

Your guide to Council Tax 2011 -12



Introduction

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Our Gateshead Year



Foreword by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mick Henry

Over the last twelve months we've have worked with our partners to deliver services to thousands of people across the borough. And, according to the Audit Commission's latest value for money assessment of the Council, we managed our finances effectively and delivered efficiencies and improved outcomes.

However, in December last year, the financial settlement we were given by the Government substantially reduced our budget. This means that if we are to continue providing quality services that meet local needs, we have to save at least £70 million over the next three years.

We do have some difficult choices to make but, along with our partners, we will continue to focus on delivering Vision 2030, Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Recently updated following consultation with over 10,000 local people, Vision 2030 still has our six big ideas at its core: City of Gateshead, Gateshead goes Global, Creative Gateshead, Sustainable Gateshead, Active and Healthy Gateshead and Gateshead Volunteers.

Looking back at what we achieved during 2010, our highlights include:

City of Gateshead

Demolition of the multi storey car park in Gateshead Town Centre has been completed and we have continued to reduce overall crime.

Gateshead goes Global

We have hosted several international conferences including Gateshead Digital Summer, Eurocities Cooperation Platform and the Eurocities Child Poverty Seminar.

Creative Gateshead

This is the 15th year to see improved GCSE figures. More than eight in every ten pupils left school with five or more top grades. The number of pupils achieving 5+ A* to C including English and Maths increased to 54%. And the overall percentage of students gaining 5+ A* to C has also risen by over 4.3% again this year to 85.5%.

Sustainable Gateshead

We recycled 31% of household waste – our highest ever figure. The new blue bin kerbside recycling scheme, rolled out this year to all households, has significantly increased the amount of waste recycled compared to the previous system.

Active and Healthy Gateshead

As part of our £36 million investment in sport and leisure facilities, Gateshead Leisure Centre re-opened after a major refurbishment with over 8,000 people attending the opening weekend. This was followed by the opening of two brand new leisure centres, Heworth and Blaydon Leisure & Primary Care Centre.

Gateshead Volunteers

Several innovative volunteering projects were developed by the Generations Together project to bring the under 25s and over 50s together. These included intergenerational mentoring and befriending opportunities. In Gateshead, voluntary activity has increased by 2% to 18%.

Looking ahead

Now more than ever, the Council needs to modernise if we are to continue to meet the needs of local people. We have therefore embarked on a programme of transformation in order to be a more effective and efficient organisation.

Your Views, Your Services

To tell us what you think of our services:

Phone: 0191 433 2061

Fax: 0191 478 2755

Email: serviceimprovement@gateshead.gov.uk

To be part of our Viewpoint Panel, contact:

Phone: 0191 433 2826 (Consultation Officer)

Email: viewpoint@gateshead.gov.uk

A copy of the Guide to Viewpoint is also available on our website: www.gateshead.gov.uk

Council Tax information

Council Tax helps to pay for local services such as education, libraries, refuse collection and street lighting. It also helps to pay for police, transport, fire and rescue service and the environment agency.

There is only one Council Tax bill for each property regardless of whether it is a house, flat or other home, or whether you own or rent it.

The level of Council Tax for your property is based upon a valuation band set by the Valuation Office Agency, which is part of the H.M. Revenue & Customs. There are eight separate bands (A to H) as shown below. Each band represents the amount that the property was worth on 1st April 1991.

Your council tax band

Valuation Band	Property Price Range	Propn of Band D Level	Gateshead Council	Northumbria Police Authority	Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Authority	Total Council Tax (Excl. Parishes)	Lamesley Parish Council	Total Council Tax Lamesley
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
A	UPTO £40,000	0.6667	962.13	55.79	48.77	1,066.69	3.88	1,070.57
B	£40,001 - £52,000	0.7778	1,122.49	65.08	56.90	1,244.47	4.53	1,249.00
C	£52,001 - £68,000	0.8889	1,282.84	74.38	65.03	1,422.25	5.18	1,427.43
D	£68,001 - £88,000	1.0000	1,443.20	83.68	73.16	1,600.04	5.82	1,605.86
E	£88,001 - £120,000	1.2222	1,763.91	102.28	89.42	1,955.61	7.12	1,962.73
F	£120,001 - £160,000	1.4444	2,084.62	120.87	105.68	2,311.17	8.41	2,319.58
G	£160,001 - £320,000	1.6667	2,405.33	139.47	121.93	2,666.73	9.71	2,676.44
H	OVER £320,000	2.0000	2,886.40	167.36	146.32	3,200.08	11.64	3,211.72

Appeals

If you have reason to believe your council tax band may be wrong, please contact the Valuation Office Agency Tel: 03000 506200.
Email: newcastlegroup.vo@voa.gsi.gov.uk

Eagle Star House, Regent Centre, Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE3 3TW

Who pays Council Tax?

In most cases the person liable to pay council tax will live in the property and will be the person with the highest legal interest in the property, i.e. a resident owner or a resident tenant.

If there is no resident living in the property then the owner will be liable.

When is the owner always the liable person?

In some circumstances, the owner is liable for particular types of property.

NOT the residents.

Properties where the owner is always liable include:

- Residential Care Homes
- Properties occupied by resident domestic staff only
- Religious Communities
- Houses in multiple occupation
- Properties occupied by a Minister of Religion
- Dwellings provided to asylum seekers



How can I pay less Council Tax?

Your Council Tax can be reduced through discounts, disabled reduction, benefits and exemptions.

Gateshead Council is committed to protecting the public purse and ensuring that only those people who are entitled to discounts and exemptions receive them. We will regularly review discounts and exemptions and will take prompt action against those who are claiming fraudulently.

Discounts

25% discount is awarded where only one adult lives in the property or where one adult lives with people who are disregarded for Council Tax purposes (see the list below).

50% discount is awarded where the property is no-one's main home or when everyone living there is disregarded.

Please be advised that if you are already receiving a discount then you must let us know within 21 days of any change of circumstances that may affect your entitlement.

Disregarded adults

- People who are in prison or detention
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- Young people for whom child benefit is paid and 18/19 year olds who leave school between 1 May and 31 October in any year
- Full time students (a certificate from the education establishment is required)
- Non-British Spouses of a Student
- Student nurses
- Apprentices who earn no more than £195 per week
- Youth Training trainees who are under 25 and on an approved training scheme
- A person who has their main home in a NHS Hospital (only applies to hospitals with a valuation band therefore does not apply to private dwellings)
- People who permanently live in a nursing or care home
- Care workers who live in premises provided by their employers and earn no more than £44 per week
- Carers who are providing care for someone who lives with them and are not the spouse, partner or parent (if under 18) of the person receiving care, and where certain other conditions are met.
- People who live in a hostel for the homeless or night shelters
- Members and Dependants of International Headquarters and Defence Organisations
- Members of religious communities who do not have an income or savings and who are dependant on the community
- Members and dependants of visiting forces
- Persons with Diplomatic Privilege or Immunity

How can I pay less Council Tax?

Disabled Reduction

If you, or someone who lives with you, needs an extra room (which could include an extra bathroom or kitchen) or floor space for a wheelchair because of a disability, you may be entitled to a reduction in your Council Tax bill.

If you qualify, your Council Tax will be calculated on the band immediately below that in which your property has been placed - or if in Band A already, part of that band.

Benefits

If you are on a low income, you could qualify for Council Tax Benefit. This can provide help of up to 100% of the amount of your Council Tax depending upon your family circumstances.

If you don't qualify for a Single Person Discount because another adult (not your partner) lives with you (such as a son or daughter) you may qualify for Second Adult Rebate of up to 25%. This depends on the other adult(s) income not yours.

If you are a tenant then it may also be possible to claim Housing Benefit which can provide help towards the payment of your rent. See the enclosed benefit leaflet for more details of how the schemes might help you and use our Online Benefit Calculator and electronic claim form to make a claim. www.gateshead.gov.uk/benefitscalculator

Exempt properties

Some dwellings are exempt from Council Tax. They are:

Unoccupied properties

- An unfurnished property which requires, is undergoing, or has undergone, major repair work or structural alterations to make it habitable. This exemption lasts for a maximum period of 12 months or 6 months after the substantial completion of the works, whichever is shorter
- Owned by a charitable body and was last occupied for the purposes of the charity. This exemption lasts for a maximum period of six months
- Unfurnished property, this exemption lasts for a maximum of six months
- Previous residence of someone who is detained in prison, hospital or other place of detention



How can I pay less Council Tax? continued

- Previous residence where the owner or tenant has gone to live permanently in a hospital, residential care home, nursing home or a hostel to receive care or treatment
- Left empty by a deceased person, an application for grant of probate or letters of administration to be made. The exemption continues for a maximum of 6 months after probate granted/letters of administration granted
- Where occupation is prohibited by law
- Waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion to perform their duties of office
- Previously the residence of an owner or tenant who has their main home somewhere else (other than a hospital, residential care home, nursing home, mental nursing home or hostel) to receive care due to old age, disablement, illness, drug dependence or past or present alcohol dependence or mental disorder
- Previously the residence of an owner or tenant who has their main home somewhere else to provide care for a person (same reasons as stated in previous exemption)
- Where owner is a student(s) and the property was last occupied by that student(s). If the owner became a student within 6 weeks of leaving the property this exemption still applies
- Where the mortgagee is in possession. This exemption applies from the date where both the property is unoccupied and the mortgagee has taken possession under the mortgage
- Where the person liable to pay Council Tax is a trustee in bankruptcy
- A pitch which is not occupied by a caravan or mooring which is not occupied by a boat
- Unoccupied annexe to an unoccupied dwelling

Occupied properties:

- Student Halls of Residence
- A property occupied only by students (or their spouse, civil partner or dependants who are not British Citizens) or by person(s) aged 18 or 19 who leave school or college between 1 May and 31 October in any year. If applying for this exemption please supply a copy of your current student certificate, this can be obtained from the Registrar of the educational establishment you attend (or attended).

How can I pay less Council Tax? continued

- UK Armed Forces Accommodation owned by the Ministry of Defence
- Where the Council Taxpayer is a member of a visiting force
- Only occupied by person(s) aged under 18
- Only occupied by a person(s) who is Severely Mentally Impaired
- The main residence of a person with diplomatic privilege or immunity
- An occupied annexe where there is a single property forming at least two dwellings and one of the dwellings (such as an annexe) is occupied by a dependant relative of a person living in the other dwelling
- The Council has the power to reduce liability for Council Tax where national discounts and exemptions do not apply. Each case will be judged on its merits, the Council will only consider using this power in exceptional circumstances.
- **If you are already receiving an exemption then you must let us know within 21 days of any change of circumstances that may affect your entitlement.**

Paying your Council Tax

Direct Debit

The Council recommends that you pay by Direct Debit as payment is easy and convenient. We offer payment dates of the 1st, 10th, 20th and 25th of each month.

You can arrange to pay by direct debit today by visiting our website www.gateshead.gov.uk/counciltaxonline

A guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own bank or building society.

- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, Gateshead Council will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by Gateshead Council or your bank or building society you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your bank or building society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

Paying your Council Tax continued

Debit Card

Telephone our dedicated 24-hour debit card phone line: 0845 149 0002
or pay on-line at: www.gateshead.gov.uk/counciltaxonline

Internet

Quote your Council Tax account number, Gateshead Council Bank account number (61278444) and sort code (089006).

In person

- at the Civic Centre or any of the Council offices listed on the back of your bill.
 - at any Post Office or paypoint facility using your swipe card (please contact the Council to have one issued).
-

What happens if I don't pay?

We are required to ensure that all debts due are paid in full on time – but we will help if you are having difficulty paying your bill. If you have problems making payments on time, you must contact us immediately either in person or by calling: 0191 433 3600.

We may be able to:

- reduce the amount payable through Benefit and relief schemes
- discuss the possibility of an alternative arrangement for payment
- consider a request for payment on a different date in the month

If you fall behind with your payments, then the Council will take prompt action to recover the debt through the court. This will involve increasing the amount of your debt as court costs would become payable in addition to your Council Tax.

Remember - it's important you let the Council know as soon as possible if you are having difficulty paying.

Payments are due on the dates shown on your Council Tax bill. Prompt enforcement action will be taken when payments are not made on the due date

Paying your Council Tax continued

What happens if I move house?

If you are moving house please tell us as soon as your moving date is confirmed. This will allow us to make any adjustment or organise a refund. You can tell us about your change of address by visiting our website at www.gateshead.gov.uk/counciltaxonline
You can also advise us in writing, by telephone or by e-mail.

Council Tax Refund Scams

Please be aware of telephone callers who say they are from the Council and ask you for your banking details or bank card number after telling you that you are due to a refund for Council Tax. The Council will never cold call you and ask you for these details. Please contact the Revenues section if you have any concerns.

How to contact us

If you have any queries about your Council Tax, contact the Revenues Section in person or by:

Phone:

Council Tax enquiries: 0191 433 3600

Benefit enquiries: 0191 433 4646

24 Hour payment line: 0845 1490 002

Fax: 0191 433 2066

E-mail: counciltax@gateshead.gov.uk

Writing to:

Gateshead Council,
Revenues and Benefits,
Civic Centre,
Regent Street,
Gateshead NE8 1HH



Electronic Information

For more information on Council Tax, why not visit the interactive web page at www.gateshead.gov.uk/counciltax You can browse frequently asked questions and complete on-line applications.

National Fraud Initiative

Gateshead Council takes part in data sharing exercises as part of a National Fraud Initiative (NFI) undertaken by the Audit Commission. Such exercises can take place following requests served upon the local authority and can involve the sharing of Council Tax information. All Councils are required to provide information, under S6 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, to identify inaccuracies or potential fraud. Data will be cross-matched for comparison and any inconsistencies are sent back to Councils to investigate.

Gateshead Advice Centre

The Gateshead Advice Centre at Gateshead Citizens Advice Bureau offers advice and information on a wide range of everyday problems including: Debt, Housing, Welfare Benefits, Family Law, Employment and Community Care.

For more information on how you can access this service please call us on 0191 478 5100 or email: gateshead@communitylegaladvice.org.uk



Spending on services

Where we get money from and how we spend it

This section shows how the Council is funded from Council Tax, Business Rates and Government Grants and also shows the Council's spending plans.

The tables show the budgets set for April 2010 to March 2011 and estimates of what will be spent next financial year from 1st April 2011.

Table 1

The Council's budget for the next year and reasons for changes from last year are shown, along with the amount of money the Council needs to raise from Council Tax.

Tables 2 to 4

Your bill includes money collected by the Council that is required to fund other organisations. These are known as precepts and relate to:

- Northumbria Police Authority
 - Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
 - Lamesley Parish Council (For residents of Lamesley only)
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Tables 5 and 6

The Council is also required to make payment in the form of levies to other organisations to help them provide their services. These are:

- Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority
- The Environment Agency

Table 1: Gateshead Council

2010/2011			2011/2012			
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000		Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
Learning and Children						
108,335	108,335	-	Schools	119,223	119,223	-
12,536	8,805	3,731	Access and Inclusion	11,751	8,483	3,268
9,208	6,714	2,494	Raising Achievement	8,286	5,880	2,406
7,846	2,025	5,821	Children and Young Peoples Service	5,538	4,095	1,443
8,538	8,024	514	Early Years	9,352	8,256	1,096
13,021	8,171	4,850	Business Support	7,649	7,216	433
22,543	2,783	19,760	Children and Families	21,570	2,710	18,860
2,198	1,036	1,162	Youth Offending Team	1,878	1,140	738
Community Based Services						
83,757	27,681	56,076	Adults' Social Care	54,842	23,035	31,807
2,712	254	2,458	CBS Business Support	1,582	123	1,459
7,418	812	6,606	Libraries and Arts	6,226	618	5,608
11,447	4,566	6,881	Sport Wellbeing and Independence	29,559	9,224	20,335
138,238	133,839	4,399	Housing General Fund	140,497	137,731	2,766
5,450	593	4,857	Safer Stronger Communities	4,659	752	3,907
Development and Enterprise						
7,193	2,364	4,829	Transport and Highways	6,339	3,312	3,027
4,845	2,700	2,145	Development and Public Protection	3,911	1,770	2,141
2,431	431	2,000	Environment and Regeneration	2,364	362	2,002
1,375	3,366	1,991	Property and Design	551	3,416	2,865
3,798	1,151	2,647	Economic Development	3,600	1,181	2,419
Local Environmental Services						
51,164	17,246	33,918		40,398	13,231	27,167
45,583	17,095	28,488	Central and Other Services	44,169	18,117	26,052
22,280	-	22,280	Capital Financing Costs	30,902	-	30,902
571,916	357,991	213,925		554,846	369,875	184,971
		12,500	Integrated Transport Authority Levy			12,726
		141	Environment Agency Levy			145
		23	Tyne Port Health Authority Precept			23
		6,000	Contingency Provision			7,000
		232,589				204,865
		15,566	cr Use of Balances			11,303
		-	cr Council Tax Freeze Grant			2,137
		24,456	cr Area Based Grant			-
		192,567	BUDGET REQUIREMENT (£1,003.28 per head)			191,425
			LESS			
		105,814	Formula Grant (£555.05per head)			105,904
		1,400	Collection Fund Surplus			23
		85,353	COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT			85,498
		£1,443.20	Band "D" Equivalent			£1,443.20
		£443m	Liabilities at Previous Year End (ie 31.3.09 and 31.3.10)			£491m
		8,089	Manpower (est. Full Time Equivalent)			7,727
REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT						
Growth, Service Pressures and Inflation						9,657
Savings						32,677
Reduction in Reserves						4,263
Change in Grant Income and Other Income						17,615
						1,142

Table 2: Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

2010/2011			2011/2012			
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000		Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
SERVICE						
66,102	7,278	58,824	Fire Service	62,924	6,157	56,767
571	571	-	Emergency Planning	485	485	-
<u>66,673</u>	<u>7,849</u>	<u>58,824</u>		<u>63,409</u>	<u>6,642</u>	<u>56,767</u>
	661		Contingency Provision			183
	120	cr	Interest on Balances			220
	-		Council Tax Freeze Grant			598
	<u>59,365</u>		BUDGET REQUIREMENT (£50.53 per head)			<u>56,132</u>
LESS						
	4,510		Formula Grant (£6.84 per head)			7,601
	31,060		Redistributed Non Domestic Rates (£22.14 per head)			24,590
	46		Collection Fund Surplus			38
	<u>23,749</u>		COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT			<u>23,903</u>
	£4.327m		Charge on Gateshead			£4.334m
	£73.16		Band "D" Equivalent			£73.16
	£18.3m		Liabilities at Previous Year End (ie 31.3.09 and 31.3.10)			£17.6m
	1,214		Manpower (est. Full Time Equivalent)			1,160
REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT						
Growth, Service Pressures and Inflation						387
Savings						3,022
Change in Grant Income						cr
Change in Service Level						598
Inflation and Other Changes						cr
						<u>3,233</u>
						cr

Table 3: Northumbria Police Authority

2010/2011			2011/2012		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
SERVICE					
344,283	51,835	292,448	329,595	41,921	287,674
		-			-
		<u>292,448</u>			<u>287,674</u>
BUDGET REQUIREMENT (£202.05 per head)					
LESS					
		256,184			250,983
		52			214
		<u>36,212</u>			<u>36,477</u>
	£4.949m	Charge on Gateshead			£4.957m
	£83.68	Band "D" Equivalent Charge			£83.68
	£32.833m	Liabilities at Previous Year End (ie 31.3.09 and 31.3.10)			£48.534m
	6,612	Staffing Levels at 01/04/11 (full time equivalent)			6,536
REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT					
					£000
Budget savings					17,742 cr
Changes in grant income and external funding					11,131
Inflation and other changes					6,137
Increased use of reserves					4,300 cr
					<u>4,774 cr</u>

Table 4: Lamesley Parish Council

2010/2011			2011/2012		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
LAMESLEY PARISH COUNCIL					
SERVICE					
8	-	8	8	-	8
		£5.96			£5.82
		Band "D" Equivalent			
REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT					
Increased use of reserves					0
					<u>0</u>

Table 5: Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority

2010/2011			2011/2012				
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000		Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	
SERVICE							
7,402	13,633	6,231	cr	Tyne Tunnels	29,107	15,338	13,769
3,967	35	3,932		ITA Expenditure	3,679	31	3,648
103,696	-	103,696		Nexus	100,933	-	100,933
115,065	13,668	101,397			133,719	15,369	118,350
		5,450		Transfer to Balances			15,314
		106,847		BUDGET REQUIREMENT			103,036
		35,141		Less: Rail Grant			29,244
		71,706		COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT			73,792
		£12.500m		Charge on Gateshead			£12.726m
		1		Staffing Levels (est. Full Time Equivalent)			1

REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT

Change in Grant Payments	1,768
Change in Other Income	4
Inflation and Other Changes	5,583 cr
	<u>3,811 cr</u>

Table 6: Environment Agency

2010/2011			2011/2012				
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000		Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	
SERVICE							
8,952	14,597	5,645	cr	Grant Aided	16,882	20,974	4,092 cr
1,213	-	1,213		Non Grant Aided	1,245	-	1,245
5,527	-	5,527		Maintenance Works	4,651	-	4,651
812	-	812		Administration Expenses	172	-	172
-	1	1	cr	Sundry Receipts	-	51	51 cr
-	-	-		Movement in Balances	-	57	57 cr
16,504	14,598	1,906		BUDGET REQUIREMENT	22,950	21,082	1,868
		£0.141m		Charge on Gateshead			£0.145m

REASON FOR CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT

Change in Service Level	38 cr
	<u>38 cr</u>

Politics affects almost every area of your life, from the food you eat to what you can watch on television, and, from how you get from A to B, to how safe you feel on the streets.

So, if you don't do politics, there's not much you do do.

How politics affects...

Where you live

- it ensures that rubbish gets collected and how much of it then gets recycled
- it keeps the streets clean and free of graffiti
- it maintains the roads and pavements in your area
- it decides if you can park your car in your street and how much it will cost you
- it affects the times and frequency of buses and trains, and creates bike lanes and paths
- it decides whether the pub next door stays open until 11pm or 3am.

Make your vote count!

www.gateshead.gov.uk/voting

Tel: 0191 433 2166



