

FOI number: HBC_FOI_20200256
Date FOI Received: 06/04/2020
Department: Council Tax
Title: Council Tax and Coronavirus (Covid-19)
Description: Information in relation to Homeowners facing financial challenges as a result of Coronavirus

Request: (As Redacted sent by requestor)

Dear Hertsmere Borough Council,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Homeowners in Hertsmere are facing financial challenges with the recent Coronavirus outbreak.

- 1) Given the financial worries facing many in the county, who authorised the release of council tax bills, which have gone up by much more than inflation?
- 2) What provisions are being made for worried homeowners to support them and their mental health during this crisis?
- 3) Why are you not approaching the central government for crisis funds instead of seeking additional funding from council tax payers?
- 4) How many years of above CPI increases have Hertsmere and Hertfordshire County Council made since 2014?
- 5) Why are Hertsmere Council Tax bills higher than those paid by London Borough of Brent?

Yours faithfully,

Response: (Response as Redacted sent by service)

Our Response:

- 1) The Council Tax is set as part of the annual budget process in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which requires Local Authorities to set a balanced budget by the 11 March each year. Hertsmere's Council Tax was approved by the full Council on 26 February 2020.
- 2) 2) Mental Health provision comes under the remit of Public Health which is the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council. Hertsmere do however provide funding for MIND outreach workers although not specifically for this current crisis
- 3) The 2020/21 Council Tax does not include any additional funding requirement in respect of the current Covid-19 crisis. Along with all of Local Government we are looking to Central Government for crisis funding and have received funding allocations under tranches 1 and 2 of the Government support measures for local government, details of which can be found on the Gov.uk website.

- 4) Hertsmere as a billing authority collect Council Tax on behalf of all precepting bodies including Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner and local Parish and Town Councils. Hertsmere's element of the total Council Tax bill is just 10%.

Hertsmere's Council Tax was frozen between 2010/11 and 2016/17 when it was increased by £5 in line with the Government's spending expectations for district councils and the council tax referendum limits and has increased by £5 annually since then.

The attached file shows all elements of the Council Tax collected by Hertsmere on behalf of all precepting bodies and the year on year increases for each body.

- 5) The level of council tax is a political decision and is set by the elected members of the borough at their full Council in February each year as part of the annual budget process. The level of Council Tax will vary between different local authorities as it is dependent on the different services provided locally and the income generated from assets and fees and charges and formula based grant funding received from the Government.

If you have any queries about the processing of your request then please do not hesitate to contact me. Further information explaining the Council's process for responding to information requests together with a complaints/appeals procedure is available in our reception or via our website at:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Your-Council/Official-Publications--Guides--Policies/Access-to-Information.aspx>

The Information Commissioner oversees the application of the Freedom of Information Act. You may contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545700
Website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Please include the above reference number on all correspondence related to this request.

Thank you for your request.

Kind regards

Information Services