Working hard, for you, in Rossendale

Council Tax 2017/18

This leaflet forms part of your Council Tax bill

To help you spread the cost of Council Tax throughout the year you can opt to pay in 12 monthly instalments. To arrange this email counciltax@rossendalebc.gov.uk
2017/18 About your Council Tax bill

The following information is intended as guidance only and is not a full statement of the law. If you need more information on any of the subjects mentioned below, please phone 01706 217777. Option 1

We charge Council Tax for most homes, whether they are owned or rented. The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on:

- the valuation band your home falls into;
- the area you live in; and
- whether you are entitled to any benefits or reductions.

Council Tax valuation bands for each property were decided by the government’s valuation officer in 1991. There are eight bands, A to H, with A being the lowest. The full list of bands and the current Council Tax Charges for each are all available on the Council’s website by following the links on the back of your bill.

You may be able to appeal against your valuation band if:

- you have moved into your home in the last six months and the building has been altered since the 1991 valuation; or
- the area where you live has changed in a way which could affect the value of your home.

You may also appeal against your Council Tax liability, but if you decide to appeal, you must continue paying your Council Tax. We will adjust your future payments or refund any amounts you have overpaid if your appeal is successful. *(Please note that bandings can go up as well as down).*

Full budget information is also available on the Council’s website (including Lancashire County Council, Fire and Police) by following the links on the back of your bill.

**Fraud prevention**

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to protecting public money and has a team dedicated to tackling Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support Fraud and also Corporate Fraud. The Council has a role to stop fraud from taking place and to reduce the number of fraudulent claims each year. The Council undertakes various activities to carry out this duty one of which is taking part in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise which checks council tax data against benefit claim records.

**Your responsibilities**

**Payments**

You are required to pay your Council Tax on time as shown on your bill. If you fail to pay an instalment, you will receive a reminder. If you bring your account up to date and then miss a further instalment, you will receive a reminder. If you bring your account up to date again, any further missed instalments will result in us asking you to pay the full debt for the year at once. If you do not, we may take legal action against you and you will also have to pay court costs. You can pay using any of the following methods:

- Direct Debit
- The Council’s website
- Telephone 01706 217777 Option 2
- In cash at post offices and other outlets (please take the barcode on your bill)
Many people choose to pay their Council Tax by monthly direct debit. This is quick and easy to arrange and your bank or building society will then pay us direct from your account. To arrange a direct debit go to rossendale.gov.uk/directdebit.

You can request to pay Council Tax in 12 instalments, instead of the normal 10, by writing to the Council Tax Office before April 15th. You can still request extra instalments after April 15th, and we will spread the charge over the maximum number of months still available.

**Information**

You are required to let us know about any changes in your home circumstances within 21 days. This is particularly important if you are claiming Council Tax Support, discounts or exemption for your property. If you do not, or the information you provide is not correct, you will have to pay us the difference between the amount of Council Tax you have paid and the amount you should have paid following the change in circumstances.

You may also have to pay an additional penalty of either £70 or £280.

**Properties exempt from Council Tax**

There are some occupied properties that are exempt from payment

- If everyone resident is under the age of 18;
- If everyone resident is a student (including halls of residence);
- If everyone resident is classed in law as being ‘severely mentally impaired’.
- If the property is an annexe occupied by a dependent relative.
- If one of the occupiers is classed as a visiting diplomat or with visiting forces
- Armed forces accommodation

There are also some unoccupied properties which are exempt:

- If the property is empty because the occupier has died, then there are no charges for six months from either the date of death or the date probate is granted
- If the last occupier has gone into permanent care, in a care home or hospital, or with a carer elsewhere
- If the last occupier has moved out to provide care elsewhere
- If left empty when the usual occupier is a student,
- If left empty when the usual occupier is a minister of religion
- If left empty when the usual occupier is currently in prison
- If the responsible party is a trustee in bankruptcy or a mortgage lender after repossession
- If the property cannot be legally occupied
- Relatives flat, which cannot be separately occupied
- Owned by a charity and last used for charitable purposes (6 months only)
- Empty caravan pitches and boat moorings

If you are awarded an exemption we will issue a notice to you to confirm it. In the case of time limited exemptions, you will receive a further notice shortly before the expiry of the exemption to explain what the charges will be.

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**We now offer 4 Direct Debit dates; the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15 & 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month.**

Set up at: rossendale.gov.uk/directdebit
Other discounts

Single person’s discount
If you are the only adult in your home (aged 18 or over), we will reduce your bill by 25%.

Unless you tell us differently, your Council Tax bill will assume that there are two or more adults aged 18 or over living in your home. However, when considering the number of adults living in a property, we do not include:

- full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees;
- 18 and 19-year-olds who are at school or have just left school;
- people who have severe mental health issues/illness;
- people staying in hospitals, care homes, prison or certain hostels or night shelters;
- care workers working for low pay (usually for charities);
- people caring for someone with a disability who is not their partner or child under 18;
- members of visiting forces and some international institutions; and
- members of religious communities (monks and nuns).

Empty Property Discount & Premium:

- For the first 6 months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished; 100% discount for the first month, followed by 50% discount for 5 months
- After 6 months a vacant property will be subject to a full charge. Where a property remains continuously vacant for more than 2 years a 50% premium will be applied i.e. a charge of one and a half times the normal rate of council tax.
- When a property is vacant due to major repairs or structural alteration, then a 50% discount will apply for up to 12 months
- For annexes occupied by a non-dependent relative, 50% discount applies

If you are awarded a discount we will issue a notice to you to confirm it. In the case of time limited discounts, you will receive a further notice shortly before the expiry of the discount to explain what the charges will be.

People with disabilities
If you, or someone who lives with you, have a disability and need an extra bathroom or kitchen, or extra space in your property, we may reduce your Council Tax by the equivalent of one valuation band.

Adult Social Care
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.
Contact us for ....

- Council Tax billing and support enquiries
- Housing Benefit queries
- Business Rates concerns
- Housing Options and support if you are concerned about being made homeless
- Support and guidance for new businesses
- Licensing applications
- Planning applications and inspections

You can visit our One Stop Shop at Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 0BB where our friendly staff will be able to help you. The One Stop Shop is open 08:45 till 17:00 daily, except Tuesdays when it opens at 09:15 due to staff training.

- phone 01706 217777
- email us at generalenquiries@rossendalebc.gov.uk
- write to us about Council Tax and Benefit issues at; Rossendale BC, Revenue & Benefits, PO Box 104 Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 3BU
- you can also write to the Council in relation to other services we provide at; Rossendale Borough Council, The Business Centre, Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 0BB

If you wish to contact Green Vale Homes you can;

- visit them at their office at 26-28 St James Street, Bacup, OL13 9NJ,
- phone them on 0300 555 5556
- email them at enquiries@greenvalehomes.co.uk

You can contact Lancashire County Council

- phone them on 0300 123 6701
- email them at enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk
- visit them at County Hall, Fishergate, Preston, PR1 8XJ
- Welfare Rights 0300 123 6739

For the latest Council news please visit;

www.rossendaleneews.org.uk
Help with paying your Council Tax

Council Tax Support
If you are on a low income, you may be able to claim Council Tax Support (a reduction in your bill). The amount we will take off your bill depends on:

- your income and savings;
- your personal circumstances;
- how much Council Tax you have to pay
- the circumstances of the people living with you.

To claim Council Tax Support, you will need to fill in a form and provide proof of your identity, income and savings, and details of anyone who lives with you.

We can also consider making a reduction in council tax if you have been affected by unusual or exceptional circumstances and do not qualify for other discounts exemptions or support schemes. Any such request must be made in writing.

Alternative Maximum Council Tax Support
If you share your home with another adult who is not your partner and who is on a low income, you may be able to claim Alternative Maximum Council Tax Support. This discount is based on the income of the other adult, not on your income. It provides a reduction of up to 25% on your Council Tax bill.

For further details phone 01706 217777 or email benefits@rossendalebc.gov.uk

For more information
Please contact Rossendale Borough Council

- Write to: Rossendale BC, Revenue & Benefits, PO Box 104 Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 3BU
- Telephone 01706 217777
- email counciltax@rossendalebc.gov.uk
- or visit the website at rossendale.gov.uk/counciltax

For more information on the budgets and spending for each of the authorities supported by this Council Tax charge please refer to the following websites and search for 'council tax':-

- Rossendale: www.rossendale.gov.uk
- Lancashire County Council: www.lancashire.gov.uk
- Fire: www.lancashire-pcc.gov.uk
- Police: www.lancsfire rescue.org.uk

If you would like this information in a way which is better for you, please telephone 01706 217777