

# WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

## 2019/20 Council Tax Frequently Asked Questions

Signposts for WSCC:

[Westsussex.gov.uk](http://Westsussex.gov.uk)

[How your council tax is spent](#)

[2019/20 Budget Book](#)

- **Why is an increase in council tax necessary?**

Like other councils we're facing difficult financial circumstances. There are increasing pressures with growing numbers of children and older people needing social care.

There are also other growing pressures, such as the government's policy on the National Living Wage. These pressures, combined with the continued reduction in our core funding from central government, mean that a council tax increase has been unavoidable.

West Sussex has comparatively low funding from government. For 2019/20 our core funding from Government is around £90 per head of population, this compares to an average of £136 for other county authorities. Our funding from government has also decreased significantly in recent years. In 2014/15 the money we received from central government, known as Revenue Support Grant, stood at £92.6m. From 2019/20 the County Council no longer receives any Revenue Support Grant at all.

Despite the reduction in funding we have faced since 2010, members of the County Council have been reluctant to raise your council tax. In fact we froze your council tax between 2011/12 and 2015/16 (five years). This meant an overall saving of around £500 for a Band D tax payer.

However, a change in government policy in 2016 meant funding reduced further for authorities including West Sussex. This was because Government assumed reductions in funding could be made good by council tax, hence we had little choice other than to increase our share of the council tax. For 2018/19 our Band D charge was lower than the comparable average for a County Council by £17.24.

Since 2010 we have also carried out an extensive transformation programme, which has meant we have made efficiency savings, whilst still protecting our frontline services. In fact, by 31 March 2020 we will have made around £240m in savings since 2010, which has helped to keep your council tax down.

- **Why is the increase 4.99%?**

The increase of 4.99% is made up of a rise of **2.99%** for the County's core element of council tax, plus **2.0%** which will be specifically for Adult Social Care.

The **core element** follows an agreement by Government to allow authorities to raise council tax by an additional 1%, taking the maximum permissible increase from 2.0% to 3.0%, before a local referendum is required. For 2019/20 West Sussex County Council has approved a core increase of **2.99%**.

In addition, there is a levy charged in relation to the Adult Social Care precept. Introduced by the Government in 2016/17, this allows councils to levy an annual charge to assist with meeting expenditure on adult social care. For 2019/20, as in previous years, West Sussex County Council will be levying a 2.0% charge for the

Adult Social Care precept. This part of the increase has been applied in full to cover the extra **£15.6m** investment needed in social care to keep pace with rising demand and the costs associated with Government implementing the National Living Wage.

- **What is the 2% Adult Social Care precept?**

Since 2016 the Government has allowed Councils which provide adult social care to levy an annual charge on the council tax of up to 3%. This additional charge is called the Adult Social Care precept. The income generated from this charge is ring-fenced, meaning it can only be used for adult social care services.

For 2019/20, West Sussex County Council has levied an Adult Social Care precept of 2% which is £26.35 or £0.51 per week for a Band D property. This will raise £8.8m in 2019/20 across the County towards adult social care pressures.

- **Why is the Adult Social Care precept shown separately on the Council Tax Bill?**

For transparency and as prescribed by government regulations, the Adult Social Care precept is identified separately on the council tax demand; it is also shown on a cumulative basis. As 2019/20 is the fourth year of the levy the amount shown on the council tax demand represents the sum of the charge for the current year and three previous years:

Year	Adult Social Care Levy Applied	Adult Social Care Levy Band D £
2016/17	2%	23.24
2017/18	2%	24.16
2018/19	2%	25.11
2019/20	2%	26.35
<b>Total</b>		<b>98.86</b>

- **How is the Adult Social Care precept calculated?**

The Adult Social Care precept is calculated on the whole of the West Sussex County Council element from the previous year. The calculation for a Band D is as follows:

Year	Previous Year Total Charge	Core Increase		Adult Social Care Increase		Total Charge £	% increase
	£		£		£		£
2016/17	1,161.99	1.95%	22.66	2.00%	23.24	3.95%	1,207.89
2017/18	1,207.89	1.95%	23.54	2.00%	24.16	3.95%	1,255.59
2018/19	1,255.59	2.95%	37.08	2.00%	25.11	4.95%	1,317.78
2019/20	1,317.78	2.99%	39.44	2.00%	26.35	4.99%	1,383.57

- **What is the £19.1m Business Rates – Gains from 75% Pilot?**

For 2019/20 West Sussex County Council and the Districts and Boroughs have been accepted as a pilot area for 75% business rate retention. The pilot is anticipated to provide an overall net gain to West Sussex authorities of up to **£19m** for one year only. The additional funds will be invested jointly by the County Council and the Districts/Boroughs on project work with economic benefit. It is reflected in the County's budget as the lead authority.