

Birmingham

Budget for Birmingham 2012/13 Council tax help and information notes



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A message from the Leader...



Birmingham is a successful, vibrant city that celebrates its cultural diversity. A city of culture, cuisine, enterprise and opportunity. A great place to live, learn, work and visit: a global city with a local heart.

In setting our budget the council is continuing to respond to one of the most significant challenges in public sector finances for generations – our contribution to tackling the national deficit means we are having to make savings of £400m+ over a four-year period (£200m+ of which have had to be made in the first year).

This is a challenge we have tackled head on, with a commitment to deliver services and savings. Our priority remains to protect critical outcomes for the people who rely on us, whilst providing quality services at a price that's fair.

In support of our budget we have carried out the largest consultation exercise in the council's history to help shape our priorities for the future.

We have a strong track-record when it comes to managing challenges and our finances. In 2011 we were awarded a "Aaa" Credit Rating by the ratings agency Moody's – an accolade many countries and large companies would be envious of!

In this year's budget, we are acknowledging the difficult financial times for everyone. Birmingham already has the lowest level of council tax of any major city, and our average 1.4% increase over the last seven years is the lowest of any metropolitan authority.

This year to ease the burden on all households – the council's element of council tax in 2012/13 will stay at the same level as in the previous year.

Critically, despite a contraction in budgets, we are still spending £3.5 billion on quality public services and the transformation of the city, and we are still investing in new frontline services. In 2012 we opened the first new swimming pool in Birmingham for over 20 years; and in 2013 we will be opening Europe's largest public library.

The council remains committed to providing quality services and investing in tomorrow's world, and I am confident Birmingham has a bright future.

Councillor Mike Whitty,
Leader of the Council

A message from the Deputy Leader...



Our ambitions and commitment to the people of Birmingham remain as strong as ever and our council priorities remain resolute. We continue to work with our partners to protect vulnerable people, encourage investment to create jobs and help people into work. We will also continue to improve education and skills and provide a clean, green and safe city.

These are challenging times for us all and we have put plans in place to ensure that we deliver on our promises to the people of Birmingham.

The world financial situation has necessarily influenced our plans and agenda, but we have still continued to develop and make progress in many areas. Birmingham is still one of the safest of the large cities in the UK and continues to lead the way as a green, sustainable city by tackling fuel poverty and providing employment opportunities in this area.

We have always been a forward looking city, leading nationally on the digital agenda, placing Birmingham in an excellent position to compete for investment and jobs in the future. It is vital that Birmingham is at the forefront of new technologies and this council has supported many successful initiatives to make this possible.

We will continue to work with our partners to provide quality services for the people of Birmingham and will remain a vibrant city, for our residents and visitors. We are keeping our promises; working with our partners in the public, private and voluntary sector and delivering the key outcomes for us all.



Councillor Paul Tilsley,
Deputy Leader of the Council

Budget and Council Objectives

Over the last 12 months Birmingham City Council has shown its commitment to helping reduce the national deficit. In the 2011/12 financial year an ambitious savings target was set and strong action has been taken across the organisation to achieve these savings.

Transforming the council – how savings have been made

Since 2006 Birmingham City Council has made some major changes to the way it operates in order to make massive savings. Millions have already been saved through cutting management and back office costs and re-designing services to improve them and make them more efficient.

Financial systems, procurement, people management, the use of property and customer services have all been transformed. The amount of spending which complies with contracts has risen dramatically, the office space occupied by staff has reduced by 25 per cent and the number of customer enquiries resolved on first contact has risen by 30 per cent.

This transformation programme continues and it will lead to even more savings and improvements in how the council operates. However these savings alone are not enough.

The economic challenge continues

For the 2012/13 financial year the economic challenge is continuing and further new savings of £61.9 million need to be achieved along with previously planned savings of £38.9 million. In order to decide where changes should be made the council carried out its biggest ever budget consultation from October 2011 to January 2012 with residents, staff, local business and organisations in Birmingham all contributing.

Thousands of comments were received and these were taken into account when the council's budget for 2012/13 was approved.

The council's priorities – putting people first

Despite savings having to be made, the council's number one priority is still to provide the essential services that Birmingham people want and need most. The council will work within its means to:

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- Protect vulnerable people (children and adults)
- Create jobs and help local people into work
- Improve local people's job prospects through providing better education and skills
- Make sure that Birmingham continues to be a clean, green and safe city

Birmingham's response to the economic situation

The challenging economic situation is an international and national problem but its impact has been felt locally and the rise in unemployment rates is a clear example of the challenges local people are facing. The council's response to this has been to help stimulate job creation in the local economy and support the people of Birmingham. This is being achieved through projects such as:

- The formation of a Local Enterprise Partnership to support economic development and enterprise as well as encouraging job creation and skills growth
- The creation of an Enterprise Zone which will boost jobs in the city and generate millions of pounds for Birmingham
- The introduction of the Birmingham Energy Savers scheme, a multi award winning project to improve city homes by making them more energy efficient
- High profile projects such as the regeneration of New Street Station and the construction of Library of Birmingham, which are committed to employing local people
- Support for the High Speed Rail project which now has government backing

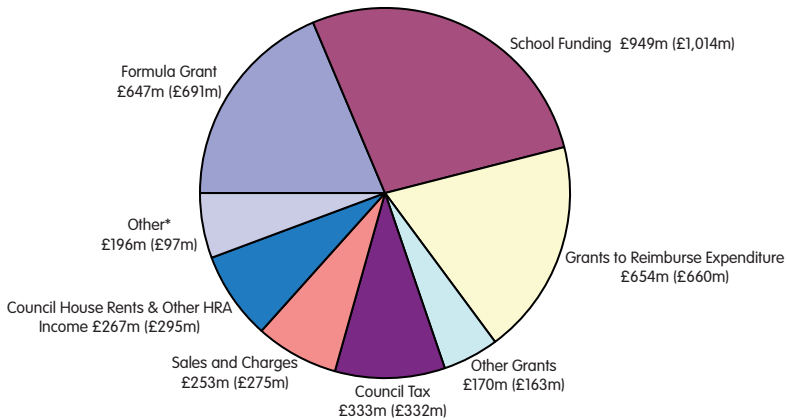
Council tax

In recent years Birmingham City Council has minimised increases in council tax and in 2012 it will once again take up the additional grant offered by the government so that the council's element of council tax in 2012/13 will stay at the same level as in the previous year. This means that Birmingham will continue to have one of the lowest levels of council tax of all the major cities in England.

How budgets are put together

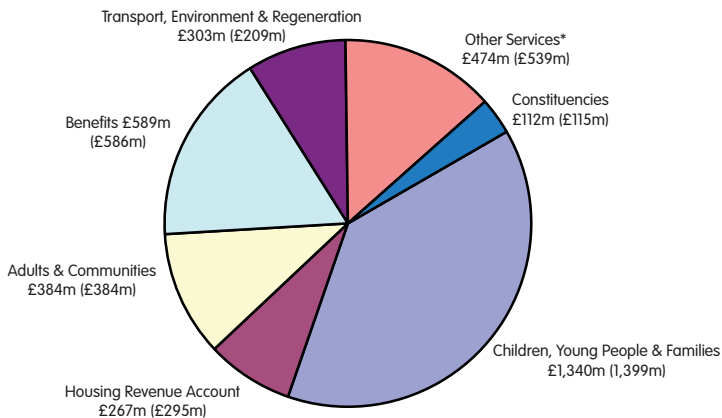
Revenue expenditure involves spending on the day-to-day running costs of the council, eg employees, premises, supplies and services.

Where the money comes from 2012/13 - Total £3,469m (£3,527m) (2011/12 figures in brackets)



*Other includes: Rents, Reimbursements & Contributions, & Use of Corporate Reserves

Where the money is spent 2012/13 - Total £3,469m (£3,527m) (2011/12 figures in brackets)



* Other Services includes: Central departments/budgets, Housing General Fund, Leisure, Sport and Culture, Local Services & Community Safety and Regulatory Committees

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Spending and council tax

	'11/'12 £m	'12/'13 £m	% change
Gross Expenditure	3,526.518	3,469.143	-1.6
Less Formula Grant	-691.206	-646.520	-6.5
Less Other Income	-2,503.114	-2,489.405	-0.5
Charge to council taxpayers	332.198	333.218	0.3
Divided by the taxbase (Band D property equivalents)	298,292	299,208	0.3
Council tax for City Council services (Band D)	£1,113.67	£1,113.67	0.0
For each £1 million change in gross spend Band D council tax would be affected as follows:	3.35	3.34	+/-0.3

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council estimates gross expenditure in 2012/13 of £85,295 (£89,020 in 2011/12) and is levying a precept for 2012/13 of £85,120 (£88,720 for 2011/12), equivalent to £40.59 per property in Band D (£42.57 for 2011/12). Its charge will be made only to council taxpayers in the parish. For each £1,000 change in gross spend, 2012/13 Band D council tax would be affected by +/-£0.48.

HOW SPENDING HAS CHANGED FROM 2011/12

CITY COUNCIL GROSS EXPENDITURE 2011/12 WAS:

£m
3,527

School Funding	-65
Fees & Charges	-23
Housing Revenue Account	-28
Technical accounting adjustment offset by additional income	100
Budget pressures and policy choices	37
Savings	-98
Other	19

CITY COUNCIL GROSS EXPENDITURE 2012/13 IS:

3,469

HOW COUNCIL TAX HAS CHANGED FROM 2011/12

CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT 2011/12 WAS:

£m
332

Inflation	8
Formula Grant	45
Pressures*	40
Savings*	-101
Other	9

CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT 2012/13 IS:

333

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

Council tax for City Council

services (Band D)	£1,113.67	£1,113.67	0.0
Fire and Rescue Authority precept	£47.83	£47.83	0.0
Police Authority precept	£99.45	£99.45	0.0
Gives a total council tax (Band D)	£1,260.95	£1,260.95	0.0

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Detailed council tax figures

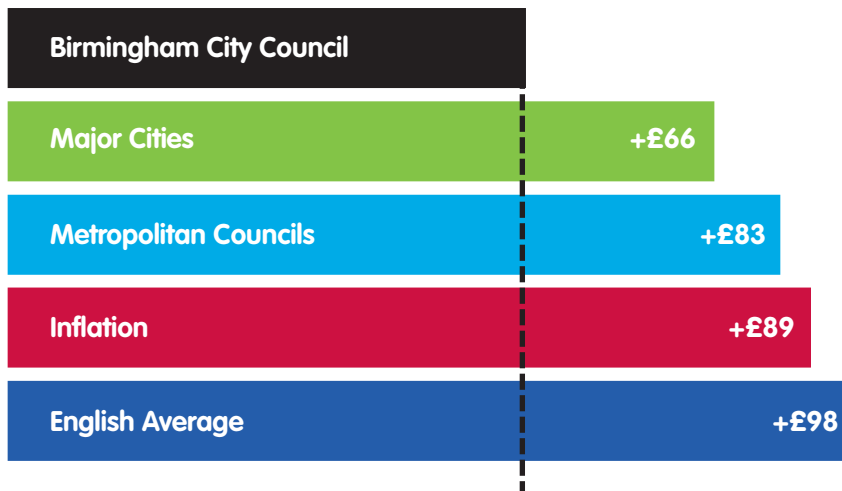
Council tax 2012/13

Band	City Council	Fire and Rescue Authority	Police Authority	Total	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish	
					Parish Precept	Parish Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
A	742.45	31.89	66.30	840.64	27.06	867.70
B	866.19	37.20	77.35	980.74	31.57	1,012.31
C	989.93	42.52	88.40	1,120.85	36.08	1,156.93
D	1,113.67	47.83	99.45	1,260.95	40.59	1,301.54
E	1,361.15	58.46	121.54	1,541.15	49.61	1,590.76
F	1,608.63	69.09	143.64	1,821.36	58.63	1,879.99
G	1,856.11	79.72	165.74	2,101.57	67.66	2,169.23
H	2,227.34	95.66	198.89	2,521.89	81.18	2,603.07

Did you know?

The City Council's seven-year council tax increase (2005/06 - 2011/12) was below the rate of inflation and the average rate of other groups of councils.

If we had increased our council tax in line with inflation, or at the average rate of other groups of councils, over those seven years then our 2011/12 Band D council tax could have been larger by:



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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 4,682 kilometres of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the area of the Severn Trent 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:

Severn Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

	2011/12	2012/13
Gross expenditure	£51.066m	£43.004m
Levies raised	£3.000m	£3.000m
Total Council Tax Base (Band D property equivalents)	2,924,000	2,939,000

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 reflects the impact of the Government Spending Review and national prioritisation of capital projects.

The total Local Levy raised has remained the same in 2012/2013 as 2011/2012 at £3,000,000. Birmingham's share in 2012/13 is £305,405.

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:

Log on 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, Resources, (Revenues and Benefits),
P.O.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.

Council tax – help and information

You should note that if your income has changed and you are claiming council tax benefit, you should **call 0121 464 7000**. If you wish to claim council tax benefit you can do so by accessing our on line application form on **www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits**. If you have recently started work after claiming Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance or have recently become unemployed, you need to contact your local Jobcentre Plus. Any claim for council tax benefit will be passed by them to the Benefit Service.

You must inform Revenues and Benefits within 21 days of any change in your circumstances. Failure to do so, without reasonable excuse, could result in a financial penalty.

You can do this by logging on to www.birmingham.gov.uk/changeincircs

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

Council tax is the way in which the 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, etc.).

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Resident owner | 4. Resident with a licence to occupy |
| 2. Resident leaseholder | 5. Resident aged 18 or over |
| 3. Resident statutory or secure tenant | 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 11 and 12.

You should not withhold payment of your council tax whilst an appeal is being dealt with by the Valuation Office Agency or we are processing your application for council tax benefit.

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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.

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
- If there are no adults living in the property (e.g. second home or an unoccupied furnished accommodation), you can apply for a 10% 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

[birmingham.gov.uk...apply for a library card...pay council housing rent...report potholes...pay business rates...](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk...apply for a library card...pay council housing rent...report potholes...pay business rates...)

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:

- An unoccupied, unfurnished property having major alterations or repairs, for a maximum of 12 months
- An unoccupied, unfurnished property, for a maximum of six months
- 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

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Council tax benefit

Council tax benefit is money off your council tax bill. This means that your bill could be reduced. Council tax benefit can be paid in addition to any other reductions in your bill, for example because you live alone.

You may still qualify for council tax benefit 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 benefit 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 are called non-dependants. For every non-dependant that lives with you there could be a reduction in the overall amount of council tax benefit that you are awarded. These reductions will increase from April 2012, and your council tax benefit might go down as a result, meaning you will have a higher bill. You can find further information about this on www.birmingham.gov.uk/counciltaxbenefit

Single people, couples and families can get council tax benefit. There is no minimum amount of council tax benefit. Even if you are only entitled to £1 per week that still means over £50 coming off your bill.

For example:

- A pensioner living alone with a council tax bill for £750 might still get some help where their weekly income is as much as £212 per week.
- A pensioner couple with a £1,000 bill could be getting as much as £312 per week and still qualify.
- A couple with three children who are working could also get help if their income (including tax credits) is £403 per week.

Remember: These are only examples. You could get more if your council tax bill is more than £1,000 or someone in your household is sick or disabled, so check it out now, even if you think you will not be entitled.

If your income is too high to qualify but you are a single person living with another adult who is not your partner and who is on a low income, you might still get some help. This is called a second adult rebate and is worked out based on the income of the person who is living with you.

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Council tax benefit

£ Millions of council tax benefit goes unclaimed each year

Every year thousands of people in Birmingham who are entitled to council tax benefit do not claim. This means that all of these people are paying more council tax than they should.

Getting 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 benefit, but would like to know if you are entitled, you can find out further information about this on www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits by accessing our online application form.

If you already get council tax benefit, you do not need to make a new claim. Your benefit has already been taken off your bill. If your circumstances change you must tell us straightaway as this could affect your council tax benefit.

In and out of work

If you have recently started work after claiming Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, you now only need to contact your local Jobcentre Plus. They will take the details from you in relation to your housing benefit and council tax benefit and pass these to the Benefit Service.

If you are no longer in employment, you only need to visit your local Jobcentre Plus. They will take your details from you and pass them to the Benefit Service. These will be used to calculate your housing benefit and council tax benefit.

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 8, 15, 21 or 28 of the month. You can also pay by direct debit if you pay yearly or half yearly. Your payment dates will be 1st April 2012 and the balance by 1st October 2012.

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 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, Corporate Resources Directorate (Revenues & Benefits), P.O.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 bailiff action, deductions from your income, bankruptcy proceedings, a Charging Order 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 our website at 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.

Customer service centres (formerly Neighbourhood Offices)

If you need help or advice, and you have been unable to resolve your enquiry online or by calling 0121 303 1113, please call 0121 216 3030 for an appointment at one of our customer service centres. Details can be found on line at www.birmingham.gov.uk

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