

BUDGET FOR BIRMINGHAM

2017– 2018

Council tax help
and information notes



A great city to live in

 **Birmingham**
City Council

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A message from the Leader

The financial challenges facing Birmingham City Council remain as difficult as ever.

We've had to save around £590 million from our budget since 2010, largely as a result of the Government's 'austerity' approach to public services, which has seen a dramatic fall in funding for this council. During 2017-18, we will have to deliver budget savings of £71 million. And we expect to have to cut £170 million by 2021.

This council is facing the toughest ever choices about public services but even in the most difficult of financial circumstances, we're still investing in frontline services. That means it is more important than ever that we work more closely with partners, community groups and residents to find new ways of delivering services.

In common with most other councils, we will be raising council tax by a total of 4.99 per cent. The initial 1.99 per cent is to cover a general increase in costs, while the additional three per cent is for the adult social care precept permitted by the Government.

Moving ahead, we've looked at imaginative ways to identify additional savings. We've cut and will continue to cut the cost of the council's ICT services. We've renegotiated contributions demanded by the West Midlands Local Government Pension Fund and will seek to make more savings in this area.

The search for sensible savings will continue. We now operate a 365-day-a-year active budget and we will constantly refine our ideas over the next 12 months.

In doing so we'll also work with you, the people of Birmingham.

Before setting this year's council budget we engaged with more citizens than ever before. We listened, and responded. We significantly reduced the cuts we were planning to make in the Supporting People budget so we can better protect vulnerable and older citizens.

We took on board the huge importance Brummies place on parks and museums and have been able to considerably reduce the cuts we initially planned in these areas. We'll continue to listen.

As I said a year ago, we're not raising the white flag of surrender. There are reasons for optimism as the Birmingham economy continues to grow strongly.

In fact, we're the most entrepreneurial city outside of London with a business growth rate higher than all UK cities and an economic growth rate of 13.5 per cent in the past five years.

We're a young city...the youngest in Europe. Almost a quarter of Brummies are under the age of 15 and nearly half of our city is aged under 30.

This gives us tremendous opportunities, but we know we have to galvanise that youthful zeal to forge a city of active communities, of innovation, creativity and social enterprise.

In short, Birmingham will do what it has always done. We'll roll up our sleeves and get on with it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Clancy".

Councillor John Clancy,
Leader of the Council

Creating the council of the future

Birmingham – a vibrant, optimistic city – is experiencing one of its most exciting periods of regeneration and development in recent times. We aim to be a city of inclusive growth in every respect – and Birmingham City Council’s purpose is to make a positive difference, every day, to people’s lives. This underpins everything we do, from setting priorities, decision-making or delivering services.

Council tax for 2017/18

There will be a rise of 1.99 per cent in the city council’s base element of council tax. And, in recognition of particular pressures on adult social care, there will be a further 3 per cent rise for the adult social care precept, contributing towards increasing adult social care costs. In total, this is a rise of 4.99 per cent.

Here are just some of the key areas we plan to spend in 2017/18*:



Adults Service



Homelessness



Community sport and events



Child protection and other children's services



Travel Assist



Library of Birmingham and community libraries



Waste management

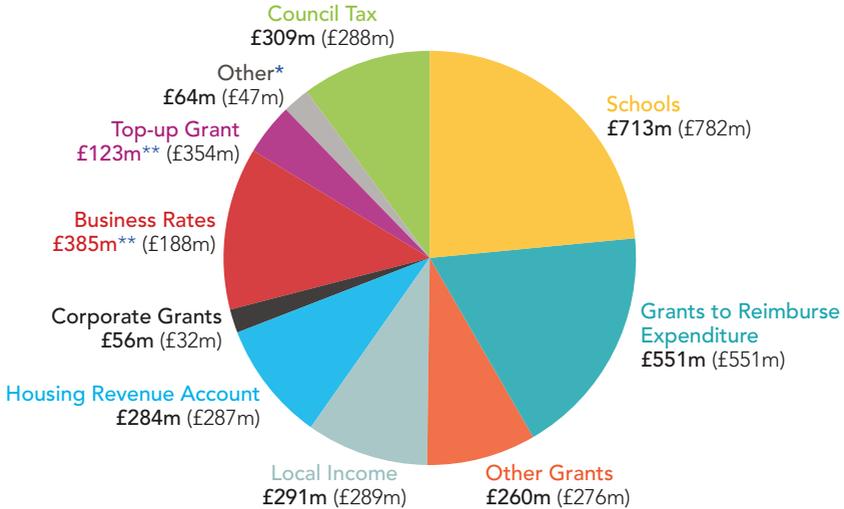


Parks and nature conservation

How budgets are put together

Revenue expenditure for city council services involves spending on the day-to-day running costs of the council, e.g. employees, premises, supplies and services.

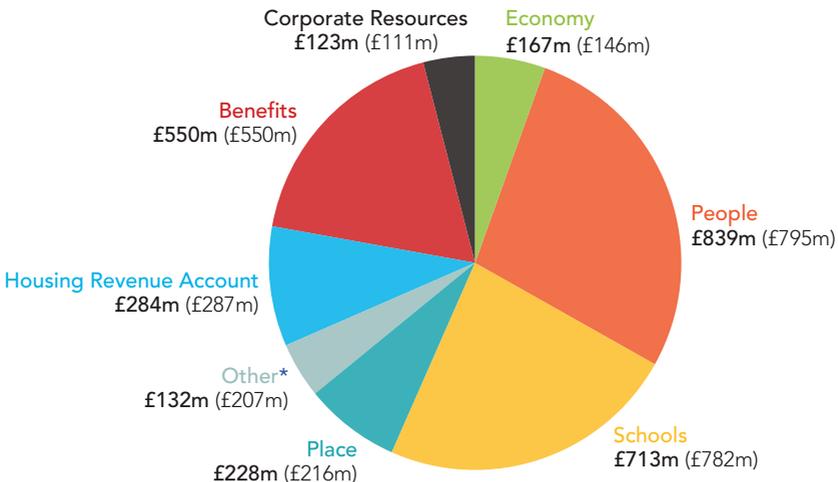
Where the money comes from 2017/18 – Total £3,036m (£3,094m)
(2016/17 figures in brackets)



* Other includes: Use of Reserves & Balances and costs recovered by charging capital accounts

** Change principally due to transfer of funding from Grant to Business Rates

Where the money is spent 2017/18 – Total £3,036m (£3,094m)
(2016/17 figures in brackets)



* Other includes Corporately Managed Budgets and Use of Reserves & Balances

Spending

SPENDING ON CITY COUNCIL SERVICES AND BAND D COUNCIL TAX	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	% change
Gross Expenditure	3,093.772	3,036.161	-1.86
Less Other Income	-2,258.491	-2,214.358	-1.95
Net Expenditure	835.281	821.803	-1.61
Less Revenue Support Grant (RSG) & Top Up Grant**	-353.654	-123.463	-65.09
Less Business Rates**	-187.884	-384.743	104.78
Plus/(less) Council Tax Collection Fund brought forward	-5.781	-5.052	-12.61
In-Year Charge to council taxpayers	287.962	308.545	7.15
Divided by the taxbase			
(Band D property equivalents)	239,042	243,955	2.06
Council tax for City Council services (Band D)*	£1,204.65	£1,264.76	4.99
Fire and Rescue Authority Precept	£56.03	£57.14	1.99
West Midlands PCC	£111.55	£116.55	4.48
Gives a total council tax (Band D)	£1,372.23	£1,438.45	4.83

For each £1m change in gross spend, Band D council tax for City Council services would be affected by +/-£4.10 (+/- £4.18 in 2016/17)

* This amount includes an increase relating to the additional Adult Social Care Precept. For 2017/18 this increase is 3% (2% increase in 2016/17)

** From 2017/18 the City Council no longer receives RSG but retains 99% of Business Rates

Total council tax (Band D)	£1,372.23	£1,438.45	4.83
New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Precept	£33.78	£34.73	2.81
Gives a total council tax (Band D) including New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	£1,406.01	£1,473.18	4.78

New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council: gross expenditure in 2017/18 will be £86,915 (£95,470 in 2016/17). Net expenditure will be £46,016 (£44,321 in 2016/17) which is equivalent to £34.73 per property in Band D (£33.78 for 2016/17). Its charge will be made only to council taxpayers in the parish. For each £1,000 change in gross spend, 2017/18 Band D council tax would be affected by +/-£0.75 (+/- £0.76 in 2016/17).

Total council tax (Band D)	£1,372.23	£1,438.45	4.83
Sutton Coldfield Town Precept	£49.96	£49.96	0.00
Gives a total council tax (Band D) including Sutton Coldfield Town Council	£1,422.19	£1,488.41	4.66

Sutton Coldfield Town Council: gross expenditure in 2017/18 will be £1,832,982 (£1,823,850 in 2016/17) which is equivalent to £49.96 per property in Band D (no change from 2016/17). Its charge will be made only to council taxpayers in the parish. For each £1,000 change in gross spend, 2017/18 Band D council tax would be affected by +/-£0.03 (no change from 2016/17).

HOW SPENDING ON CITY COUNCIL SERVICES HAS CHANGED FROM 2016/17	Gross Expenditure £m	Gross Income £m	Net £m
2016/17 BUDGET WAS	3,094	-2,259	835
Inflation	13	-2	11
Budget Issues and Policy Choices	82	28	110
Savings Plans	-76	5	-71
Movement in Use of Corporate Reserves	-3	-24	-27
Changes in Corporate Grants	0	-25	-25
School Expenditure & Funding	-69	69	0
Housing Revenue Account	-3	3	0
Corporately Managed Budgets & Other Changes	-2	-9	-11
2017/18 BUDGET IS	3,036	-2,214	822

Detailed council tax figures

Council tax 2017/18

Band	City Council*	Fire & Rescue Authority	West Midlands PCC	Total excl. Parish Precept	New Frankley in Birmingham		Sutton Coldfield	
	£	£	£	£	Parish Precept £	Parish Total £	Town Precept £	Town Total £
A	843.17	38.09	77.70	958.96	23.16	982.12	33.31	992.27
B	983.70	44.44	90.65	1,118.79	27.01	1,145.80	38.86	1,157.65
C	1,124.23	50.79	103.60	1,278.62	30.87	1,309.49	44.41	1,323.03
D	1,264.76	57.14	116.55	1,438.45	34.73	1,473.18	49.96	1,488.41
E	1,545.82	69.84	142.45	1,758.11	42.45	1,800.56	61.06	1,819.17
F	1,826.88	82.53	168.35	2,077.76	50.16	2,127.92	72.16	2,149.92
G	2,107.93	95.23	194.25	2,397.41	57.89	2,455.30	83.27	2,480.68
H	2,529.52	114.28	233.10	2,876.90	69.46	2,946.36	99.92	2,976.82

* This amount includes the Adult Social Care precept which is shown separately on your bill

Environment Agency Midlands Region

The Council Tax (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations 2011

The Environment Agency is a levying body for its Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Functions under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Environment Agency (Levies) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

The Environment Agency has powers in respect of flood and coastal erosion risk management for 4,855 kilometres of main river and along tidal and sea defences in the areas of the Severn & Wye and the Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (2,486 and 2,369 respectively). Money is spent on the construction of new flood defence schemes, the maintenance of the river system and existing flood defences together with the operation of a flood warning system and management of the risk of coastal erosion. The financial details are:

Severn & Wye Regional Flood and Coastal Committee		
	2016/17	2017/18
	'000s	'000s
Gross expenditure	£16,795	£13,040
Levies raised	£1,084	£1,106
Total Council Tax Base (Band D property equivalents)	923	940

Trent Regional Flood and Coastal Committee		
	2016/17	2017/18
	'000s	'000s
Gross expenditure	£38,353	£46,057
Levies raised	£1,975	£2,014
Total Council Tax Base (Band D property equivalents)	1,727	1,761

The majority of funding for flood defence comes directly from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). However, under the new Partnership Funding rule not all schemes will attract full central funding. To provide local funding for local priorities and contributions for partnership funding the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees recommend through the Environment Agency a local levy.

A change in the gross budgeted expenditure between years reflects the programme of works for both capital and revenue needed by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees to which you contribute. The total Local Levy raised has increased by 2.0% for the Severn & Wye Committee and 1.99% for the Trent Committee.

The total Local Levy raised has increased from £3,058,936 in 2016/17 to £3,119,917 for 2017/18 (£1,105,900 for Severn & Wye and £2,014,017 for Trent Committees). Birmingham's share of this total Local Levy in 2017/18 is £279,121.

Council tax – help and information

If you have any difficulty understanding this part of the leaflet or you want more help with your council tax you can:

Go to the website at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/council-tax

You will find information about council tax, along with forms you can use to ask questions about your account, or to tell us about changes in your circumstances. Please quote your account reference number, if you have one, when contacting us.

Text phone: 0121 303 1119 (Registered users only)

Write to: Birmingham City Council, Revenues, PO Box 5, Birmingham B4 7AB

Fair Processing Statement

Any personal data held by Birmingham City Council, in relation to your council tax or business rates bill, will be held in full compliance with the legal obligations as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and in accordance with the council's privacy policy. A copy is available at any council library or on the Birmingham City Council website: www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy

Birmingham City Council will incorporate the names and addresses held in the council tax and business rates systems into customer services systems. This is in line with the privacy policy.

Changes in circumstances

You must inform the council if there is a change that affects your council tax charge – for example, if you receive a discount or exemption and the conditions no longer apply. This could be where you are not the only person in your property aged 18 years and over and therefore no longer qualify for a single person discount. You should also advise us if you change address, or if a different person should now be liable to pay the bills.

You must inform the council's Revenues and Benefits team immediately of any change in your circumstances. Failure to do so, without reasonable excuse, could result in a financial penalty.

You can do this by visiting: www.birmingham.gov.uk/changeincircs

If you wish to claim Council Tax Support or if you are claiming Council Tax Support and have a change in your circumstances that you wish to report, you can do so by accessing the Birmingham City Council website:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits

Council tax – help and information

Help and information for visually impaired people

Please call 0121 303 1113 to register for our large print services. We can provide you with information relating to your council tax bill in large print, on audiotape or in Braille.

Council tax bands

Council tax is the way in which Birmingham City Council receives some of the money it needs to provide local services. The amount you pay is based on the value of your property in 1991. There are eight bands set by the government. Your band is shown on your council tax bill.

Band	Property value in 1991	Band	Property value in 1991
A	Up to and including £40,000	E	£88,001 – £120,000
B	£40,001 – £52,000	F	£120,001 – £160,000
C	£52,001 – £68,000	G	£160,001 – £320,000
D	£68,001 – £88,000	H	More than £320,000

Appeals against banding

You can appeal against the banding of newly-occupied properties, or properties which have had a major change in structure, or use of facilities. It is not possible to appeal on the grounds of general changes in the property market, or if an appeal has been made before.

If you have any questions concerning the banding of your property contact:

The Listing Officer, Council Tax West, Valuation Office Agency, Overline House, Central Station, Blechynden Terrace, Southampton SO15 1GW
Telephone: **03000 501501**; Website: www.voa.gov.uk

Council tax – who is responsible for payment

The person liable to pay council tax is the person who first fits one of the descriptions listed below: starting with one and working through to six. More than one person can be held liable if they are on the same level. Husbands, wives and partners are usually jointly liable. In some cases, the owner of a property will have to pay the council tax, rather than the residents (e.g. houses in multiple occupation, care homes or nursing homes).

1. Resident owner
2. Resident leaseholder
3. Resident statutory or secure tenant
4. Resident with a licence to occupy
5. Resident aged 18 or over
6. Non-resident owner

If you think that you are not the person who should have to pay council tax, see help and information on pages 9 and 10.

You should not withhold payment of your council tax if you are waiting for a decision on whether your banding or liability is correct or whether you are entitled to Council Tax Support.

Adult Social Care Precept

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has made an offer to adult social care authorities. ("Adult social care authorities" are local authorities which have functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, namely county councils in England, district councils for an area in England for 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.)

The offer is the option of an adult social care authority being able to charge an additional "precept" on its council tax for financial years from the financial year beginning in 2016 without holding a referendum, to assist the authority in meeting expenditure on adult social care. Subject to the annual approval of the House of Commons, the Secretary of State intends to offer the option of charging this "precept" at an appropriate level in each financial year up to and including the financial year 2019-20.

For 2017/18 the City Council has increased Council Tax by 3% in relation to the Adult Social Care Precept.

Council tax reductions

People with disabilities

If your home has special facilities for someone in your household who is disabled, it may be possible to get your bill reduced. You may be able to get a reduction if, for example:

- You have a room needed by the disabled person for a special purpose (e.g. dialysis equipment)
- You have an extra bathroom or kitchen for the disabled person
- There is enough floor space for someone who uses a wheelchair within the home

You will need to complete an application form to receive this reduction. Please call us on 0121 303 1113 for an application form.

Annexes occupied by a relative

From 1 April 2014, a discount of up to 50% can be awarded where a relative is occupying an annexe and a charge is payable.

You will need to complete an application form to receive this reduction. Please call us on 0121 303 1113 for an application form.

Personal discounts

The full bill is only payable if there are at least two adults living in the property. In certain circumstances you may be entitled to a reduction:

- If you are the only adult aged 18 years or over living in your property you can apply for a 25% discount

Some people are not counted when looking at the number of adults in a property.

The main categories are:

- Full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- People caring for someone living in the property who has a disability, and who is not their spouse, partner or child aged under 18 years
- 18 and 19-year-olds who are at, or who have just left, school or college
- Patients resident in hospital
- People who are being looked after in care homes
- People in prison (except those in prison for non-payment of council tax or a fine)

For further information, or to make an application, please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/discounts-and-exemptions-form

Exemptions

Exempt properties

Some properties are exempt from council tax.

For a full list, please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/exemptions

However, the main categories are:

- A property left unoccupied by a person detained in custody
- A property left unoccupied by patients now resident in a hospital or care home
- A property left unoccupied because the owner or tenant has died, for a maximum of six months after probate has been granted
- A property left empty by people receiving care
- A property left empty by people providing care
- A property left empty by someone who is now a full-time student living elsewhere
- A property occupied solely by full-time students, or by some non-British dependants of students
- A property left empty by a bankrupt
- A vacant caravan pitch or boat mooring
- A property occupied only by people aged under 18 years
- An unoccupied annexe which cannot be let separately without a breach of planning control
- A property occupied only by people who are severely mentally impaired (including the liable person)
- Certain properties occupied by diplomats
- An annexe occupied by an elderly or disabled relative

You will need to complete an application form to receive any reduction or exemption.

For further information, or to make an application, please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/discounts-and-exemptions-form

Care Leavers Discount

The council will be reducing the council tax for care leavers under 21 to zero from 1 April 2017.

This discount will be awarded automatically where a balance remains outstanding once all other discounts and exemptions, and any entitlement to council tax support (CTS), has been assessed.

The council will also consider awarding a discretionary discount of up to 100% to care leavers between the ages of 21 and 25. To claim this discount, you will have to complete a simple form. If not in receipt of CTS, you will need to supply income and spending details.

Discounts can be backdated to 1 April of the financial year in which either an application for a discount is received or the council identifies that the conditions for the discount are met. Where the liability started after 1 April, the discount will be awarded from the date the liability started.

If a care leaver leaves Birmingham and returns, they will be entitled to the discount for any period they are liable for council tax in Birmingham provided the other conditions are satisfied.

Entitlement to an automatic discount will end when the care leaver reaches the age of 21. Entitlement to the discretionary discount will end when the care leaver reaches the age of 25, or if their circumstances change such that they no longer qualify. If a discount is not awarded, the care leaver can ask the council to review its decision. Any such request will need to include reasons for asking for the review, and relevant supporting information.

Reviews will be considered by an officer not involved in making the original decision and the applicant will be notified of the outcome of the review in writing.

Empty property charges

Where a property has been empty and unfurnished for a period of two years a council tax charge of up to 150% may be applied.

Council Tax Support

Why should I claim Council Tax Support?

Council Tax Support is money off your council tax bill. This means that your bill could be reduced. Council Tax Support can be awarded in addition to any other reductions in your bill.

Claimants of working age (other than those listed below) will have their Council Tax Support assessment based on a maximum of 80% of their council tax liability.

Claimants will have their Council Tax Support assessment based on 100% of their council tax liability if the:

- Claimant or their partner is a pensioner
- Claimant or their partner is entitled to a disability premium, severe disability premium, enhanced disability premium or disabled child premium
- Claimant or their partner is entitled to employment support allowance and receives a qualifying disability-related benefit
- Claimant or their partner qualifies for a carer's premium
- Claimant or their partner receives a war disablement pension, war widow's pension or war widower's pension
- Claimant or their partner has a dependent child under six

You may still qualify for Council Tax Support even if:

- You are working
- You have other income such as a works pension or a private pension
- You have savings, unless these are more than £16,000

How much can I get?

The amount of Council Tax Support you get depends on your individual circumstances and takes account of any income you (and a partner, if you have one) get from working, pensions, benefits and tax credits, any savings over £6,000 and your household circumstances including any other people who live with you.

The people who live with you other than your partner and dependant children are called non-dependants. For every non-dependant that lives with you there could be a reduction in the overall amount of Council Tax Support that you are awarded.

Help and advice

Some people might not know how to claim, others might think it is too complicated. If you have not claimed Council Tax Support, but would like to know if you are entitled to it, you can find out further information about this at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/benefits

If you already get Council Tax Support, you do not need to make a new claim.

Your Council Tax Support will be taken off your bill. If your circumstances change you must tell us immediately as this could affect your Council Tax Support entitlement.

For more information on the Council Tax Support scheme, go to www.birmingham.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

Other benefit changes

The government has recently introduced major changes to a number of benefits. If you have been affected by these changes and you need help and guidance, please visit our webpage www.birmingham.gov.uk/financial-help

Benefit fraud – help us stamp it out

Do you know anyone committing benefit fraud or any other type of fraud against the council? Anyone wishing to report a suspected benefit fraud should call, in confidence, the Local Authority Fraud Hotline on **0800 854 440 (0800 328 0512 Textphone)**, or write to NBFH, Mail Handling Site A, Wolverhampton WV98 2BP.

How to pay

Please note that your payment date is the 1st of the month, commencing in April, unless you pay by Direct Debit when you will have a choice of payment dates.

Monthly Direct Debit payers have the choice of paying on the 8th, 15th, 21st or 28th of the month. You can also pay by Direct Debit if you pay yearly or half-yearly – your payment dates will be 1st April if you pay annually, and 1st April and 1st October if you pay half-yearly.

Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay, and you are protected by the Direct Debit guarantee. If you would like to pay by Direct Debit, it could not be simpler. You can make an application online by visiting www.birmingham.gov.uk/directdebit. If you do not have access to the web, just call us on 0121 303 1113, advise us of your chosen payment date and provide us with the relevant details. We will do the rest.

Online – Visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/council-tax where you can make a payment by a debit or credit card.

By telephone using debit / credit card – call 0121 464 2001 to make payment on the 24-hour automated payment system.

If you pay by any of the following methods, you must allow five days for your payment to reach us.

PayPoint/Payzone/Post Office – towards the top right-hand side of your bill there is a barcode, which can be used when making a payment. You should present this, along with your payment, at any Post Office or any shop displaying the PayPoint or Payzone logo. Please note that only cash is accepted at PayPoint and Payzone outlets. You can pay by cheque at the Post Office. Cheques need to be made payable to 'Post Office Counters Ltd'. There is no charge for using these services. The barcode cannot be used at banks. The cashier will process your payment and give you back your bill.

It is recommended that you request a receipt for your payments. Please keep your bill in a safe place as you will need it to pay your instalments throughout the year.

For a list of PayPoint and Payzone outlets, please visit www.paypoint.com and www.payzone.co.uk

Don't fall into the debt trap

All payments must be received by the due dates shown on your bill, or you may receive a reminder notice. If payments are not made on time, you may be subject to enforcement action. This can involve deductions from your income, bankruptcy proceedings, a charging order, enforcement agent (bailiff) or an application to commit you to prison. Substantial costs are involved – which you will have to pay.

You should not withhold payment of your council tax whilst you are appealing against your banding, disputing your liability, or if we are processing your application for any form of discount, exemption or other benefit.

If you have difficulties paying your council tax, please contact us on **0121 303 1113**.

Paying by Direct Debit ensures you do not miss payments. You can make an application online by visiting www.birmingham.gov.uk/directdebit. If you do not have access to the web then just call us on **0121 303 1113**, advise us of your chosen payment date and provide us with your relevant details. We will do the rest. For information on all council services visit www.birmingham.gov.uk

Service improvement

The council has tracing software which enables us to identify and recover outstanding council tax from people who leave their property without paying.

Comments / compliments / complaints – your views

We are committed to providing our customers with an excellent level of service and support the city council's 'Your Views' policy.

If you would like to raise anything about the service you have received, whether it is a comment, compliment or complaint, please let us know by visiting www.birmingham.gov.uk/yourviews or contact us using the details available in the help and information section of this booklet.

Making a positive difference everyday to people's lives



birmingham.gov.uk