

Council Tax

2017 / 2018



Foreword by the Leader of the Council, Lord Peter Smith



Welcome to this year's Council Tax booklet.

Council funding for 2017/18 continues to be challenging, but through The Deal we're transforming the way we operate to avoid making cuts to frontline services. So far we've lost £160m from central government and have a further £45m to save. Because of these cuts we've had to reorganise many services while trying to avoid raising Council Tax as we know the impact it has on many families across the borough.

Unfortunately the adult social care funding crisis continues to impact the NHS and councils. The government has responded by imposing a three per cent Council Tax rise. This is unfair on areas like Wigan where Council Tax doesn't raise as much as in the leafy suburbs but also unfair on many struggling local people. However unlike most neighbouring authorities, we have not increased the charges for any other Wigan service so we have again achieved the lowest Council Tax increase in the whole of Greater Manchester.

In December we launched a budget consultation to find out which

services you value to help us make decisions. The results were mixed with 66 per cent of respondents saying they valued libraries and 73 per cent saying they want us to protect school crossing patrols. The simple fact is that with £45million to save we do not have enough money to continue funding these services without radically changing the way we operate in other areas.

So we have made some tough decisions which not everyone will agree with but I can assure you that they are in the long term interests of the borough. One of those decisions was to move to three weekly bin collections. We can work together to resolve the concerns raised and have already put measures in place to address them.

2017 won't be without its challenges, but with your help we know we can do it. I'd like to thank you for supporting The Deal.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Peter Smith of Leigh
Leader of Wigan Council

About Council Tax

Council Tax is a tax on residential dwellings, not people.

Each year we send a Council Tax bill to every domestic property in the borough, whether it's a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette, mobile home or houseboat. Each dwelling is put into one of the eight bands below, based on what it would have cost to buy on the open market on 1 April 1991.

Every year we set the Council Tax for each band. The amounts for 2017/2018 are below. The band given to your property is on the front of your bill.

The Valuation Office Agency decides the band not us. You can appeal against your property's band if you have moved into the property in the last six months or there has been a change in the building or physical state of the local area.

You can contact them at Valuation Office Agency, Manchester Valuation Office, Portland Tower, Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LD.
Phone 03000 501 501

www.voa.gov.uk

For information about the council's income and spending visit

**[www.wigan.gov.uk/
incomeandspending](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/incomeandspending)**

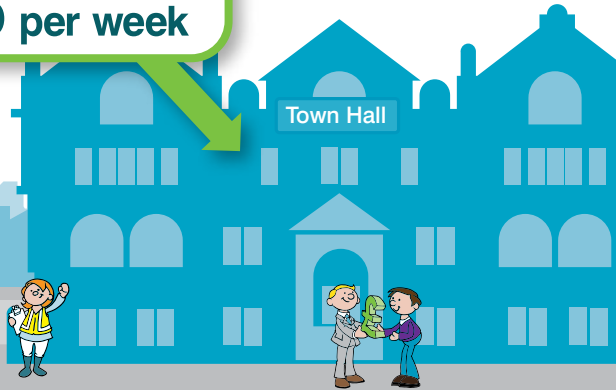
Band	Band Value	Council Tax for 2017/18
A	Up to £40,000	£983.13
B	£40,001 - £52,000	£1146.98
C	£52,001 - £68,000	£1310.84
D	£68,001 - £88,000	£1474.74
E	£88,001 - £120,000	£1802.42
F	£120,001 - £160,000	£2130.12
G	£160,001 - £320,000	£2457.84
H	£320,001 and above	£2949.42

Council Tax breakdown

The council provides over 700 services to the residents of the borough and has the second cheapest Council Tax in Greater Manchester. From bins to street lights, schools to recycling centres, you'll be surprised at just what you get for your Council Tax.

Support services including
finance, legal, IT, councillors

89p per week



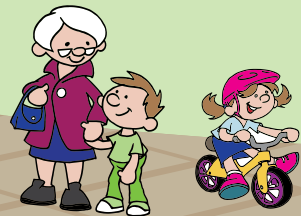
Police

£2.08 per week



Bus and rail services

£1.55 per week



The Deal

Roads and pavements, bins, street lights, recycling centres, leisure facilities

£3.24 per week

Schools, teachers, youth services and children in care

£3.59 per week

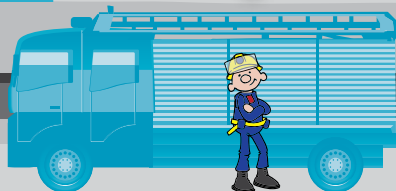
Fire Service

77p per week

Home help, day centres, support for disabled and vulnerable adult residents

£6.78 per week

includes 22p Adult Social Care Precept.



Thank you for having your say

4602 residents completed the Your Council, Your Say consultation

2,531 residents did not know that the council has made over £115m savings to date, with a further £45m to save by 2020. The council's budget will be

40% less in 2020 than it was 2010.

2,796 residents did not know that their Council Tax is the second lowest in Greater Manchester.

2,602 residents agreed with our strategy that doing

things differently rather than cutting services is better for them and their family.

3,010 residents agreed with increasing the number of online services to improve accessibility and availability 24 hours a day.



Your Council, Your Say



We're listening

2,849 of you don't want us to increase Council Tax, apart from the Adult Social Care charge. **We've listened and this year we will only increase Council Tax by 3% to cover this charge.**



2,625 of you think we should continue to invest in local community groups and organisations. **By April 2017 we'll have invested £7.5m in community groups across the borough. We're also going to invest a further £4m in Leigh.**



3,095 of you want us to give children the best possible start in life. **We've listened and we'll continue to invest in children's services.**



3,186 of you think the council should encourage businesses to invest in the borough. **We have listened and will aim to create 5,000 new jobs and 12,000 apprenticeships by 2020.**



3,165 of you want us to protect the most vulnerable and elderly and believe we should work differently by focussing on people not buildings. **We've listened and will continue investing in adult social care to improve their quality of life.**



3,347 of you told us you wanted to save school crossing patrols - **so we're going to keep these safe.**



3,018 of you agreed with proposals to protect library services. **We're listening - we're one of only a few councils in Greater Manchester to come up with a plan to protect our libraries. We'll work hard to keep all 15 open.**



594 residents said we need to recycle more and agree that we should reduce the frequency of collection of your black bin from two to three weekly to make it happen. Some residents said they were worried about this - **and we're listening.**

You said you were concerned about the impact of this on large families.

We'll give an extra bin to homes that meet this criteria. Details of this criteria will be available in Summer.

You said to help you recycle more you want us to look at the frequency we empty your blue and brown bins.

We will bring collections in line with each other as much as possible to make it easier for you.

You said you were concerned about fly-tipping.

We'll increase our patrols to stop this from happening.

Thank you for going to three weekly bin collections and for doing your bit as part of The Deal. Because of your willingness to work with us, we've saved up to £2m and you're helping us keep Council Tax low too.

We recognise it is important that others take responsibility too which is why we signed up to the Courtauld agreement to lobby big manufacturers to change their packaging.

So we're listening, thank you for having your say.



When you may not have to pay Council Tax

You won't have to pay if only the following people occupy your property:

- Students,
- People under the age of 18, or
- People who have a severe mental impairment and would otherwise be liable to pay Council Tax.

You may not have to pay for a limited time if your property is not occupied because it is:

- Newly built and not yet occupied (no charge for 1 month); or
- Substantially unfurnished (no charge for 1 month); or
- Owned by a charity (exempt for 6 months).

You may not have to pay for any of the following types of properties even if they are occupied:

- Armed Forces' accommodation.
- Visiting Forces' accommodation.
- An annexe such as a 'granny flat'.
- Occupied by someone who has diplomatic, commonwealth or consular privilege or immunity.

Use your MyAccount at **www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount** to tell us if you think you qualify for an exemption. Certain conditions may apply.

You may not have to pay for your property whilst it is:

- Left empty by the owner or tenant, who was the last occupier, and who has moved to receive or provide personal care in either a hospital or home elsewhere.
- Repossessed by a mortgage company.
- Empty because occupation is forbidden by law.
- Waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion.
- The responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee.
- Left empty by a student owner who lived in it immediately before leaving to study elsewhere.
- An empty caravan pitch or houseboat mooring.
- Unoccupied because the last occupier, who was also the owner, had died and probate or letters of administration have not yet been granted (and for 6 months after).

Ways to pay less Council Tax

The full Council Tax bill assumes that there are 2 or more adults living in a property.

If you are the only adult living in your property your bill can be reduced by 25%. We can also consider local discounts for other reasons as well.

When we work out if you are entitled to a discount we don't count these people:

- Children under 18.
- People over 18 that still qualify for Child Benefit.
- 18 or 19 year olds who leave school after 30 April are not counted until 1 November of the same year.
- People with a severe mental impairment.
- Apprentices.
- Youth Training Trainees.
- Care Workers.
- Carers.
- People in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels that provide a high level of care.
- Resident hospital patients.
- Student nurses.

- Prisoners in detention (unless for non payment of fines or Council Tax).
- Students in full time education.
- Diplomats and members of international organisations with headquarters in the UK (and their non British spouses).
- Members of religious communities such as monks or nuns.

Certain qualifying conditions apply.

People with disabilities

If you, or a person that lives with you, has a disability you may qualify for a reduction.

Your home will need to have an extra bathroom, kitchen or other room that is used mainly to help with the person's disability. You can also qualify if the disabled person uses a wheelchair in the home.

If you qualify we will work out your Council Tax charge again using the valuation band below the one your property is in.

Use your MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount to tell us if you think you qualify for a discount or reduction.

Council Tax for empty dwellings and second homes

When a dwelling first becomes empty

A dwelling that becomes newly empty will be given a maximum 1 month full exemption followed by a 25% discount for a maximum of 5 months.

Long term empty dwellings

Dwellings left empty and unfurnished for longer than 6 months, or have already been empty for between 6 months and 2 years, will be charged 100% Council Tax.

Empty Homes Premium

Long term empty dwellings that remain empty and unfurnished for longer than 2 years will attract an Empty Homes Premium. The premium will be an extra 50% charge in addition to the 100% charge for a long term empty dwelling.

Second homes

Dwellings that are unoccupied but furnished are classed as second homes. There is no discount for these dwellings. The charge for a second home is 100%.

If your property becomes empty, contact us straight away and we can tell you if you qualify for any reduction.

A property in need of, or undergoing, major repairs

If you own a property that is either in need of, or undergoing, major repairs you may be entitled to a reduction of 75% from your bill for a maximum of 12 months, or until the work is completed if that is sooner. You will be asked to provide evidence of the extent of the works required to render the property habitable. Only one major repairs reduction can be given for any period during which a property is continuously empty. Certain qualifying conditions apply for all reductions.

Family annex

If your property has an annex which has a separate Council Tax band and it is occupied by a relative, they may be entitled to a reduction from their Council Tax.

Use your MyAccount at **www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount** to tell us if your property has become empty or if your property has a separate annex occupied by a family member.

Council Tax Reduction

Our Council Tax Reduction Scheme helps households on low incomes to pay their Council Tax bill. Wigan Council has two schemes:

1. The National Council Tax Reduction Scheme – pensioner households and households with children under 5

These households:

- Can apply for support
- Can apply for Second Adult Rebate if the only other adult living in the property is on a low income.
- Can apply for backdated support. This will only be awarded if there is good cause why the claim wasn't made from the earlier date.

2. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – working age households with no children under 5

These households:

- Can apply for support under our local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Will have their entitlement calculated using the national scheme but support will be reduced by 20%
- Cannot apply for Second Adult Rebate.
- Can only get support from the date a claim for reduction is made.

Who can apply for Council Tax Reduction?

To apply for Council Tax Reduction you must be the person whose name is on the Council Tax bill.

You may qualify if you are:

- On Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit;
- On Pension Credit, Guaranteed Credit and in some cases Saving Credit;
- Working and on low pay (including people who are self employed);
- On a low income. For example you might only get a retirement pension or be getting social security benefits like Incapacity Benefit;
- A working age household with capital / savings under £12,000; or
- A pensioner household, or household with a child under 5, with capital / savings under £16,000

How to apply

Register for MyAccount and apply directly to Wigan Council online at **www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount**

You cannot make a claim for Council Tax Reduction through Job Centre Plus or the Pensions Service.

For more information about Council Tax Reduction visit **www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction**

If you rent your home you might also be entitled to Housing Benefit. For more information about Housing Benefit visit **www.wigan.gov.uk/housingbenefit**

Need help to make an application?

- You can get help and use our online facilities at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.
- If you are a tenant of Arena Housing, Adactus Housing, or Riverside Housing, your landlord can help you fill in and check your benefit claim online.
- If you do not have access to a computer or are unable to visit us at any of the above places, contact us 01942 489002.

The following agencies can give advice about your application:

- Citizens Advice
Tel: 0344 826 9713
Email: advice@wigancab.org
www.wigancab.org
- Age UK (for those over 50) Wigan
Tel: 01942 241972
Email: enquiries@ageukwiganborough.org.uk
www.ageukwiganborough.org.uk
- You can also get Welfare Rights Advice from us by emailing welfarerightsadvice@wigan.gov.uk

These facilities are available to all customers:

- Access for wheelchair users at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.
- Browsealoud is available on our website to download so that you can have the information on our web pages read aloud to you.

Changes you need to tell us about

Tell us straight away if you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction and have a change in circumstances. If you do not tell us about a change as soon as it happens, you could lose benefits or we could pay you too much and you will probably have to pay it back.

It is an offence not to tell us about any change in circumstances that affects your entitlement. We may take court action against you.

Tell us online by registering for MyAccount at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount and click on our 'report a change in your circumstances' form.

You can get face-to-face help with any enquiry about a council service at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.

Complaints or compliments

Fill in an online form at www.wigan.gov.uk/contactus

Under Occupancy of Social Housing

If you rent from a local authority, a registered housing association or other registered social landlord, from 1 April 2013 the amount of Housing Benefit you get is based on the number of bedrooms your household needs.

The rules allow one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried);
- any other adult aged 16 or over;
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16;
- any two children aged under 10;
- any other child;

- a non-resident carer;
- an overnight carer for children with disabilities;
- a child assessed as being unable to share a room due to a disability;
- qualifying foster carers; or
- an adult son or daughter serving in the armed forces but normally live at home as long as they intend to return home.

If you are classed as having one or more extra bedrooms your Housing Benefit may be reduced. If you under-occupy there will be a reduction in your Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit that has started to replace 6 existing benefits with a single monthly payment. Universal Credit will help you to be better off in work, start a new job or work more hours.

Universal Credit will eventually replace:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Get Online

If you don't have a computer at home, you can use one for free at your local library or Life Centre.

Free courses are available to help you get online and make the most of it. We can help you access the internet, introduce you to email and use online forms. Computers and the internet can help you:

- keep in touch with family and friends,
- manage your money,
- search for jobs,

To check if you are eligible visit www.gov.uk/universal-credit/eligibility

What's new about Universal Credit?

- It is 6 benefits in one monthly payment.
- If you have a partner you'll get one monthly payment for both of you.
- If you get help with your rent, this will be included in your monthly payment – you'll then pay your landlord yourself.
- You'll claim Universal Credit online.

If you don't have a computer at home, you can use one for free at your local library or Life Centre. You will have to pay your Council Tax from your monthly Universal Credit payment yourself.

- apply for Universal Credit and other benefits, and
- learn more about the things that interest you.

For more information and to get on a course contact us on 01942 489009 or go to www.wigan.gov.uk/getonline

For more information about money, benefits and where to get advice go to www.gov.uk

Beware

Need help with money or other problems? For information go to www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice

Avoid doorstep loan companies. Their interest rates can be extremely high.

Don't be excluded

Get in touch with those you owe money to as soon as you can. You can nominate a friend or representative to help you if you find it hard to manage it yourself.

In a crisis?

If you find yourself in a crisis our Local Welfare Support Advisors can help support customers to:

- access financial help and advice,
- gain appropriate referrals e.g. food parcels, white goods, and
- build self-reliance.

To speak to a Local Welfare Support Advisor ring 01942 705221 or visit our Life Centres at Wigan or Leigh.

Information about the Adult Social Care Precept

Wigan Council has responsibility for Adult Social Care functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has given Wigan Council the option to charge an annual 'precept' on its Council Tax for the financial years from 2016/17 to 2019/20 without holding a referendum, subject to annual approval of the House of Commons. This money will be used to fund Adult Social Care.

For 2016/17 Wigan Council took the option to charge the maximum precept for Adult Social Care of 2%. For 2017/18 Wigan Council has taken the maximum option to charge an Adult Social Care precept of 3% of the value of the amount of Council Tax set in 2016/17 including the 2% Adult Social Care precept.

We can make the information in this booklet available in other formats and languages on request. Contact us at: Wigan Council, PO Box 100, Wigan, WN1 3DS. 01942 489001
Email: revenues@wigan.gov.uk

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