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## **Council tax information 2019/20**

### **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 2019 to 31 March 2020.**

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 2019 to 31 March 2020.

For 2019-20 Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority agreed a 2.98 per cent rise in its council tax, which means that the amount paid by a band D taxpayer will rise from £62.70 a year to £64.57 a year. This £1.87 increase, which equates to about 16p a month, will come into effect on 1 April 2019.

We will spend £30.3 million (£37.75 per head of population) on providing services to you. Our services are funded by Government grants and business rates (£12.41 per head of population), council tax (£24.88 per head of population) and use of reserves (£0.46 per head of population).

Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets, said: "Although the budget has increased by £1.8 million since last year, £1.6 million of this increase is as a direct result of an increase in employer pension contributions to unfunded pension schemes and is outside our control.

"Although the Government has committed to funding the majority of the cost of this increase for 2019-20, no assurances have been given regarding funding for future years. We have been able to balance the medium-term budget by significantly reducing our planned capital expenditure, but this is not sustainable in the longer term. The three per cent council tax referendum limit continues to restrict services with the lowest council tax bills."

Councillor Roger Reed, Chairman of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, said: "We will continue to make our case to the Government in the hope of securing additional funding next year. However, should this not be forthcoming, the Fire

Authority has discussed the possibility of holding a referendum to increase council tax by more than the three per cent limit.

"This is not a decision that would be taken lightly given the high cost of holding a referendum and the impact on the local taxpayer. However, it is something that must be considered if the Government is unwilling to grant additional local discretion in setting our council tax while burdening services with ever-increasing costs of employing staff.

"Our staff continue to work hard to ensure our service is one of the most efficient fire and rescue services in the country. For example, a rise in the region of an extra £10 a year on council tax would still put us below the average for fire authorities across England."

Council tax bills in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes include the following totals per home to pay for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) in 2019-20.

- Band A, £43.05
- Band B, £50.22
- Band C, £57.40
- Band D, £64.57
- Band E, £78.92
- Band F, £93.27
- Band G, £107.62
- Band H, £129.14

Less than 4p from every £1 of council tax paid in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes goes to BFRS. The rest goes towards the cost of services provided by councils and the police.

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

The funding settlement for 2019-20 was announced on 29 January 2019. The table below shows the breakdown of where our funding comes from:

<b>Table: Where the money comes from</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Revenue Support Grant and business rates	£8,158	£8,876

Specific grants		£1,097		£1,097
Council tax		£19,237		£19,993
Use of Reserves		£0		£366
<b>Total</b>		<b>£28,492</b>		<b>£30,332</b>

### Where the money goes

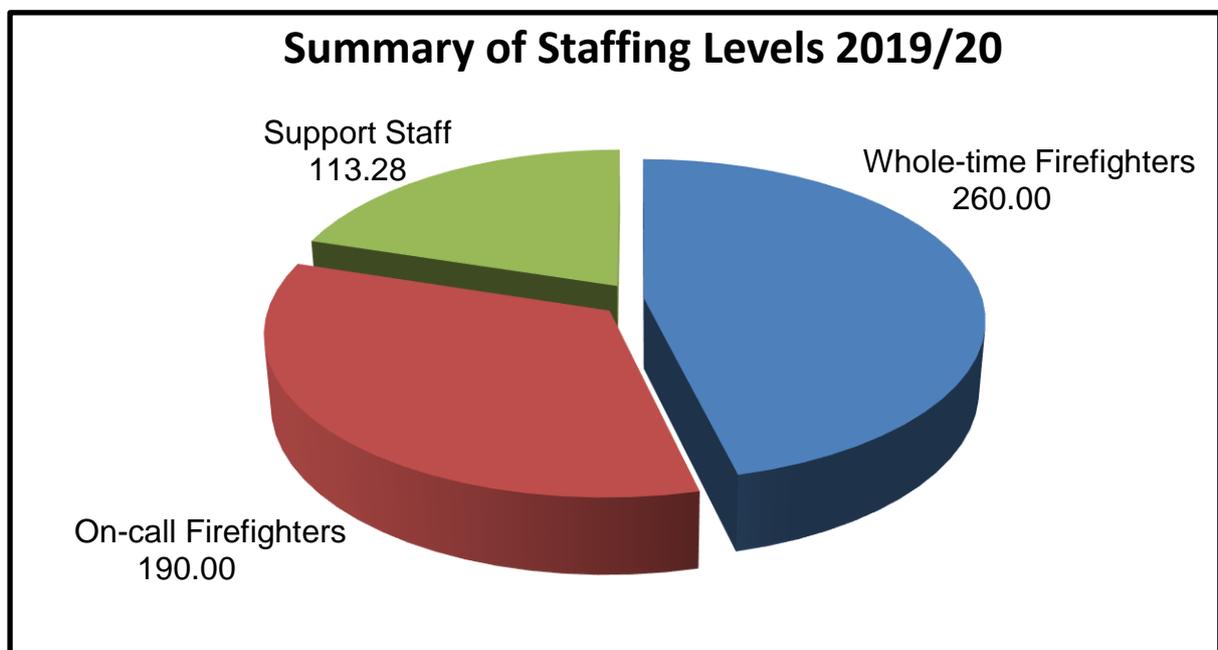
In this challenging financial environment, work continues to achieve the objectives set in our Public Safety Plan for 2015-20, whilst working towards developing the Public Safety Plan for 2020-25.

For 2019-20 we will continue to improve our efficiency and effectiveness through a number of initiatives, which involve better ways of working to meet our vision for the longer term. We are investing in more up-to-date technology, new ways of working and are pursuing avenues which aim to share costs with our community partners and other fire authorities.

<b>Table: Where the money goes</b>		<b>2018-19 £'000</b>		<b>2019-20 £'000</b>
Employees		£20,067		£22,018
Premises		£1,516		£1,561
Transport		£1,070		£995
Supplies and services		£3,047		£3,476
Agency payments		£1,181		£940
Capital charges		£2,433		£2,024

Contributions to reserves		£0	£0
Income		-£822	-£682
<b>Net budget requirement</b>		<b>£28,492</b>	<b>£30,332</b>

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



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

In 2019-20 BFRS will welcome a further 16 apprentice firefighters, continuing its plan to recruit and develop young people into careers across the Authority and the Government's nationwide commitment to create 3 million apprenticeships by 2020.

This will be our fourth tranche of apprentice firefighters. The apprenticeship journey for the first tranche of firefighters began in 2016-17. As part of the first tranche, 22 individuals were recruited as apprentice firefighters. At the end of their apprenticeship in August 2018, all apprentices who had successfully completed the apprenticeship were offered permanent whole-time positions.

On-call firefighters represent an efficient and flexible alternative to traditional staffing methods while maintaining response capabilities. As a result of this, we plan to recruit and retain more of these firefighters over the coming years.

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 monitoring of our budgets, always looking to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. 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.