Your Council Tax Explained 2020/21

About your council tax
How to pay
Applying for reductions and discounts

hfdscouncil herefordshire.gov.uk
The council has an annual budget of around £380m which we use to deliver services to over 187,000 residents. These services include maintenance of over 2,000 miles of roads, collection of over 85,000 residential bins, safeguarding around 1,000 children (including 354 who are in our care) and providing care and support to 2,500 vulnerable adults.

Services we provide include:
- Adult social care
- Planning
- Waste collection and disposal
- Children and young people’s services
- Highways and transportation
- Cultural and community services

Council tax payments contribute £110 million to the money we have to spend. As well as supporting the provision of services, council tax also helps to fund Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, West Mercia Police and Parish and Town Councils.

The remainder of our spending is funded by business rates, government grants and charging for some services.
Where our money comes from - gross budget £380m

More information on funding streams
Where we will spend the money
Using our resources wisely is one of our core principles so we are always seeking new ways to provide efficiencies in service delivery and to maximise our purchasing power to ensure we deliver value for money that benefits Herefordshire businesses and residents.

Our spending plans need to maintain financial stability, deliver efficiencies and support investment in priority services. Our plans must demonstrate value for money and maintain service quality. Each year we consult with you on how you think we should be spending our money. More information on this year’s budget consultation.

Our medium term financial strategy details our priorities and can be viewed on the website by clicking the link.
How council tax is calculated
Council tax is set based on the difference between the amount of budget we need for the year and the grant and non-grant income that we will receive.

Government grants and non-domestic rates currently fund part of the spending by Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority. The remainder of spending, together with all the spending by town and parish councils, is funded by council tax.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget requirement</th>
<th>2019/20 Total £000s</th>
<th>2019/20 Amount per band D equivalent properties £000s</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>2020/21 Total £000s</th>
<th>2020/21 Amount per band D equivalent properties £000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire Council*</td>
<td>104,251</td>
<td>1,514.70</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>109,780</td>
<td>1,573.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority</td>
<td>5,804</td>
<td>84.34</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>5,998</td>
<td>85.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mercia Police</td>
<td>14,912</td>
<td>216.66</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>15,709</td>
<td>225.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish and town council precepts**</td>
<td>4,622</td>
<td>67.16</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4,869</td>
<td>69.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average council tax charge</td>
<td>129,589</td>
<td>1,882.86</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>136,356</td>
<td>1,954.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The increase to the Herefordshire Council budget requirement includes a 2% increase specifically to fund adult social care
** Funding collected on behalf of parish and town councils is referred to as a precept
The Social Care Precept Explained

The percentage increase in the Herefordshire Council element of your council tax bill includes a 2% increase specifically to help support the rising costs of adult social care. The impact of the social care precept on an average Band D property is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Band D Council Tax £</th>
<th>Percentage increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire Council 2019/20</td>
<td>1,514.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Council Tax Increase 2020/21</td>
<td>28.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Care Precept</td>
<td>30.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire Council 2020/21</td>
<td>1,573.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has given adult social care authorities the option to charge an additional precept on their council tax to assist those authorities in meeting their expenditure on adult social care. The Spending Review 2015 announced that local authorities responsible for adult social care would be given 2% additional Council Tax flexibility, on top of their existing referendum threshold, on the understanding that they use all additional revenue for adult social care services. These councils were later given the option of charging the precept at an appropriate level in each financial year up to a threshold of 6% over the financial years 2017/20; and the government have continued to allow these councils to charge a further 2% in 2020/21.

Adult social care authorities are those which have functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, namely county councils in England, district councils for an area in 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. As a county council, Herefordshire Council is an adult social care authority and therefore able to charge a social care precept. It is a government requirement that this precept is shown as a separate line on the bill with an amount that is the total for this additional precept, rather than the total spend on adult social care.
The adult social care precept for Herefordshire Council is a cumulative total adding up to 10% (2% + 8%) rather than a linear amount just based upon a 10% increase of the previous year’s Council Tax. For a Band D property this is:

- In 2016/17 the total council tax was £1,324.83 (£1,299.33 + £25.50)
- In 2017/18 the total was £1,376.50 (1,324.50 + £52.00), this is a percentage increase overall of 3.9%
- In 2018/19 the total was £1,443.95 (£1,364.42 + £79.53), a percentage increase overall of 4.9%
- In 2019/20 the total is £1,514.70 (£1,406.29 + £108.41), a percentage increase overall of 4.9%
- In 2020/21 the total is £1,573.77 (£1,435.07 + £138.70), a percentage increase overall of 3.9%

The adult social care precept of £108.41 is the total of the annual 2% increases of:

- £25.50 (2016/17)
- £26.50 (2017/18)
- £27.53 (2018/19)
- £28.88 (2019/20)
- £30.29 (2020/21)
Spending by parish and town councils

Each year parish and town councils forecast how much money they are going to need the following year and this is collected on their behalf via council tax. You can see how much money your parish council requested.

The actual amount of your council tax bill will be dependent on the spending by your town or parish council and the valuation band your home is in. You can find the council tax payable by band for your parish.

Flood defence and land drainage

The council’s budget includes a provision to meet the special levies of the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards (IDB).

The Environment Agency is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. They make sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone to create a cleaner and healthier environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levy Body</th>
<th>Net Requirements (special levy) 2019/20 £000s</th>
<th>Net Requirements (special levy) 2020/21 £000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency- West Midlands</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Lugg IDB</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Severn IDB</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total per Band D equivalent</td>
<td>£3.34</td>
<td>£3.38</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Internal Drainage Boards manage water levels and land drainage and undertake flood risk management on ordinary watercourses (other than main rivers). This involves the maintenance of rivers, drainage channels and pumping stations, facilitating drainage of new developments and advising on planning applications. IDBs also look after sites of special scientific interest and other designated environmental areas.

The easiest way to pay your council tax is by direct debit.

You can pay over 10 or 12 months and can also choose from four payment dates: 1st, 10th, 15th or 26th of the month. If you would like to pay over 12 months, you must request this in writing no later than 15th April 2020.

You can set up a direct debit online or if you prefer you can download and print off a direct debit mandate which can be emailed or posted to us.

Click on the boxes to go to the website.

Set up online  Download a direct debit instruction

By BACS or faster payment
If you prefer to pay by BACS or faster payment you can do so using these bank details. Please ensure you quote your 8-digit council tax reference number on all payments so they can be correctly allocated against your account.

• Sort Code: 53-50-41 • Account No: 55059805
You can pay at any Post Office free of charge. Please take your bill with you so that the barcode can be scanned.

You can pay free of charge anywhere that you see the PayPoint sign. Please take your bill with you so that the barcode can be scanned.

**Pay by cheque**
You can pay your bill by sending a cheque to: Council Tax Section, Revenues and Benefits, Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane, Hereford HR4 0LE. Please write your **8-digit Council Tax reference number** on the back of the cheque.

**Pay by phone**
You can pay securely by calling our payment line on 01432 260200. You will need to quote your 8 digit Council Tax account reference.

**Paying by instalments**
Council tax bills are issued every March and are payable over 10 monthly instalments unless you request to pay over 12 months. Instalments are due on the 10th of each month unless you are paying by direct debit and have chosen a different date.

Applications to pay by 12 instalments must be received by the 15th April 2020. Please email your request to pay by 12 monthly instalments to counciltax@herefordshire.gov.uk quoting your 8 digit Council Tax account reference. Please note that any request made to pay over 12 monthly instalments may result in your instalment dates being moved to the 26th of each month.
Who to contact for help and advice
Our website contains lots of useful information but if you cannot find what you are looking for you can contact us by telephone or email.
Email: counciltax@herefordshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 01432 260360

Council Tax Reduction
In certain circumstances you can get help to pay your council tax bill. You can get help if you are responsible for paying the council tax bill and:
• You are on a low income whether from benefits, low paid work or self-employed work
• You (and your partner) don’t have more than £6,000 in savings and capital, unless you are getting Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
• You get Universal Credit, because it only includes help with your rent, not council tax

If you have a partner we will include their income and savings as well when we work out how much you can get.

To find out more about eligibility for a council tax reduction please visit the Who can claim Council Tax Reduction page on our website or to apply for a reduction click below.

Council tax reduction
Council Tax discounts and exemptions
You can get money off your council tax bill, or even pay nothing, in certain circumstances. A discount or exemption depends on your current situation or circumstances, but does not take account of income or savings. Click on the opposite boxes to find out if you might be eligible.

- Single Person Discount
- Disabled person discount
- Carer or care worker discount
- Student discount or exemption
- Apprentice discount
- Care leaver discount

- Person aged 18 and eligible for child benefit discount
- Patient in care home or hospital discount or exemption
- Severe mental impairment discount
- Person in detention or prison discount
- Apprentice discount
Council Tax exemptions
Some properties are exempt from council tax. Exempt properties can be occupied and unoccupied. If you think a property you are responsible for paying council tax for fits any of the below criteria, visit the website for more details of how to apply for an exemption.

- Unoccupied property owned by a charity (exempt up to six months)
- Property left empty by a prisoner
- Property left empty by a person receiving personal care in hospital or care home (no time limit)
- Left empty following death of taxpayer
- Occupation prohibited by law
- Empty and awaiting occupation by minister of religion
- Left empty by someone who has moved to receive personal care from another person
- Left empty by someone who has moved to provide personal care to another person
- Property left empty by a student
- Property repossessed by the mortgagee
- Halls of residence
- Properties occupied by students or school leavers
- Armed forces accommodation such as barracks
- Properties occupied by members of visiting forces
- Property left empty by bankrupts
- Unoccupied caravan pitches and houseboat moorings
- Properties occupied by persons under 18
- Unoccupied annexes which form part of a single property and may not be let separately without breaching planning consent
- Properties occupied by persons who are severely mentally impaired
• Property where at least one person who would otherwise be liable is as a diplomat
• Annexes or similar accommodation occupied by an elderly or disabled relative
• If you are unable to find the information that you are looking for on our website please contact us by email at counciltax@herefordshire.gov.uk or call us on
• 01432 260360.

Save time and go online
My Account
Register online at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/myaccount

Why wait until office opening hours?

Manage your online account, correspondence, billing and much more, 24 hours a day:

• Council Tax
• Housing Benefit
• Council Tax Reduction
• Business Rates
• Landlord accounts

You’ll need your account reference to get started which can be found on your most recent correspondence from us

Think of the environment and go paperless