



27 December 2015

## **Council Tax since 1996-97**

Since 2010, central government has offered grants to local authorities to freeze or cut Council Tax. Additionally, local authorities wishing to increase Council Tax by 2 per cent or more must seek the approval of their residents to do so through a referendum. The effects have been an end to the constant, above inflation increases of the preceding two decades.

Between 1996-97 and 2010-11, 90 per cent of local authorities increased Council Tax every year. In 2011-12, there were no increases in Council Tax in England, but despite the availability of the grant, more than a third of local authorities have increased Council Tax in each of the past three years.

In real terms, local authorities' spending was reduced by 20.4 per cent between 2009-10 and 2014-15, or 23.4 per cent on a per person basis. This is broadly in line with the spending reductions across unprotected central government departments.<sup>1</sup>

However local authority revenues have fallen by less (19.9 per cent) as councils have built up their reserves.<sup>2</sup>

At the Autumn Statement in November 2015, the Chancellor announced that councils would be able to add two per cent on Council Tax, provided that the revenue raised goes towards social care. And from 2020 councils will be able to keep money from business rates.

This note looks at Council Tax bills in England since 1996-97, the first year in the Department for Communities and Local Government's data set. Figures are for band D Council Tax.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7617>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

The key findings of this research are:

- In 1996-7, the average band D Council Tax bill in England was £646. Today the figure is £1,484, **a real terms increase of 58 per cent.**
- In real terms, the average band D Council Tax bill **increased by 71.8 per cent between 1996-97 and 2010-11**, and has **fallen by 8 per cent between 2010-11 and 2015-16**, after the grant to freeze or cut Council Tax was introduced.
- Residents in **Weymouth & Portland Borough Council** pay the highest Council Tax in the UK - £1,756.44.
- Residents in **Westminster City Council** pay the lowest Council Tax in the UK - £674.16
- Between 1997-98 and 2010-11, there were a total of **4,471 individual Council Tax increases**, but only 149 cuts and 161 freezes.
- Since 2010-11, there have been a total of 406 individual Council Tax increases, **203 cuts and 1,161 freezes.**
- In real terms, six councils have lower Council Tax today than they did in 1996-97 (excluding precepts):
  - London Borough of Southwark (2.2 per cent lower)
  - Harlow District Council (8 per cent lower)
  - London Borough of Hackney (10.3 per cent lower)
  - London Borough of Islington (11.7 per cent lower)
  - London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (21.3 per cent lower)
  - London Borough of Wandsworth (22.6 per cent lower)
- Since 2010-11, 45 councils have **not increased Council Tax** with 17 of them cutting Council Tax at least once.
- Including precepts, in real terms, only residents of **Hammersmith & Fulham** pay less Council Tax today than they did in 1996-97 – 2.9 per cent less.
- Seven councils have **cut Council Tax for the last five consecutive years**:
  - Broadland District Council
  - City of London (six consecutive years)
  - East Staffordshire Borough Council
  - Mendip District Council
  - Rother District Council
  - Ryedale District Council
  - Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (six consecutive years)

- **The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead** has cut Council Tax the most since 2010-11 - £88.78.
- **Walsall Metropolitan Borough** has increased Council Tax by more than any local authority since 1996-97 - £918.87.
- **Nottingham City Council** has increased Council Tax the most since 2010-11 - £127.39.
- 10 councils have **increased Council Tax** in 18 of the past 19 years:
  - Allerdale Borough Council
  - Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
  - Gravesham Borough Council
  - Lichfield District
  - Middlesbrough Borough Council
  - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
  - Surrey County Council
  - Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
  - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
  - West Devon Borough Council
- **The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham** has cut Council Tax on nine occasions in the last 19 years, more than any other local authority.

### Findings by area (excluding precepts):

#### District councils

- **Ipswich** has the highest band D Council Tax - £328.32
- **Breckland** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £70.46
- **Weymouth & Portland** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £212.62
- **Preston** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £25.48
- **Cotswold** has cut Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £17.98

#### Outer London Boroughs

- **Kingston upon Thames** has the highest band D Council Tax - £1,379.65
- **Newham** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £945.63
- **Kingston upon Thames** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £853.64

- **Harrow** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £47.81
- **Barnet** has cut Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £11.13

### Inner London Boroughs

- **Lewisham** has the highest band D Council Tax - £1,060.35
- **Westminster** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £378.01
- **Lewisham** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £519.95
- **Camden** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £20.33
- **Hammersmith & Fulham** has cut Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £83.97

### Metropolitan Districts

- **Gateshead** has the highest band D Council Tax - £1,471.34
- **Trafford** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £1,105.23
- **Walsall** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £918.87
- **Liverpool** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £76.39
- **Dudley** has cut Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £0.04

### Unitary Authorities

- **Nottingham** has the highest band D Council Tax - £1,459.67
- **Windsor & Maidenhead** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £906.95
- **Middlesbrough** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £786.69
- **Nottingham** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £127.39
- **Windsor & Maidenhead** has cut Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £88.78

### County Councils

- **Nottinghamshire** has the highest band D Council Tax - £1,241.14
- **Somerset** has the lowest band D Council Tax - £1,027.30
- **Dorset** has increased Council Tax the most since 1996-97 - £761.27
- **Surrey** has increased Council Tax by the most since 2010-11 - £103.32



- **West Sussex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Gloucestershire, Essex, Hampshire and Somerset** have frozen Council Tax since 2010-11

**To see the full data [CLICK HERE](#)**

**Table 1: 25 highest band D Council Tax (including precepts)**

**Table 2: 25 lowest band D Council Tax (including precepts)**

**Tables 3 – 18: Highest and lowest Band D Council Tax by region (including precepts)**

**Table 1- Highest Council Tax including precepts**

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase (%)
Weymouth & Portland	582.49	1,756.44	1,173.95	107.5%
East Dorset	602.59	1,720.28	1,117.69	96.4%
Newark & Sherwood	766.33	1,718.36	952.03	54.3%
Purbeck	573.23	1,712.86	1,139.63	105.6%
Rutland UA	631.70	1,709.71	1,078.01	86.2%
City of Nottingham UA	769.23	1,708.51	939.28	52.8%
Lewes	633.13	1,702.11	1,068.98	85.0%
Wealden	647.46	1,697.66	1,050.20	80.4%
Hartlepool UA	836.84	1,696.38	859.54	39.5%
West Dorset	592.32	1,680.44	1,088.12	95.2%
Oxford	679.82	1,679.16	999.34	69.9%
West Devon	603.18	1,678.32	1,075.14	91.4%
Mansfield	693.20	1,677.34	984.14	66.5%
Bassetlaw	722.03	1,676.20	954.17	59.7%
Durham UA	-	1,674.81	n/a	n/a
North Dorset	575.92	1,674.74	1,098.82	100.1%
Kingston upon Thames	596.36	1,674.65	1,078.29	93.2%
Broxtowe	716.29	1,674.46	958.17	60.8%
Hastings	643.35	1,673.24	1,029.89	78.9%
Fenland	577.65	1,671.24	1,093.59	99.0%
Rushcliffe	681.04	1,669.70	988.66	68.7%
Ashfield	720.72	1,668.68	947.96	59.3%
Redcar & Cleveland UA	853.79	1,667.77	813.98	34.4%
Central Bedfordshire UA	-	1,665.95	n/a	n/a
Bristol UA	871.46	1,660.39	788.93	31.1%

**Table 2 - Lowest Council Tax including precepts**

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Westminster	295.10	674.16	379.06	57.2%
Wandsworth	434.32	683.42	249.10	8.3%
City of London	450.00	943.44	493.44	44.2%
Hammersmith & Fulham	725.00	1,022.81	297.81	-2.9%
Kensington & Chelsea	510.79	1,077.58	566.79	45.1%
Windsor & Maidenhead UA	591.19	1,150.03	558.84	33.8%
Tower Hamlets	645.91	1,180.52	534.61	25.7%
Southwark	730.91	1,207.14	476.23	13.6%
Lambeth	665.00	1,238.70	573.70	28.2%
Newham	594.00	1,240.63	646.63	43.7%
Isles of Scilly	432.71	1,241.02	808.31	97.3%
Islington	853.39	1,276.01	422.62	2.9%
Greenwich	763.29	1,276.04	512.75	15.0%
Dudley	637.29	1,286.84	649.55	38.9%
Hackney	855.13	1,293.45	438.32	4.1%
Trafford	591.66	1,316.00	724.34	53.0%
Birmingham	749.43	1,320.10	570.67	21.2%
Bromley	540.00	1,325.14	785.14	68.8%
Barking & Dagenham	576.00	1,331.67	755.67	59.1%
Camden	778.72	1,337.10	558.38	18.1%
Sandwell	679.23	1,337.22	657.99	35.4%
Thurrock UA	605.34	1,338.21	732.87	52.1%
Sunderland	652.45	1,349.56	697.11	42.3%
Solihull	625.67	1,351.23	725.56	48.6%
Brent	455.50	1,353.94	898.44	104.5%

## Tables 3-18: Highest and lowest Band D Council Tax by region (including precepts)

### Highest Council Tax in East of England

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Fenland	577.65	1,671.24	1,093.59	99.0%
Central Bedfordshire UA	-	1,665.95	n/a	n/a
Ipswich	671.13	1,624.95	953.82	66.6%
Huntingdonshire	537.91	1,609.29	1,071.38	105.8%
Norwich	641.38	1,593.21	951.83	70.9%

### Lowest Council Tax in East of England

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Thurrock UA	605.34	1,338.21	732.87	52.1%
Southend-on-Sea UA	574.30	1,379.76	805.46	65.3%
Peterborough UA	564.97	1,383.46	818.49	68.5%
Broxbourne	558.73	1,402.15	843.42	72.7%
Waveney	593.78	1,460.98	867.20	69.3%

### Highest Council Tax in East Midlands

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Newark & Sherwood	766.33	1,718.36	952.03	54.3%
Rutland UA	631.70	1,709.71	1,078.01	86.2%
City of Nottingham UA	769.23	1,708.51	939.28	52.8%
Mansfield	693.20	1,677.34	984.14	66.5%
Bassetlaw	722.03	1,676.20	954.17	59.7%

### Lowest Council Tax in East Midlands

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Wellingborough	499.50	1,420.97	921.47	95.7%
Derby City UA	-	1,432.44	n/a	n/a
East Lindsey	611.69	1,442.96	831.27	62.3%
Corby	616.68	1,451.71	835.03	62.0%
South Kesteven	605.38	1,455.27	849.89	65.4%



## Highest Council Tax in London

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Kingston upon Thames	596.36	1,674.65	1,078.29	93.2%
Richmond upon Thames	712.24	1,582.39	870.15	52.9%
Harrow	579.69	1,529.36	949.67	81.5%
Havering	595.00	1,514.00	919.00	75.1%
Haringey	780.33	1,479.32	698.99	30.4%

## Lowest Council Tax in London

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Westminster	295.10	674.16	379.06	57.2%
Wandsworth	434.32	683.42	249.10	8.3%
City of London	450.00	943.44	493.44	44.2%
Hammersmith & Fulham	725.00	1,022.81	297.81	-2.9%
Kensington & Chelsea	510.79	1,077.58	566.79	45.1%

## Highest Council Tax in North East

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Hartlepool UA	836.84	1,696.38	859.54	39.5%
Durham UA	-	1,674.81	n/a	n/a
Redcar & Cleveland UA	853.79	1,667.77	813.98	34.4%
Middlesbrough UA	639.61	1,657.18	1,017.57	78.3%
Gateshead	781.43	1,634.42	852.99	43.9%

## Lowest Council Tax in North East

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Sunderland	652.45	1,349.56	697.11	42.3%
South Tyneside	708.66	1,479.66	771.00	43.6%
North Tyneside	785.87	1,490.99	705.12	30.5%
Darlington UA	660.24	1,524.05	863.81	58.8%
Newcastle upon Tyne	771.21	1,544.86	773.65	37.8%

## Highest Council Tax in North West

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Preston	749.11	1,644.06	894.95	51.0%
Copeland	692.01	1,629.81	937.80	62.0%
Burnley	747.19	1,629.50	882.31	50.0%
Pendle	754.29	1,624.00	869.71	48.1%
Barrow-in-Furness	734.56	1,619.34	884.78	51.7%

## Lowest Council Tax in North West

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Trafford	591.66	1,316.00	724.34	53.0%
Manchester	838.36	1,382.21	543.85	13.4%
Wigan	700.02	1,402.88	702.86	37.9%
Halton UA	646.53	1,432.63	786.10	52.4%
Tameside	756.00	1,443.05	687.05	31.3%

## Highest Council Tax in South East

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Lewes	633.13	1,702.11	1,068.98	85.0%
Wealden	647.46	1,697.66	1,050.20	80.4%
Oxford	679.82	1,679.16	999.34	69.9%
Hastings	643.35	1,673.24	1,029.89	78.9%
Eastbourne	639.07	1,657.10	1,018.03	78.4%

## Lowest Council Tax in South East

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Windsor & Maidenhead UA	591.19	1,150.03	558.84	33.8%
Basingstoke & Deane	577.99	1,379.33	801.34	64.2%
Bracknell Forest UA	551.08	1,383.46	832.38	72.7%
Portsmouth UA	572.13	1,390.24	818.11	67.2%
Fareham	586.98	1,396.81	809.83	63.7%

## Highest Council Tax bills in South West

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Weymouth & Portland	582.49	1,756.44	1,173.95	107.5%
East Dorset	602.59	1,720.28	1,117.69	96.4%
Purbeck	573.23	1,712.86	1,139.63	105.6%
West Dorset	592.32	1,680.44	1,088.12	95.2%
West Devon	603.18	1,678.32	1,075.14	91.4%

## Lowest Council Tax bills in South West

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Isles of Scilly	432.71	1,241.02	808.31	97.3%
Swindon UA	619.73	1,404.22	784.49	55.9%
Taunton Deane	602.18	1,433.36	831.18	63.8%
Tewkesbury	519.65	1,451.50	931.85	92.2%
North Somerset UA	615.93	1,458.66	842.73	62.9%

## Highest Council Tax bills in West Midlands

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
North Warwickshire	714.26	1,641.44	927.18	58.1%
Nuneaton & Bedworth	705.79	1,600.56	894.77	56.0%
Walsall	587.86	1,599.81	1,011.95	87.2%
Herefordshire UA	-	1,583.96	n/a	n/a
Rugby	676.06	1,577.67	901.61	60.6%

## Lowest Council Tax bills in West Midlands

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Dudley	637.29	1,286.84	649.55	38.9%
Birmingham	749.43	1,320.10	570.67	21.2%
Sandwell	679.23	1,337.22	657.99	35.4%
Solihull	625.67	1,351.23	725.56	48.6%
Stoke-on-Trent UA	644.64	1,430.03	785.39	52.6%

## Highest Council Tax bills in Yorkshire and the Humber

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Scarborough	583.23	1,609.97	1,026.74	89.9%
Harrogate	626.30	1,607.81	981.51	76.6%
Richmondshire	589.17	1,606.81	1,017.64	87.6%
Ryedale	620.98	1,592.25	971.27	76.4%
Selby	583.42	1,592.20	1,008.78	87.8%

## Lowest Council Tax bills in Yorkshire and the Humber

Council	1996-97 (£)	2015-16 (£)	Increase (£)	Real terms increase
Bradford	646.94	1,361.31	714.37	44.8%
Leeds	636.94	1,375.48	738.54	48.6%
Doncaster	604.16	1,384.47	780.31	57.7%
Wakefield	592.60	1,393.37	800.77	61.8%
Kingston upon Hull UA	655.29	1,420.02	764.73	49.1%

## Sources and methodology

All data were taken from the statistical data set "Live tables on Council Tax"<sup>3</sup>

To calculate real terms price changes, the CPI index for the second quarters of 1996 and 2015 was used.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-council-tax>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/datasets-and-tables/data-selector.html?cdid=D7BT&dataset=mm23&table-id=1.1>