City Council – writing your payment reference number on the reverse. Please do not send your payment card, if you have been issued with one. Cash must not be sent in the post and do not staple, pin or fold cheques. Receipts will only be issued if a stamped self-addressed envelope is provided.

If the front of your bill shows that you will be paying by payment card, you should continue to use the card you used last year.

Whether you choose the post office, PayPoint or PayZone please take your payment card with you.

Don't fall into the debt trap

All payments must be received by the due dates shown on your bill, or you will receive a reminder notice. If payments are not made on time, you may be subject to enforcement action. This can involve deductions from your income, bankruptcy proceedings, a charging order, enforcement agency action or an application to commit you to prison. Substantial costs are involved - which you will have to pay.

If you have difficulties paying your council tax, please contact us on 0121 303 1113.

Paying by direct debit ensures you do not miss payments. Call 0121 303 1113 to arrange this. For information on all council services visit www.birmingham.gov.uk

Service improvement

The council has tracing software which enables us to identify and recover outstanding council tax from people who leave their property without paying.

Comments / compliments / complaints – your views

We are committed to providing our customers with an excellent level of service and support the city council's 'Your Views' policy.

If you would like to raise anything about the service you have received, whether it is a comment, compliment or complaint, please let us know by visiting www.birmingham.gov.uk/yourviews or contact us using the details available in the help and information section of this booklet.

GET COUNCIL STUFF SORTED

ANYTIME

[birmingham.gov.uk/
doitonline](http://birmingham.gov.uk/doitonline)



Keep up to date with services!
click on the logo at birmingham.gov.uk

Connect
Birmingham
Sign up for email alerts



Popular Council Services

Use the following shortcuts on birmingham.gov.uk to find out more about popular council services:-

Council tax

Council tax payment - birmingham.gov.uk/directdebit

Change of address or other personal details - birmingham.gov.uk/changeincircons

Rubbish and recycling

Garden waste - birmingham.gov.uk/greenrecycling

Bulky waste - birmingham.gov.uk/bulkywaste

Fly tipping - birmingham.gov.uk/fly-tipping

Missed collections - birmingham.gov.uk/refuse

Transport and streets

Parking or bus lane fines - birmingham.gov.uk/pcn

Park and pay by phone - parkmobile.co.uk

Potholes and other road problems - birmingham.gov.uk/roadrepair

Planning

Planning applications and comments - birmingham.gov.uk/planningapplications

Planning breaches - birmingham.gov.uk/planningenforcement

Planning appeals - birmingham.gov.uk/planningappeals

Leisure

Leisure centre memberships - birmingham.gov.uk/leisurecard

Leisure centres - birmingham.gov.uk/leisurecentres

Libraries - birmingham.gov.uk/libraries

Library catalogue - birmingham.gov.uk/libcat