

Council Tax 2021/2022

How we spend your money

Dear resident,

It goes without saying that the past year has been dominated by the pandemic, which has had a wide ranging impact on our community. All of our plans have been affected by Covid-19, but we are committed to delivering a strong local recovery whilst continuing to mitigate the impact of the virus on our district.

Since the pandemic began, we have offered a variety of financial support schemes and programmes to our residents and businesses including:

- Local test and tracing facilities
- A Winter Grant Scheme totalling £532k for those experiencing hardship
- Over £36m in grants to more than 2,000 businesses across the District
- £2.6m in financial support to help social care providers with infection control
- The establishment of a Community Support Hub to coordinate assistance to our most vulnerable residents

Our priority for the coming year is to continue to provide good essential local services while supporting our community through this period of economic uncertainty. To do this, we have factored in a range of investments to



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support the district's recovery and to enhance and maintain the services on which people rely.

For instance, we will be investing more funds so we can meet our aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. We will also continue to invest in schools, transport and other infrastructure to build back better.

We remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable in our district with increased funding in Social Care and we anticipate that much of the £3.2m given to us by Government for Covid-19 related pressures will be spent in this area.

Whilst still meeting all our commitments, we've managed to keep the total Council Tax increase at 1.99% by not seeking any Adult Social Care Precept (an extra 3% is allowable).

This has been made possible by the combination of the extensive Government support we've received, the Council's prudent financial control in recent years, instituting a savings programme to reduce costs by a further £3.7m, and decreased demand in Adult Social Care due to Covid-19.

We will be one of the very few councils across the country not to impose an ASC Precept in 2021/22 (whilst retaining the flexibility to add one in 2022/23 should we need to). In taking this decision we are recognising how hard this year has been for many residents, deliberately limiting the total increase rather than taking the full 4.99% as many other councils are doing.

We intend to make a further hardship payment during the 2021/22 financial year to help residents who receive the Council Tax Reduction. This will further reduce the amount of money that working age council tax payers have to pay. This has not been deducted from initial annual demands but we expect to fund a further reduction and issue revised demands to those who are eligible in due course.

The measures outlined in this budget along with continued investment in West Berkshire will give the district what it needs to come through these turbulent times. I look forward to moving ahead with our plans and making West Berkshire an even greater place to live, work and learn.



Councillor Ross Mackinnon,
West Berkshire's Executive Member for Finance

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