

YOUR COUNCIL TAX

EVERY £1 OF YOUR COUNCIL TAX IS SHARED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY...

72p Essex County Council

10p Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner - Police

9p Uttlesford District Council

5p Average town/parish council share

4p Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner - Fire



2018/19



This leaflet explains how your Council Tax is worked out and where the money goes. It also sets out all the easy ways to pay, and gives information about how you might qualify for a Council Tax discount, exemption or reduction.

WHAT IS COUNCIL TAX?

Council Tax is a tax charged by local authorities to raise money for local services such as education, libraries, refuse collection, highways and care for the elderly.

We (Uttlesford District Council) collect your Council Tax and share it with Essex County Council, the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex and the town and parish councils.

Almost every household has to pay Council Tax whether your home is a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette, annexe, mobile home or houseboat. The amount you pay will depend on your Council Tax band which can be found on your bill.

There are eight valuation Council Tax bands. The band is set by the Valuation Office Agency and is based on what the property might have been worth on 1 April 1991.

Further information can be found on the website at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/counciltax or by contacting the council.

APPEALING YOUR COUNCIL TAX BAND

If you think your home should be in a different valuation band, you should contact the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) as Uttlesford District Council does not set the bands.

The VOA can advise you further about your rights and how to appeal if you are entitled to do so.

Council Tax East
Valuation Office Agency
Kings Wharf
20-30 King's Road
Reading
RG1 3ER

Email: cteast@voa.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: **03000 501501**

DIFFICULTY PAYING?

We are here to help you.

Please contact us as soon as possible if you cannot pay your Council Tax. Don't wait until you are in debt as this makes it more difficult to sort the problem out.

WHO HAS TO PAY COUNCIL TAX?

At least one person in each household is responsible for paying Council Tax whether they own the home or rent it.

To work out who is responsible for the Council Tax on your home, look down the list below until you come to the description that applies to you:

- owner-occupiers
- leaseholders
- people who pay rent
- People who have a licence to occupy, such as people who live in tied cottages (housing relating to their work)
- People who occupy the property without any legal interest in it (that is they don't own or rent it)
- People who own the property but don't live in it

People living together such as joint tenants, married people or civil partners can be held jointly and severally responsible for all their Council Tax charge.

PAY ONLINE OR BY PHONE

- Please visit the website www.uttlesford.gov.uk to pay online and get a receipt by email
- Phone our automated 24-hour payment lines on **01799 510551** or **510552**

PAYMENTS

You can pay your Council Tax over 12 months rather than 10. If you would like to make this change you must write to us by 16 April 2018. If you want to keep paying over 10 months you don't need to do anything.

Join over 28,000 people who already pay their council tax by Direct Debit

Direct Debit is safe and secure, and takes away the worry of trying to remember to make your payments on time. There are four instalment dates to choose from, and it's easy to set up!

Complete the Direct Debit form on the back of your bill or call us on **01799 510510** to set up over the phone.



COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS

You don't have to pay Council Tax on some properties. These are known as 'exempt properties' and include properties lived in only by full-time students, people who have a severe mental difficulty, and people aged under 18.

Empty properties may be exempt if they:

- are left empty by someone who has moved to either provide or receive personal care
- are left empty by someone who now resides permanently in a care home
- are left empty by someone who is in prison
- have been repossessed
- are empty because no-one is allowed to live in them by law
- are owned or leased by foreign diplomats
- are owned or leased by visiting forces
- remain in the hands of the estate of a deceased person and where probate has not been granted or probate was granted less than six months ago
- are an unoccupied annexe which must remain ancillary to the main dwelling
- are waiting to be lived in by a minister of religion

Forces barracks are also exempt, and the people who live there contribute to the cost of local services through a special arrangement with us.

Some properties owned by a charity can be exempt for up to six months if they were last occupied in connection with the charitable aims of that charity.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

You may be entitled to pay less Council Tax if you or someone who lives with you has a room set aside for use by the disabled person in connection with their disability, or an extra bathroom or kitchen, or uses a wheelchair indoors, to meet special needs relating to a disability.

If you would like to apply for a reduction, please get in touch for an application form. We will need a letter from your GP or a similar healthcare professional to confirm the additional room or space for the use of a wheelchair is of significant importance to the wellbeing of the disabled person.



If you are receiving a Council Tax discount, exemption or disabled reduction, you must tell us straight away if your circumstances change or if you think the information on your bill is incorrect.

For more information or to apply, please get in touch with us by email at revenues@uttlesford.gov.uk or on **01799 510510**, or visit the website at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/counciltaxdiscount

DISCOUNTS

When issuing a Council Tax bill, we assume that two adults are living in the property. If you are the only adult living there (as your main home), we will reduce your bill by 25%.

When we look at the number of adults living in a property, we do not count:

- Full-time students, student nurses and apprentices
- 18 or 19 year olds who are at, or have just left, school/college
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- People staying in some hostels or night shelters
- People who are being looked after in care homes
- Care workers working for low pay (usually for a charity)
- People caring for someone with a disability, who is not their partner or their child (someone under 18)
- People in prison (unless they are in prison for not paying their Council Tax or a fine relating to their Council Tax)

If you live in job-related accommodation because your contract of employment specifically requires you to reside elsewhere, you may qualify for a 50% discount on your other home.

If your property is furnished and it is not your sole or main home, a 100% charge will apply.

UNOCCUPIED PROPERTIES: DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUM CHARGES

If your property is empty and unfurnished, we can award a 50% discount for a period of up to six months. If your property is in need of, or is undergoing, major repairs or structural alterations as well as being unoccupied and unfurnished, we can award a 50% discount for a period of up to 12 months.

Properties which remain empty at the end of a discount period will be listed as long-term empty and a 100% charge will apply. Properties which have been empty for more than two years will have an additional 50% premium charge applied to their Council Tax bill. The premium charge does not apply to annexes or properties owned by service personnel.

Please be advised that for the purposes of discounts and premiums, the unoccupied period starts from the date the property becomes empty and not from the date the ownership changes.



LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) is a means-tested discount which could provide help in reducing your Council Tax if you are on a low income.

You can apply if you own your home, are unemployed or working.

Contact the council on **01799 510510** or **benefits@uttlesford.gov.uk**, or visit **www.uttlesford.gov.uk/LCTS** for further details.

CHALLENGING LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT DECISIONS

If you have applied for Local Council Tax Support and you disagree with the decision, you must write to us giving the reasons why you are aggrieved. If we cannot resolve your grievance within two months, you may appeal to the Valuation Office Tribunal.

You cannot withhold payment of your Council Tax while the matter is being investigated or is under appeal.

EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP FUND

Our Exceptional Hardship Fund has been set up to support our most vulnerable residents. This includes people who have either seen a reduction in the government support they receive to help pay for Council Tax, or those who are suffering financial hardship due to unforeseen circumstances.

These support payments can provide short-term relief but should not be seen as a long-term solution to debt problems.

Applicants will need to ensure they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve their own situation prior to application.

Contact us or visit **www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ehf** for details.

PENALTY NOTICES

You must notify us within 21 days of any change in your circumstances which might affect your eligibility to claim a discount.

Failure to do so may result in a penalty fee of £70.

You must tell us straight away if you have been given a discount, exemption or reduction to which you are not entitled.

COUNCIL TAX REVIEWS

We have a duty to review the discounts and exemptions we award. If you receive a review letter, you must respond to either verify that your discount or exemption should continue or to advise us of any changes. Failure to respond may result in the discount or exemption being withdrawn.

FRAUD

Help us protect local services by reporting Council Tax fraud

Fraudsters cost all of us money so if you know someone who may be claiming a Council Tax discount that they're not entitled to, please contact our fraud team on **01799 510366** or **510397**.

All calls are treated in the strictest confidence.

Alternatively, you can email us at **fraud@uttlesford.gov.uk**.

DEBT PROBLEMS?

If you are struggling to pay your bills or have run up debts do get advice early. Visit Uttlesford Citizens Advice at **www.uttlesfordcab.org.uk** for information or call 01799 618840. Advice is free, confidential and independent.



Your Council Tax is shared between Uttlesford District Council, Essex County Council, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, and your town/parish council. About three quarters of the Council Tax collected in the district goes to the county council and the rest is shared between the other organisations listed above.

Information about the district council's 2018/19 budget can be found at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/budget.

You will also find links to the 2018/19 budgets of Essex County Council, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, and town councils with budgets over £140,000. A paper copy of this financial information can be obtained on request from the relevant organisation.

Your Council Tax bill will show the amount of increase or decrease in Council Tax payable to each relevant body for the 2018/19 year. Uttlesford District Council has decided to increase its Council Tax by 2.99%.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRECEPT – ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

The Secretary of State for Housing, 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 for 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 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.

More information visit: www.essex.gov.uk/counciltax

HOW TO CONTACT US

Telephone: 01799 510510

Textphone users: 18001

Email: uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk

Visit/write to us: Council Offices, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER or
The Library, White Hart Way, Dunmow (visit only)

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format please phone 01799 510510.