



## **Council tax information 2015/16**

### **Explaining the amount of council tax which you will pay towards the services we will provide over the course of the financial year, 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.**

Your council tax helps pay for services in the local area, such as education, caring for people in need, maintaining the road network, and protecting our environment. It also pays for services at town and parish level, as well as supporting the emergency services such as the fire service and the police.

The money raised through Council Tax is shared out between the following authorities:

- Your local council/s (including town and parish)
- Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner

This page explains the amount of council tax which you will pay towards the services we will provide over the course of the financial year, 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Despite having our Government grant support reduced by 26 per cent between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the authority has not raised council tax since 2010/11 and this year decided to reduce council tax by 1 per cent for 2015/16. The charge to the council tax-payer from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 will reduce to £58.54 for each band D property for services provided by Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

We will spend £28,740,486 (£37.24 per head of population) on providing services to you. Our services are funded by Government grants and business rates (£15.04 per head of population) and council tax (£22.20 per head of population).

Council tax bills in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes include the following totals per home to pay for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service in 2015-16.

<b>Band</b>	<b>Amount</b>
A	£39.03
B	£45.53
C	£52.04
D	£58.54
E	£71.55
F	£84.56
G	£97.57
H	£117.08

About 4p from every £1 of council tax paid in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes goes to Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. The rest goes towards the cost of services provided by councils and the police.

### **Where the money comes from**

The funding settlement for 2015-16 was announced on 3 February 2015. The table below shows the breakdown of where our funding comes from:

<b>Table: Where the money comes from</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Government grant and business rates	£10,700,542	£10,510,420
Council tax	£16,929,784	£17,131,066
Other grants	£1,178,482	£1,099,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£28,808,808</b>	<b>£28,740,486</b>

Although the amount of grant funding has reduced between 2014/15 and 2015/16, improved positions in the council tax and business rates bases and improved collection rates have helped to reduce the impact of those cuts.

## Where the money goes

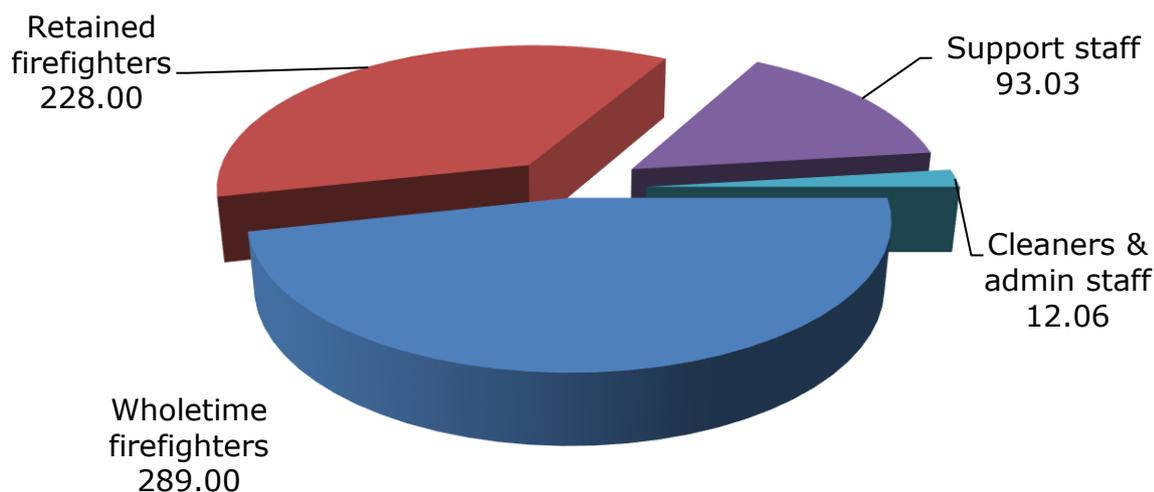
In this challenging financial environment, work continues to achieve a balanced budget, progressing in line with our Public Safety Plan for 2015-20 so that we can carry on as usual without detriment to public safety or emergency responses.

The Fire Authority has taken a number of measures already and plans to do more to ensure that it continues to meet the priorities set out in the Public Safety Plan. For 2015-16 we plan to make further savings through a number of initiatives, which involve better ways of working and consolidating workforce plans to meet our vision for the longer term. We are investing in more up-to-date technology and are pursuing ways of sharing costs with our community partners and other fire authorities.

<b>Table: Where the money goes</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Employees	£21,971,018	£19,838,954
Premises	£1,748,798	£1,679,167
Transport	£1,042,592	£782,611
Supplies and services	£3,504,757	£3,420,923
Agency payments	£955,259	£929,251
Capital charges	£1,956,000	£2,831,000
Contributions to/(from) reserves	-£970,684	£21,805
Income	-£1,398,932	-£763,225
<b>Net budget requirement</b>	<b>£28,808,808</b>	<b>£28,740,486</b>

Included within employee costs are the National Insurance contributions required by employers, and pension contributions set in accordance with relevant pension schemes regulations.

### Summary of staffing levels 2015/16



(Figures in the table above are based on full-time equivalents)

Retained firefighters represent an efficient and flexible alternative to traditional staffing methods while maintaining response capabilities. As a result of this, we plan to increase the proportion of these firefighters over the coming years.

Planned restructures for support services and changes to crewing arrangements for firefighting personnel are also being carried out by the organisation, in order to ensure that the right resources are in the right place to meet operational and strategic priorities in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Control room staffing is planned to transfer to the shared Thames Valley control centre for 2015/16.

Employee costs include costs for training our staff to ensure that they are well prepared for any event that they may be required to attend, and are skilled to the appropriate level to help you at a variety of different types of incident.

As well as responding to fires, our firefighters are needed in situations involving road traffic collisions, flood response, specialist rescue, hazardous substance incidents, home fire risk checks and fire safety enforcement. Each requires highly qualified, experienced and expert staff, ready to respond to an emergency 24 hours a day.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority will continue the close scrutiny and challenge of revenue growth and savings proposals as well as all capital projects. Funding for initiatives in the capital programme comes from a mixture of Government grants and contributions from revenue. The Authority currently has no plans to borrow any additional money.

For 2015/16, the Authority has been successful in its bid for the Fire and Rescue Authority Transformation Funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government. The grant funding of £2.841m is to be invested in the construction of a modern joint facility with Thames Valley Police. The project introduces opportunities for alternative service delivery and partnership working with other emergency services.

Other capital projects include essential fire station refurbishment, the replacement of specialist equipment and investment in new technology. Day-to-day savings are being achieved because of this policy. In previous years, photovoltaic solar panels have been installed at key sites to reduce electricity costs, while an ageing turntable ladder appliance has recently been replaced by a newer, more efficient vehicle, resulting in reduced maintenance costs and more efficient crewing arrangements.

We continue to strive to make Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel, but also to achieve this at the lowest cost to those we serve.